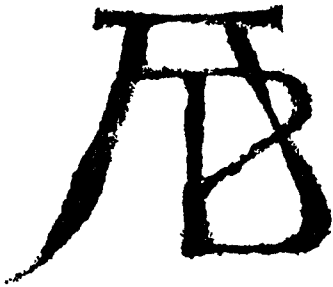


The Political  
Education of  
ARNOLD  
BRECHT



The Political  
Education of  
ARNOLD  
BRECHT

An Autobiography  
1884-1970



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

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The original German edition of this autobiography was published by Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, in 1966–1967 in two volumes: *Aus nächster Nähe, Lebenserinnerungen eines beteiligten Beobachters* (the years 1884–1927) and *Mit der Kraft des Geistes, Lebenserinnerungen zweite Hälfte* (the years 1927–1967).

The author has condensed and rewritten it for this American edition.

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*To Those Generations  
That Have Not Yet Failed*



## INTRODUCTION

WHEN after years of concentrated effort my most voluminous book, *Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, was completed,<sup>1</sup> I was at long last free to turn again to other plans. Three major projects competed for priority. One—seemingly the most obvious option—was the second (special) volume of theory, parts of which were already at an advanced stage of preparation; the second, publication of my lectures on the constitutional history of mankind, an analysis of the reciprocal influences between constitutions and history; the third, some type of autobiography or memoirs, an interplay of recollections and reflections.

A writer who at the age of forty or fifty has to choose among projects of this scope can easily persuade himself that his decision concerns only the order of sequence. If he is about eighty, however, he knows that the choice of one in all probability means the death sentence for the others.

Why in these circumstances I gave priority to the autobiography calls for a word of explanation. The longer I thought over it, the more I became convinced that the other two books could be written by someone else, whereas this one only by me. I have liked to fancy, it is true, that the first volume of *Political Theory* bears my personal stamp. The second, however, was meant to be based to such an extent on the principles laid down in the former that some inspired member of our profession who agrees with them should be able to produce it in the same spirit, enriched with his own infusions. An outline of what I had planned is to be found in my article "Political Theory" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1968).

As to the constitutional history of mankind, the systematic presentation I have had in mind has not yet been forthcoming. This project, too, can well be carried through by another person, and I have no doubt that such a work will not be long in coming.

My recollections, however, can be put down by no one but me.

<sup>1</sup> Princeton University Press, 1959, 5th printing, 1968. German edition, 1961. Also editions in Spanish and Portuguese.

Originally I had thought only of relating a coherent story of my life, knitting together the scattered sections of the cloth from which it was cut, for my own benefit and that of friends. That would not have been very important for the world at large, was not even necessarily meant for publication, and could have been done alongside of work on weightier projects.

Yet when I had finished the first part, which dealt with my young years far removed from politics, the book turned out to become more and more a history of important political events. My life had been so closely interwoven with these events that it could not be adequately described apart from them. What I had come to see from close quarters was no longer my own personal way of life alone and its private environment, but political history from the beginning of World War I to the end of the Weimar Republic and further. Even where I had not been active myself, daily observation from central points influenced and formed me decisively.

Therewith the writing began fully to occupy my time and energies. The briefest listing of characteristic situations in which I had found myself will illustrate this, and at the same time explain the ever-growing urge I felt as a matter of professional responsibility to testify to what I had observed.

After seven years of work in the imperial Department of Justice in Berlin and half a year in the Department of Economics I received a call from the last imperial Chancellor, Prince Max von Baden, to join his staff in the Chancellery (October, 1918). I stayed there for three years under seven Chancellors (Prince Max, Ebert, Scheidemann, Bauer, Hermann Müller, Fehrenbach, Wirth) and eight revolutionary People's Commissaries in between (originally six, plus two replacements). In the Chancellery I witnessed the war's end, the debate about the Kaiser's abdication, the Revolution, the birth of the Weimar Republic, the Versailles peace negotiations, the controversy on the responsibility for Germany's collapse, the Kapp Putsch, the loss of a popular majority for democracy in the elections of 1920—deadly virus for German democracy—the unilateral disarmament, the struggle about reparations, Erzberger's assassination, Rathenau's appointment, and the beginnings of the "Policy of Fulfillment."

Only in the course of writing did I realize that apart from being the only survivor among politicians and higher staff members who at one time or other had been in the Chancellery during those three

years, I was indeed the only one who had stayed there within that entire period. All others served merely during a part, generally a very small part.

Thereafter I worked for over five years in the federal Ministry of the Interior under eight ministers—two Social Democrats, three Democrats (liberals), one of the German People's Party (national-liberal), and two German Nationalists, the second of whom dismissed me because of my pro-democratic views. I witnessed Rathenau's assassination, the occupation of the Ruhr, the runaway inflation, the conflict with Bavaria, Hitler's beer-cellar putsch, the stabilization of the currency, the deceptive recovery, and, finally, the passing of three strategically important offices into the hands of men with anti-democratic and anti-republican views—the federal Presidency, the federal Ministry of the Interior, and my own office as chief of the constitutional division.

My dismissal from federal office failed to remove me from the center of political events in Germany, however. Appointed one of the leading officials of republican Prussia in Berlin and serving as Prussia's representative in the Reichsrat (Federal Council), in the official committee of twenty preparing a draft bill for Germany's reorganization (*Reichsreform*), and finally before the Supreme Constitutional Court in the conflict with the Papan government, I observed the final catastrophe of the Weimar Republic: Hitler's appointment and his gaining total power.

Temporarily arrested by Hitler's secret police and subjected to close surveillance I accepted a call to the newly founded graduate faculty of political and social science in the New School for Social Research, New York (November, 1933). A new phase of my life began, in an entirely different arena, devoted to political science rather than its practice. My share in practical politics thereafter was indeed reduced to occasional advice given in publications, memoranda, and personal discussions, as described in this book's final chapters.

Consequently, the major part of this narrative is given to the middle years of my life, those between thirty and fifty, from the beginning of World War I to Hitler's ascent to total power in Germany. The thirty-five years in the United States are dealt with more briefly, since work spent in the pursuit of theory, however important it may appear to specialists, cannot expect to encounter general interest.

The preponderance of German affairs had originally caused me to publish my memories and reflections in German. On two grounds, however, it has appeared suitable to have an English-language edition available. One is academic in character. German history from the start of World War I through the period of the Weimar democracy to the ascent of Hitler encompasses a peculiarly coherent sequence of events. Their close study leads to a number of the most puzzling problems of democracy, of political theory in general, and of history-writing—problems that are amply discussed in this book. They are sure to attract continuous attention. Just as I myself owe a good deal of my own political education to my involvement in this period's history, I felt this book might help others, not only Germans, in theirs.

The second reaches much further. This particular section of German history, from 1914 to the present, far from being simply a parochial sample of national history, has actually assumed something like the central position in the recent political history of the world at large. It is not saying too much, I think, to claim that the terminal phase of the second millennium after Christ has essentially been shaped by it and cannot correctly be apprehended without studying it.

I now must remind the reader, however, that my first purpose was writing an autobiography. Many pages are devoted to the first thirty years of my life, quite non-political in activities and atmosphere; elsewhere, too, more space is given to personal experiences and reflections than would be appropriate in a purely historical work. At first sight, this may seem to be an incompatible blend of purposes. However, reactions to the German edition have confirmed my belief that the book's intentions have not been impaired. The lyrics, drama, and epics of one particular life may be able to introduce the reader, and especially readers of the younger generations, to this portentous period of history and its perennial problems more intimately and more realistically than can purely historical studies.

An autobiography that omits the years of youth may provide good political memoirs but will be poor autobiography, and one that falsifies the record. I have tried to be as sincere as I could, not in retrospect belittling or sidetracking with the presumptive wisdom of haughty old age that which in those years had been important for my development. This is not to say that I approve of all I did or thought then. Quite the contrary, I wonder now at a good

deal of it, as much as the reader may, ruefully shaking my head at times. But this is the way it was. I cannot change it; and as it was, it has formed me.

I kept no diaries. The only authentic source of these recollections is my memory, freshened up by notes, letters, memoranda, and the like still in my possession. I have not hesitated to verify data by consulting other sources of current history. In a few chapters I have used ideas and reflections from earlier publications of mine, occasionally even their wording. I am sincerely indebted for permission given me in this respect to the publishers and editors of my books *Prelude to Silence* (1944) and *Federalism and Regionalism in Germany: the Division of Prussia* (1945), both published by Oxford University Press, New York, and of my articles "Walther Rathenau and the German People," *Journal of Politics* (February, 1948) and "Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik und die politische Wissenschaft," *Zeitschrift für Politik*, vol. 2 (1955), pp. 291 ff.

The original German edition of my autobiography was published by Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, in two volumes, the first titled *Aus nächster Nähe, Lebenserinnerungen eines beteiligten Beobachters*, covering the years from 1884 to 1927 (1966), the second, *Mit der Kraft des Geistes, Lebenserinnerungen zweite Hälfte, 1927-1967* (1967), each about 500 pages long. The present American edition, although reduced to half the size of the German, preserves the essence of what is historically, scientifically, and humanly most important. To make this possible it omits that which was to serve purposes of documentation and verification only, especially in the two extensive appendices of the German edition, and the discussion of subjects that are of interest only to specialists. These items are easily accessible to scholars in the original edition. I have also omitted some of the purely autobiographical data, stories, anecdotes, and reflections of no significance for the understanding of the general trend of the narrative. Heavier cuts in less important chapters have made it feasible to render the most important ones in their entirety.

Chapters are numbered from the beginning to the end, whereas the German edition starts the second volume with a new numbering. Numbers in both editions are identical to Chapter 43; thereafter they diverge, partly because of the omission of some chapters. A synopsis of the relationship of the editions will be found in the Appendix.

Friendly assistants have helped me by preparing tentative transla-

tions from the German edition as a basis for me to shorten and reorganize the text and to rewrite it for non-German readers, who would be unable to understand many historical allusions or institutional peculiarities of common knowledge to Germans, without adequate explanation; who would approach facts and implications from their own angle of knowledge and prejudice, unless properly warned; and who should not be bothered with details and names of interest only to Germans. Most of the preparatory work of translation was ably done by Miss Wendy Philipson, instructor for English at the University of München (Chapters 5 to 53, 74 to 94, 98 to the end). Minor parts were handled equally well by Mr. Thomas Bourke, München (Chapters 1 to 4); Mrs. Lenore Friedrich, Cambridge, Mass. (54 and 55); Mrs. Charlotte Neisser, New York (56 to 73); and Mr. Salvator Attanasio, New York (95-97). I wish to express my cordial thanks to all of them, as well as to Miss R. Miriam Brokaw of Princeton University Press who went over the final copy, and to Mrs. Gertrude Lederer of New York who prepared the Index.

I also wish to thank Mrs. Alice Assmus and Miss Ursula Holdschmidt in München, and Mrs. Johanna Brandt of New York for their successful efforts in transcribing heavily altered manuscripts.

Finally, one word on the book's title. My original proposal was "Participant-Observer." "Observer of *what?*" Herbert Bailey, the publisher's editor in chief, retorted at once. What a man has observed in eighty-five years cannot easily be summed up in a book's title. We considered many alternatives, among them "Life Under Six Political Regimes," "History Shaping Up For the Millennium's Final Stage," "Facts and Values," "From Practice To Theory," or just "Memoirs." Any of these would have been correct, but none seemed sufficiently specific. Mr. Bailey proposed the present title and stuck to it over my objections that it was too personal and that its allusion to Henry Adam's great autobiography would be considered presumptuous. He did not share these misgivings, he said, and I can only pray that he is right, as he usually is.

The American edition can claim independent value on the dual ground of its more compact arrangement and its being addressed to non-German readers.

Arnold Brecht  
New York, March 1970

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The Political  
Education of  
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BRECHT

# PART I

The Early Years:  
Far Removed  
from Politics

## 1. AS A CHILD AT HOME

FAMILIES from the upper strata of society who lived in North Germany around the turn of the century generally had little contact with politics, if we disregard occasional outbursts of patriotic feeling, hero-worship (Frederick the Great, Bismarck), and negative reactions to the opinions of *other* groups, considered “political” in contrast to one’s own “objective” views.

If a boy’s home was a Hanseatic town, in my case the city of Lübeck, one could be reasonably sure that the fathers of all his upper-class friends shared an outlook that could be politically classified as “National Liberal.” They enthused about free trade, a flourishing industry, a strong navy, and colonies. Social Democrats were “public enemies,” and heads were wagged over “ultramontane” Catholicism. This way of thinking was natural. Whoever tended farther toward the Left or the Right—*they* were the “politicians.”

Once as a child in the company of my father I encountered a workers’ demonstration. I asked what it was. My father explained to me that those were Social Democrats—people who aspired after higher wages and a state of the future where everyone would be equal. That struck me as being very natural. Shouldn’t they be given higher wages? My father answered that was not so simple because many factories did not make sufficiently high profits to pay more; first of all, it was necessary to see to it that everyone had work and could earn a living. The answer did not quite satisfy me, and the question continued to trouble me. Whatever else demonstrations accomplish, they cause children to put questions to their parents.

I came into the world in Lübeck on the 26th of January, 1884, the same year of birth as that of Theodor Heuss, first President of the Federal Republic of Germany; the American President Harry Truman; Professor Edwin Redslob, co-founder of the Free University in Berlin; and of many others whose course of life later crossed mine. Of the house where I was born I have kept no memories, for my parents soon moved to one they had bought near the railroad station, where, opposite the Holsten Gate, my father’s office was.

This house, Moislinger Allee Nr. 22, with its front- and back-garden and a square tower, which offered one of the finest views of the city's old churches and the richly wooded embankments, remained our home until my adult life.

Our father was a Protestant pastor's son—the youngest of four brothers—from a small town near Magdeburg (Ochtmersleben). As a lawyer he went into railroad administration in Berlin, married the third of four daughters of the railroad's division director from the Prussian Ministry of Commerce, Theodor Weishaupt (there was not yet a separate Ministry of Railroads). Some time afterward he went to Lübeck as president of the only large-scale private railroad yet in Germany, the Lübeck-Büchner Railroad Company. We children—the two “big ones,” Edith and Gustav, and the two “little ones,” Gertrud and I (there was a gap of four years between Gustav and me; our brother Rolf, the fifth child, did not enter the stage until after another twelve years)—used to issue ourselves free railroad passes by filling in the blank over our father's official seal, and so were able to make trips free of charge into pleasant surroundings, particularly the Baltic Sea, our great love. If a number of engines stood on turntables around a railroad workshop, Jürgen Fehling, lifelong friend since our schooldays and later great man of the theater, used to call it the Brecht Family Celebration Day.

Our father's brothers also had reached, each in a different profession, positions of some distinction. The oldest, an architect, was Privy Councillor to the Court of Rudolstadt; the second was a historian of high quality and Lord Mayor of Quedlinburg, where he is honored by a monument and a street-name. The third, a renowned oculist in Berlin, died at an early age; his son, later a philologist of German, Professor Walter Brecht (Vienna, Munich), was as our father's ward often in our house.

Seen as a whole, the paternal generation illustrated the frequent rise of a craftsman's family (my great grandfather was a saddler) by way of a Protestant vicarage towards the higher social strata. But we saw the older generation as personalities rather than in sociological categories. The great star in our family's sky was the grandfather, Pastor Christoph Heinrich Brecht, although we had never known him personally. He was held by us younger children in higher esteem than our mother's father, the Ministerial Director in Berlin, whose rank was a matter of complete indifference to us, and indeed, like everything “official,” repulsed rather than attracted us.

In marrying my father, her elder by fifteen years, our mother at the age of twenty-one gave up not only the home and social circle of a high official in Berlin but also her studies at the Academy of Music, where she was as a gifted pianist taking lessons from Clara Schumann, the great composer's widow. The Blüthner grand piano in the drawing-room of our Lübeck house remained her spiritual habitat and her refuge from her many chores and social obligations, which she attended with a burning sense of duty, in her perfectionism sometimes stricter than our father, who had grown up with farmers' and craftsmen's sons. But she somehow managed every day to go to the piano and play, practice or give lessons to the two daughters. She never played anything but good classical pieces, especially sonatas and piano concertos by Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann, and Brahms, with great technical ability developed by diligent finger exercises, a captivatingly soft touch, and a deep understanding of the art. We two boys soon broke away from these, as we thought, boring lessons and taught ourselves to play by ear, with the occasional help of laboriously deciphered notes; so did the late-comer Rolf. Gustav also played the violin and clarinet, I the clarinet, and Rolf the cello. Sometimes we had an entire orchestra in the house. Most of the time, however, while I did my homework, I used to hear in the next room my mother's or sisters' accurate playing of good music. This became so customary to me that even now I often have sonatas or piano concertos playing from records or radio while I work. But what a world of difference between the canned music of even the greatest pianists and the warm, living flow from the piano in the next room under our mother's hands!

I was a sickly child, and as a result backward in the development of thought and speech. At the age of four I incurred a serious bout of pleurisy, as a consequence of which my heart shifted from its position and developed a valve defect which prevented me until my later school years from indulging in athletics and from performing my military service.

Gustav was physically much stronger and mentally earlier developed. A four years' age gap between brothers—especially when there is no intermediary child between them (a girl had died at birth)—is a vast chasm. To be only four when your brother is eight, only eight when he is twelve, only twelve when he is sixteen—that indeed is a sorry fate. It is only when finally the one is about twenty-three and the other twenty-seven that the age-span gradually stops having the

effect of a difference between generations and eventually loses all importance.

Gustav's way of playing with me was to tyrannize me. Those games of tyranny and rebellion were to repeat themselves later between Gustav's own second and third boys, who had the same age gap. It is best described by the following scene: Wolfgang, in a fight with the younger Christoph, has thrown his brother to the floor:

"Do you admit that you're beaten?"

"No!"

Wolfgang kneels on the other's arms.

"Do you admit *now* that you're beaten?"

"No!"

"But you're lying underneath!"

"Then the winner is lying underneath!"

"But you're crying!"

"Then the winner is crying!"

Editha, six years older than I, was a sort of governess, mother's deputy, for us two little ones. Not until very much later did we build up a proper brother-sister relationship. In those early years we were for her simply incredibly stupid.

My dearest playmate, and my consolation in times of misfortune, was Gertrud, one and a half year younger than I, born in the month of roses, winsome and mild, with blue eyes and thick blond hair which, because of the curious strength of the individual strands, formed an unusual contrast to her graceful, childlike expression. By nature gay and yet pensive, she was for the parents a constant "ray of sunshine" in contrast to us "problem children," and at the same time a "little mother" because of her calm observations about the world around her. She was my confidante in all situations—understanding, discreet, always ready to help. When Gustav beat me, she wept with me. When I wanted to come home later than our parents would allow, she left the window open for me. When our parents complained about me, she defended me.

Mother's oldest sister, Anna, was married to Georg Sombart, President of the Stettin Railroad and brother of the economist, Professor Werner Sombart. Of the previous generation she represented for us the epitome of elegance and was very intent on improving our manners whenever we visited her.

The second sister, a gifted painter, was married in Berlin to the

chairman of a narrow-gauge railways association, City Councillor Adalbert Erler, who was politically and socially more liberal than his sister-in-law's husband, Georg Sombart. Their son Hans Erler, later a commander and a vice-admiral in the German navy, was for his entire life a good friend of us Brecht children.

The youngest of the four sisters, Aunt Else, remained single after the death of her parents, whom she had cared for until their last breath. She was like an older sister in her mixture of good manners, intellectual freedom, and boyishness, full of tender understanding in all our joys and sorrows and always ready to accommodate and entertain us during our visits to Berlin.

Lastly, there was our mother's only brother, Uncle Ewald Weisshaupt, colonel and director of the government-run rifle factory in Spandau. We had less contact with him than with our aunts, although rather more with his children, particularly his two sons; the younger of the two later became a spirited torpedo-boat commander, often in conflict with his superiors.

## 2. SCHOOL DAYS (1891-1902)

BECAUSE I had so often been ill I did not go to school until I was seven years of age; then, however, on account of my height, I was immediately put with older and quicker boys. This was at Dr. Busenius' "preparatory school," which was the equivalent of an American grammar school, with some Latin and French added; later, boys were transferred to the Katharineum, the famous Lübeck "Gymnasium," which was almost four hundred years old.

On my first day at school, during one of the lessons, a boy from a higher class, after knocking timidly, opened the door and walked in, carrying a cane in his hand. He had to report to Mr. Sch. in this way because of insubordination during the break. The teacher ordered him to unlace and relace his boots while standing; as the boy did this, he was given several strokes of the cane on the tightest part of his trousers. Watching this took my breath away. The incident was in fact not repeated, but caning was a common means of punishment.

In the next higher class (the "Sexta") I stayed for two years at

the request of my parents since I was “anyway too young.” At the beginning of the second year I was being placed at the top of the class, the only time this ever happened to me at school. In the following terms I slowly dropped back to the lower third and remained there year after year, until the age of fifteen, when there was a sudden marked improvement and I rose quickly to seventh place. This seemed to me to be quite unnecessary and I cut down on work so much that I was again near the bottom, my only care being that I did not fail graduation (the “Abitur”).

Corporal punishment was not used in the Katharineum, but otherwise things were all the more strange there, especially in the higher classes. We pupils had a strong code of honor among ourselves, but in our relationships with most of our old teachers—not all of them; there were remarkable exceptions of extremely popular teachers—honor had only one meaning: trying to fool them, bravely and successfully. Once I had been given two black marks on one day—a serious matter, which made my advancement seem doubtful. The mathematics teacher, Dr. Goth, who taught the last lesson that day, saw the bad marks, looked at me—I was a good mathematician—and put a good mark in the book. I was saved. A few years previously something similar, though unfortunately without the good mark, had happened in the same class to another native of Lübeck: Thomas Mann. In 1931, at the four-hundredth anniversary of the Katharineum, by which time Mann had risen to being the official speaker, the old class register was in a glass case in the exhibition room, open at the page on which the two bad marks had been entered. When we told Mann, he said: “That’s going too far.” There was a rumor that he had been able to make the class at that time only on the tacit understanding between school and family that he would then leave, which he did.

The century came to an end. Fifteen years old, I went on New Year’s Eve into the town where the crowds were surging back and forth in Breite Strasse. I did not mingle with them, but was standing alone beneath the dark, mighty towers of St. Mary’s Church when the bells rang at midnight. “No one who today sees the beginning of the new century,” I thought, “will live to see its end. But these towers will still stand then as they have done for five or six centuries.” A strange thrill ran through me. But before the century was half over, those eternal towers lay in ruins, the bells melted at their feet.

Three days after the new year the wedding of our eldest sister Editha took place. At the party held on the eve, one of her friends, Irmgard Behn, appeared dressed as Rautendelein—a fairy figure in a play by Hauptmann—declaiming a poem by my brother Gustav. She seemed incredibly lovely. Her cousin, the Munich sculptor Fritz Behn, Gustav, and I—we all fell in love with her at the same time. My ardent love lasted for nine months—a very long time at that age. Hopelessly for she was two years older than I, but all the more happily, I made pilgrimages almost every day over the old walls to Brehmer Strasse to see her.

In the meantime at Easter, 1900, my flamboyant final two years on school ("Prima," lower and upper section) began. School fraternities were permitted in Lübeck, a city which could allow itself such strange activities because as an independent federal state it had its own cultural sovereignty. Many of the senators had previously been members of these fraternities themselves and allowed them to continue because of pleasant memories of their own youth. Every Saturday or second Saturday we met in a reserved room of a small suburban tavern, celebrating, singing student songs, and drinking colossal amounts of beer. Every other week in winter there were dances at the homes of the most distinguished families; we visited them formally at the beginning of the winter with the tacit understanding that the parents would take turns in holding these dance evenings.

But these were matters of secondary importance compared with what really mattered to me, the theater, the old Lübeck municipal theater. I was, like Gustav four years before me, an enthusiastic theater-goer, paying sixty pfennigs for standing-room tickets, and in these two years got to know many great operas well—Wagner, Mozart, Beethoven, Verdi, Bizet—and many operettas, particularly Offenbach and Johann Strauss. A fanciful love for Alice Nova, a singer, who was ten years older than I, increased my enthusiasm. She appeared on the stage several times a week, as Adele in *Fledermaus*, as Mozart's Papagena, or Offenbach's beautiful Helen, as Thomas' Mignon, Adam's Poupée, or as an apprentice in *Meistersinger*. It was said that she came of a distinguished Bremen family and that she had thrown herself from the Rhine bridge in Cologne in order to put an end to an unhappy marriage; her husband, so the story went on, had jumped in after her and had drowned, but she was saved, had recovered, and went on to fulfill a long-felt desire: to sing and to act. In the evenings she appeared only with a lady

companion who brought her to the theater and picked her up afterwards. This love story of mine also remained platonic, romantic, idealistic. Greetings in the street, when she was coming from rehearsals and I from school (I often walked up and down for a long time in order not to miss her), a few words, handshakes, a picture and a carnation—that was all.

In order to procure the money for my theater visits I coached a lower-class pupil (of whom a teacher had said to me: he is even more stupid than you) for a mark an hour and managed to learn something in the process myself, so that in the end I passed the *Abitur*, whereas he was kept down. He later became a Lübeck senator and a member of the Federal Parliament in Bonn, still a friend. A bigger problem was getting away from home in the evening. In view of my poor achievements my father announced at the beginning of my final winter at school that I must give up going to the theater until the examinations were over. This was, for the reasons I have mentioned, “impossible” for me. I invited a few of my fellow pupils to come up to my room after supper so that we might work together for the exams. We founded a “work society.” Mother protested because she could not sleep. Well, I answered, then we will meet at different houses in turn. And so I went out two or three times a week—to the theater. The lie was the high price to pay for my freedom. I did not feel at the time that I was doing wrong. I very much regret that I lied to my parents. But even now I cannot quite manage penitently to regret my visits to the theater.

Of the many thousands of class hours in school I can say of only two that they had an influence on me for my whole life above and beyond the general impressions of a humanistic education. The first occurred when I was fourteen. A staff member was ill and in his place came a substitute who did not normally teach our class. He led an unprepared discussion with us, something quite outside our curriculum, about whether there were such things as superior beings and what effect they would have on us if we were to meet them. We are beings with three dimensions, he said. Let us suppose that, like shadows, we had only two—only length and width, not height as well. What could we observe if we encountered a three-dimensional being? We would perhaps bump into it. But we would not be able to envisage its third dimension; we would be able to recognize only the two dimensions familiar to us. The same would happen to us three-dimensional beings, he went on, if we were to

meet a being with four dimensions. This comparison—or, more correctly, this conclusion from analogy—fascinated me. In eternally repeated sequences of thought I pictured to myself what the fourth dimension of such a being might well be and reached the conclusion that it must be *time*. We three-dimensional beings are always aware of only one moment in time. But a being with four dimensions would project into time and would be able to move about in it freely, as we do in space. I familiarized myself mentally with such a being. This was before 1900. When great scientists began to be preoccupied with Einstein's theories and with time as a fourth dimension, I was well prepared.

The other lasting impression was of a physics lesson in which Professor Goth showed us one of the first Edison phonographs: the original type of phonograph with a long horn and wax cylinder. He explained the physical process to us. No electricity could be used as an explanation or as an excuse. None was needed. The sound waves struck the membrane, a pin fastened to this engraved the vibrations on the revolving roll of wax; when the cylinder was then made to pass the pin again the membrane vibrated and produced the sounds which had been spoken. "It's all quite simple," Professor Goth concluded his demonstration, and then after a short pause added thoughtfully, passing a hand through his hair: "But that someone had the effrontery to believe that it would really work!" It was this last sentence that made the lesson so memorable for me. It became my secret cipher to the understanding of great discoveries and inventions, a source of reverence for the "effrontery" of strictly logical thought, and a continual encouragement to make myself guilty of such effrontery.

But such lessons were rare exceptions. When we left school we had had for nine years a Latin lesson every day, twice a week even two. At the end of all this hardly one of us was able to express himself fluently in Latin, or indeed, even to read a Latin text with ease. Not to succeed in teaching someone a language in nine years of daily tuition must be difficult. For this a German "Gymnasium" was necessary—and a group of pupils such as we.

History, too, remained something of a mystery to me. The collection of dates, heroes and villains, victories and defeats, conclusions of peace and breaches of faith, which were presented to us as history, had no meaning for me. There were some exceptions, as, for example, a lesson for eleven-year-old boys in which Dr. Bussenius

told us, most eloquently and convincingly, of the beauty of Cleopatra; I listened to this intently. The period of history taught extended only up to the Napoleonic wars of liberation in 1813–1815; then there was a sudden leap over the internal liberation movement to the wars of 1864, 1866, 1870–1871. We did not get any further.

In our struggle against school discipline we imagined ourselves to be heroes, forerunners of a better, more creative society, far more illustrious than the petty bourgeois environment in which we lived. But I have since often regretted that I squandered the precious opportunity to learn more. I had a lot to catch up.

Nor would I wish to exaggerate the degree of our ignorance. When we left school we had learned the fundamentals of Latin, Greek, French, and English, and also of history, mathematics, and natural sciences. We had absorbed the beauty of the Greek language and the richness of its forms, the clear logic of Latin, the expressive terseness of unrhymed rhythms, not because they had been explained to us carefully, but just as independently as the beauty of the Lübeck churches in the shadow of which we had grown up; they had been natural parts of our environment, until one day or night we had the independent experience of their beauty, until we said to one another: “Look how beautiful that is.”

From the first letters of words of a verse by Horace: “*Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae*” (“When the earth is shattered in fragments its ruins will slay me undaunted”) I formed a name which was to be my pseudonym: Sfió Ifr. No one would know what it meant.

At this time Alice Nova’s farewell performance was given. She played *La Poupée* in Adam’s romantic operetta. I saw the piece for the fifth time, chewing cloves during the performance, for I had read of scientific experiments, according to which an event connected with a particular smell or taste reoccurs to us with great vividness when we again come upon the same smell or taste twenty or thirty years later (not earlier). I was willing to wait that long. In fact even today cloves still immediately remind me of that farewell performance.

The beloved singer left Lübeck. At the very last moment, when the engine whistled, I climbed, armed with one of our free railroad passes valid for “any desired class,” into the first class next to her second-class compartment. She leaned out the window looking at Lübeck, until it was lost to our sight and then, turning around, face-

tiously shook her finger at me. At the first station I asked permission to join her in her compartment. She smiled a yes. Thus for the first time I had the opportunity of talking with her at greater length. At the station in Hamburg she presented me with a large carnation from her bouquet and I took the next train back to Lübeck.

In the course of the same year she married the English baritone Whitehill, who had courted her in Lübeck, where he had begun his career. He attracted attention because—a tall, slim young man—he always went around wearing a top hat. In my third term at university I visited the couple in Bremen and spent an evening with them in the *Ratskeller*. Later I lost contact with them. Whitehill often appeared as a guest at Bayreuth.

Even after having passed the exams we continued at school from February to Easter, as was the custom. Director Schubring had us translate from Homer without preparation. I faltered over a word and asked unabashed: “Herr Direktor, what does *nebros* mean?” His answer was: “He thinks himself prepared for life and doesn’t even know that *nebros* means fawn.” I have never forgotten this Greek word since.

### 3. UNIVERSITY (1902–1905)

DURING my years as a student, too, I kept aloof from politics. Sons of southern German bourgeois families often were more advanced in this respect, thanks to the more advanced democratization of political life there. Theodor Heuss, for example, who was the same age as I almost to the day, and like me in his fourth semester at the University of Berlin, was keenly politically active there, a supporter of Friedrich Naumann, while I had as little concern for politics as I had had as a schoolboy.

After groping around unsurely at the beginning in Bonn I ended up in a musical student fraternity, the Makaria. No less a person than Theodor Litt, later one of Germany’s most upright philosophers, three years older and ten years more mature than I, had won me over to this by producing a pianoforte arrangement of *Tristan* and by playing the prelude to the *Meistersinger* extempore on

the piano in the clubroom. I hiked, drank, laughed a lot, and, apart from music, developed a serious attitude only toward the study of law under the guidance of the great teacher Ernst Zitelmann, the only professor whose lectures I attended without fail. I was captivated by the mixture of historical and logical elements in this subject.

In the winter semester (1903-1904) in Berlin my main interest turned once more to the theater, which I had greatly missed in Bonn. From the gallery of the Royal Opera House, together with Gustav, I saw and heard Wagner's *Tristan* for the first time. Its impact has never been greater. But we liked the Metropol Theater in Behrenstrasse with its yearly "revues" almost as much. In order to save the cost of a ticket I took a part as an extra in *Lohengrin* for fifty pfennigs; Dr. Muck was the conductor, with Emmi Destinn as Elsa. At the dress rehearsal in the middle of Elsa's finest aria in the first act Dr. Muck suddenly stopped the orchestra. "One of the men of Brabant over there is wearing eye-glasses," he cried out aghast. I had put them on to see Elsa better. There were disapproving glances from all sides, including Elsa, who, however, gave a charming, understanding smile immediately afterwards. I had selected *Lohengrin* because the men of Brabant are on the stage almost without interruption with the apparent exception of the bridal scene. But even then they are present. For the bridal chamber is only a few yards deep. Behind it the stage has already been set for the trial scene with its huge lime-tree and, while Elsa and Lohengrin are left alone in the foreground by their entourage and breathe the sweet fragrances, at the back we men were sitting around the tree in the half-light behind the drop-curtain, waiting. This experience had a metaphysical significance for me. The atmosphere behind the drop-curtain has stayed with me all my life, an uncanny symbol of the fourth dimension, time. Whatever is happening around me, behind the drop-curtain I see the stage set for the trial.

In the course of my semester in Berlin and the two which followed in Göttingen there occurred a profound change in me. For the first time I began to be aware of the real nature of art, not only of music, the medium through which I had previously come close to art instinctively, but now also in painting (almost every day I spent several hours in art galleries), in drama and, above all, in *language*, in prose and in lyrical poetry, and everywhere in the rela-

tionship between form and content. Content without form now seemed to me to be water without a bucket.

Love and friendship accelerated and intensified the change. During the vacation in March between my semesters in Berlin and Göttingen, my school friend Jürgen Fehling brought me to the house of an esteemed Lübeck lawyer, descended from an old family of senators, who was at that time forty years old. I will call his wife Rezia and him, Hinrich Soederbrook, although this disguise is hardly necessary as he died fifty years ago and she, forty. Rezia wanted to invite a large company of people, for whose entertainment, on the advice of Fehling, a parody of Schiller's *Don Carlos* was to be presented. A small stage was constructed. We rehearsed and acted, Jürgen played Philipp; I, Carlos; Rezia prompted. The whole affair would not be worthy of mention, had it not been the start of a singular experience of love which strongly influenced my further development. She was at that time twenty-nine, the mother of three children between three and seven, the daughter of a Lübeck doctor and a Venezuelan lady of Spanish blood, who was a descendant of Bolivar, the liberator of South America. She had southern beauty and charm, expressive of her soul (human beauty which was not an expression of a person's soul has always repelled me), and great self-assurance in social contacts, so that for me, in otherwise humdrum hanseatic surroundings, she was a phenomenon from another world. In her bearing and gestures always a little solemn, the "beautiful stranger" in town, she loved Lübeck, yet, just as we, liked to make fun of everything philistine and petty. People from the theater and painters met at her home, also artists from Munich and Berlin, and occasionally friends from Italy or Venezuelan relatives. The sight of her, her voice and her movements, stirred me deeply. I saw her only a few times more before I went up to Göttingen for my fifth semester.

My love of Rezia seemed to me something that was its own reward. Love, *real* love, love which "conflicts with destiny," as Goethe said, was the supreme blessing, and the purer and more selfless it was, the greater the blessing. What had I to hope for from this love? What could a lanky, twenty-year-old student who, notwithstanding all his intellectual frenzy, was as yet awkward, dull, and penniless too, mean to this woman admired by so many? If indeed I might one day win her friendship, her confidence, if she might

think of me with a grateful smile, then that would be enough. Everything else in life was on a totally different level.

One of the two friends who influenced my new life was Jürgen Fehling. In Göttingen I saw him every day and in the summer semester even lived with him. He had given up theology after two semesters and began to study law, mistrustfully and ready for every escape into the world of art. He had a Shakespearean richness of ideas and inspiration. It really was as though you were strolling through the fields or sitting over a pint with a nineteen-year-old Shakespeare; I cannot describe it any better.

The other was called Paul Rintelen, one of the many sons of a high-court judge. Four years older than I he had a wonderful self-assurance in making an appearance, a compelling, very melodious voice; he could read Goethe's elegies in a way no one else equaled. An ardent admirer of women, he would love both mother and daughter passionately at the same time and did not really know himself which he loved more. Abstract discussions he disliked. He could not stand Schiller, Ibsen, Wagner, or the painter Max Klinger. "Apothecaries" he called all four of them because in order to achieve their effects they would cunningly mix all sorts of ingredients. Yet to him I owed a new attitude to Goethe, one which was free from school memories, in particular to the later Goethe, to *West-östlicher Divan*, the second part of *Faust*, the *Marienbad Elegies*, and *Pandora*.

In all practical, social, and political affairs I remained as immature as I had been at school. Political activities seemed to me quite contemptible. Politics was indulged in by people different from me, people who spoiled any serious conversation because they had an answer for everything, because they *wanted* something: not conversation, not art, not love, not even truth, but something specific, always waiting for an opportunity, to go ahead with this something. As far away as possible from them! And above all from foreign policy—a book with seven seals, which only these fatuous-respectable people from the Foreign Office could decipher. To have a say in such affairs was just as ludicrous as someone wanting to step onto the stage and play in Hamlet extempore.

When I opened non-legal books, then ten to one it would be Goethe. True, I did read other things. I read everything Stendhal had written, Flaubert, Tolstoy's great novels, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Heine, Shakespeare, Hauptmann, Ibsen, Heinrich Mann, Thomas

Mann, Jens Peter Jacobsen, Hoffmannsthal, Wedekind, all the theater reviews by Alfred Kerr, and a lot of Strindberg—before he was fashionable, not out of curiosity about his marriages but because in him I found a first-rate attempt to explore the ways in which guilt is logically and inexorably atoned for in human life: “How bold then, how bad now.” The cult of the aesthete and of self-flatterers disgusted me. What I did read I usually read very slowly and carefully, as though I were writing it myself sentence by sentence. For this reason alone I was not able to read much. In any case I read nothing about politics, nothing about history.

We expressed our contemptuous distaste for the dominant social ideals and the student customs about us in an entirely independent manner of life inspired solely by our demon or genius. That is, we engaged in what Germans call *genialisches Treiben*, generally frowned upon and condoned exclusively in the one case of Goethe’s youth. We liked to arrange and perform parodies of great operas and dramas, such as *Carmen*, *Lohengrin*, *Meistersinger*, *Faust*, and we excelled in practical jokes, all far away from the serious matters of life.

For example, there had turned up a distant acquaintance of ours, one Herr Kraus, interested in foreign affairs, who behaved in a high-handed fashion. From the room of a mutual friend, Eddi Berkemeyer, we wrote him the following letter, on lady’s notepaper and in a very feminine hand: “Dear Herr Kraus. From the register of students I have learned that you are studying here at present. Do you know that I was a friend of your dear mother’s in her youth? I am looking forward so very much to making your acquaintance and perhaps to being of some assistance to you. I have invited a few people to come to my house next Sunday evening at eight o’clock. It would be a great pleasure for me if you could come. Since there is so little time I shall not expect you to reply or to call beforehand. Evening dress, please. Yours faithfully, Madame Marme.” We had ascertained from the directory that there was a lady of this name living next door. On Sunday we leaned out of the window and, lo and behold, along came Herr Kraus in a dress-coat. “Come on up,” we called. “I can’t, I have an invitation,” he said proudly. Then he went in next door. After a time he came out, looking embarrassed. But he took it good-humoredly and invited the three of us to visit him and regaled us royally. A good diplomat!

Once, when we were playing poker at Berkemeyer's, Jürgen lost one hundred marks. It was one o'clock in the morning. Gambling debts are debts of honor. With a gloomy face he went to the desk and wrote. We had him show us the letter. It was to his eldest brother, a flourishing Lübeck attorney. "Dear Emanuel," it read, "I have done something dreadful. I have been gambling and have lost two hundred marks. Please, help me just this once. I promise that I will never gamble again. Yours, Jürgen." "But you only lost one hundred," we said. "Yes," said Jürgen, "but you only get half of what you ask for anyway." But Emanuel sent two hundred, enclosing a note in which he said that Jürgen should not make promises he would not keep; he should rather win back the money. So we suddenly had a welcome surplus which went around in the course of the following weeks.

Nonetheless, like all of us, Fehling was soon again in financial difficulties. Once he came home gloomily carrying a small blue notebook which he had just bought in order to keep a detailed account of all he spent. About six months later I found it lying on his desk. On the cover was written in Fehling's wonderful hand the word "Mammon." I opened it. The only entry read: "One notebook . . . five pfennigs."

One November day, just after the start of the winter semester, we decided at about eleven o'clock at night to run away to the station and to travel fourth class by the night train to Lübeck, in order to see the objects of our love: Jürgen, his girl friend at that time, Gertrud Sauer mann, a very independent Lübeck girl, who later became a famous horsewoman; I, my distant beloved. When we arrived, we had ourselves fitted out with beards by the theater hairdresser so that our parents would know nothing of our visit. Rezia gave parties in our honor. Our disguise was not very effective. In a concert hall an old school friend tapped me on the shoulder from behind: "Hello, Brecht!" The beard at the front did not prevent people from recognizing us from behind.

Our visit had the fortunate result for me that I became an intimate younger friend of Rezia's. She and I had been sitting alone together in a corner of her blue Renaissance room with its heavy yellow curtains, talking about friendship and love, about "real" love and about Goethe's great example of taking love seriously until his old age. "I know only one kind of love," an officer had answered when she asked him what he meant by the word "love." That sur-

prised us, for we distinguished many kinds. Our conversation and my dignified beard lured her into telling me about her life and to confess (as she put it) that the breaking off of a relationship with a Munich artist, which had threatened her marriage, had greatly depressed her. Our student prank was helping her to get over this, and for this she was grateful to us.

When we returned to Göttingen, I began to exchange letters with her. Soon we were writing daily and gradually began to address each other familiarly. The writing and receiving of these letters lifted me from the everyday world about me. Most of my letters were written at night and I would then take them to the train which came from Frankfurt and left Göttingen for Lübeck at half past one, in order to be able to post them directly into the mail coach; this involved a nightly walk over the wooded walls to the station and back. In the letters I spoke of love and art, religion and nature, human relationships (the most important thing in life), of Goethe, of plans and moods, and occasionally, but only as an exception, of my studies, my critical ideas about the nature of justice. The letters often contained poems, plans for dramas, novels, and short stories. I always wrote slowly, careful to avoid anything banal and effusive, trying to find the most appropriate expression, to put the meaningful in place of the meaningless. I struggled to attain a personal style, imitating now Goethe's prose, now Alfred Kerr's theater criticisms—a strange pair!—but gradually an individual style suited to me evolved.

When it was no longer possible to deny that I loved her, she spoke of my "first great love, which she was happy to receive." She quoted: "When you are loved you should not have time for anything else," or inscribed a picture of herself she sent me: "What annoys us in life can be enjoyed in a picture." During the Christmas vacation in Lübeck I went to her house almost every day; I also spent New Year's Eve, her birthday, there. In February she passed through Göttingen on her way to Italy; I traveled with her on the night train for an hour, as far as Kassel. On her return journey she spent two days with our small group in Göttingen. The friendship which a few months previously I had thought beyond reach had become reality.

A steady stream of literary attempts, both in verse and prose, and Rezia's moderating influence on my as yet unrestrained way of life were not all I owed to this friendship. I was lastingly influenced by

the inward experiences this love gave me precisely by that which would be called its "abnormality": the lack of prospect or remedy, the impossibility of its being fulfilled in the way a man would normally desire of a love-affair, and its deep fulfillment in a different sense.

At school I had already rejected the double morality I could observe around me—uninhibited love-affairs with "lower-class" girls, and lofty, idealistic, moral pretensions in relationship with girls of one's own class of society. I was convinced that sexual union, whether with girls of a higher or lower social class, had profound and lasting psychological consequences and that at least one partner, and probably both, would suffer harm which could never again be put right unless such a love was undertaken seriously and permanently, "in heaven." Love, real love, was independent of sexual union, indeed, through sex love risked losing its transcendental character. Such opinions were regarded just as foolish then as they are today. To me, however, they were neither modern nor old-fashioned but a signpost to a better future, an eternal truth.

The Provincial Court was in Celle, and in April, 1905, Rintelen and I moved there to prepare ourselves for our first state examination. The six spring weeks on the Aller river, with daily letters, were paradise for me. I was not nervous about the exam. On the 14th of June, 1905, soon after my twenty-first birthday, I passed, with the mark "good." Another six happy weeks followed, spent partly on the Baltic, partly in Lübeck, where I was a daily visitor at Rezia's.

But what now? Should I spend my in-service training in Lübeck? My father warned me that I would then be stuck there for the rest of my life. Lübeck had, as an independent federal state, its own legal sovereignty and its own legal administration, and a Lübeck judge was a Lübeck judge; he could not be transferred to Berlin, Munich, or Weimar. My father reminded me that I was by birth a Prussian too and advised me to have my training in Prussia, in the province of Hannover, if I wished, in order to be near to Lübeck.

Thus in July, 1905, at Winsen-on-the-Luhe (situated between Hamburg and Lüneburg), I took the oath at the local court, but then immediately went on leave. I accompanied my parents to Thuringia. After that I went for two months to Leipzig in order to take my oral doctor's exam. There I lived with no social contact, except for a visit from Rezia on her return from a journey to Flor-

ence; she spent an afternoon and evening with me and left for Lübeck at midnight.

At the invitation of my father, who wanted to lure me away from Lübeck, I traveled to Switzerland for a week and then on to Grenoble to improve my French. But Grenoble soon bored me; I wanted to see Paris and went there for my last six weeks. I found a cheap room in Rue St. Jacques, on the Left Bank just in the middle of the Latin Quarter. A new world opened up for me. Places that had previously been mere names to me—Notre Dame, Sainte Chapelle, the Ile de St. Louis, the Louvre, the Musée Luxembourg, the Place de la Concorde, the Champs-Élysées, the Opéra, Montmartre, the banks and bridges of the Seine, the whole network of streets and squares, even churchyards—were now becoming a sort of personal possession. Every day I spent several hours in the Louvre, as I once had done in the galleries in Berlin. At that time entry was free. Thus I continued my private untutored study of art, attempting to understand the history of art by merely looking, and at the same time to gain a direct insight into the essentials of what art really is. This was supplemented by visits to the Musée Luxembourg, where the Impressionists were still housed at that time.

I continued to correspond with Rezia regularly. From one letter I learned of her pride in the homage paid to her by a twenty-two-year-old musician who had just been appointed leader of the Philharmonic at Lübeck—the beginning of a great career as a conductor. I felt that I should be near to her now, to fight for her friendship, and I counted the days and hours to my return. But at the same time I also became aware of the strange nature of my love. I had originally wanted nothing else but to love. The idea that my love might be requited was so inconceivable to me that I had not even thought about it. When in the summer our relationship became closer I reached the conclusion that I must by all means prevent her from returning my love with equal passion.

What made me think thus was not simply religious aversion to adultery, to sin, no clearly defined moral principles. I had none. It was my awareness of the inevitable consequences, and of my own causative responsibility for them. I use the word “causative” advisedly. For “causative” responsibility, I said to myself, was valid even for someone who did not take “moral” responsibility very seriously. To me the most frightening aspect of her returning my love was that my divine love would then be threatened. It would come

to an end just as surely if we had been having a secret love-affair as it would if we had thought of her separation from husband and children. The reality of life would in either case shatter all the sweetness, the poetry and sublimity of our relationship. However difficult it might be to draw a line between her affectionate friendship I wanted to have and the passionate reciprocation of love which I wanted to avoid, that distinction was to guide me. I had seen in the summer that this was not easy. Her affectionate words and gestures were now those of a mother, now of a sister or friend, now just of a woman, the distinctions blurring and merging. Physical contacts, so it seemed to me then, were ennobled and sanctified by the absolute truth of my love and by her absolute trust in me, her feeling of physical and spiritual security in my presence. But it was like walking a narrow ridge.

#### 4. UNCONSCIOUS POLITICAL PRINCIPLES

DESPITE my complete lack of interest in politics at school and university, when I look back now I realize that I did hold certain beliefs which were in a way connected with politics, although I was not aware of it. Three ideals were of great importance to me, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. They were: justice, freedom, and truth. How noble it sounds to pride oneself in these principles! In the reality of life, however, my adherence was rather weak; I often sacrificed truth and justice for the sake of freedom, but seldom freedom for the sake of truth or justice.

My love of justice was genuine, though. Injustice upset and enraged me. In disputes I instinctively took the part of those who were weaker or absent. Unjust one-sided arguments did not only arouse my opposition, in a way they disgusted me. People who argued in this fashion seemed to me loathsome and stupid, more stupid than bad. In this I saw culpable stupidity. "Woe betide fools! For they could become wise. Otherwise it would be brutal to condemn them," I wrote in a sort of manifesto. In my own personal conduct I rarely hesitated to make use of those minor privileges that followed from my position as a student, or from that of my parents and friends. But as soon as I began to make a judgment on a given

set of circumstances—and I was soon driven to do this, even when I myself was involved—my imagination operated in such a way that I was able to understand the point of view of other persons involved, was able to put myself in their positions, with the result that I was just to them in my opinions, and often in my actions as well.

This putting myself in other people's positions led at times to inward conflicts. Among my notes from the period there is a sheet of verse which shows how the continual weighing of conflicting arguments confused me, because it threatened the true expression of unsifted emotions. But such heretical moods did not last long. The demand for justice quickly reasserted itself.

While studying law, I began to think about the nature of justice more systematically. I did this on my own; I did not attend a single lecture on legal philosophy. There was as yet no philosophy of the scientific relativity of values. Max Weber's works on this subject did not appear until 1904, those of Radbruch and Kelsen considerably later, and in any case I did not read them until long afterward. But I struggled with the same problem: the dependence of the sense of justice either on traditions or on personal ideals and aims which conflicted with the traditions and ideals of other people. A small cardboard file on which I had written "The nature of the sense of justice" was soon filled with notes.

Fundamental axioms (axiomatically accepted principles), such as the sanctity of property and of contract, heredity and family, and the logical derivations therefrom, apparently played a decisive role in matters of justice: judgments as to whether something was just or unjust were made according to these axioms. The relationship between justice, axioms, and logic fascinated me. During my trip to Grenoble and Paris I wrote my doctoral dissertation on a legal problem in which the axioms of property, of the binding force of contracts, and of the consideration of impossibility, stood in conflict with one another. (*Sale of an article belonging to someone else*, Diss. Leipzig, 1906.)

A subsequent essay on "Contract Liability"—about a hundred printed pages long—attempted to trace the seemingly complex rules dealing with contracts in the German Civil Code of 1900 back to a few underlying principles. It was accepted without alterations for publication in *Jherings Jahrbücher* (vol. 53, 1908, pp. 213–302). My father began to treat his otherwise incomprehensibly childish and confused son with a respect that deeply moved me.

In this and in two further essays there emerged early samples of my particular interest in the influence of “impossibility,” that is, of a fact in the realm of *Is*, on the realm of *Ought*. This interest had been suggested in the subtitle of my doctoral dissertation: “A contribution to the theory of impossibility.” (This stimulated Rezia to write in my pianoforte arrangement of *Tristan*: “Another contribution to the theory of impossibility.”) The title of one of the longest chapters of my *Political Theory*, which appeared fifty years later, is “Impossibility” (limited possibility).

A fifth piece of work—“Condition and Expectation”—threw light on another factor: *time*. A person’s property rights can be disposed of not only in spacial parts, for example with landed property, but in sections of time as well, because the effect of the transfer can be postponed.

Before I discuss the transition from thoughts about justice to conscious political activity, I must come back to my youthful ideals of freedom and truth. Every boy who climbs a tree enjoys the freedom of choice of the site and the particular view he has and, not without justification, feels himself superior to people moving on a normal level. I sought such feelings everywhere. Even in later years I would climb at night into new buildings and stretch out on the builder’s planks, or enter a deserted ship in the harbor, to discuss matters of importance with friends or sit alone and muse; this gave me a feeling of independence and helped me free myself of the banality of everyday thoughts.

People who appealed to authority, either their own or other people’s, instead of giving reasons that convinced me or at least filled me with respect, had a bad time with me. My pet answer at twenty years of age to older persons who bragged of their age or experience was: “When you are as old as I am, then you will see that I am right.” I lived and grew up in conflict with authority. Whatever I learned and devised, I learned and devised out of a sense of opposition. Once when my father had read a letter I had written in the style of a manifesto, he wrote imploring me not to read any Nietzsche for a year. I had never read Nietzsche before then. Now, of course, I read him, not much, though, only *Zarathustra*; and its beginning I read so often I never managed to finish it.

In order to enjoy my freedom more fully, I dressed differently. I wore neither the usual long tie nor the bow tie notted about a high,

stiff collar, but a huge, black bow which fluttered in the wind under a collar with such a large roll a rabbit might slip into it. My hair, thick and blond, I did not wear cut short or neatly combed, as was the fashion, but falling wildly forward onto my forehead.

Since my garb made me look like a bohemian, I counteracted this by wearing a monocle instead of ordinary eyeglasses, at least for seeing into the distance (I did not need glasses for close work). I declared this to be a measure both practical and social, because it was possible to put on and take off a monocle with one hand, instead of having to execute a complicated maneuver with both, and because a monocle was cheaper than other eyeglasses. Later I gave up the fluttering tie and the roll collar, finally the monocle as well.

But now, unfortunately, I can no longer avoid the more serious aspects of my love of freedom. In order to obtain freedom I would as a boy employ any means which presented itself; to put it more bluntly: I occasionally lied, when it was necessary, and did not even have a bad conscience about it, unless it was because I had acted stupidly. I lied in the search for truth, from which I would have been cut off, if I had told the truth.

Thus the third great ideal of my youth—truth—was linked in a highly dubious manner with its opposite. I originally saw no contradiction in this. The untruthfulness against which I fought was not principally the telling of lies to other people, the “necessary lie” in the preservation of one’s freedom, but lying to oneself, deep insincerity, untruthfulness which one did not admit to himself. A large number of the older generation indulged in heroic and ethical ideals, derived from the victorious wars of 1813, 1815, 1864, 1866, and 1870 and from the founding of the Empire—ideals held up to us for guidance in lofty speeches and books, dramas and poems, pictures, monuments, celebrations of the Emperor’s birthday and of the battle of Sedan (1870). We were surrounded on all sides by a false bathos. By 1900 the struggle against insincerity had become characteristic of a section of the younger generation—but only of a section. In our determination to unmask insincerity we acted remorselessly.

I could not fail to see, however, that in the heroism and ethos of the old order there were things which were *not* insincere. As a student I worked out a way of thinking which I called “positive irony” (positive in the sense of “affirmative”). What is normally meant by an ironic comment is a statement which is not to be taken

seriously. I, on the other hand, in using my "positive irony" would say something with a smile, *although* I meant it—for example, something heroic, virtuous, unselfish—and I meant it, although I said it. This was at the same time my reaction to the tendency of contemporary lyrics and literature toward pretentious refinements and sexual affectations, combined with a fear of ridicule. Avoid childlike simplicity, avoid naïveté! I wanted to preserve the genuine expression of genuine emotions in youth. I wrote letters, poems, and a short story in my style of positive irony.

Only gradually did I succeed in dissociating my striving for a deeper truth from a fusion with falsehood in real life, from the "necessary lie" which was supposed to preserve my freedom. The change began when I entered the university. Here there was freedom without the need to lie. The young student of law was able to study for three years, or as much longer as he liked, without taking a single exam; only in more advanced semesters did he have to hand in work for his seminars. No one checked on what he did, not even whether he really attended the lectures he had registered for (I personally did not usually attend lectures regularly).

I enjoyed this freedom as fully as my monthly allowance of 125 marks would go. In my reports home I did what was common at that time and exaggerated the portion of expenditures devoted to lecture fees. But there was no longer any cheating in my *work*. The things I wanted to know, I wanted to know; to remember, to think about, to have them ready. It was the same later with the fulfillment of my duties during my in-service training, as a young judge and as a government official. I took my duties seriously.

At the beginning of my official career my frank way of speaking and my unbureaucratic behavior were considered to be virtues and I was complimented on being a good *Hanseatic* citizen. Later, when I represented the Federal Government of Germany in negotiations at which the representatives of the States behaved in a more bureaucratic way than I did, my demeanor was appreciated as the sympathetic manner of a spokesman for the *Nation*. But afterward, when I represented Prussia, it was called typical *Prussian arrogance*. Finally when, after a long exile in America, I returned to discussions about the reorganization of Germany and debated such questions as the reciprocal withdrawal of troops from the Elbe in a quite unorthodox fashion, this attitude was termed *American freedom* or *American naïveté*. I myself think that I was always the same.

But in mentioning this I have gone far beyond the story of my youth. Two things still have to be added: my attitude at that time to philosophy and to religion. Everything I heard and saw of philosophy seemed to me to pass over what was essential. Love, “real” love, was essential, and so were the consequences of human actions. What could a student do, for example, when he is overpowered by the sexual urge, but does not want to find a partner in the street? Are philosophers not overpowered in that way? Anyone who says *A*, must also say *B*, and eventually *Z* too, all the way through the whole alphabet. What was the *B*, what was the *Z*, in relationship to *this A*, within *this* alphabet? Such were my questions. The philosophers did not seem to have any answers.

My Lutheran Confirmation, when I was fifteen, I had taken very seriously, deeply moved by the solemn act at the altar of St. Mary’s and by my first communion. My confirmation text: “Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life,” has remained sacred to me all my life. But what did I really believe? Although astronomy, paleontology and biology seemed to be at one in discrediting the old, divine explanation of the world, I refused to cast off belief in God as a superstition. I mocked Haeckels’ *Welträtsel* (Riddle of the Universe)—very popular during my years as a student—because in it he passed over the remaining riddles clumsily in superficial phrases. I also rejected an alternative solution which even today many of my most learned friends have chosen; they dismiss the belief in a personal God as a fairytale, but view the universe with great reverence and call this respect religion. If the universe were nothing more than a vortex of glowing masses of atoms, then I would not be able to worship it, neither the masses of atoms nor the influences they exercise upon one another, neither the gigantic spaces in which they move, nor the tremendous time that their rays need to reach us. I refused, and still refuse today, to worship sheer bigness.

If there was no benevolent God behind all this, then I did not want to degrade my reverence in the worship of glowing masses. I would rather shift it to those *human beings*, who had bestowed upon us the great creations of art and thought: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Shakespeare, Goethe, the Ancient Greeks, and above all Moses and Jesus, who gave us in word and living example the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. Nor did I want to put “Mystery” in God’s place and content myself with “re-

vering it silently," as Goethe had chosen to do. I was willing only to worship a being who could do at least that which men are capable of on a small scale: thinking, planning, acting; not the bubble of a mystery which might one day burst and leave nothing but an empty space, nor an apathetically brooding cosmos with no conscious will. I was myself a part of this and had grown beyond mere unconsciousness.

Every day and every hour we are confronted with the one alternative: that there is a thinking, planning, acting God, or that there is not. The fact that I was not able to make up my mind did not change that alternative. There cannot be a God one minute, and in the next minute none, just as fits our mood. But my realizing this did not help me to come to a decision. Science in all its exactness, science as *scientia transmissibilis*, as I have called it later, is not able to prove or disprove the existence of God. The scales that weigh the scientific arguments, in favor and against, are evenly balanced. If you, the eager reader, were in God's stead, you would probably not leave them in this state of equilibrium. When Hitler was speaking under a clear, blue sky to thousands of listeners, bragging of providence for his success, you would have sent down a thunderbolt right away from that blue sky. One beautiful summer afternoon when I was saying this to some American students, there was at that very moment a loud clap of thunder outside; a storm had gathered without our having noticed it. American students do not easily believe in miracles. They laughed and so did I.

If science were able scientifically to prove the existence of God, then our struggle with this problem would be pointless. But this does not prove either his existence or the contrary. There were times when I was convinced that there was no God. Well, then, I no longer believed in God. But even then there was something which disturbed my certainty. I prayed: "Dear God, today I have sinned against truth. I have come to the conclusion that you do not exist, but I have not been strong enough to tell the truth to myself and to others. Forgive me my untruthfulness and my weakness." Does a man who prays in this way believe in God or not? It is possible to believe and doubt at the same time, to doubt and believe on different levels. This experience later became the theme of the final chapter in my major academic work, *Political Theory*.

On no level did I ever doubt the historical truth of Jesus dying

mocked and apparently powerless on the cross, Jesus, who by his very crucifixion achieved his great power on earth.

I never bothered much about whether I was immortal or not. I believed firmly in life *before* death. That was the life in which I could and must prove myself. I wanted to leave the question as to what comes afterward the secret that it is, without inquiring too closely.

In the course of my life I have put many questions to God. Almost always I have, sooner or later, had an answer. The answer did not come in actual words, but in the form of something actually happening—the consequences of good or evil.

5. WHEN YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU WANT—  
IN-SERVICE TRAINING (1906-1909)

ON my return from Paris I found Rezia unchanged in her familiarity and affection toward me. She did not care to hide the romantic fancy she had taken to the new conductor, like a schoolgirl. "And why not?" I said. "I have no claims on you. I just love you. I would rather be a conductor of Beethoven, a great actor or an extra at the Royal Opera House than a trainee in Winsen-on-the-Luhe. The great danger that you might return my love is in this way eliminated." "No," she protested, "this danger has not been eliminated."

I celebrated my twenty-second birthday in Lübeck at the end of January and then took up my post in Winsen. I stayed there until October for the prescribed nine months; then I changed over to Lüneburg for a year's training in the district court and a further four months in the public prosecutor's office. But almost every weekend I traveled to Lübeck.

The young composer—his name was Hermann Abendroth—disarmed me with his great musical ability, his lack of affectation, a certain old-fashioned element in his attitude to life, and a lack of ambition in intellectual and literary matters. Rezia lived in both our worlds, and in others too. For we were not the only frequent guests. Other musicians, singers, actors and actresses, writers, painters, who occasionally came from Munich, Berlin, or Italy and sometimes

stayed for longer periods at her home, aesthetes and intellectuals of Lübeck society, young girls who had serious artistic ambitions, town people of official rank too—all these came and went. Cupid's darts sped back and forth. Whoever was tormented by unrequited love was in his turn unhappily loved by someone else, as in the song by Heine. No one was entirely happy in his love. Love which knew no barriers was rather scorned. That was no real love. It was banished from the land, so to speak, with a patronizing, "Go to bed!" Life was a charming, yet melancholy game, both serious and facetious, with plenty of music, many debates about art, theater, culture, and personal philosophies, gay performances and practical jokes, but with no clear moral concepts.

Rezia's husband, a respectable Hanseatic citizen with discreet duelling scars which dated from his time as a member of a student *Korps*, was to all appearances proud of the lively society of intellectuals and artists his wife drew into his home. He let her frequent the company of us "boys" and civilize the admiration we bestowed upon her. He used to say that, if he locked her up, he would make a cripple of her, and he did not want that. At this time a fourth child, a girl, was born to the couple, who looked very much like her mother. At about the same time the only son died. Both these events only served to increase my admiration for her. I pictured to myself our all growing older and how we would later look back on these years, our friendship unaltered.

The conductor was more sensible than I, in conventional terms. He became engaged to a young actress. Our personal relations grew very friendly and, when he later took over the Gürzenich concerts in Cologne, we kept contact through my brother, who was the chairman of the Cologne Musical Association.

But fundamentally I was as alone in Winsen as I had been in Leipzig, Grenoble, and Paris. As though from a distance I looked at myself, saw myself sitting at the bench, taking out briefs, putting them away again, speaking to witnesses, playing cards, walking through meadows, writing letters; it was as though I was watching another person doing these things. Only when I was ardently pursuing some philosophical or scientific line of thought, when I was trying to give artistic form to some idea, or when I was taking that long walk in Lübeck from the Holsten Gate through the Burg Gate to the Soederbrook's house—only then did this double image fade.

I now began to grow accustomed to being alone and felt myself

the richer for it. I hired a piano and from now on this was always the first thing I did when I moved somewhere new. It gave me great satisfaction when I gradually achieved a certain mastery over the keys and was thus able, at a time when there was neither radio nor records, to reproduce the music I loved most and thus to feel myself transported to another world in an instant. Some things I played by ear, others I first deciphered from sheets of music and then worked them out independently on the key-board as though I were composing them myself. What I played made a strange mixture. There was, for example, Offenbach (*Tales of Hoffmann*), whom I rated very highly as a composer (I still do today); then, Wagner's *Tristan*, the magnificent preludes to all three acts, the long, warning notes of Brangäne in the second act, and Isolde's death in the third; many of Schubert's songs, at least half of *Müllerlieder* and *Winterreise*; some pieces by Schumann; excerpts from Verdi's *Aida* and *La Traviata*, Bizet's *Carmen*, and some Puccini. I also composed songs of my own with lyrics written in my style of positive irony.

In contrast to Winsen, Lüneburg was an attractive old town with high walls and large wooded areas nearby. I would walk almost every afternoon to "Rote Schleuse," which was about an hour away, drink coffee there, take a ferry across the river and walk back on the other side. As I walked I would be absorbed in critical philosophy, would work out poems and scenes for dramas, and I finished a romantic story called *Traum der Treue* (The Dream of Faithful Love). At the same time I completed my essay on contract liability with no ironic overtones, either negative or positive. This paper, as mentioned before, was immediately published, but the story stayed in my drawer.

There were occasional social gatherings, games of tennis and get-togethers in the evenings. I fell in love from time to time; at that age it is possible to feel love for several women at the same time. But the strongest source of attraction still was in Lübeck.

At work I watched what others did: judges, attorneys, plaintiffs and defendants, the accused and witnesses; and I learned the art of writing case reports. Mine were considered good; difficult and involved trials were assigned to me for handling, and I thus won the friendship of judges who had at first regarded me with disapproval because of my peculiarities.

At the end of my time in Lüneburg, however, twenty-four years old, I had had enough of this prolonged education. I wanted to give

up the in-service training, go to Berlin and earn money there by coaching students of law for their exams, write an "instructive commentary" on the Civil Law Code for students, and pursue my *real* inward vocation. But again my father was successful in warning me. You have held out so long, he said, carry on for the final two years as well; then, as an *Assessor* you will have many more possibilities and will thus not find yourself in the position of having done things by halves. His reasoning convinced me. So I persevered, but decided to go for the subsequent training period—to be spent in an attorney's office—to Berlin.

When I saw the tall, boring houses of the endless Berlin suburbs passing by the train windows I was overwhelmed by a feeling of aversion to the great city, or should I say a fear of it. Here there were millions of anonymous people who did not concern me. Here was the Imperial Court with its hierarchy of courtiers, its pomposity, and its arrogance. Here were the top regiments with their military splendor which meant nothing to me. Here was the top-level bureaucracy which I did not trust. And here was what at that moment repulsed me even more: the whole group of established artists and writers, clever people who knew how to operate this machine called Berlin. How could I expect to find any personal echo here, other than a smile? Ought I not to turn back?

But when I was there, when I had my own room and my piano in Marburgerstrasse 15, this aversion soon vanished. One of Berlin's most respected attorneys, Walther Lisco, cousin of Martin Richter, my brother-in-law, accepted me as a trainee. He let me sit with him in his office room in Mohrenstrasse and listen in at his conferences; I worked out individual problems for him, was occasionally to substitute for him at court sessions, and still found time for my articles in *Jherings Jahrbücher*. He was a cultured man, an expert on Goethe, and was pleasantly surprised to find similar predilections in me.

In my leisure time I did not wander around alone as I had done in Paris. At that time Gustav and Gertrud were in Berlin—she was studying music and lived with Aunt Else Weishaupt—and so were several more distant relatives. Jürgen Fehling was preparing for a career in the theater. I looked up Alfred Kerr, who was then at the peak of his influence as a theater critic. There were numerous others we came to know, and again others who, though no personal friends of ours, were in a sense public property: actors such as Fritz

Massary, Alexander Moissi, Joseph Giampietro, "old Pagay," Albert Bassermann, painters like Max Liebermann, Lovis Corinth, and Max Slevogt. Berlin became our spiritual home. It was an intoxicating feeling to be just "contemporaries" in this city.

We lived a Bohemian life. We went to all the exhibitions and great theater productions of the time, particularly those of Max Reinhardt, whose star was as yet in the ascendant. We read and liked Büchner, Grabbe, and Strindberg, and discussed the style in which Strindberg ought to be, but was not yet, produced. Our days usually ended in the Café des Westens on Kurfürstendamm, or the restaurant Schwarzes Ferkel, Strindberg's favorite in Dorotheenstrasse, or at Bertolini's Italian restaurant by the Potsdamer Brücke.

I still showed no interest in politics. Only once did I go to the Reichstag. The senior Hanseatic representative took me up to the box reserved for the federal states. Nothing was further from my mind than the thought that one day I myself would have business here.

When my time with Lisco was up, I stayed for the next period of my training—this time with a larger County Court—in Berlin and delighted in the first theatrical efforts of Jürgen Fehling as an actor, not yet as stage director. Then I moved to Celle, in order to finish my prescribed training at the highest Provincial Court.

Thus, after an absence of four years, I found myself once again in Celle, where I had been so happy in the period immediately before my first state examination. I lived again in a room by the Aller river—though I now had a piano, a possession I had formerly to do without—and sailed again in the same boats. I still exchanged letters with Rezia. But their tone and content began to alter. There were arguments, differences of opinion about other people, reproaches, justifications, jealousy perhaps. Since neither of us was willing to put up with less than what we had had, the letters suddenly stopped. Our feelings toward each other remained in essence unaltered, and we both knew it. But outward approaches were at an end. We exchanged only an occasional greeting.

There were brief flareups of other amours. But I never was able to transfer those deeper emotions which had belonged to Rezia for five years, to another woman. Every attempt I made, while reading Goethe or playing Schubert songs, to think of others but her was a ridiculous failure. Even Rezia, at a time when we were still on the best of terms, had had reason to be jealous of my mental image of her.

Once, during one of her short visits to Berlin, when we went to see Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*, it seemed to me that the distant beloved was competing with the one sitting next to me; I found it difficult to realize that the subject of my inward longing as I listened to the music was a physical presence in my immediate vicinity.

My life so far had been an *éducation sentimentale*, an education in feeling and in art, a search for truth, and at the same time a professional education—but none at all for political activity. I had nothing to do with the German youth movement of that time, called *Wandervogel*. In order to be able to live, truly to live, I had to be alone or in the company of a few friends.

Like many before and after me I tried to unite Nazareth and Hellas; like many before and after me, I failed. Every step toward Nazareth is a step away from Hellas; every step toward Hellas is one away from Nazareth. Yet both were very strong within me.

The beauty I sought was beauty expressive of something supernatural. I looked for and found it in nature, in art, in human persons, in human interrelations. But only in tranquillity. In hallowed silence. Alone.

## 6. THE GREAT STATE EXAMINATION—DEATH OF MY FATHER—JUDGE IN LÜBECK (1910)

I WROTE my major thesis for the second ("great") state examination at home in Lübeck in the fall of 1909. My parents had traveled to Arosa in Switzerland on account of a slight relapse in the pulmonary disease which, during my childhood, had necessitated my father's going twice to Ajaccio on Corsica and Ospedaletti on the Riviera in the winter; after these visits, however, he had been declared cured.

The maid stayed behind and cared for my needs. I was joined for lunch by Georg Pfuhl, a friend of Jürgen Fehling's, who had attached himself to me, too, and accompanied me to Lübeck. He was as bizarre as a character out of Hoffmann's tales, lover of all arts, clearly unsuited to contemporary bourgeois life, yet marvellous as a companion in spinning out unusual trains of thought, and very musical. He composed beautiful songs. He also had the gift of pre-

senting problems vividly in short plays, and eventually wrote some twenty one-act plays—among them “Hiob” and “Xanthippe”—all of which have a tone peculiar to him, but none was produced, nor even printed. We talked of everything but politics.

Two days after I had submitted my thesis my father died, at the age of sixty-eight. His heart had not been able to stand the altitude of 1,800 meters; the lung specialists had not taken this fact into consideration and, when it was discovered, it was too late to take him down to the valley. His poor condition had been concealed from me in accordance with his wishes, so that I would not be distracted from my work. We buried him in Lübeck, to the music of the funeral march in Beethoven’s seventh symphony and the ringing of the bells of the old churches. Henceforth we would have to miss his clear honesty, the incorruptible objectivity of his judgment, his goodness which I had so often deceived, his profound concern for our development, the nobility of his brow and that happy ease which radiated from him on quiet evenings spent at home with wife and children. But even more painful to me was the fact that I had not been able to assuage his anxieties about my future, which had troubled him to the last. My ministerial career, which was to begin just a year later, would have put our relationship on a completely new, more mature, and for him happier, footing.

I received the news of his death late at night and, in order to be able to pull myself together, went out for a walk alone in the darkness, over the lonely walls, continuing to the Burg Gate, down by the harbor back to the Holsten Gate, past the “old station” (a new one had been built under my father’s management), and past our old house in Moislinger Allee, back to the present house in Lachwehr Allee—more than two hours, walking quickly. I entered the house again long after midnight and was just going to my bedroom when there was a sudden loud continuous ringing which went on and on with no interruption. The ringing did not come from the door, nor from the telephone. It was an uncanny experience. Many years later, one evening in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when the Harvard philosophers Ernest Hocking and Ralph Barton Perry, the political scientist, Professor Arthur Holcombe, and the former Chancellor Brüning were our guests, the conversation turned to “parapsychic experiences.” The two philosophers were discussing what to do with money bequeathed to the university for parapsychic research. Each of us related some experience, I that story. In reality, when it hap-

pened, I had not lost my composure but tried to trace the physical cause of the ringing and had found it at a damaged point of the circuit, where the two wires to and from the bell crossed. But the fact that it is possible to find a physical cause does not fully account for the psychical experience, nor refute the possibility that God uses the physical range in psychical happenings. When something psychical happens to you, you must not show too much physical curiosity; this can only cause a distraction from what is essential. We philosophized about such topics. I confessed that the symbolic force of that mysterious ringing at just that critical moment had always stayed in my mind—like some urgent call, a wish for communication, an appeal for help or a warning signal.

On the morning of April 18, 1910—eight years to the day since my debut at the university—I took the oral part of the examination in the Prussian Ministry of Justice in Berlin, wearing my dress-coat, as was the custom. Passing once again with “good,” I now was seriously faced with the difficult choice of a profession. I still was ill prepared for a decision. There seemed to me to be three separate worlds: the worlds of thinking, acting, dreaming (poetry). All three made claims on me. But they could not be combined. The one impeded the other. There is a way of settling a disagreement: the disputing persons stretch out their hands in one of three positions—one signifying “paper” (hand flat); the second “stone” (fist clenched); the third, “scissors” (two fingers spread). Who wins is decided according to the formula: “Paper wraps up stone, stone whets scissors, scissors cut paper.” The relationship of dreaming, thinking, and acting seemed to me similar. Dreaming enwraps acting, thinking cuts up dreaming, acting kills thought.

Which of the many jobs, that were open to a successful *Assessor*, should I choose? Walther Lisco, the Berlin attorney, offered me a vacation post in his office, but I refused despite the prospects it opened up. For the present I took leave from Prussia and accepted an invitation from the president of the Lübeck court system to help out as a judge in Lübeck. Thus every week in the summer and fall of 1910 I held my two or three sessions either as single judge in the lower court or as a member of the three-man district court.

The burden of this work was much greater than I had expected. It took all my energy to work through the sixty to eighty files for the next session and to write out the opinions. My knowledge of

the law and my faculty for logical thought were sufficient, but my practical experience was small. On the whole the impression I have kept of that time is that at twenty-six one is too young to be a judge, at least the only judge at a one-man court. The practice of the Anglo-American countries, which select their judges at a later age from among tested attorneys and let their young lawyers first earn their spurs as attorneys, seems wiser to me.

High as I rated the job of a judge, I felt that I did not want to stay therein. One of Lübeck's most prosperous attorneys, Emanuel Fehling, elder brother of Jürgen, offered me a partnership in his law firm. Gladly, I replied, but only half-time, for half the money. I wanted to devote the other half of my working hours to literary plans. He answered that half a Brecht is less than half, since a large part of time at work is spent in gathering information and only completeness of knowledge about people and things makes work as valuable as it can be.

Only seldom did I go to the Soederbrook's house. I had grown too old to continue the relationship as it had been. A new, younger friend had taken over the role of enthusiastic admirer. There was still a glow under the ashes. But I could no longer find a deeper meaning in my staying on in Lübeck. I longed to return to Berlin.

I wrote a letter to the state secretary of the Federal Department of Justice in Berlin, Hermann Lisco, brother of the attorney and like him a cousin of my brother-in-law. I complained to him of my indecision in choosing a profession. In the work as a judge there was something missing. "Law suits come. Judgments go." I wanted to create new law, not merely apply the old. I wanted to be able to look back on something I had created. In view of my good exam report he invited me to present myself to the Under Secretary of his department. I did this. After the latter had conversed with me politely for a time, he asked if I were prepared to enter the Department as an assistant (*Hilfsarbeiter*), in order, among other things, to undertake some of the preparatory work for the new penal code. Such a call was an affair of great distinction in imperial Germany. Delighted, I answered yes.

Lübeck obliged by releasing me from my duties. There was a farewell party at Rezia's, and suddenly, there were tears again. Then, on the 7th of December, 1910, still at the age of twenty-six, I took up my position in Berlin.

## 7. IN THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (1910-1918)

THE work and the surroundings in the Department of Justice were so congenial that I soon forgot my choice of a profession. This was the right place for deferring the decision. There were in the Department at that time under the direction of the Under Secretary only about eight established councillors (*Vortragende Räte*) and some six to eight aides—judges on loan from Prussia or other states or younger lawyers (*Assessoren*) like me. They were all hand-picked. The mere quality of the work made working with them a pleasure, and this was the greater because of the friendly relations between older and younger members and among the younger ones themselves. Here I began my lifelong friendship with Erich Zweigert, later State Secretary in the Republican Ministry of Interior, and with Ernst Trendelenburg, later State Secretary in the Ministry of Economics.

My work did not, however, consist of that application of creative initiative which I longed for. I first had to put together extracts of essays on penal law reform to be laid before the Commission in book form at their meeting in April, 1911. Then I became one of the three recorders of the Commission. We took turns at the three weekly sessions and spent the rest of the week working out our minutes carefully. Nevertheless, I felt the opportunity for participating at the meetings of the Commission and the friendly communication with its members and the government delegates to be an exceptional privilege. The basic questions of guilt and responsibility, nature and degree of penalties, their execution and consequences, were all not nearly thoroughly enough considered, I thought. But otherwise good work was done. Zeal was so great that once during a total eclipse of the sun, after only a brief glance at this rare marvel, work was resumed, if uneasily, with the electric lights turned on; this disrespect enraged me, but was in keeping with the Prussian sense of duty.

Other tasks occasionally fell to us assistants too: drafting minor laws and memoranda, handling complaints about lack or procrastination of justice, and the like—nothing of great importance.

Privately, I wrote my third major essay for *Jherings Jahrbücher*, "Condition and Expectation," already mentioned. The completed, handwritten manuscript suddenly disappeared without a trace. After two days of vain searching, it occurred to me that while I was working on other things at home I had put it down on a tubular wastepaper basket beside me, and had forgotten to remove it when I went out. The basket had been emptied into the garbage can and this taken away. All attempts to recover the manuscript failed. I could overcome the destructive feeling I had only by forcing myself to rewrite the entire essay—about two hundred pages—from memory and reconstruct the bibliographical references from notes. The most annoying thing was that I did not gain that inner freedom which would have enabled me to write the essay afresh, but tried continually to reconstruct the formulations I had used in the first draft. Only when the repeat performance was completed did the affair cease to haunt me. Since then I have never laid manuscripts down on wastepaper baskets.

Life at the Department was very hospitable. We assistants were in the course of every winter invited at least once by each of the older councillors, together with all the others, to a festive dinner, always in evening dress. Hermann Lisso, the head of the Department, and his friendly wife—both of them great admirers of Goethe—invited me also to their own social gatherings and asked me to help in their arrangement.

While I am writing this I can see the building in Voss Strasse 4 clearly, with the door through which we, "freely in order of seniority" (this phrase was repeated every time with a laugh), re-entered after lunch, the corridors and every room, in several of which I myself had worked for a time, and the men whose faces, figures, movements, and voices I knew so well and still do know. The building is no longer there, not even its ruins, only flat concrete, and apart from me none of the men is still alive. But in my mind they all still live, freely in order of seniority.

More important in retrospect than this sentimental memory is the fact that despite the ministerial surroundings and the nearness of Wilhelmstrasse, I still had no contact with politics.

Because of the late voting age under the monarchy (25 years) the first national elections in which I could vote were those of 1912. Although I was by then twenty-eight years old, I was completely unprepared for the election. At that time every third German voted for