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Antigone, the Melian Dialogue, Michael Kohlhaas, the Grand Inquisitor and Ragtime

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Chapter 1
The Narrative Approach to Civic Education

Political issues have always been reflected in literature. This book's primary aims are to give insight into the political arguments and reflections to be found in narrative works and then consider in what ways they can contribute to deepening our political understanding. To that end, I present readings of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, the *Melian Dialogue* of Thucydides, Heinrich von Kleist's story *Michael Kohlhaas*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's parable of the *The Grand Inquisitor*, and E. L. Doctorow's novel *Ragtime*; each reading focused on the text's political interest and also addressed interdisciplinary aspects of the narration concerned. The underlying aspiration is to serve civic education by using narrative literature as an introduction to the political dimension of life and a step toward a mature understanding of politics.

I shall proceed by analyzing the chosen works in detail, demonstrating their contemporary relevance and presenting them in a standard sequence. In each instance, an introduction sketching the historical context is followed by an outline of the action depicted and then by an analysis focused on the text's treatment of the political concepts of might and right—concepts that are not only of central importance in practical politics but perennially relevant. Sophocles' *Antigone* and Thucydides' *Melian Dialogue*, written at the apogee of Athenian democracy, allow insight into what might and right really meant at this period when democratic government was a brand-new concept; and in turn the exploration of Athenian democracy, with its clear modern relevance, stimulates and informs the study of present-day politics. Heinrich von Kleist's long-short story *Michael Kohlhaas* presents aspects still relevant today both of contract theory and of the human sense of justice; and these appear again, in a further updated guise, in E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*.

Fyodor Dostoevsky's parable of the *Grand Inquisitor* deals with the tension between equality and freedom and anticipates the currently acute problems arising from the instrumentalization of religion.

The studies presented together here are intended specifically as a contribution to the theory and practice of teaching civics. They naturally make no claim to offer a

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comprehensive view of the political dimension of the narrations concerned nor to have done justice to other—and particularly the aesthetic—aspects of the works.

Hannah Arendt recognized the importance and educational potential of narrations in her study of the irrational links between racism, imperialism, and the genesis of totalitarian systems. Her analysis uses Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as its illustrative text:

> There is no justification, either theoretical or political, for the racial delusion; so if one is to understand the sense of horror in which it originates, it is no use turning for enlightenment to either ethnologists, who by definition had to be exempt from that horror if they were to take up research in the first place, or to racial fanatics, who claim to be above such horror and thus unaffected, or even to those who in their rightful struggle against all racial notions of whatever kind understandably tend to dismiss these as devoid of any basis in real experience. Joseph Conrad's story *Heart of Darkness* certainly illuminates this experiential background more effectively than any of the relevant historical, political or ethnological scholarship (Arendt 2000, p. 407f.).

Narrations have the power to deepen political understanding impartially and enduringly. Literature introduces life in its wholeness, to which all things political belong:

> Reading novels can be a viable *political* activity [...], a way of gaining political understanding in a civilized and pleasing setting: but expect to be startled, to be (fore)warned, but also to be offered help. [...] Literature has a special capacity for illustrating and illuminating 'lived reality.' It can help restore to political thought a more adequately complex view of human nature: to complicate (Whitebrook 1995, p. 2; original italics).

Stories have been told since before records began. For some time the preserve of literary theory, the narrative mode, was drawn into the analytical focus of the social sciences by the "narrative turn" of the early 1970s (cf. Czarniawska 2009, p. 1ff.; Cobley 2014, p. 213). Over the next few decades, literature was featured as a serious topic in scholarly discourse in a wide range of disciplines including economics (cf. Watts 2007), history (cf. White 1989) and political science (cf. Zuckert 1981; Nussbaum 1995; Cowell-Meyers 2006; Hrezo and Parrish 2010).

Literary narrative theory engages with a wide range of texts beyond the explicitly epic genres of novel, short story, etc. with fictional narrator. Writing on historical theory, Hayden White argues:

> It is because historical discourse utilizes structures of meaning-production found in their purest forms in literary fictions that modern literary theory, and especially those versions of it oriented towards tropological conceptions of language, discourse, and textuality, is immediately relevant to contemporary theory of historical writing. It bears directly on one of the most important debates in contemporary historical theory: that of the epistemic status of narrativity (White 1989, p. 36).

In the teaching of political science including civics, first steps have been taken to introduce the study of narrative (cf. Juchler 2012a). This approach responds to current discourse among educationalists on competence definition in civic education; enables a cross-disciplinary perspective to be maintained; enables experience of multiple significance, ambiguity, and contingency; enhances the capacity for political judgment; and has as its central aim the advancement of political understanding.

These educational aspects of the study of narrations in the civic education context are reviewed below.

Political content in narratives is often implicit and always interweaves with other strands in the complexity of human existence. This is why it makes sense to study narrations in civic education classes conducted on an interdisciplinary basis. The present canon of recognized school subjects has grown unsystematically over time and facilitates the institution's organization and structuring of instruction and new experience according to pre-existing categorization of knowledge. But this compartmentalization of school learning arbitrarily distances students from real-world processes—a loss very seldom made good within the school context, except through special programs such as cross-disciplinary project work. The rigid subdivision of teaching into discrete specializations makes it at least difficult and at worst impossible for students to acquire what Deichmann (2001, p. 8) calls a "holistic world view," however educationally desirable that might be.

Cross-disciplinary classes in civics can deliver the subject-specific information in meaningful relation to content from other domains. The complex weave of political, historical, economic, juridical, religious, and other topics in narrations can readily be used in cross-disciplinary civics classes to encourage holistic learning and a correspondingly holistic grasp of life's political dimension. In this way students' reading of literature may come to constitute an "enrichment of the complexity of [their] worlds of experience" (Mieth 2007, p. 218), instigated and deepened in civics classes through the study of narrations with specific reference to their political content. This does not imply that the learners' motivation should be focused—as in reception of factual-informative texts—on political content alone. What an imaginative-creative text can offer is to introduce the students into an aesthetically generated world of experience—and knowledge—that they can apprehend holistically and from which they draw stimulus and prompts for follow-up sessions devoted to analysis, and class discussion, of subject-specific political aspects.

Works of imaginative literature often contain elements of multiple significance, mystery, ambiguity, and contingency. Narrations may challenge supposed certainties; cast doubt on cherished truisms, prejudices, and long-accepted value judgments; and undermine political convictions. In so doing they give their readers access to new dimensions of existence: "Literature focuses on the possible, inviting its readers to wonder about themselves. [. . .] Good literature is disturbing in a way that history and social science writing frequently are not" (Nussbaum 1995, p. 5).

The reading of narrations in a context of cross-disciplinary civic education enables students to experience the contingent nature of life lived in the real world, using follow-up class discussion to gain an understanding of contingency as such. They can thus become quicker to recognize and better able to understand the specific circumstances attaching to contingency in politics, as well as the implications of this phenomenon for the life of society. Having begun from experience by proxy, through the aesthetic medium, students can then be confronted with contingency as manifested in politics (cf. Shapiro and Bedi 2007) and continue by way of classwork analysis and consolidation to the point where they can "cope with contingency" (Sander 2009, p. 245): "In our day, ethnology, cinema, historiography

and television all contribute to enlarging our sense of the possibilities open to human beings. But the genre that helps us most to appreciate the diversity of human life and the contingency of our individual repertoires of moral concepts is the novel" (Rorty 2003, p. 57). Proxy experience of contingency communicated through literature is an effective means of equipping students with the resources critical to a mature understanding of politics: awareness, preparedness, and openness vis-à-vis the unexpected, the unpredictable, and the range of possible eventualities. Narrations, already a familiar part of the social environment, offer a readily accessible path to these experiences.

Over a period of time, civics teaching on this basis with cross-disciplinary study of imaginative-creative literary texts can arm students intellectually against the oversimplifications purveyed by political demagogues and the Manichean world view of political and religious extremists; and it can win them over to valuing the openness of pluralist democracies. Narrations provide experience of ambiguity and contingency and an awareness of the plurality of values, attitudes, and political options. These experiences cumulatively equip students to recognize the inhibiting or positively repressive nature of dictatorship, absolutist ideologies, and political and/or religious "-isms"—and correspondingly to develop a positive appreciation of the multiplicity of human interests, value judgments, and political opinions. Milan Kundera sums up the *raison d´être* of the novel as follows: "As a Model of this Western world, grounded in the relativity and ambiguity of things human, the novel is incompatible with the totalitarian universe. [. . .] The world of one single Truth and the relative, ambiguous world of the novel are molded of entirely different substances. Totalitarian Truth excludes relativity, doubt, questioning; it can never accommodate what I would call the *spirit of the novel*" (Kundera 1988, pp. 13–14; original italics). Work in the civic education context on narrative and, more particularly, study of the ambiguities presented in narrative are effective means of helping students develop the ability to tolerate ambiguity.

The multiple meanings to be found in narrations result primarily from the accounts given of the individual literary characters' differing ways of seeing. The different and in some cases disparate perspectives of the fictive personages alert readers to the wealth of nuances distinguishing the personal, philosophical, moral, and political attitudes of different individuals. The fictive world of narrations prompts and motivates the learner to adopt the perspective of others, view the world as others see it, and use empathy to place him- or herself in a new social role. Literary texts used in this way may well also trigger an emotional response in students, prompting them to engage intellectually with the various viewpoints of others and extending and enriching their own human understanding and cultural awareness in the process. As Eva Dadlez has pointed out: "Empathetic engagement with fiction can be and often is ethically significant precisely because it allows us to explore experiences we have not had from perspectives that are not wholly our own but that we can make our own" (Dadlez 1997, p. 195).

Confrontation with the differing perspectives represented in narrations also challenges students to evaluate the merits of these and rethink their own personal attitudes. The use of narrations in cross-disciplinary civic education thus helps in a

special way to realize the desired outcome of enhancing learners' capacity for political judgment. A specific political judgment can be deemed qualified if it takes the interests of others into account alongside those of the person pronouncing it: "Thus the political judgments of an individual retain their autonomous character, yet by virtue of taking the political viewpoints of others into account ceases to be a purely subjective judgment attributable to personal interests. In addition, the individual who takes account of another's viewpoint thereby acknowledges the relativity of his or her own political judgment" (Juchler 2012b, p. 20).

Hannah Arendt, in an unpublished lecture, used a vivid analogy to characterize the emergence in an individual of autonomous personal judgment—that is, judgment qualifying as autonomous because intersubjectively valid:

> I look at a specific slum dwelling and I perceive in this particular building the general notion which it does not exhibit directly, the notion of poverty and misery. I arrive at this notion by representing to myself how I would feel if I had to live there, that is, I try to think in the place of the slum-dweller. The judgment I shall come up with will by no means necessarily be the same as that of the inhabitants, whom time and hopelessness may have dulled to the outrage of their condition, but it will become for my further judging of these matters an outstanding example to which I refer . . . Furthermore, while I take into account others when judging, this does not mean that I conform in my judgment to those of others, I still speak with my own voice and I do not count noses in order to arrive at what I think is right. But my judgment is no longer subjective either (Arendt quoted from Beiner 1992, pp. 107–8; omission present in original).

As the prevailing social and political realities are generally not to be found on one's own doorstep, fiction has the special merit of enabling its recipients to enter these worlds at least in imagination. This was what Martha Nussbaum identified as the social and ethical benefit conferred by the study of imaginative-creative literature: "In fact, I defend the literary imagination precisely because it seems to me an essential ingredient of an ethical stance that asks us to concern ourselves with the good of other people whose lives are distant from our own" (Nussbaum 1995, XVI). Narrations studied in cross-disciplinary civic education afford students the opportunity to engage with the viewpoints of others, emotionally through the exercise of empathy and also cognitively through analysis and discussion. That is why literary texts can contribute significantly and distinctively to enhancing students' capacity for political judgment.

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Chapter 2
Sophocles: *Antigone*

2.1 Introduction: Theater and Democracy in Athens

Sophocles wrote his *Antigone* about 2500 years ago during the flowering of the first democracy in Athens. It is still widely staged in our own day, both in Sophocles' original version and in numerous adapted versions. It was probably in the year 442 BCE, as part of the *Dionysia*, the rites honoring the god Dionysos, that the very first performance of *Antigone* took place, in the theater built into the southern slopes of the Acropolis.

Ever since theater art first arose in 534 BCE as Attic tragedy, born of the Dionysos cult, under the Athenian tyrant Peisistratos, it has been connected with public affairs—with politics. During the period in which the historically novel political system, democracy, prevailed in Athens, the politics-theater link grew greatly in importance: this was because the stage performances—presented as enactments of myth—addressed real political problems, setting them in the wider context of the great existential questions arising out of the human condition. Stage drama as a shared experience prompted audience members to exchange views on the challenges of contemporary politics and to conduct a reasoned debate. By depicting irreconcilable conflicts on a mythic plane, the tragedies furnished their audiences with experience and insights that individuals could bring to bear on their conduct of their own lives and on their citizenship.

What made this form of citizenship education possible in ancient Athens during the age of democracy was a comprehensive policy of subsidizing both the staging of drama and the prices of public admission to performances. The Dionysia, of which tragic stage drama in Athens came to form part, were festivals organized by the *polis* and attended by around 14,000–17,000 spectators, which amounted to "from a third

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to almost half of all the full citizens of Athens and a substantial proportion of the population of all Attica, which was then some 200,000" (Bierl 2007, p. 50). The educational value in terms of collective political cohesiveness that the *polis* expected to derive from public theatergoing is further underlined by the provision for supporting "attendance at the competitions by wage-loss compensation of two obols for those most in need" (Bierl 2007, p. 50).

Sophocles himself had close personal experience of Athenian democracy. Born in 497 or 496 BCE at Kolonos, not far from the city, he held political posts in democratic Athens; and the *Antigone*, which of all the Sophocles tragedies seemed "the most 'political' in its impact and has been made to serve again and again as a classic document of political resistance, was composed at almost exactly the time of Sophocles' official activities serving the interests of the *polis*" (Flashar 2000, p. 35). The period immediately before and after the writing of *Antigone* and its premiere in 442 BCE was notable for political events and effects that flowed from the new civic dispensation, democracy, and also represented its high point; these were events that still shape our modern-day image of Athenian democracy. Pericles, scion of the Athenian aristocracy, held the post of strategist continuously for 15 years from 443 BCE; the Sophist known as Protagoras of Abdera drew up the constitution of the Athenian colony of Thourioi on the Gulf of Tarentum, the founding of which points to a strong element of panhellenism in Athens' self-perception; and in ordering the reconstruction of the Acropolis—sacked by the Persians—Pericles demonstrated the aspiration of democratic Athens to hegemony in the Greek world, as the restoration works were funded from the tribute money now compulsorily paid to Athens by its allies in the Delian League. However, Athenian pursuit of power came increasingly into conflict with the ambitions of the other great power of the Greek world, Sparta, and this led to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. It began slightly over a decade after *Antigone* was first staged and was to last almost a further three: 431–404 BCE.

Sophocles took the material for his *Antigone* from the myth of the Labdacids, the ruling dynasty of Thebes. His contemporary public knew of the myth from Homer's *Odyssey* and knew something about Antigone, but no tragedy so far had borne her name as title: "It will have been generally known that Antigone and Ismene were daughters of Oedipus, but people were probably hazy on detail." (Flashar 2000, p. 59) Over the years since it first appeared, the *Antigone* of Sophocles has generated a reception and adaptation history that still makes its mark on theater programs worldwide (cf. Mee and Foley 2011) and on academic and cultural discussion. Before the end of antiquity, another version of the *Antigone* material had been produced and performed in the theater of Dionysos—that of Euripides, who after Aeschylus and Sophocles is the third Athenian tragedian whose works have come down to us. For the German-speaking countries, it was the Baroque poet Martin Opitz in 1636, during the Thirty Years' War, who first translated the *Antigone* of Sophocles into German. Its breakthrough on the German stage came midway through the nineteenth century, for "under the influence of the French Revolution with its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity *Antigone* gained a new contemporary relevance and became a paradigm for tragedy as such. The figure of Antigone thus

replaced King Oedipus, who had been regarded by Aristotle as epitomizing the tragic." (Flashar 2000, p. 78) In 1840, shortly after becoming king, Frederick William IV of Prussia ordered that *Antigone* should receive a stage production faithful to the Sophocles text; in so doing, he returned to a performance tradition that had lain dormant for centuries. To ensure authenticity, the foremost experts were consulted: the classical scholar August Boeckh was persuaded to advise on linguistic and literary aspects of the production, Ludwig Tieck was put in charge of the dramaturgy, and the music for the tragedy's choral sequences was composed by Felix Mendelssohn. The theater selected for the premiere in October 1841 was the Court Theatre in the New Palace at Sanssouci, Potsdam, which had seating arranged in the form of an amphitheater (cf. Fischer-Lichte 2007, p. 112). Following the Potsdam premiere, this version of *Antigone* was played in Berlin and a number of other German and European cities. Frederick William's choice of this particular work for production in the New Palace at Potsdam as he began his reign was not random. His political purpose in having the *Antigone* produced in Potsdam in 1841 was to project an image of the Prussian state of the future, the Prussian state "as it was intended to become under Frederick William IV's rule" (Fischer-Lichte 2007, p. 115). Frederick William's own reaction to the 1848/1849 revolution, however, ensured that the state's actual subsequent history was not creditable from a democratic point of view, rather the contrary.

The themes touched on in the *Antigone* can be considered classical in their timelessness, having been revisited again and again for stage adaptations but also for exploration in literature and music. These productive borrowings from the original material are eloquent testimony to the communicative power this tragedy still retains, 2500 years after it was written, informing and enriching modern civic education along with other aspects of our lives.

2.2 *Antigone*: The Action

For his *Antigone* tragedy, Sophocles draws on the myth of the Labdacid dynasty, the action of which is set in and around Thebes, in Boeotia. The narrative telling how Oedipus overcame the Sphinx and slew his father was already familiar to the *Antigone* audiences for whom Sophocles wrote, having figured prominently both in the *Odyssey* of Homer and in the much more recent tragedy by Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes*, which had been performed in the Theater of Dionysos at Athens in 467 BCE. But it was Sophocles who first chose a woman as the protagonist of the tragedy, and he also chose her name for his title. The siblings Antigone, Ismene, Eteocles, and Polynices were the children of Oedipus and Jocasta—who was Oedipus' mother as well as his wife. On discovering through an investigation he had himself launched—as king of Thebes—that he himself had been the murderer of his father Laius and had thereupon married his own mother, Oedipus blinded himself. His mother, who was now also his wife, committed suicide by hanging. Now the city was governed by the two sons, Eteocles and Polynices—until they fell

out. Polynices allied himself with his father-in-law Adrastos, king of Argos, and five more princes and in this company launched an attack on the city of his birth ("Seven Against Thebes"). In the course of the hostilities, the two brothers slew each other, leaving Jocasta's brother Creon to become ruler of Thebes.

This is the point from which the action of Sophocles' *Antigone* unfolds. Antigone meets with Ismene to tell her Creon has ruled that Eteocles should receive honorable burial as one of the city's defenders, while Polynices as an attacker is denied it:

ANTIGONE Our brothers' bodies, Ismene.
Creon has decided to honour one
And shame the other. So Eteocles
Lies in state, while hymns wing him to the Gods,
The wails and moans and prayers of sobbing Thebes
Echo round his senseless ears, but silent
Lies the corpse of unheard Polynices.
Nor man, nor woman, nor child may weep for him.
Only the yellow wind and wild hyena
Sing for him beyond the walls, and sightless
His tender smile is dug by birds, who eye
And mock his outstretched nakedness. (Sophocles 2000, p. 23)

Creon's prohibition of burial rites for Polynices sets up the tragedy's central conflict and the course of events that will follow. Antigone intends to defy the ban and bury Polynices and tries initially to persuade her sister Ismene to join her in doing so. But Ismene rejects the idea, on the grounds that it contravenes the king's ruling and that in any case it is for the woman, being weaker, to submit to the will of the stronger:

ISMENE If we two break his law, what punishments
Will spill upon the daughters of Oedipus?
No, Antigone, now we're all that's left,
And must remember that we're only women.
We can't fight men! The king is powerful,
We are weak and must learn to bear with patience
The pain that is, and was, and that will come.
I beg those beneath the earth to understand
I have no choice but to obey authority.
Sometimes it is prudent to compromise. (Sophocles 2000, pp. 24–25)

Antigone for her part contrasts the lawgiving of human authorities, here Creon, with the divine injunction to bury her brother: for her this law takes precedence, and she intends to obey it:

ANTIGONE Be who you think best, but I will bury him.
It is a fine thing for me to die like this;
Brother and sister shall lie together.
This crime is holy, it shuffles me off

To Hades, where father, mother, brother
Count the breaths I waste in Thebes. You must do
Whatever seems right, Ismene, you choose,
If it really seems right to dishonour
The will of the Gods. (Sophocles 2000, p. 25)

Antigone subsequently does indeed defy Creon's proscription, by strewing dust over the corpse of Polynices. Learning of this, Creon sentences her to death. Even his son Haemon, betrothed to Antigone, cannot persuade him to rescind his decision. Haemon therefore breaks with his father:

HAIMON She won't die where I am.
Never will you see my face again. Rage on
While you have an audience; louder, louder! (Sophocles 2000, p. 46)

Antigone for her part offers no contrition and will not recant. Her resolve is still unbroken when she meets the end ordained for her by Creon. The Chorus comments on this as autonomous action, action in accordance with her own law, and finds it particularly noteworthy that the person taking such action is a woman:

CHORUS Isn't there fame and praise enough for you?
Is this not attention enough for you?
Others die obscurely, wasted by disease,
Or mangled on the battlefield. But you
Of your free will walk breathing and conscious
To your death.
[. . .]
But Antigone, she was a Goddess,
Born of Gods. We're different; we are born
Of men and women. And yet it honours you
To share the fate of Gods, in life and death.
(Sophocles 2000, p. 48)

When Antigone eventually laments her fate, which is linked to her "father's accursed marriage", the Chorus reminds her that the death sentence passed on her was the consequence of a decision she made herself. Antigone is responsible for her own actions and for their consequences:

CHORUS You've overreached yourself, Antigone.
You have dared to humiliate the law.
Now justice sends you tumbling and your fall
Is terrible. You must pay for a deed
That your fathers have done. (Sophocles 2000, p. 49)

Influenced by the words of the seer Tiresias and consultation with the Chorus, Creon finally repents his decision: he orders Polynices' burial and tries to revoke the sentence passed against Antigone. But she has hanged herself, on which first Haemon and then his mother Eurydice also commit suicide. Creon is left alone in his despair.

2.3 Epistemological Skepticism and the Capacity for Judgment

In Sophocles' tragedy, following exposition of the clash of wills between Creon and Antigone on the burial of Polynices, the Chorus delivers its first *stasimon* (non-processional song). This *Ode to Humanity* pays eloquent tribute to the human capacity to domesticate nature, shape the human environment, and found civilizations. Sophocles here has the Chorus present what was for his day a modern image of humanity in line with the ideas of the Sophist, Protagoras. In broad terms this is an image of humanity founded on the specific "consciousness of human ability" (Meier 1990, p. 204) possessed by the *polis* citizen during the age of Athenian democracy:

CHORUS Many things are wonderful
But nothing is as wonderful as man.

With the wide white wind he splits sea from sky
And his prow slices the roaring surges.

Even the highest of the Gods, the Earth,
Who cannot tire, who cannot die, receives
Man's plough from year to year and turns and yields
As his horses sweat in silence.

Silly birds, flittering beyond his grasp,
Stick themselves in his traps, wild snorting pigs
Fall breathless at his feet and his nets fix
The sinuous exhalings of the sea.

Man's quick brain tricks and tames the stallions
Galloping and whinnying across the hills
And even the bull, low and broad and steaming,
Submits to his yoke. [. . .] (Sophocles 2000, p. 33)

Over and above their ability to subjugate nature, humans also have the power to communicate through language and to live together in cities:

[. . .] Man has learned to speak,
To place 'I think' between 'I feel' and 'I do'.

These things he can escape: frosts on mountains,
Arrows of hard rain. He can even cure
Bewildering illnesses. He can prepare,
Foreseeing difficulty. Only Death
Masters him. Only Death equalises him.
(Sophocles 2000, p. 33)

Sophocles' *Antigone* presents an image of self-reliant humanity, of individuals endowed with the ability to control their environment, to organize community life in cities—and to learn. This description of humankind and its specific abilities relates to Sophist positions widely held in the democratically constituted Athens of the time. In Protagoras, for example, the gods similarly recede into the background; on issues of metaphysics, as a Sophist, Protagoras stands for an uncompromising epistemological skepticism. A fragment of his lost treatise *Concerning the Gods* begins with the statement: "Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not or of what sort they may be. Many things prevent knowledge [. . .] including the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life" (quoted in Pirie 2009, pp. 17–18). The Sophists are accordingly regarded as protagonists of the Greek Enlightenment of that period (cf. Guthrie 1995, p. 48).

Long-standing traditional and, it seemed, incontrovertible truths concerning the gods are left in the background, while humankind with its cognitive powers—these admittedly subject to sensory limitations—takes center stage. Thus, in the *Theaetetus* of Plato, Socrates asserts of Protagoras: "(. . .) He says, I fancy, that 'man is the measure of all things'; of things existing, that they do exist; of non-existing things, that they do not exist" (Plato 1881, pp. 116–7). This draws attention to the subjectivity of the various viewpoints put forward in the *polis* and to the fact that their validity is only relative: and this circumstance is particularly relevant to democracy as a form of government. On the remark here attributed to Protagoras, Bertrand Russell comments as follows: "This is interpreted as meaning that *each* man is the measure of all things, and that, when men differ, there is no objective truth in virtue of which one is right and the other wrong. The doctrine is essentially skeptical, and is presumably based on the 'deceitfulness' of the senses" (Russell 1972, p. 77; Russell's italics).

In the words of the first *stasimon* in *Antigone*, Sophocles makes his Chorus express views on humankind that accord closely with the teachings of Protagoras the Sophist as presented by Plato in the eponymous Dialogue. Hence the rhetorical question posed by Otto Pöggeler: "Was Sophocles not close here to what had been discredited since Plato—Sophism? Plato, in his *Protagoras* (pp. 320 ff.), narrates once more the Sophist myth of all the grandeur attainable by humankind. Is not Sophocles still subscribing to that myth, in his own way?" (Pöggeler 2004, p. 15). Henning Ottmann even claims that Sophocles chose the Protagoras myth as a blueprint for the *Ode to Humanity* (cf. Ottmann 2001, p. 194).

For purposes of civic education, the myth of Protagoras is highly significant, as he was endeavoring to identify the prerequisites for democracy as it existed in Athens at that time. The educability of all humans everywhere, predicated on the principle that we can all be molded, was proclaimed in its political application right back in the time of the ancient Greek Enlightenment—by Protagoras. His thoughts regarding the anthropological basis of Athenian democracy are based on the assumption that all citizens can be educated in the requisite political competences. In thus propounding as axiomatic the capacity in principle of the Athenian *demos* for political judgment, he was also establishing the basis for today's civic education as a normative force. Although we possess no incontestably authentic utterances of Protagoras in his own

voice, the attribution to him of these views in the *Protagoras* Dialogue of Plato is considered reliable, in broad outline at least.

In the Dialogue, purportedly for the benefit of his interlocutor, Socrates, Protagoras explains his thoughts regarding the education of men in citizenship and begins by recalling an episode from the mythological past. In the mythical narrative, Prometheus and Epimetheus took on the task of endowing all newly created living beings with their respective capabilities. Epimetheus as a matter of policy distributed these powers unequally yet in such a way that every species was fitted for survival through its allotted powers. However, he forgot to make any provision for humankind; so Prometheus stepped in, stealing arts and crafts from Hephaistos and fire from Athene and presenting both to humankind as gifts. Humans now had the "technical skills" (Plato 2010, p. 56) they needed for living, but they were still ignorant of social organization and thus unable to form communities of any size. Zeus eventually took pity on the humans and had the messenger Hermes bring them further endowments: "respect for others, and the practice of justice" (Plato 2010, p. 57). But he added the proviso—crucial to Protagoras' statement regarding political competences—that these latter endowments were not to be unequally distributed like the earlier gifts but shared: "... am I to distribute [them] to all?" (Plato 2010, p. 57). And later in the Dialogue: "You see, there wouldn't be poleis, if few shared in these, as in the other technical skills" (Plato 2010, 322d, p. 57). Referring to the Athenian democratic community in particular, Protagoras elaborates his point:

> [...] when they go to share advice about [carrying out] the affairs of the polis excellently, [323a] which103 must arise entirely from a practice of justice and self-restraint, they fittingly take up [the advice of] every man, as it is appropriate, of course, for everyone has a share in this excellence, or there wouldn't be poleis. This, Socrates, is [what's] responsible for this [phenomenon]. (Plato 2010, p. 57)

Protagoras adds, however, that these capabilities are not innate in humans:

> [...] They don't think that [this excellence] is by nature or that it arises automatically but [they think] that it is teachable and that it arises from the attention one brings to it. [...]. (Plato 2010, 323c, p. 58)

In formulating his idea that every human being is eligible to acquire the political competences needed for community life, Protagoras identified one of the constitutive requirements of the democratic form of government. While it was immaterial in the context of an oligarchy or a tyranny—the other two forms of government known in Greece at that time—whether all citizens in the jurisdiction possessed political competences, the democracy practiced in Athens was in the converse position: those competences were a sine qua non. In postulating that such competences existed and could—in principle—be taught, Protagoras created a norm crucial to the survival of a democratic polity and still valid today. In classical Athens, what legitimized the political equality of all citizens (isonomy) prevailing there at this time was the right enjoyed by *every* citizen in principle to acquire political competence. Accordingly, when the time came for Pericles—with whom Protagoras is considered to have been associated, albeit not closely (cf. Leppin 1999, p. 43)—to deliver a speech honoring the first men to die for Athens in the Peloponnesian War, he

emphasized that the Athenians' capacity for sound judgment in matters political was a mark of their democratic governance (Thucydides 2009, II 40, 2).

> [. . .] We are unique in the way we regard anyone who takes no part in public affairs: we do not call that a quiet life, we call it a useless life. We are all involved in either the proper formulation or at least the proper review of policy, thinking that what cripples actions is not talk, but rather the failure to talk through the policy before proceeding to the required action. This is another difference between us and others, which gives us our exceptional combination of daring and deliberation about the objective—whereas with others their courage relies on ignorance, and for them to deliberate is to hesitate. [. . .] (Thucydides 2009, II 40, pp. 92).

While Protagoras' ideas on the development of political life in a democratic system are buoyed up by an optimistic faith in progress predicated above all on the capacity of those living in the democratic *polis* to learn political judgment, the Chorus for its part, in the first *stasimon* of *Antigone*, voices a much more skeptical view of the ethical potential and political behavior of humankind. This comes across from the outset, the Chorus observing in its very first line of verse that there is nothing more wonderful (Sophocles 2000, p. 33) than the human being. The Greek term used is ambivalent, referring to the wide range of human potential in the ethical and political aspects of life—humans are capable of "wonderful" constructive attainments but also, as an alternative translation can make clear, of "monstrous" acts with destructive effects. In the final strophe of its first *stasimon*, the Chorus describes the ethical and political implications of this view of humanity:

CHORUS Man imagines; this imagining man
Chooses sometimes to do bad and chooses
Sometimes to do good. The Earth has its laws,
The Gods have justice and obeying both,
Human beings can become citizens
Of proud states. But any disobedience
Shuts him out beyond the gates, city-less.
May such a one keep far away from me,
From the warmth of my fire and from my thoughts!
(Sophocles 2000, p. 33)

Humans thus possess all the skills they need to shape their natural environment and their communal political life independently. However, nothing within the reach of humans determines the manner in which they will conduct their affairs, for in politics as in every other facet of life, they can act for the good or for the bad. No higher instance predetermines or prescribes their actions. They must therefore heed such guidance as is available to them: "The Earth has its laws, /The Gods have justice [. . .]" (Sophocles 2000, p. 33)—and this is indeed what both Antigone and Creon seek to do, from rigidly maintained standpoints. In relation to ethics—and this includes political issues—the human mindset is fundamentally ambivalent. It is this ambivalence that leads in the *Antigone* to the tragic conflict foreshadowed in the *Ode to Humanity*: "The ode seems to set out an evolutionary view of political community and the development of the arts attributable to rational mastery of the environment. But at its conclusion this power is seen to be ambiguous at best. The chorus perceive

that when human powers lack intelligent moral direction, these capacities and designs recoil and destroy their agents" (Lane and Ann 1986, p. 178). This ambivalent trait in the human character, its potential for enormity of goodness and of evil, makes it imperative that human action, most of all on the level of politics, must be guided by wisdom, the power of insight: in the words of the seer Tiresias, "Nothing is more precious than good advice [. . .]" (Sophocles 2000, p. 53), or as the Chorus has it in the closing lines of the tragedy: "Happiness is born in wisdom" (Sophocles 2000, p. 62).

"Insight" and "circumspection" are associated with political judgment. Citizens' possession of these aptitudes was constitutive for the new form of government—democracy. This had not been the case with either tyranny or oligarchy, the difference being the democratic principle of isonomy which now applied, according equal value to every vote in the popular assembly. And it was against this point—decision by majority vote—that those opposing the principle of political equality across the entire Athenian *demos* deployed their most cogent argument. As they saw it, the arithmetical equality inherent in isonomy leveled out the real qualitative differences between citizens with regard to education, impairing the *polis*' capacity for political action. This topos of democracy criticism identifies the community with the vulgar masses. In Herodotus, for example, we read:

> [81] Megabyzus, however, urged that power be turned over to an oligarchy. 'While I concur with the criticisms leveled by Otanes against tyranny,' he said, 'I feel that he is seriously wide of the mark in recommending that power be transferred to the masses. There is nothing more lacking in intelligence, nor more insolent, than some useless mob. How intolerable that men should escape the haughty brutality of a tyrant, only to succumb to the untampered violence of riff-raff no less haughty or brutal! At least a tyrant, when he does something, understands what he is doing, but a mob lacks even that modicum of knowledge! What can anyone know who has been taught nothing of what is fine and noble, nor possesses any innate sense of it, but only rushes blindly at things, and batters at them like some river in spate? No, leave it to those who bear ill will towards the Persians to deploy the masses in government! Let us instead pick a band of the finest men we have and entrust them with power. We ourselves will, after all, be numbered among them—and it is only reasonable to assume that men who rank as the best will devise the best policies as well.' Such was the case made by Megabyzus (Herodotus 2013, pp. 228–9).

Writing in the same vein in about 430 BCE, the author (identity still not established, but referred to as pseudo-Xenophon) of *The Constitution of the Athenians*, an advocate of oligarchy, equates popular rule with rule by the poor. This work too lays stress on the implications of educational and intellectual differences; the "old oligarch" takes up the cudgels vigorously on behalf of rule by the few: "But it is in fact the case in every country that the better element opposes popular rule; for among the better citizens disorderliness and injustice are least, conscientious aspiration to the good and noble are at their greatest; but in the general populace lack of cultivation and self-discipline are most pronounced, as is base behavior; for they are much more apt to be led into bad ways by poverty and by their lack of education and culture—which in turn is caused by the fact that some of the little people lack the necessary funds" (Pseudo-Xenophon 1913, I, 5). Where the pseudo-Xenophon treatise criticizes the deficient education and culture of the lower

classes from an oligarchic standpoint, Plato's criticism of democracy attacks the same target from the standpoint of the philosopher. Holding as he did that the kingdom of philosophers portrayed and defended in his *The Republic* (*Politeia*) is the best possible form of polity and should be the aspiration of all, he understandably viewed democracy with disfavor. '"It is a noble polity, indeed!' he said. 'These and qualities akin to these democracy would exhibit, and it would, it seems, be a delightful form of government, anarchic and motley, assigning a kind of equality indiscriminately to equals and unequals alike!"' (Plato 1994, p. 291, 558c). Like the "old oligarch" and Herodotus, Plato regarded the deficient education and lack of judgment characteristic of the Athenian *demos* as the key factor in inequality. The common citizens in general, Plato believed, were not mentally equipped to distinguish truth from falsehood. He puts his point in one of the Dialogues: "'Philosophy, then, the love of wisdom, is impossible for the multitude.' 'Impossible.' 'It is inevitable, then, that those who philosophize should be censured by them.' 'Inevitable.' 'And so likewise by those laymen who, associating with the mob, desire to curry favour with it'" (Plato 1994, p. 43, 494).

Criticism of the *demos'* inadequate capacity for judgment included allegations of vacillation over decisions that had to be taken in the popular assembly. Isocrates notes in his *Discourse on Peace* that the citizens of Athens, for all their experience in debate and action, were sufficiently "irrational" to put forward "'contradictory views on the same issues on one and the same day": "In the popular assembly we give our assent to what we had condemned prior to arriving there, and not very long afterwards we return home expostulating against the decisions that have just been agreed by the assembly" (Isocrates 1993, VIII, 52). Now, as has been shown above, democracy undeniably makes demands on the citizens who choose to live by it: it was a constitutive prerequisite for the democratic system of government that the *demos* should have the capacity for political judgment, the Athenian citizens generally an understanding of civics. The classical scholar Christian Meier sees the issue in quite specific terms: there was a need for ". . . the knowledge and the capacity to judge the speeches and proposals of politicians" (Meier 1993, p. 3). In the light of this historical background, it may be inferred that the emergence of tragic drama during the honeymoon period of the earliest democracy was not mere coincidence: that there is a causal link. In the introductory part of his *The Political Art of Greek Tragedy*, Christian Meier declares: "This book works on the premise that tragedy and politics were most closely connected in the fifth century" (Meier 1993, p. 5). And on tragedy in particular: "It seems possible that we have here a rather special example of a social body carrying out quite publicly the maintenance and development of its mental infrastructure" (Meier 1993, p. 4). It is possible, in other words, that public theater in Athens, specifically the performing of tragedies, may have been a means of remedying the deficiencies in political maturity attributed to the common people by opponents of democracy. "Tragedy is of particular interest because in this genre alone—and, of course, comedy—we find the middle and lower classes 'present' in the literature of that time; they may only participate as audience, but in a certain sense they set the agenda" (Meier 1993, p. 6). We turn now to examining some of the political issues that were expounded to the Athenian *demos*, through the

medium of the *Antigone* performances, in the year 442 BCE—issues that still matter to us today, twenty-five centuries later.

2.4 Sovereign Authority and Resistance

We shall begin with Antigone's position. Modern-day studies of this ancient tragic drama tend to focus particularly on the resistance she puts up. She alone defies the seemingly tyrannical Creon, who embodies the unlimited power of the state.

CREON Please answer my questions very simply.
Did you know I had decreed against this?

ANTIGONE Of course I knew.

CREON You dared to break the law?

ANTIGONE Yes. It wasn't the law of Zeus I broke.
Your decree laughs in the face of justice.
It's perfectly simple: you have no right
To pass such laws. You're just a little man,
And you will die. How can you overturn
The great enduring laws of the immortals?
You can't rewrite them when you feel like it!
For yesterday, tomorrow and today
Dissolve within the greatness of their will.
There's nothing brave in standing up to you.
I'm far too scared to break my Gods' laws.
(Sophocles 2000, p. 36)

Antigone rebels against Creon's decree prohibiting the burial and in so doing rebels against the law of the land—invoking a higher, divine law in support. In raising the question of limits to the lawfulness of law itself, Antigone becomes a fruitful case study for modern political analysis. Her act of rebellion establishes a reference standard against which any period's accepted definitions of the lawfulness of laws and of the limits of civil disobedience and resistance can be measured up and debated—from the US civil rights movement of the 1960s to today's political upheavals across the Arab world, the worldwide Occupy movement and the *Wutbürger* ("middle-class rage") of Swabian provenance.

The *Antigone* can also serve as a starting point for in-depth study of the German experience of dictatorship. For instance, useful learning approaches can be built on the affinities between the Antigone figure and the White Rose resistance group at the University of Munich—Hans and Sophie Scholl, Alexander Schmorell, Willi Graf, Christoph Probst, and Kurt Huber. There is much for modern students to think about in the courageous statement made on 19 April 1943 by Kurt Huber, a professor at the university, when he was arraigned before the *Volksgerichtshof* ("People's Court"):

> All external legality has a final limit beyond which it becomes mendacious and immoral. It reaches that limit when it becomes the cloak for the cowardice that shrinks from denouncing blatant injustices. When a state prohibits all free expression of opinion and vilifies any morally justified criticism whatsoever, any call for reform, as 'preparation for high treason', that state breaks an unwritten law (quoted after Laufs 2006, p. 421).

Although almost 2500 years have passed since Antigone's sacrificial death was played out before its Athens audiences, the issue that it made them face is no less pressing today: where is the borderline beyond which the law itself is no longer lawful? This, in Ernst Bloch's eyes, is what makes Antigone a tragic heroine:

> To the true tragic hero there belongs a sense of protest, which has the sense of being objectively right; this is what first makes the phenomenon of tragic defeat great, and leaves the hero unconquered in the defeat (if not dialectically on account of the defeat). The power and the dignity of the tragic assault always enter the picture (in terms of their content) in *another order* which the hero represents and brings into the midst of the existing order; this entry is directed partially or centrally against the existing order, which has been judged to be unjust (Bloch 1986, p. 254).

Finally, tragic drama may serve also to deepen our understanding of the transition through which resistance can become terrorism. Antigone pursues her path without deviating from her own inflexible moral perspective and without regard to the consequences. For educational purposes, students can be asked to consider analogies with recent terrorist issues involving the Red Army Faction (RAF) in Germany. Theater productions, too, frequently invoke this connection by juxtaposing modern-day world events with the particular tragic drama being enacted on the stage. Bernd Stegemann, who teaches theater history at the Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch (E.B. Academy of Dramatic Arts) and also holds the position of *Dramaturg* (expert adviser) at the Berlin Schaubühne, concludes: "It is thus not by accident that *Antigone* even today is still frequently staged as a 'Rote Armee' story. And depending on political slant, the production will depict either the jackboot reaction of the State to dissidence over fundamental issues, or the deluded fanaticism of an individual making war on a society that seeks only to defend itself" (Stegemann 2007, p. 98).

The common factor linking Antigone and Creon is that neither shows the slightest understanding of the justified expectations of the other. This is why Hegel could consider that *Antigone* delivers the "ultimate dramatic situation"—the collision between the legally valid aspiration to bury one's kin and the *raison d'état* which holds that the city does not afford burial to its enemies, only to its friends:

> The resolution of the collision is when the ethical powers that are in collision (due to their one-sidedness) themselves renounce the one-sidedness of independent validity; and the way that this renunciation of one-sidedness appears is that the individuals who have committed themselves to the realization of the singular, one-sided, ethical power perish. For example, in the *Antigone* the love of family, the holy, the inner, what is also called the law of the lower deities because it belongs to sentiment, comes into collision with the right of the state. (. . .) Each of these two sides actualizes only one of the two, has only one side as its content. That is one-sidedness, and the meaning of eternal justice is that both are in the wrong because they are one-sided, but both are also in the right (Hegel 1988, p. 353).

And indeed Hegel's portrayal of a clash between two equally justified principles points to the timeless political significance of ancient tragedy for us today: "The power of the *Antigone* to move us even today is not because it sets right against wrong but because it pits one morally justified set of claims against another. It is a conflict between two contending moralities that is the essence of tragic drama" (Smith 2012, p. 13).

Objectively, the stance taken up by Antigone, her resistance to Creon's decree proscribing the burial, and the rigidity with which she maintains that resistance amount to stubborn self-will on her part too. And the Chorus duly spells this out to her:

CHORUS You've overreached yourself, Antigone.
You have dared to humiliate the law.
Now justice sends you tumbling and your fall
Is terrible. [. . .]
(Sophocles 2000, p. 49)

Antigone's utterly rigid adherence to the standpoint she has adopted and to what she believes to be a higher justice is every bit as lacking in perspective and reflective deliberation as the corresponding stance of Creon is variously alleged to be, by Haemon, Tiresias, and the Chorus at different points in the tragedy. By acting without insight, Antigone makes herself partly responsible for the tragic outcome.

2.5 *Raison d'état*: The National Interest

Dedicated solely to the interests of the state, Creon's political conduct in its narrow-mindedness and rigidity is the counterpart to the mindset and actions of Antigone with regard to observance of the divine injunction on burial practice. The transformation of Creon's position—initially the constitutionally unassailable standpoint of the king of Thebes, latterly the illegitimate exercise of sovereign power—is a metamorphosis that he has himself brought about, through his pretension to sole rightness and rejection of the viewpoints and advice of others; and it provides another of the drama's instructive paradigms. Creon presents his standpoint to the city elders as follows:

CREON Eteocles, who died so gallantly,
We'll hide within the grateful earth of Thebes,
Entombed, bewept, beloved and well remembered.
But his brother, smiling Polynices,
Whose shining eyes obscured a filthy heart,
Who urged the enemy to rape his home,
To burn his Gods, to drink his cousin's blood
And sell you, Thebans, into slavery.
(Sophocles 2000, pp. 28–29)

Creon, then, is guided solely by his devotion to duty and his understanding of what is best for the state. The law he promulgates, while constitutionally within his powers, is unacceptable in what it demands. Yet Creon pursues the supposed interest of the *polis* to the bitter end. This can be used in political education to illustrate how the law, even good law, "when pursued to extremes, [may] flip over into inhuman injustice." Hasso Hofmann sums up the situation's present-day relevance: "The terrible reversal ensuing on rigid belief in the rightness of one's stance and the unjust law-making of dictatorships are in essence very ancient and ever-recurring human experience. And so the quarrel between Creon and Antigone over the unburied body of Polynices speaks directly to us even today, across the great gulf of the years" (Hofmann 2000, p. 77).

It is in the course of his dialogue with his son Haemon that Creon finally becomes the out-and-out tyrant who will allow no other viewpoint than his own:

HAEMON Father, the Gods sow intelligence in men,
The greatest of all their gifts, and you know
That I could never say that you were wrong
And may I never learn how to suggest
Such a thing. But, Father, you cannot hear
What Thebes is yet to say. The man in the street
Quakes when disapproval narrows your eyes.
[. . .]
[. . .] Hear me when I ask you to hear
Another point of view. You must not think
You own the monopoly of wisdom;
Whoever thinks that he alone has sense
Rings hollow as a drum. Wisdom knows that she
Has much to learn and clasps the new idea
As her most honoured guest. This is why, Father,
When winter hurls the river down the hills
To burst its puny banks, it is the trees
That yield with grace which manage to survive,
But the mighty oak, too proud to bend, is ripped
From his deep roots and tossed into the roar.
The captain needs humility to see
His tiny boat is weaker than the storm.
A sail too tight will whip him upside down:
Round rolls the canvas; captain, planks and all
Plummet to eternity. No, Father—think,
Feel your anger but do not act on it.
I know that I am young but I say this:
No-one knows everything.
(Sophocles 2000, pp. 43-44)

Haemon's view is that the ruler should not steer exclusively by his own unaided judgment but should take the views of others into account when making his decision. In Haemon's eyes, Creon is an "empty vessel," because he acknowledges only one "way of thinking." Sophocles, who held important offices of state even during the crowning years of Athenian civilization, is using his *Antigone* drama as a parable to

educate his contemporary audiences about the dangers inherent in politics and specifically in the new form of government, democracy:

CREON Are we
To be lectured by a boy half our age?

HAEMON Yes, for what I say is right. You should hear
Anyone when you trample the laws of the Gods.

CREON You want me to respect a criminal?

HAEMON I would not ask you to honour the bad.

CREON Bad? She is infected and infectious!

HAEMON My fellow citizens do not agree.

CREON Am I to take orders from the people?

HAEMON Now it is you who argues like a boy.

CREON Am I to rule for them, not for myself?

HAEMON No city belongs to one man alone. [. . .]

Would you like to rule an empty city? [. . .]

CREON How dare you
Insult your father?

HAEMON I must speak out,
When I see him doing what is wrong.

CREON I do wrong when I respect my office?

HAEMON Respect, Father, respect? Do you respect
Anyone when you trample on the will of the Gods?

(Sophocles 2000, p. 45)

Creon as the autocrat insists on the strict letter of the law that he has imposed, whereas Haemon points out the justness of other viewpoints held among the community. Of this pivotal dialogue, Christian Meier wrote: "The exchange between father and son is one of the most significant monuments of political thought" (Meier 1993, p. 196). Creon fails one of the fundamental requirements of practical politics, the ability that Immanuel Kant considered a "'maxim' of the power of judgment: the

ability to see from the perspective of others and so to attain a 'broad-minded way of thinking'" (Kant 2000, pp. 174–5).

Commenting on Kant's interpretation in his *Critique of Judgment* (§40) of this faculty of judgment as an "enlarged mentality," Hannah Arendt writes:

> Unfortunately, it remains characteristic of Kant that this political virtue par excellence plays hardly any role in his own political philosophy, that is, in his development of the categorical imperative; the validity of the categorical imperative is derived from 'thinking in agreement with the self,' and reason as the giver of laws does not presuppose other persons but only a self that is not in contradiction with itself. In point of fact, the real political faculty in Kant's philosophy is not lawgiving reason, but judgment, which in an enlarged mentality has the power to override its 'subjective private conditions.'* In the case of the polis, the political man, given the characteristic excellence that distinguished him, was at the same time the freest man: for thanks to the insight that enabled him to consider all standpoints, he enjoyed the greatest freedom of movement. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that the freedom of the political man definitely depended on the presence and equality of others. A thing can reveal itself under many aspects only in the presence of peers who regard it from their various perspectives. Wherever the equality of others and of their particular opinions is abrogated, as, for instance, under tyranny, in which everything and everyone is sacrificed to the standpoint of the tyrant, no one is free and no one is capable of insight, not even the tyrant (Arendt 2005, p. 169).

Lacking the will—or perhaps unable—to see from the perspective of others and attain some breadth of vision, Creon slides from a constitutionally sound position at the outset to end as an embodiment of tyranny. His political conduct vividly exemplifies an observation in the *Ode to Humanity*:

> CHORUS Many things are wonderful
> But nothing is as wonderful as man.
> (Sophocles 2000, p. 33)

Creon—as a human being—has to choose between different courses of action and adopts an extreme position that takes no account of other legitimate viewpoints. He shows, moreover, that he is not amenable to reason, brushing aside the rationally balanced exhortations of his son. It is the same with the appeal from Tiresias when he too seeks to deflect Creon from the full rigor of his policy on the interment of Polynices:

> TEIRESIAS: So consider these things, my child: all men
> Make mistakes, even the wise, but the wise
> Will try to put right the thing that is wrong.
> Only the idiot is immovable.
> Stubbornness makes us all stupid. Creon,
> Yield to the dead man! Stop stabbing his corpse.
> What is the point in re-killing the dead?
> I mean you well and my advice is good.
> (Sophocles 2000, pp. 52–53)

Tiresias declares authoritatively that no human, not even the king of Thebes, is proof against error. This being so, one may confidently place one's trust in the advice

of others and so avoid the error of "stubbornness" and its consequence—"stupidity." This counsel of course applies in politics, as elsewhere. Humans must reflect before reaching a decision, so that it will be informed by insight:

TEIRESIAS My child, if you could only see yourself,
If you could only hear.

CREON Hear what? See what?
This sanctimonious mumbling? You're a liar.

TEIRESIAS Nothing is more precious than good advice.

(Sophocles 2000, p. 53)

But when Creon finally does achieve insight, having reflected on the issue, and so reaches an appropriate judgment on the issues of interring his erstwhile foe Polynices and of the treatment to be accorded to Antigone for defying the law of the land, it is too late, and the tragedy moves on to its known outcome. The king now finally recognizes that he has behaved foolishly and despairs of his own fate:

CREON I am alone. No-one else can share this guilt.
It was me, I killed you. I tell the truth.
Ah, men lead me, lead me away from here
As fast as you can, take away this skin
For it is worth so much less than nothing.
(Sophocles 2000, p. 61)

In the tragedy's closing lines, the Chorus once again takes up the didactic role of pointing to the "monstrous" human capacity for good or for evil as the crucial factor making for the importance and value of reflective deliberation in human affairs—and here, in *Antigone*, specifically in the arena of politics:

CHORUS Happiness is born in wisdom.
When we deal with the Gods
We must behave with piety.
The great words of the proud
Are punished with great blows.
We learn this as we grow old.
(Sophocles 2000, p. 62)

2.6 *Antigone:* Adaptations and Interdisciplinary Potential

The reception history and specifically the adaptations for literary purposes and in music and visual art that have accreted round the *Antigone* story since the tragedy's Athens premiere present a rare abundance of material. We shall look here at three examples of how the ancient myth has been adapted by modern writers for purposes of their own. These adaptations—works by Alfred Döblin, Jean Anouilh, and Rolf Hochhuth—offer a wide variety of potential stimulus material for use in civic education and a range of interdisciplinary learning approaches. The common factor linking the Döblin, Anouilh, and Hochhuth adaptations is that they are contextualized to the two twentieth-century world wars and portray individuals confronted with the dilemmas of ethical conduct in the political circumstances of those times.

2.6.1 Alfred Döblin: November 1918: A German Revolution

Alfred Döblin, physician and author, had achieved fame through his novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929). As a Jew and a socialist, he fled Germany in 1933. He wrote the substantial three-part narrative *November 1918: Eine deutsche Revolution* between 1937 and 1942. The work's subject is announced by the title: it examines the events of the November Revolution that followed the end of World War I. The link to *Antigone* is found in Part 3 of the narrative, entitled *Karl und Rosa* in allusion to Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

Hostilities over, the classically educated Dr. Friedrich Becker, "a man in his middle thirties" (Döblin 1983, p. 154), returns in January 1919 to the high school post that he had left 4 years earlier to fight for his country. He has been badly wounded. "But once home, apparently as a consequence of his illness, he found himself in a serious emotional crisis that almost ended in madness: he felt that he was to blame for the war" (Döblin 1983, p. 154). The first course he teaches is Greek for the top grade of students; the class has recently completed its reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*. The time has come for critical analysis, evaluation, and general appraisal of the play, a program that Becker introduces in the context of *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. A "red-haired boy" (Döblin 1983, p. 164) expounds his view of Antigone, which will prove to be shared by a large part of the class: "There were women, it was true, in both *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, but in *Antigone* a woman was the heroine. It became apparent that this heroine did not appeal to the redhaired boy. She broke the laws of the state, and during a war, moreover. And for a very private reason. In that light it served her right" (Döblin 1983, p. 164). Subsequently, the boy elected as *Primus* backs up his red-haired classmate's stance. "The class spokesman replied for the whole class: 'Antigone really doesn't have our sympathy. One of her brothers bravely fought for his native city; he fell in battle and was buried with honors. As it should be. The other brother was a traitor who had assembled a great hostile army to attack his home. That would be the same as if now

the Spartacists were to invite France to send troops here to do Germany in.' ('Right!' came an echo from the classroom.) 'And if Polynices, the rebel, falls in the attempt, then the Thebans are right in letting his body lie on the field of battle'" (Döblin 1983, p. 169). At a later point, the *Primus* comments further: "The State has to depend on something. It must work with cogent, written laws that have been established once and for all. It expresses the morality of its citizens in the paragraphs of a written code of laws. Under no circumstances can the citizens be given the opportunity, especially not during wartime, to claim that some divine inspiration has been imparted to them by which they can then bring disorder to the whole of civil life" (Döblin 1983, p. 174).

While this view of Antigone's behavior is shared by the clear majority of the class, one boy comes out against it, a "full-grown, broad-shouldered and large-headed fellow," August Schramm. He is "the son of a left-wing district deputy in the neighborhood and himself active in a workers' organization, the 'Red' of the class" (Döblin 1983, p. 170). Having begun with a series of "disparaging remarks about the play in general: 'Prehistoric fables, patricide, blood-guilt, nothing but atrocity stories and dark superstitions'" (Döblin 1983, p. 170), he continues in a different vein: "But Antigone represents a modern personality. She confronts a tyrant, and doesn't come to heel the way several people here would like. Her brother has fallen, and she is determined that he will be buried, and she won't be denied." [. . .] "The political rights of the oppressed over against tyrants. And Sophocles takes her side. And if the play is so famous it's only because, like Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, it's a play about political freedom" (Döblin 1983, pp. 170–71).

While the *Primus* and the great majority of the class believe that the lesson to be drawn from *Antigone* is the absolute necessity of enforcing what the national interest dictates, and the left-leaning August Schramm sees the Antigone figure as a freedom fighter opposing Creon and so a role model for the workers, the young Classics master attempts—in the end unsuccessfully—to get the class to focus on the play's conflict between human law and divine law. In the course of his remarks, he endorses Antigone's conduct as meaningful and necessary: "Becker, back at his podium, concludes: 'You can see therefore: Antigone is not following some blind impulse in doing this deed, but is governed by a universally recognized, moral and religious understanding. Antigone is not doing battle at all. She sees herself as an instrument. She is serving divine law'" (Döblin 1983, p. 172). Antigone, he contends, is thus "no rebel." In fact,

> [. . .] She is absolutely the opposite of a rebel. If anyone in the play is a radical, then it's—and don't be amazed by this—King Creon. You haven't noticed that fact at all? But of course, because by virtue of his indeed tyrannical will, of his pride in this victory and in being king, he believes he can dismiss sacred tradition, ancient facts of life. For in civilized Greece it was a fact of life that a family mourns and buries its dead. [. . .] Creon believes he can ignore these old rites of piety. He believes that once he has defeated his enemies he can do with them as he pleases, even beyond the bounds of death. But there are bounds that are set by other powers. He has run up against supernatural powers. From them come the laws that no one dare undermine, and that are so strong that they can allow themselves to speak through the mouth of a weak young girl [. . .] (Döblin 1983, p. 173).

As a war veteran, Becker in pronouncing these words is mindful of his own recent service in the 1914–1918 war with its millions of dead, and the readers of Döblin's narrative will think of the dead of 1939–1945 as well—dead men and women who should be accorded respectful burial, friend or foe. That, in Becker's view, is the higher commandment and takes precedence over all laws made by humans. Rudolf Bultmann, in his analysis of the Sophocles text, argues similarly: "The cause that she [Antigone, I.J.] upholds against Creon is not ancient custom and the principle of family tradition, but the knowledge that human existence, including in particular the existence of this specific *polis*, is bounded and encompassed by the transcendent power of Hades. Not that Hades is conceived of as a mythical individual entity or special power jealously guarding its claims: it is seen rather as the inscrutable infinite context for all human undertakings and law-making; as the power from which ultimate justice springs, and in the face of which all man-made laws and all human justice are only relative" (Bultmann 1975, p. 66). For discussion of the key issues arising from the *Antigone* text, a starting point with modern topicality could be the controversial decision in 1977 by the then Mayor of Stuttgart, Manfred Rommel, to allow the former Red Army Faction members Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Jan-Carl Raspe to be interred at the city's Dornhalde cemetery, another, much more recent still, the debate about burial for the former SS *Hauptsturmführer* (captain) Erich Priebke, prompted by his death in 2013.

2.6.2 *Jean Anouilh:* Antigone

Another adaptation of the *Antigone* story completed during the Second World War was that by the French playwright Jean Anouilh. He made certain changes to the original Sophoclean cast list, adding a speaker who comes onstage at the opening of the drama to introduce the situation from which the tragic action will unfold. Anouilh's *Antigone* as a whole is cast in an existentialist mold: Creon and Antigone are depicted in their human existence, and *la condition humaine* will force each separately into making a choice—a decision—that will set the dramatic action going. Anouilh's exposition enables the spectator to appreciate and to identify, with the motivation of both principal characters, Creon's concern for the national interest and Antigone's individual rebellion.

The speaker's prefatory remarks introduce Creon in his kingly role: "He practices the difficult art of a leader of men" (Anouilh 1958, p. 4). And again: "Now and then, when he goes to bed weary with the day's work, he wonders whether this business of being a leader of men is worth the trouble" (ibid.). When the men appointed to guard the corpse of Polynices bring before him the individual who sought to bury it, his own niece, Creon's first thought is to save the situation by having Antigone withdraw to her room while he ensures a cover-up: "You will go to your room, now, and do as you have been told; and you won't say a word about this to anybody. Don't fret about the guards: I'll see that their mouths are shut" (cf. Anouilh 1958, p. 31). But Antigone rejects this offer and leaves Creon in no doubt that she will

continue making every effort to secure burial for her brother. Face to face with Antigone, Creon characterizes himself as a down-to-earth, pragmatic ruler, one who had never actually aspired to be king, but now, having had kingship conferred upon him, intends to live up to his responsibility to protect the constitution:

> Thebes has a right to a king without a past. My name, thank God, is only Creon. I stand here with both feet firm on the ground; with both hands in my pockets; and I have decided that so long as I am king—being less ambitious than your father was—I shall merely devote myself to introducing a little order into this absurd kingdom; if that is possible (Anouilh 1958, pp. 30–31).

Creon's sober and skeptical habit of thought is underlined in the course of the play by his political actions, driven by what Max Weber categorizes as the ethics of responsibility. It is with the aim of bringing the people of Thebes together again after the rift of the fraternal war between Eteocles and Polynices that he has proclaimed the ban on burying Polynices: for he knows that the body lying decomposing outside the city walls may well not in fact be that of Polynices, both brothers' bodies after death having been mangled beyond recognition by the hooves of the cavalry and thus rendered indistinguishable. Creon has simply had the less terribly mutilated body buried under the name of Eteocles and ordered the other to be left rotting outside the gates as the purported Polynices. To Antigone he explains his *raison d'état*—his safeguarding of the national interest—as follows:

> I shall save you yet. [He goes below the table to the chair at end of table, takes off his coat, and places it on the chair.] God knows, I have things enough to do today without wasting my time on an insect like you. There's plenty to do, I assure you, when you've just put down a revolution. But urgent things can wait. I am not going to let politics be the cause of your death. For it is a fact that this whole business is nothing but politics: the mournful shade of Polynices, the decomposing corpse, the sentimental weeping, and the hysteria that you mistake for heroism—nothing but politics.
>
> Look here. I may not be soft, but I'm fastidious. I like things clean, shipshape, well scrubbed. Don't think that I am not just as offended as you are by the thought of that meat rotting in the sun. In the evening, when the breeze comes in off the sea, you can smell it in the palace, and it nauseates me. But I refuse even to shut my window. It's vile; and I can tell you what I wouldn't tell anybody else: it's stupid, monstrously stupid. But the people of Thebes have got to have their noses rubbed into it a little longer. My God! If it was up to me, I should have had them bury your brother long ago as a mere matter of public hygiene. I admit that what I am doing is childish. But if the featherheaded rabble I govern are to understand what's what, that stench has got to fill the town for a month! (Anouilh 1958, pp. 34–35)

With Creon playing the statesman, cynical but nonetheless acting responsibly and ethically, Antigone holds to the full rigor of her particular ethic of conviction. She claims to be acting autonomously in that—unlike Creon—she appreciates that choice is an existential right. The tirade quoted above from Creon prompts her accusation:

> *Antigone [turns to him].* You are a loathsome man!
>
> *Creon.* I agree. My trade forces me to be. We could argue whether I ought or ought not to follow my trade; but once I take on the job, I must do it properly.
>
> *Antigone.* Why do you do it at all?

Creon. My dear, I woke up one morning and found
Myself King of Thebes. God knows, there were other
Things I loved in life more than power.
Antigone. Then you should have said no.
Creon. Yes, I could have done that. Only, I felt that it
Would have been cowardly. I should have been like a
workman who turns down a job that has to be done. So
I said yes.
Antigone. So much the worse for you, then. I didn't
Say yes. I can say not o anything I think, vile, and I don't have to count the cost. But because you said yes, all that
You can do, for all your crown and your trappings, and
Your guards—all that you can do is to have me killed.
(Anouilh 1958, p. 35)

All Creon's efforts to make the realities of his position clear to his niece are defeated and, inevitably so, as she fundamentally does not want to understand: "I am not here to understand. That's all very well for you. I am here to say no to you, and die" (Anouilh 1958, p. 37).

Anouilh's version of *Antigone* was much performed in occupied and postwar France and also in West Germany. In Germany today it is still a staple text in schools and colleges where French is taught. Its frequent inclusion in the syllabus is prompted not least by Anouilh's heightened dramatization of key roles, as described above. The same feature makes the Anouilh version of *Antigone* a fruitful stimulus text for civic education.

2.6.3 Rolf Hochhuth: Die Berliner Antigone (Antigone in Berlin)

Having worked on historical material since his earliest days as a dramatist, Rolf Hochhuth almost inevitably became a leading exponent of documentary drama once it became popular in the 1960s. He achieved his literary breakthrough with *The Deputy*, a portrayal of the Holy See's attitude to the Holocaust, in 1963. In the same year, he published his own adaptation of the *Antigone* story: the *novelle* (short narrative) *Die Berliner Antigone.* The historical background drawn on by Hochhuth for this work was the delivery of 269 female cadavers to the Berlin Institute of Anatomy between 1939 and 1945. All the women had been executed. Their bodies were used for research purposes. In attaching a dedication to his *novelle*—"Für Marianne" (for Marianne)—Hochhuth adds a biographical element, one that links to the story of the executed women: Marianne is the name of Hochhuth's first wife. She was the daughter of Rose Schlösinger, an activist in the Rote Kapelle (Red Chapel) resistance movement, who was arrested—along with a large number of her comrades—in September 1942, sentenced to death for espionage and executed by guillotining at Plötzensee, Berlin, in August 1943. Her husband had predeceased her, committing suicide at the front in February 1943.

The Antigone in Hochhuth's *novelle* is called Anne. Her brother has been sentenced to death and hanged; following an air raid on Berlin, Anne has removed his body from the anatomical institute and interred it covertly at the city's Invaliden cemetery. The offense committed by her brother, for which he has been sentenced to death, is reported in the text as follows: "Far from being grateful to have been evacuated by air as a seriously wounded casualty on one of the last flights out of the Stalingrad cauldron, he had shamelessly declared after his recovery that it was not the Russians but the Führer that had destroyed the Sixth Army" (Hochhuth 2010, p. 6). The "presiding judge" at Anne's trial is the father of her lover Bodo. Anne is accused of having breached the "Führer's directive that burial must be denied to perpetrators of political crimes" and furthermore of having "demonstrated against the State" in burying her brother (cf. Hochhuth 2010, p. 8). Hitler's view is that Anne should be "beheaded and placed at the disposal of the Institute of Anatomy as a warning to the medical students who had presumably helped in the removal of her brother's cadaver. Here in the Reich capital there must be no hue and cry hunting down student malcontents, as they pose no serious threat, and it was unfortunate enough that the enemy Press got wind of the Munich student uprising as a result of Freisler's *Volksgerichtshof* making too much fuss about dealing with those concerned, however fast it acted" (Hochhuth 2010, p. 7). Here Hochhuth creates an explicit parallel between the "lone offender" Anne in *Antigone in Berlin* and the anti-Nazi resistance group known as the White Rose.

Anne is finally executed—like Rose Schlösinger, the "Red Chapel" activist—on 5 August 1943. Here at the end of his narrative, then, Hochhuth has added a further explicit allusion to the resistance movement against National Socialism: to the attempt to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944. And so here again, as well as through the already cited allusion to the White Rose, it becomes clear that Hochhuth does not wish his *Berliner Antigone* to be understood as referring—even if only implicitly and in the dedication—to any one specific manifestation of German resistance to National Socialism. What the sacrificial gesture of his *Berliner Antigone* represents is the ethically founded political stance of all the men and women who in some way resisted the National Socialist dictatorship. "The women were taken singly, at short intervals, across the bonemeal-gray yard to the execution shed. No accompanying clergyman was permitted. Those present as witnesses, near the little three-legged table with the schnapps and glasses—the admiral, the public prosecutor, a Luftwaffe colonel representing the presiding judge, and a senior Army judicial officer—said not a word after the war, to avoid risk to their pensions. However, the register records that the executioner on this occasion was the horse-knacker, Röttger, a man known for his impish sense of humor, who was engaged a year later, almost to the day, to execute Field Marshal von Witzleben and eleven comrades by hanging, following the 20 July plot. A film was made of these executions for Hitler and his staff officers: they wanted to watch in the Reich Chancellery as the men who had tried to overthrow the regime died like cattle. A secretary of state reported subsequently that even Hitler's satanic Party comrade, his Propaganda Minister, covered his eyes more than once during the showing of the film" (Hochhuth 2010, p. 18).

Hochhuth's concern in his *Antigone in Berlin* is to pay tribute to the defiant attitude and political commitment of those who had the strength as individuals—whether or not acting in a group—to resist totalitarian dictatorship with all the force of their personality. And in one of his *Zwölf Blätter aus einem Geschichtsatlas* (Twelve Pages from a Historical Atlas), he highlights the commitment of Georg Elser, whose attempt on 8 November 1939 to kill Hitler with a bomb in the Munich Bürgerbräu beer cellar—the culmination of months of preparation and weeks of work—very nearly succeeded.

With regard to the shared commitment and political activism of German resistance members during the National Socialist dictatorship, it should be added here that the individuals referred to explicitly or implicitly in *Antigone in Berlin*, members of various resistance groups, did in historical reality try to establish mutual contacts. Two White Rose activists, for instance, Alexander Schmorell and Hans Scholl, based in Munich, tried to set up a link to resistance circles in Berlin with Falk Harnack as their intermediary. Falk Harnack was the brother of Arvid Harnack, who had been arrested in September 1942 and executed along with Rose Schlösinger and other members of the Red Chapel.

Over and above the still potent memory of resistance under the Third Reich, this final section of Hochhuth's Antigone *novelle* contains a further "legacy" theme capable of generating research and discussion in the civic education context: the inadequacy—often, indeed, total absence—of efforts after the war to trace and bring to justice those who had committed crimes under the National Socialist regime. A reference included here by the writer Rolf Hochhuth anticipates a public debate that did not take place until some years later, in the changed climate brought about by the West German student movement of 1968. The debate was revived in 1978 when Rolf Hochhuth triggered a public debate centered on the then *Ministerpräsident* (First Minister) of Baden-Württemberg (served 1966–1978), Hans Filbinger. Hochhuth called Filbinger "a dreadful lawyer" on account of his record as a navy lawyer during the Third Reich. The accusation prompted a public and political controversy that eventually led to Filbinger's resignation as *Ministerpräsident* of Baden-Württemberg on 7 August 1978.

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Chapter 3
Thucydides: *The Melian Dialogue*

3.1 Introduction: The Mutual Interdependence of Democracy and Foreign Policy in Athens

Thucydides' account of the war between Athens and Sparta is a classic text for students both of history and of politics. The reception history of his *Peloponnesian War* begins in the ancient world and extends through the Early Modern period—when it directly influenced the political thinking of Thomas Hobbes—to the present day (cf. Crane 1998; Kauppi 1991). Thucydides is considered the "founding father" (Nye 1988, p. 235) of the Realist paradigm of international relations theory, and even in our own time *The Peloponnesian War* has left its imprint on many politicians who once studied it (cf. Pinzler 2000). One episode in particular is still cited by textbooks dealing with relevant aspects of international relations theory: the reported dialogue between a delegation of Athenians and the ruling council of the Aegean island of Melos (cf. Krell 2000, pp. 89ff.; Betts 2013 pp. 69ff.).

The immediate historical context for Thucydides' account is the development of Athenian democracy. With victories over the Persians in the battle of Marathon in 400 BCE and in the naval engagement at Salamis in 480, Athens had become the Aegean's dominant sea power. The Athenians continued to consolidate their hegemony among the Greek city-states, to this end taking advantage of their military lead role in the Attic League, which had originally been set up as a defense against the Persians. This raison d'être in fact ceased to exist in 449 BCE, when peace was concluded with the Persian king, Artaxerxes I—the so-called Peace of Kallias. But the Athenians nevertheless continued using the league to enhance their hegemony among the member *poleis*.

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Their reason for doing so lay in the direct material benefit that the citizens of the first democracy could draw from the league. Over the course of the preceding two centuries, democracy had been made a reality in Athens through the politicization of further population sectors: this in turn had been achieved by conferring passive voting rights on all able-bodied Attic citizens capable of arming themselves and serving as hoplites, i.e., heavy infantry. Jochen Bleicken sums up the consequences for the political self-awareness of farmers: "All those who stood shoulder to shoulder in the battle-line were the new "active citizens". Nothing could be better calculated to strengthen the sense of political unity and shared responsibility than war and the inculcation by war of equality and of the principle, literally observed in battle, of keeping in step with one's peers" (Bleicken 1995, p. 27). Service as heavy foot-soldiers in the *phalanx* had become the *conditio sine qua non* for political rights for those whose peacetime work was on the land.

As a result, a considerably larger proportion of the population now participated actively in the Athenian polity. Commenting on this causal link between military service and political participation, Aristotle observes: "But as cities increased in size and those with heavy arms provided relatively more strength, more persons took part in the regime. Hence the regimes we now call polities used to be called democracies" (Aristotle 2013). The close connection between the development of the democratic form of government and Athenian foreign policy is reflected in the political practice of the Athenian *demos*: the overwhelming majority of decisions taken by the Athenian political institutions, and the popular assembly in particular, concerned external affairs. The primacy of foreign policy in Athenian collective thinking was due above all to the social situation in the *demos*. The citizens' voting behavior was to a greater or lesser extent determined by calculations of economic benefit, with the result that Athenian foreign policy had an unmistakable social component. The wars that Athens waged were the "most important factors behind the city's prosperity" (Meier 1990, p. 584).

Support given by other members of the naval alliance took the form in most cases not of troop detachments but of financial contributions to the Athens budget, a practice described by Cleon, following Thucydides, as the foundation of Athenian power. The Athenian *demos* for its part used the considerable sums involved not simply to build more warships and fund immediate military requirements but also for such purposes as expanding the system of popular decision-making assemblies. In this way, Athenian foreign policy in turn influenced the development of democracy at home, since the expansion of the popular assemblies and the associated program of introducing democratic equality in political practice could not have advanced so rapidly without the dependable financial cushion provided by the league monies.

These same levies paid by the league members also contributed to the Athenians' longer-term supremacy in the Attic naval league, by funding the arms procurement program and the military campaigns that ensured continued Athenian domination of the league. In addition to this role in the politics of power, league membership levies brought the Athenians direct economic benefit: funding for soldiers' pay and military equipment orders placed with Athens-based artisans and traders were the foundation for the city's economic prosperity. The buildings erected on the Acropolis during the

period of office of the strategist Pericles bear eloquent witness to this day to the material benefits reaped by the Athenian foreign policy of his time. In one respect it was the poorer sections of the population that benefited in particular from the proactive foreign policy and Athenian domination of the naval league. If a league member dropped out only to be subsequently re-enrolled, a part of its territory would be annexed by Athens and distributed among its own less affluent citizens.

However, the Athenian moves toward hegemony in the Aegean had brought about a conflict of interest with Sparta, the second great power of the Hellenic world, culminating in the Peloponnesian War of 431 to 404. Thucydides identifies the "last and true reason" for the war's outbreak as the buildup of Athenian power, provoking fears among the Spartans and forcing them into war (cf. Thucydides 1986, I 23, 6). Thucydides here distinguishes between the immediate factors prompting the outbreak of hostilities—the Athens–Sparta dispute over Kerkyra and Poteidaia—and the underlying reason for the Peloponnesian war—fear of letting Athens grow too powerful. Karl Reinhardt had this basic distinction between precipitating factors and the deeper reason for a war in mind when he referred to the "never fully learnt paradigm of how wars begin" (Reinhardt 1959, p. 193).

And it is for his carefully weighed account of the Peloponnesian war that Thucydides is regarded as a founding father of historiography. That he has a didactic purpose in writing it down he himself makes clear at the outset: "And it may well be that the absence of the fabulous from my narrative will seem less pleasing to the ear; but whoever shall wish to have a clear view both of the events which have happened and of those which will some day, in all human probability, happen again in the same or a similar way—for those to adjudge my history profitable will be enough for me. And, indeed, it has been composed, not as a prize-essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time" (Thucydides 1986, I 22, 4).

This aspiration by a classic author to transcend his own era in his works will be examined below as a discursive starting point for approaching contemporary issues in international relations. First, an account of the diplomatic exchanges between Athens and the small island of Melos in winter 416/415 BCE, during the sixteenth year of the Peloponnesian war, is given.

3.2 The *Melian Dialogue*: The Action

The Melians, descendants of Spartan émigrés, had remained neutral in the conflict between Athens and Sparta. But when the Athenians tried to coerce them into league membership by ravaging their land, the Melians went to war. Prior to laying siege to the city itself, the Athenians sent delegates to negotiate with the Melian council, with a view to enlisting Melos as a tribute-paying member of the league. The altercation that ensued was opened by the Athenian delegates with the following demand:

> The Athenians: Very well, we for our part have no wish to spin fine-sounding words—for example, citing our right to hegemony since defeating the Persians—into a long-winded and correspondingly unpersuasive harangue. Equally, however, we urge you for your part not to

> imagine you can convince us through similar rhetoric that as citizens of a daughter polis of the Lacedemonians you could not have gone to war (on our side), or that you would have done us no wrong. No! Instead, in the light of what we know to be the reality of the situation, you should seek what is attainable, knowing as well as we do that in human affairs right will only prevail when might is evenly balanced, while those who are stronger will enforce their will in every way they can, and the weak submit.

To this the Melians replied:

> Melians: As we think, at any rate, it is expedient (for we are constrained to speak of expediency, since you have in this fashion, ignoring the principle of justice, suggested that we speak of what is advantageous) that you should not rule out the principle of the common good, but that for him who is at the time in peril what is equitable should also be just, and though one has not entirely proved his point he should still derive some benefit therefrom. And this is not less for your interest than for our own, inasmuch as you, if you shall ever meet with a reverse, would not only incur the greatest punishment, but would also become a warning example to others. (Thucydides 1986, V 89)

Thucydides proceeds to set out the Athenian standpoint, namely that political neutrality in the Peloponnesian war is not an option for any state:

> Melians: And so, you mean, you would not consent to our remaining at peace and being friends instead of enemies, but allies of neither combatant?
>
> Athens: No; for your hostility does not injure us so much as your friendship; for in the eyes of our subjects that would be a proof of our weakness, whereas your hatred is a proof of our power. (Thucydides 1986, V 94 f.)

The Athenians invoke the currently prevailing balance of power in international relations as rationale and justification for their rejection of the Melian offer of friendship and political neutrality, and their insistence that the only alternative to political subjugation in the form of league membership is military confrontation. Were the Athenians, while holding hegemonial power in the Attic naval league, to accept Melian neutrality, they would be destabilizing their own supremacy, since other *poleis* belonging to the international system would interpret such a step as indicating weakness. In the Melian dialogue, the Athenian delegates then underpin their stance with what purports to be a law of nature, declaring that the natural order of things constrains humans to rule wherever they can. And as further justification they affirm: "And so in our case since we neither enacted this law nor when it was enacted were the first to use it, but found it in existence and expect to leave it in existence for all time, so we make use of it, well aware that both you and others, if clothed with the same power as we are, would do the same thing" (Thucydides 1986, V 105, 2).

With the Melians still declining to join the league, the Athenian delegation returned to the waiting army; the city was subsequently besieged by the Athenians and their allies, and after an intensification of the siege tactics in the winter of 416/415, the Melians surrendered unconditionally. The Athenians killed every male adult and sold the women and children into slavery. They then re-inaugurated the city, and soon afterward about 500 Athenian settlers were sent to populate it.

3.3 Athens-Melos: The Lesson for Posterity

What lesson, then, does Thucydides wish to be drawn from his account of the *Melian Dialogue*? A first point to note is that the relationship between might and right portrayed in the *Dialogue* represents a position upheld in classical Athens by the Sophists in particular. Plato, for instance, in his *Politeia,* has the Sophist Thrasymachos asserting, in dialogue with Socrates: "Justice is simply what is good for the stronger" (Plato 2013, 338c). This principle, Thrasymachos maintains, applies also to state authority in its various forms, so that each regime imposes laws reflecting its own nature, tyrannies imposing tyrannical laws, democracies democratic laws, and so on. Thrasymachos accordingly concludes: "That's what I mean, "my friend", when I say that in all cities the same thing is just, namely what is good for the ruling authority. This, I take it, is where the power lies, and the result is, for anyone who looks at it in the right way, that the same thing is just everywhere—what is good for the stronger" (Plato 2013, 339a). The view of the Sophist Thrasymachos, then, is that politics is not governed by principles of justice but by the interests of the powerful, and this still today constitutes the fundamental theoretical standpoint of political Realism, of which Thucydides is considered the archetypal exponent.

It would be fallacious to identify the Athenian position in the *Melian Dialogue* with political or ethical views held by Thucydides himself. In accordance with his own precept that historical events should be depicted as they happened and without commentary, the historian has here permitted himself no personal value judgment regarding the Athenians' conduct. But Thucydides' decision to narrate the Melos story immediately before his description of the second—and ultimately disastrous—Athenian expedition to Sicily permits the inference that it was his intention as author of the *Peloponnesian War* to drop a hint to his readers on how to view the Athenian handling of events on Melos. Immediately following his depiction in the *Melian Dialogue* of the law of the stronger operating in the context of relations between the *poleis*, his history of the Peloponnesian War turns to the Athenians' preparations for their second Sicilian expedition, launched in 415. Officially this was undertaken in response to an appeal for assistance from Segesta, a league member under pressure in Sicily. It was Alcibiades, a product of the Sophist school, who emerged as the most influential advocate of the mission, persuading the popular assembly to approve the dispatch of a huge fleet. Thucydides notes one aspect in particular of this doomed Sicilian expedition that was based on considerations of power politics: in his address to the assembly, attacking the pacific policies advocated by Nicias, Alcibiades held out the prospect of the increased power that would accrue to Athens were Syracuse to be defeated. He also, again in the same context, took recourse to an anthropological-psychological topos that had previously emerged in the *Melian Dialogue*. The Athenians owed it to themselves to undertake this war, he contended, since it was not in their nature to remain passive in such contexts: were they to relapse into "inactivity," they would wear themselves out, and their "everyone's skill will atrophy," a decision in favor of war, however, would ensure that "constant campaigning will add to our experience and train us to fight our cause with action rather than rhetoric" (Thucydides 2009, VI

18, 318f.). Athens must, then, expand continually or perish. These were the grounds on which the Athenian delegates on Melos had concluded that to earn the enmity of the Melians would be less dangerous than to concede them the neutrality they sought. The law of the stronger puts the stronger themselves under duress, generating a compelling—and permanent—need for an expansionist foreign policy. Hans J. Morgenthau, propounder of the Realist paradigm of international relations, argued, as had Thucydides, from the premise that such anthropological constants existed, and made them into axioms of his theory (cf. Morgenthau 1963, pp. 74ff.).

The military venture directed against Sicily ended in catastrophe for the Athenians, and the defeat at Syracuse was to prove the decisive turning point in the Peloponnesian War. This final defeat of Athens at Syracuse in 413 BCE led a year later to the conclusion by Sparta and the satraps of the Persian king, at Sardis, of a treaty that was to determine the war's final outcome. The king undertook to issue large-scale war loans, in exchange for recognition by the Spartans of his sovereignty over the Greek cities in Asia Minor. This material support from Persia enabled Sparta and its allies eventually, in 405, to destroy the last Athenian fleet; a year later, Athens was forced to capitulate.

In subsequent years, Athenian democracy too suffered decline, a gradual process. The decay of the democratic polity, like its growth decades before, correlated closely with developments in international relations. The navy in time gone by had given the masses a "live link to politics," and democracy had been closely associated from the outset with "naval power and the resulting imperialist ambitions": "With no dominion or even influence zone to its name, the city lived the life of an amputee" (Bleicken 1995, p. 479). As a result, many citizens turned away from politics. Even so, it was not its own internal decay that killed democracy in Athens. The quietus was administered to this pioneer democratic constitution by external agency, the Macedonian army, in 322 BCE.

The narrative structure that places the *Melian Dialogue* episode in *The Peloponnesian War* immediately before the doom-bringing Sicily expedition invites the inference that Thucydides himself saw the Athenians' treatment of the Melians as hubris. Insistence on the prerogative of the strong, which the Athenians exercised in its pure form at the expense of the inhabitants of the island of Melos, is linked directly and inescapably to the terminal decline of their own civilization, one of the Great Powers of antiquity, Athens.

3.4 Might, Interests, and Right in International Relations

In the *Melian Dialogue* episode of his war history, Thucydides presents in exemplary form the issue of might versus right in the relations between two *poleis* (today we would refer to nation-states). His account has the Athenian delegates deposing bluntly and clearly that in the field of international relations—in contrast to the legally underpinned isonomy inside the Athens *polis*—political equal rights do not exist. Fair exchange, they maintain, is possible only between parties of equal power,

and it is for the Melians as the weak nation to give way to the right of the strong. For discursive purposes, it is this might-versus-right antinomy that links the classical text to the international politics of modern times. In the *Melian Dialogue* as presented by Thucydides, Arnold Bergstraesser identifies a focus text for the exploration in a civic education context of "the basic patterns of power configurations and their ethical consequences in situations involving more than one nation-state" (cf. Bergstraesser 1966, p. 314).

Power is one of the key basic concepts of political discourse. The familiar definition by Max Weber has it that power means "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis in which this probability rests" (Weber 1978, p. 53). Power, according to Ernst-Otto Czempiel, is the "elixir of all politics" (Czempiel 2002, p. 3). But among political scientists, there is no kind of consensus on how power is to be defined (cf. Göhler 2004, pp. 244f.). In international relations theory, those most likely to rate power as a key concept are representatives of the Realist and Neorealist approaches: "The main themes in this school of thought are that in order to survive, states are driven to seek power, that moral or legal principles that may govern relations among citizens within states cannot control the relations among states, and that wars occur because there is no sovereign in the international system to settle disputes peacefully and to enforce judgments. States have no one but themselves to rely on for protection, or to obtain what they believe they are entitled to by right. Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* [. . .] is the classic statement of these ideas. [. . .] The Melian Dialogue is perhaps the most extreme and frank discussion of power politics, unclouded by diplomatic niceties, ever recorded" (Betts 2013, p. 66). After its beginnings in Thucydides, the Realist tradition continues from "[. . .] Machiavelli, Hobbes, the German schools of *Realpolitik* and *Machtpolitik*, to E. H. Carr, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau and others in the mid-twentieth century" (Betts 2013, p. 66). Thus, for example, in his standard work *Macht und Frieden* (Power and Peace), an exposition of classical Realism, Hans J. Morgenthau could declare with reference to power in international relations: "International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim" (Morgenthau 2006, p. 29).

Advocates of liberal theory certainly do not deny the importance of power in international relations. But they take issue with a tendency to focus exclusively on things military, preferring to point to the relevance of other facets of power. It is helpful, therefore, when considering the field of politics relevant for our present purpose, international politics, to resolve the broad category of power into different levels. Joseph S. Nye, who propounds the theory of institutionalist liberalism, subdivided power into three levels of operation—military, economic, and transnational. To this last level he assigns transnational problems such as the spread of AIDS, or global warming (cf. Nye 2002, p. 238). A similar categorization can be found in Zbigniew Brzezinski's analysis of "global power." Alongside military and economic power Brzezinski singles out the cultural dimension of power, by which he means the magnetic attraction exerted by American mass culture on young people, in particular, in all parts of the world (cf. Brzezinski 1997, pp. 24ff.). Nye,

on the basis of his political analyses of present-day power distribution in present-day international relations, proposes an instructive analogy:

> Today, power in the world is distributed in a pattern that resembles a complex three-dimensional chess game. On the top chessboard, military power is largely unipolar and the United States is likely to remain supreme for some time. But on the middle chessboard, economic power has been multipolar for more than a decade, with the United States, Europe, Japan and China as the major players, and with others gaining in importance. [. . .] The bottom chessboard is the realm of transnational relations that cross borders outside of government control, and it includes non-state actors as diverse as bankers electronically transferring sums larger than most national budgets at one extreme and terrorists transferring weapons or hackers threatening cyber-security at the other (Nye 2011, p. xv).

For civic education purposes, the study of conflict that has a foreign policy or international affairs dimension can be facilitated by determining the particular political thrust of the conflict in question along similar lines to the categorization proposed by Joseph S. Nye.

Closely bound up with the concept of power is that of interest. The concept of interest is a core component both of political studies and of political education. In the international relations subdiscipline likewise, with its special relevance for the study of foreign policy and international relations in general, the concept of interest is of central importance. Defining the content of the concept of interest, or more specifically national interest, as pursued by the nation-states in their political activity within the international system, is a matter on which opinions differ.

Within the range of views constituting the Realist paradigm, Hans J. Morgenthau stands for an objectivist position holding that "objective laws" apply in politics and that a nation-state's "national interest" accordingly is not the product of an individual's whim or a political group's collective special interest. On the contrary, according to this view, the "national interest" is an "objective datum" blindingly clear to all who apply their capacity for rational thought to foreign policy. For Morgenthau, the political Realist, the connection between interests and power is easy to see:

> The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power. [. . .] It sets politics as an autonomous sphere of action and understanding apart from other spheres, such as economics (understood in terms of interest defined as wealth), ethics, aesthetics, or religion. [. . .] We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power (Morgenthau 2006, p. 5).

Arnold Bergstraesser crafted a less objectivist and more open definition of interests in which interest is to be understood as "the foundational anxiety at the root of the formation of the political will, which concerns the present and future of the structure of life of the peoples and societies represented in foreign policy"—"Thus, what qualifies as interest at the individual level is the result of given, concrete conditions of life on one hand, and intellectually defined notions of meaning and purpose in foreign policy on the other. The formulation of a well-understood interest is the result of a critical evaluation of what is desirable for the people in light of the opportunities that emerge in terms of the overall political constellation, and in particular in terms of

options for power available to foreign policy institutions" (Bergstraesser 1965, p. 37). Bergstraesser's definition thus proposes twofold differentiation of the concept of interest into material and moral, the latter corresponding to aspects inherent in the concepts of justice or of norms, as applicable.

The Realist school, which bases its thinking on the premise of "anarchy" as the prime characteristic of international politics, takes the view that where a nation's interests conflict with norms or with agreements in legal form between nations, the outcome sooner or later will be the imposition of that nation's interests. Anarchy as such is not simply war of all against all, since wars are costly and their outcomes unpredictable; nations accordingly use other methods to pursue their interests. Benjamin Frankel therefore concludes: "In fact, there are many agreements, conventions, treaties, understandings, and other arrangements to facilitate cooperation among states, but as is the case with international organizations, these conventions and agreements merely reflect the interests of the states subscribing to them. When it is no longer in a state's interest to abide by a certain convention, the state withdraws from the convention [. . .]" (Frankel 1996, XV).

At this point the difference between the theoretical approaches of the Realist and the liberal schools of thought emerges clearly. While the Realists argue on the basis of anarchy prevailing in the international system, with actor states always directly or indirectly furthering national interests, representatives of liberalism's democratic and institutionalist approach stress the interdependence of the nations of today's world and the importance of international treaties and international organizations. With regard to the Realist school, Benjamin Frankel notes: "Realists do not say that institutions or conventions are not helpful. Institutions and agreements increase the knowledge states have of other states' capabilities, they facilitate negotiations and ease exchanges and interactions. This, however, is all they do. Institutions and conventions do not foster new consciousness or fundamentally alter the anarchic state of international relations. No state will sacrifice its interests (endanger its security, undermine its welfare, jeopardize its future) in order to serve a larger community" (Frankel 1996, XV). Institutionalist liberalism by contrast emphasizes that nations' calculations of interest and benefit lead them to cooperate and also to introduce norm- and rule-based international systems ("regimes"). Such "regimes" impact on the thinking of international actors in relation to their own interests and the legitimate pursuit of those interests, and may indeed change attitudes (cf. Müller 1993, p. 171f.).

Whereas the concept of power can be assigned schematically to the Realist and Neorealist paradigm of International Relations, norms have special relevance for adherents of the Idealist or liberal paradigm. The term "norm" embraces philosophical, ethical, and legal norms, although in actual foreign affairs practice these different aspects operate interdependently. Studies carried out by advocates of the institutionalist approach within the liberal theory of International Relations have shown correlations between the existence of international norms and the foreign policies of state actors when guided by these norms. International norms are thus capable of influencing state actors' conduct of foreign affairs, in some cases significantly (cf. Keohane 1993, pp. 271ff.). Actors such as governments and interest

groups will invoke international norms and exploit them in the domestic political arena for their own political interests. In this way, international norms become part of the domestic political debate and may as a result impact on national political decision-making (cf. Cortell and Davis 1996, pp. 451ff.).

The paradigm of liberal institutionalism denies neither the importance of national interests in the international arena nor their potential for generating violence, but its defenders regard the institutionalization of cooperative arrangements between nation-states, including provisions specifically aimed at conflict resolution, as possessing the potential to limit conflicts at that level. This institutionalized and regulated form of cooperation between states is termed an "international regime." International regimes in this sense are "sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations. Principles are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards of behavior defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action" (Krasner 1984, p. 2). Norms that have, so to speak, coagulated into international regimes contribute in this way to the cooperative addressing of the problems and conflicts arising from the anarchic condition of the international arena.

What distinguishes the liberal-institutionalist from the Realist perspective with regard to the concepts of power, interests, and norms in international relations is crisply summed up in a recent publication, as follows: "First, ideas matter. The pen is mightier than the sword, and a society's political and economic values will make it more or less prone to peace, no matter what the structure of the international balance of power may be. (. . .) Second, history is *progress*, a process of development in which the right ideas steadily drive out the wrong, not a cycle in which the fate of nations is to repeat the same follies. (. . .) Third, the fact that the international system is anarchic does not bar civility among nations. Under certain conditions, norms of cooperation can help keep countries from each others' throats because governments can recognize their mutual interest in avoiding conflict" (Betts 2013, p. 134).

The next stage in our argument is to return to the educational perspective, demonstrating how an exemplary case study, here the war in Iraq that began in 2003, can be used in civic education to develop a nuanced understanding of might and right as political realities.

3.5 Contending Positions on Might and Right in Present-Day International Relations

3.5.1 The Iraq War of 2003

"The tension between the ancient text and the contemporary present," in Hans-Georg Gadamer's view, "should not be glossed over in a naïve pretence of assimilation, but made explicit. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project a

historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present" (Gadamer 2004, p. 305). If the "horizon of the present," the focus for civic education purposes, is to be the present-day international relations arena, then the Iraq war launched by the USA and allies in 2003, an international conflict offering insights into contemporary political practice, clearly provides an appropriate case study.

The war in Iraq from 2003 was the first war fought as an expression of a new American foreign policy paradigm: it emerges in retrospect as the precedent-setting first deployment of the then new foreign affairs strategy generally referred to from today's perspective as the Bush Doctrine. President George W. Bush had outlined this doctrine for the first time in his address to the nation of January 2002, in which he described three countries, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, as an "axis of evil." At this time Bush also signaled his preparedness to take preventive action against these states should need arise. The doctrine was formally unveiled in September 2002 when President Bush presented his new US *National Security Strategy* (NSS) (cf. NSS 2002). It laid down the principles on which the US Administration proposes to build the new world order. Maintaining the military supremacy of the USA is rated here as a lead imperative, directed primarily against the contingency of China becoming a military rival. "Rogue states," so termed, i.e., states possessing weapons of mass destruction or seeking to acquire them, and thus identified as potential threats to US security, may now be opposed by means including "anticipatory self-defense." Ultimately the aim of the NSS is "to create an international structure in which American norms apply universally and can be enforced by Washington without restriction" (Bierling 2003, p. 245).

In adopting this policy the USA is also committing itself to infringing international law and the principles of the United Nations if necessary. The Charter of the United Nations enshrines the proscription of the use of force (art. 2 para. 4 of the Charter of the United Nations) aimed at safeguarding world peace and international security and the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of any nation (art. 2 para. 7 of the Charter of the United Nations). Under the Charter of the United Nations, the use of armed force is legitimate only if sanctioned by a resolution of the UN Security Council or—as laid down in Article 51 of the UN Charter—for self-defense if an armed attack occurs. While some UK and US authors dissent, the prevailing view among international law experts is that "preventive self-defense is an offense against international law and requires the alleged threat to have actually materialized in the form of an imminent attack" (Hillgenberg 2003, p. 157). Unlike the intervention in Afghanistan, however, the invasion of Iraq was carried out without UN mandate on the grounds that preventive action against the Iraqi dictator's supposed weapons of mass destruction was a necessity.

For civic education purposes, the Iraq war provides a suitable case study for examination of the modern balance between might and right in international relations. A central point of focus here is the dispute between the US Administration and other members of the Security Council in the forum of the United Nations. In this debate, for the first time, America's policy was based on the NSS of 2002, under which the US proposed to prioritize its own vital interests even if they conflicted with international law.

A text by Robert Kagan can be used to facilitate a deeper understanding of America's position. Kagan works at the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* in Washington and belongs to the influential school of Neoconservative thought ("Neocons"), which had a measurable influence on policymaking under the Bush regime. Kagan attracted attention with his essay *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, which was also distributed in Germany by the Federal Agency for Civic Education. Kagan's central thesis claims that the present transatlantic policy differences are an expression of deeper divergences in worldview between a powerful USA and comparatively weaker Europe. While the USA must stand the test of "the brutal laws of an anarchic Hobbesian world where power is the ultimate determinant of national security and success" (Kagan 2003, p. 37), the Europeans "have stepped out of the Hobbesian world of anarchy into the Kantian world of perpetual peace" (Kagan 2003, p. 57). "Europe's new Kantian power," Kagan proceeds to argue, "could flourish only under the umbrella of American power exercised according to the rules of the old Hobbesian order." (Kagan 2003, p. 73)

Kagan's heavy play on Thomas Hobbes declares his adherence to the Realist school of international relations theory, which in turn goes back to Thucydides. Within the political sciences division of international relations, Realism in its various shadings remains the most influential theoretical approach (cf. Lebow and Strauss 1991, p. 1). Hobbes' own ideas were deeply imprinted by Thucydides, whose oeuvre he translated into English.

When Robert Kagan asserts that the USA has to make its own way in international relations in face of the harsh laws of that anarchic Hobbesian world, he is harking back to the anthropologically pessimistic mindset of the English philosopher, whose own thought had been imprinted through and through by the ravages of the seventeenth-century English civil wars. In his major theoretical work on contract, *Leviathan*, Hobbes depicts the natural state of human relationships as a struggle of all against all, every man a wolf to others. He sees this as the natural state of affairs obtaining between nation-states likewise. For Hobbes, the inherent right of the stronger is neutralized by an imaginary contract between humans ordaining that all are subject to an overriding governmental authority—the Leviathan (cf. Hobbes 1984). Whereas the individual nation-state has its internal peace contractually assured by the Leviathan, however, Kagan contends that in the domain of international relations the anarchic Hobbesian world and the law of the jungle prevail to this day. This assessment can be contrasted for civic education purposes with the other great school of international relations theory, dismissed by Kagan: the school that traces its intellectual ancestry back to Immanuel Kant's essay *Zum ewigen Frieden* (On Everlasting Peace) in 1795 and finds institutional expression in the United Nations. *Zum ewigen Frieden* presents a theoretical schema for the placing of international relations on a legal footing through transformation of international law into a worldwide constitution and credits the normative autonomy of international law with a pacific influence (cf. Kant 1991).

In civic education, these contrasting traditions illustrate how the might-versus-right relationship, far from remaining constant through time, from Thucydides to

Hobbes to the present, has evolved markedly since the beginning of the modern era. The groundbreaking treatises published by Hugo Grotius in the seventeenth century began the evolution of international law into a progressively more comprehensive legal framework for the conduct of international relations. At global level, this development found institutional expression after World War One in the League of Nations and after World War Two in the United Nations. In this context, the political disputes arising between the European nations and the USA over the creation of the International Criminal Court serve as an instructive example.

Critical study of the 2003 Iraq war in civic education aptly illustrates the point that today, in contrast to the times in which Thucydides lived, or Thomas Hobbes, and contrary also to the state of affairs implied by Robert Kagan, legality—the right—is a real factor in international relations. By marginalizing the global organization, the UN, both in the run-up to the Iraq war on which it was intent and during the campaign, the US conspicuously defied this accepted principle of legality. Even if we assume the most altruistic of motives—neutralization of weapons of mass destruction and long-term democratization of Iraq—the USA set other countries a bad example by attacking Iraq without United Nations mandate. This act of self-empowerment by the USA to initiate a preventive war impugns the core principle of nonviolence, and also amounts to opening a Pandora's Box of precedent, as other countries could follow suit, and the way would be open for any of them to take arbitrary action based on military superiority (cf. Hillgenberg 2003, pp. 158ff.). But the Kantian variant, as Jürgen Habermas puts it, recognizes "the possibility that a superpower—provided only that it is democratically constituted and acts with foresight—will not invariably misuse international law for its own ends, and may support a project that will in the end actually tie its hands. It might even be in such a nation's long-term interest not to seek to deter putative future great powers by threatening pre-emptive strikes, but rather to move while there is still time to secure their adherence to the rules of a politically constituted community of nations" (Habermas 2004, p. 148). By contrast, the US global strategy in connection with the Iraq war was modeled, as the American economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman remarked, on the motto of the ancient Roman empire, *Oderint dum metuant*—"Let them hate us, what matters is that they fear us!" (cf. Scherpenberg 2003, p. 2). And that brings us back to the *Melian Dialogue* and the analogous argument produced by the Athenians:

> Melians: And so, you mean, you would not consent to our remaining at peace and being friends instead of enemies, but allies of neither combatant?
>
> Athens: No; for your hostility does not injure us so much as your friendship; for in the eyes of our subjects that would be a proof of our weakness, whereas your hatred is a proof of our power. (Thucydides 1986, V 94 f.)

Kagan for instance recognizes political constellations in international relations in the writings of Thucydides and Hobbes that still apply in contemporary contexts. He connects them to his apologia for existing conditions in international relations, arguing for "the vital necessity of having a strong, even predominant America—for the world and especially for Europe" (Kagan 2003, p. 101).

Kagan's neo-conservative thinking thus remains stuck in the Thucydidean and Hobbesian world of international relations and reliant on a simplistic analogy between those times and the present. From this perspective, history is bound to appear as a Nietzschean eternal recurrence of the same. Yet it is precisely the "task of a historical hermeneutics to consider the tension that exists between the identity of the common object"—here the balance of might and right in international relations—"and the changing situation in which it must be understood" (Gadamer 2004, p. 308).

From our present-day historical perspective, then, its norms based on assumptions not current in Thucydides' or Hobbes' day, the *Melian Dialogue* gains new meaning. Our contemporary present is different in possessing such achievements in international law as the United Nations Charter, the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war, and the International Criminal Court in The Hague. These institutions offer a recourse not available during the Athens–Melos standoff, namely a globally effective, non-evadable standard for political adjudication of the disputes surrounding the invasion of Iraq.

As a classic exemplar of the might-versus-right issue in international relations, the *Melian Dialogue* is an excellent model for demonstrating the gulf that lies between ancient and modern perceptions of this issue. In the event that a state acts today in the manner of former millennia, then its citizens have automatic recourse—provided the state is liberal and democratic—to a normative criterion of judgment that can be given effect when the next election comes round. Writing in his *The Law of Peoples* about the right to wage war, John Rawls accordingly concludes: "Indeed, a liberal society cannot justly require its citizens to fight in order to gain economic wealth or to acquire natural resources, much less to win power and empire. (When a society pursues these interests, it no longer honors the Law of Peoples, and it becomes an outlaw state.)" (Rawls 1999, p. 91; parenthesis *sic*).

On participation in a liberal society, John Rawls advocates that "... ideally, citizens work out a truly political opinion, and not simply an opinion about what would best advance their own particular interests" (Rawls 1999, p. 91). But if citizens in a liberal society or their political leaders act solely on the basis of rational considerations of self-interest, they will have their precedent in Thucydides, whose Athenians show that democratically run states too are capable of pursuing an imperialist foreign policy.

Under George W. Bush's successor as US President, Barack Obama, the unilateralist character of American foreign and security policy has softened significantly. The USA is now taking a more cooperative line in its consultations with allies and showing greater understanding of what Nye termed "soft power": "By showing restraint in foreign policy and drawing a clear line between himself and his predecessor in office, Obama also succeeded in restoring the United States' credibility as a democracy and alliance partner. American soft-power qualities, emblematic of the nation's values, exerted their influence once more. What guarantees the nation's strength is thus not political or military coercion, but the fabric woven from values and ideas, open structures, security conferred by multilateral institutions and alliances" (Kornelius 2012, pp. 67f.).

3.5.2 *The International Criminal Court*

The idea of creating an International Criminal Court had been mooted at the United Nations not long after the Second World War, the International Military Tribunals at Nuremberg and Tokyo having provided the inspiration and a prototype. But the project remained stalled for the duration of the Cold War, its realization beginning only as a follow-up to the ad hoc tribunals set up by the UN for the former Yugoslavia (1993) and Ruanda (1994) (cf. Bachmann et al. 2013, pp. 11ff.). The Statute establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC), adopted by the United Nations at a meeting in Rome on 17 July 1998, limits the Court's jurisdiction to four especially heinous crimes, each of which affects the international community as a whole: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. The ICC is complementary to individual states' internal justice systems; under the Statute's provisions, the latter take precedence. The principle of complementarity means that the ICC will take action if national criminal prosecution authorities prove unable or unwilling to pursue enquiries or the prosecution process rigorously.

The Statute of Rome was adopted only after considerable debate among the delegates, who can be divided into two groups of nations with two different views on how the ICC was in practice to be constituted. One group—led by the USA—showed itself to be primarily concerned with its members' national sovereignty and sought to permit the ICC to act only with the specific consent of the states concerned in any given case. The opposing group, made up of "like-minded nations," including all EU member states, together with human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, fought to make the ICC as effective and as autonomous as possible—and it was this position that prevailed when the Statute of Rome was finally put to the vote.

The European community of nations having been among the most committed advocates of the extension of international law represented by the creation of an International Criminal Court, the Council of the European Union in its Common Position on the ICC accordingly declared the establishment of the Court, for the purpose of preventing and curbing the commission of serious crimes, to be "an essential means of promoting respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, thus contributing to freedom, security, justice and the rule of law as well as contributing to the preservation of peace and the strengthening of international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations" (Council of the European Union 2001).

1. The consolidation of the rule of law and respect for human rights, as well as the preservation of peace and the strengthening of international security, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and as provided for in Article 11 of the EU Treaty, are of fundamental importance to, and a priority for, the Union.
   http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9362-2001-INIT/en/pdf

By April 2002 a total of 60 nations, including all EU member states, had deposited their instrument of ratification—sanctioning the creation of the ICC—with the United Nations, enabling the Statute to take effect on 1 July 2002, and the

Court was then duly established as a permanent body, with its headquarters at The Hague. The European Union's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, described the coming into force of the Statute as the beginning of a "new era in international law": "We actively supported the creation of the World Court because it fully accords with the principles of justice and human rights that we cherish, and actively supports them. Our continent has witnessed the most heinous of crimes, during two world wars, and most recently in the Balkans. But Europe is not alone in having suffered such terror. All parts of the world have seen grave violations of international human rights. We need the means to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice. We must ensure that the likelihood of such crimes diminishes in future by creating the strong expectation that justice will prevail. We must end the era of impunity in which, all too often, the victims are forgotten while the perpetrators go unpunished" (Solana 2002).

But the USA was opposed from the start—as were other powerful nations, such as Russia, China, and India—to the creation of the ICC, and sought ways to thwart its operation: "The United States was the only major power to adopt a policy of active marginalization. [. . .] The other skeptical major powers—Russia, China, India, and [. . .] Japan—mostly opted for a policy of passive marginalization" (Bosco 2014, S. 178). The former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger explained the USA's negative attitude to the creation of the ICC as follows:

> To be sure, violations of human rights, war crimes, genocide, and torture have so disgraced the modern age and in such a variety of places that the effort to interpose legal norms to prevent or punish such outrages does credit to its advocates. The danger is that it is being pushed to extremes which risk substituting the tyranny of judges for that of governments; historically, the dictatorship of the virtuous has often led to inquisitions and even witch hunts. [. . .] For example, can any leader of the United States or of other countries be hauled before international tribunals established for other purposes? [. . .] Most Americans would be amazed to learn that the ICTY, created at American behest in 1993 to deal with Balkan war criminals, asserts a right to investigate America's political and military leaders for allegedly criminal conduct—and for the indefinite future, since no statute of limitations applies (Kissinger 2002, pp. 273 and 280).

The reservations expressed by Kissinger were not shared in the European Union or by those who spoke for German foreign policy. Hans-Peter Kaul, for instance, who at the time was head of the German Foreign Office's international law section and later became one of the ICC judges, commented on the German position and specifically on the Americans' qualms: "After the Nazi regime, Germany learned at first hand how important it is to review crimes by proper legal process. That is bound to be an important motive.

> There was also a clear objective. Every party in the Bundestag endorsed the creation of the International Criminal Court. The idea was to put in place an effective, independent and therefore credible court of justice. [. . .] It is true that Washington presently dissents. This is all the more regrettable when one reflects how deeply the rule of law and the fight against injustice are embedded in American tradition. Take the Nuremberg trials, for a start. Also, the American concerns are unfounded. The Statute governing the court is full of safeguards. One

> of them is a provision that national jurisdictions have precedence in launching criminal prosecutions. So countries that are serious about their obligation to prosecute heinous crimes have absolutely nothing to fear (Kaul 2002).

Subsequently, however, under the Presidency of Barack Obama, the American position underwent what Hans-Peter Kaul describes as an "almost dramatic switch to the positive"—"The US State Department's web pages now contain no criticism of the ICC, while they do express willingness, in spite of non-participatory status, to support the court whenever this is in United States interests" (Kaul 2013, p. 192).

In 2003, the Court's first 18 judges were sworn in, and 122 nations to date have ratified the Statute of Rome. The USA and some other countries such as China, Russia, and India, continue to dissociate themselves from the ICC. In March 2006, for the first time ever, an accused person was put on trial before the Court. This was Thomas Lubanga, a member of the Hema ethnic group and leader of the "Union of Congolese Patriots" and its militia in Eastern Congo. Lubanga is alleged to have been one of the principal protagonists of the ongoing war between the Hema and the Lendu. This war, like all Congolese conflicts, was fuelled by neighboring countries and by competition for raw materials. According to United Nations estimates, it has cost around 60,000 lives since 1999. The militia representing the Union of Congolese Patriots is accused of massacres of Lendu civilians, mass rapes, the burning down of entire villages, and the recruitment of child soldiers. The ICC eventually sentenced Lubanga in July 2012 to 14 years' imprisonment for recruiting hundreds of children as soldiers.

Lubanga's committal for trial by the ICC and the Guilty verdict marked a new phase in the process of establishing a legal framework for the conduct of international relations at global level. Proceedings have now been initiated in numerous further efforts to punish the perpetrators of very grave crimes against humanity. On the question of might versus right, revisited in the light of these developments, the following comment is apposite: "The International Criminal Court represents one of the world's most elaborate experiments in enforcing legal restrictions on violence. By threatening the prosecution of individuals—including senior government and military officials—who commit or order crimes, it seeks to constrain the behavior of even powerful states" (Bosco 2014, p. 177). Assessing the future prospects for the ICC and the precarious balance between might and right, Hans-Peter Kaul accordingly concludes: "Contemporary international penal law and the International Criminal Court are innovative attempts to give backbone to the universality of human rights. If we are realistic we must also recognize that they are held in the field of forces surrounding the seemingly eternal conflict between plain brute force on the one hand and the aspiration, on the other, to wider dominion for the rule of law and stronger safeguarding of human rights. *Realpolitik*, as many call it, cynicism, contempt for legality—and reverses and disappointments—are certain to go on in the future, calling the validity of the ICC into question again and again" (Kaul 2013, p. 196)—Civic education, against this global background, has an obligation to maintain a realistic perspective on issues of might and right, power and justice, in international relations, and that means a perspective capable of embracing contradictions and therefore of coping with ambiguity.

3.5.3 *Might and Right from the Perspective of German Foreign Policy*

The breakup of the Soviet empire and the associated upheaval in international relations at the end of the 1980s constituted the political context for the opening of the German-German border on November, 9, 1989. From that point, 25 years ago now, the process of creating the unified German polity could begin. The *Treaty on the Final Settlement With Respect to Germany* (the "Two-plus-Four Treaty") negotiated and signed subsequently by the four former victorious and occupying powers, the USA, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France, with the Federal Republic and GDR governments, laid down the international parameters for the reunification of Germany on 3 October 1990 through the accession of the GDR to the (old) Federal Republic as provided for by Article 23 (old) of the Basic Law.

No other policy area was as radically affected by reunification as foreign and security policy. Removal of the division between East and West Germany broke up an entrenched constellation in foreign affairs and defense policy that had had the two German states confronting each other for decades from their respective sides in the Eastern and Western alliances. Attainment of national unity brought in its train the restoration of full national sovereignty to Germany and represented an epochal turning point in German foreign policy, which from now on enjoyed considerably greater autonomy in decision-making. Disengagement from the postwar European political structures has placed Germany in a new international context. Its geopolitical position between East and West, combined with the European continent's largest population and greatest economic potential, prompted Hans-Peter Schwarz to describe Germany as "the Central Power within Europe" (cf. Schwarz 1994).

Germany's return to the "world stage" (cf. Schöllgen 2003) has brought increased responsibilities in the area of foreign and security policy. True, there has been no fundamental change since the time of the former West German Federal Republic in central foreign policy preoccupations—the European integration process and the transatlantic partnership. But there has been some adjustment, a redistribution of priorities, in foreign and security policy. For example, Germany's voice in international politics now carries distinctly more weight than before reunification: "The effectiveness of any individual nation, in other words its ability to achieve its foreign policy objectives, is determined by the material and moral resources at its command, together with the respective levels of antagonism and receptiveness prevailing among other nations with regard to the objectives concerned. *German power*, so defined, has grown substantially in recent years—and thus also improved German security" (Hellmann 2013, p. 50; Hellmann's italics).

Commenting on Germany's current situation in terms of international relations and security, participants in a project called "Elements of a German foreign and security policy for a changing world"—jointly sponsored by the *German Marshall Fund of the United States* and the *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (Berlin) (German Institute for International and Security Affairs)—recorded the view that Germany "has never been as prosperous, secure and free as it is today" and accordingly carries

a greater weight of responsibility than hitherto (SWP/GMF 2013, p. 2). The statement also pointed out that the United Nations, the European Union, and NATO continue to represent between them the formal parameters within which German foreign and security policy has freedom of operation. But the sustaining core values on which that foreign and security policy is founded are Germany's own normative and multilateralist sympathies: "From Germany's past followed an unconditional commitment to human dignity, freedom, the rule of law, and democracy, as well as to an international order based on universal norms" (SWP/GMF 2013, p. 5). There is, to be sure, always a possibility that the normative predisposition of German foreign policy on the one hand may conflict with Germany's immediate foreign policy interests on the other. The same project report accordingly concludes: "What is true is that conflicts between German values and interests, especially in dealing with authoritarian states, are often unavoidable in the short term and that they must be balanced from case to case. In the long term, however, a commitment to values is an existential interest for any Western democracy" (SWP/GMF 2013, p. 6).

It is clear from the foregoing that civic education must concern itself with the tension that arises from time to time in the field of foreign and security policy between power, norms, and interests. The goal of such study should be to deepen understanding of how goals can conflict in this area of politics; such understanding goes along with tolerance for the contradictions that may arise. That tolerance of course must have its limits. But it should extend far enough to ensure that if foreign policy goals clash with one another, there will be no knee-jerk response of jettisoning the baby with the bathwater and casting doubt on the value of foreign policy as such. The borderline between tolerating a foreign policy norm breach and contesting this breach will certainly have to be determined on a case-by-case basis each time a conflict of goals arises, values versus interests, and this will require political judgment.

The same considerations apply to assessment of individual national policies in the field of international relations in general. While it can be taken as axiomatic in the case of Western nations that their foreign policies are not determined by considerations of power alone, it remains true that in particular situations a nation's foreign policy may well experience a conflict of goals, a forced choice between a *realpolitisch* assertion of its own interests and the upholding of the values and norms in which it believes: "Western governments for the most part endorse liberal institutionalism, in the belief that the increasing recourse of international institutions makes for a more predictable, cooperative and thus peaceful environment. Even great powers appreciate the order institutions help maintain. [...] Nevertheless, major powers such as the US at times prefer 'unilateralism'" (Richardson 2012, p. 56).

Richardson's final point is equally applicable to non-Western nations. A currently ongoing example of conflict in international relations between might and right is furnished by Russia's actions with regard to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Ukraine in the context of the Crimean crisis of 2014 and also with regard to the civil war in Eastern Ukraine. The German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel commented: "In the case of the Crimea we are witnessing a headlong plunge

back into old attitudes of mind, shown by violation of the territorial integrity of another nation, in this instance Ukraine. It nevertheless remains my conviction that while in the short term the rights enforced may be those of the powerful, in the longer term the outcome will demonstrate the power of what is rightful" (Merkel 2014).

In civic education, exemplary case studies provide a useful focus point to assist analytical study of the unstable relationship of might and right in international relations. The ambivalences and contradictions arising out of these issues can be identified and discussed in the light of accumulated expertise in political science. The objective of such studies in the context of civic education should be to foster that tolerance of ambiguity that makes it possible to deal dispassionately and methodically with the sometimes seemingly irreconcilable demands imposed on foreign policy by power, interests, and values, respectively.

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Chapter 4
Heinrich von Kleist: *Michael Kohlhaas*

4.1 Introduction: Kohlhase/Kohlhaas—"At Once the Most Upright and Most Terrible of Human Beings"

The first part of Heinrich von Kleist's tale *Michael Kohlhaas* was published in 1808 in the literary journal *Phöbus*, of which Kleist and a constitutional lawyer called Adam Müller were joint editors. "To be continued," readers were advised, but *Phöbus* closed down for financial reasons in 1809, and so it was not there that the story appeared in its entirety, but in the first volume of Kleist's collected stories in 1810. The subtitle of *Michael Kohlhaas* reads "From an old chronicle." This was Kleist's acknowledgment of the historical Hans Kohlhase, who was born c. 1500 and executed in 1540. A cattle-dealer, he was a citizen of Cölln an der Spree (its location is now central Berlin) and became involved in a long-running feud in the state of Saxony, of which an account is given in the *Märckische Chronik* of Peter Hafftitz (c. 1520–1602). The chronicle has Hans Kohlhase, cattle-dealer, leaving Cölln, which was in the Electorate of Brandenburg, on October 1, 1532, heading for the Michaelmas market at Leipzig, in Saxony. Between Wittenberg and Leipzig, on the orders of a Saxon Junker, Günter von Zaschwitz, he was made to leave behind some of his horses as a surety until such time as he could furnish proof that they were his property and not stolen. The *Märckische Chronik*, probably a source for Kleist too, records what happened next:

> But after Kohlhase had continued on his way, the same nobleman pressed the horses into his own service for some weeks, in which they toiled greatly until they were exhausted and good for nothing. Accordingly, when Kohlhase returned with the proof that had been required of him, he was not minded to take the horses back, but demanded to be paid their full value. But the nobleman would not do as he was bidden, and Kohlhase, notwithstanding that he had

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> sought recourse to the Elector of Saxony, as it is laid down, having nevertheless not been granted the justice that he sought, accordingly declared himself in feud with the Elector of Saxony [. . .]. Wherefore he violently attacked the Elector of Saxony, plundered the Saxon villages that border on the Mark Brandenburg, burnt the little town of Zane to the ground, and wrought great havoc [. . .] (translated from Hamacher 2003, p. 59f.).

Eventually, Hans Kohlhase approached the Reformer Martin Luther himself for advice. Luther replied from Wittenberg in a letter dated December, 8, 1534, attempting to dissuade Kohlhase from pursuing his feud: "Injustice is not set right by a second injustice. Being a judge in one's own case and judging in one's own case is assuredly unjust, and the wrath of God will not let it go unpunished. What you can do that is rightful, that you can well do; if you cannot secure justice for yourself, then the only good counsel is to suffer injustice. [. . .] And so, if you are desirous of my advice (as you say in your letter), my advice is to accept peace when you are offered peace, and accept harm to your property and your honor rather than continue in such enterprises [. . .]" (translated from Hamacher 2003, p. 74). The story ended in March 1540 with Hans Kohlhase being put on trial, along with Georg Nagelschmidt. They were sentenced to death and broken on the wheel outside St. George's Gate (now Strausberger Platz in central Berlin).

Heinrich von Kleist based his tale *Michael Kohlhaas* on the life story of Hans Kohlhase, probably prompted by his friend Ernst von Pfuel. Into the early modern historical context of Kohlhase's tribulations, he imported major social and legal controversies dominant in his own period and born essentially of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. In *Michael Kohlhaas* he addresses modern ideas: the social contract, issues of natural justice and the right of resistance, the sense of justice, and the state monopoly of power.

The story's real fascination lies not so much in its legal and political subject matter as in its narratorial ambivalence. Paradox and related uncertainties of interpretation are manifest in Kleist's opening sentence: "About the Middle of the sixteenth century, there dwelt on the banks of the River Havel a horse-dealer named Michael Kohlhaas. The son of a schoolmaster, he was at once the most upright and most terrible of human beings" (Kleist 1967, p. 1; emphases added). This first paragraph sets the tone for the rest of the story, unsettling the reader with its apparent stark paradox: "Until his thirtieth year, this extraordinary man might well have served as the model of a good citizen. [. . .] For it was his strong sense of justice that made of him a robber and a murderer" (Kleist 1967, p. 1).

It was after a "devastating life crisis and loss of ideals in the years around 1800" (Frick 2014, p. 14) that Kleist resolved to become a writer. This upheaval in his life, commonly referred to as his *Kant crisis*, resulted from his reading of Immanuel Kant. Kleist was shocked by Kant's views on the limitations of human knowledge—his epistemological skepticism. He was thrown into a state of existential uncertainty that left its traces right across his subsequent writings. Certainly, the many ambiguities and the fundamental ambivalence of perspective that characterize Kleist's writings are the reflection at least in part of his Kant crisis. Kleist's avoidance of committed positions in issues of law, justice, and the individual's relation to the state leaves his

Michael Kohlhaas narrative open to widely differing interpretations. It could thus be made to serve the purposes of mutually incompatible political persuasions. During the Weimar Republic, for example, Nazis and Communists alike would cite Kleist's story, seeking to harness the figure of Michael Kohlhaas to their respective causes.

The writer Heinrich von Kleist himself, widely misunderstood during his lifetime, was to enjoy higher public esteem after his death in 1810, advancing during the nineteenth century to the status of an author deemed fit for study in schools, and in due course gaining the prominent place in the syllabus that he still holds today. Classroom reading of *Michael Kohlhaas*, for instance, was recommended to teachers in August Koberstein's *Grundriss der deutschen National-Litteratur. Zum Gebrauch auf Gymnasien* (Outline of Germany's national literature. For use in grammar schools), published in 1837 (cf. Pfeiffer 2009, p. 469). Law schools too have used *Michael Kohlhaas* as a literary illustration useful for students getting to grips with the perennial issues of law, justice, the sense of fairness, and the relationship between positive law and natural law. The legal author Wolfgang Naucke considered *Michael Kohlhaas* to have such value as "illustrative legal background reading" that "no student [. . .] should graduate from law school without having expressed a formal opinion on Kohlhaas" (Naucke 2000, p. 111).

In a similar way, *Michael Kohlhaas* is a rewarding background text for students of civic education, confronting them with the ambivalences and contradictions of law and justice, and the balanced options of identifying with or distancing oneself from the protagonist's actions. Gustav Radbruch, for instance, as far back as 1948, in his *Staatsbürgerkunde als Lehrfach* (Civics in the Classroom) recommended class study of *Michael Kohlhaas* precisely because of the disquiet that Kleist evokes through this story with regard to the issue of justice (cf. Radbruch 1948, p. 7). The inescapable ambivalences and imponderables arising out of the action challenge every reader to undertake that intensive critical study without which no independent perspective can be achieved on the legal and political issues that this text raises. The conflicting readings and resulting divisions of critical opinion can in themselves provide study material serving civic education's central aim of developing the capacity for independent political judgment.

4.2 *Michael Kohlhaas*: The Action

Kleist's narrative is based loosely on the biographical circumstances of Hans Kohlhase and the historical events of the time. His Michael Kohlhaas is a horse-trader based in Brandenburg and is on the road in the neighboring state of Saxony with a string of young horses. Near the castle of a local *Junker* or minor nobleman, Wenzel von Tronka, he is unlawfully denied passage. On the pretext that there is no right of passage without documentation, Tronka's castellan forces Kohlhaas to leave two of his horses behind as surety. In Dresden, Kohlhaas obtains official confirmation of "what he had suspected all along—that the story about the permit was indeed a fiction" (Kleist 1967, p. 7). After selling his remaining horses in Dresden "at a

satisfactory price," he returns to Tronka's castle "without any bitter feelings apart from a sense of the general wretchedness of the world" (Kleist 1967, p. 7), to reclaim the two impounded horses. But on arrival there he finds that his groom has been chased off and his two horses then forced to do the work of oxen, starved and scandalously mistreated. Kohlhaas' furious protests are contemptuously brushed aside by the castellan. Back home, he finds his groom, Herse, lying incapacitated by his injuries: on protesting against the mistreatment of the horses, he had been viciously beaten up and chased off the Junker's land.

Kohlhaas thereupon files a lawsuit against the Junker with the Dresden courts, petitioning for restoration of his horses to their original condition and payment of nursing costs for his injured groom. Kleist's narrator comments as follows: "The justice of the complaint was indeed clear. The fact that the horses had been detained in an unlawful manner threw a decisive light on the whole matter. And even if they had been injured by pure accident, the horse-dealer's demand that they should be restored to him in a sound and healthy state was nevertheless a just one" (Kleist 1967, p. 19). After a year's wait, Michael Kohlhaas finally learns that his legal action has been quashed and that this verdict results from manipulation at higher level by two influential Tronka kinsmen, the Junkers Hinz and Kunz von Tronka. Kohlhaas continues trying every possible means to obtain the justice he has been denied. Eventually he comes to the conclusion that his only remaining option is to petition his own head of state, the Elector of Brandenburg, stating his case. He reassures his devoted wife, Lisbeth: "Our ruler is in himself, I know, a just man. If I can only succeed in getting past all those who surround him and see him personally, I have no doubt that justice shall be done me, and I shall be able to return with merry heart, within a week, to you and to my old trade" (Kleist 1967, p. 28). Lisbeth persuades him that it would be better to let her take the petition and make the personal approach to the Elector. But she is brought back unconscious, reportedly after suffering a violent lance thrust in the chest from one of the Elector's bodyguard, and dies a few days later of her injuries.

Michael Kohlhaas thereupon abandons all restraint: he and seven of his men storm the Tronka castle and burn it to the ground. The Junker himself has reportedly escaped to Wittenberg. Kohlhaas responds by publishing "proclamations" and gathering around him a steadily growing militia: "So he composed a second manifesto, in which, after a brief description of what had befallen him on his travels, he called upon 'all good Christians' (as he put it) 'to come to his aid, with a prospect of bounty and other warlike privileges, in his cause against Squire Wenzel von Tronka, the general foe of all Christians'. In another manifesto, which appeared shortly afterwards, he called himself 'a man independent of kings and countries, and answerable only to God'" (Kleist 1967, p. 39). To lend weight to his ultimatum, he carries out several arson attacks in Wittenberg. Later, in yet another proclamation, he calls himself "an emissary of the Archangel Michael, come to punish with fire and the sword all those who join the squire's cause in this dispute, as well as the deceitfulness into which the world has fallen" (Kleist 1967, p. 46).

In the face of these circumstances Martin Luther shoulders the task of "forcing Kohlhaas back into the bounds of human propriety." He drafts a notice for posting

throughout Saxony, in which he denounces Kohlhaas as a rebel against God and human authority: "Kohlhaas! You say you are sent to wield the sword of righteousness. But what deeds do you perform, you presumptuous knave, in the madness of blind passion, you who are filled from head to foot with unrighteousness itself? [. . .] Know, then, that the sword you wield is the sword of robbery and murder, you are a rebel and no warrior in the cause of a just God, and your end on earth will be the wheel and the gallows, and in the beyond damnation and the perdition meted out to evildoing and godlessness" (Kleist 1967, p. 48).

Kohlhaas, by now an arsonist and killer, uses guile to obtain a secret face-to-face interview with the Reformation leader, with the outcome that Luther persuades the Elector of Saxony to issue a conditional amnesty allowing Kohlhaas to present his case to a fresh hearing. Kohlhaas promptly disbands his militia and travels to Dresden. However, political intriguing by Junker von Tronka's circle succeeds in having him placed under arrest and subsequently deported back to Brandenburg. There, in Berlin, "on special orders from the Elector of Brandenburg [he] had been conducted to a detention house for knights where he and his five children were made as welcome and as comfortable as possible, had been brought before the bench of the Supreme Court as soon as the Imperial lawyer had arrived from Vienna, to be tried on charges of breach of His Imperial Majesty's and the public peace," and in due course is sentenced "to be executed by the sword" (Kleist 1967, p. 119). Before his execution, Kohlhaas learns from the Elector of Brandenburg that the tribunal hearing his original case has found in his favor: "Well, Kohlhaas, today is the day when justice is done to you! Look here, I give back to you everything you lost by force at Tronka Castle, and which I, as your ruler, was responsible for having returned to you: the blacks, the scarf, the gold florins, the clothing, and even the costs of medical treatment for your man Herse who fell at Mühlberg" (Kleist 1967, p. 128). Moreover, the Junker Wenzel von Tronka has been sentenced to two years' jail. With that news, Michael Kohlhaas declares, "his dearest wish had been granted"; and when asked by the Elector if he is now ready, for his part, "to give full satisfaction [. . .] to His Imperial Highness, whose attorney stands here, for the breach of his peace" (Kleist 1967, p. 129), he assents and is beheaded. The Elector of Brandenburg pays his own posthumous tribute to the virtuous criminal by knighting Kohlhaas' two sons and directing that they be educated in the court school for pages.

4.3 Legal Uncertainties and Epistemological Crisis

Kleist's narrative opens with a sentence that epitomizes the work's ambiguity and kick-starts the multiple divergent interpretations that will ramify through two centuries of reception history: "There dwelt on the banks of the River Havel a horse-dealer named Michael Kohlhaas. The son of a schoolmaster, he was at once the most upright and most terrible of human beings" (Kleist 1967, p. 1). The choice of subject, inescapably associated with the historical Hans Kohlhase, is an immediate pointer to the problematic legal scenario Kleist sought, the basis for ambivalence when it

came to judgment of the historical figure as seen in the fictional narrative. After the wrong suffered by Kohlhaas—*inter alia* the chicanery of Junker Wenzel von Tronka that robs him of the two black horses—is compounded when he is cheated out of restitution through process of law, Kohlhaas takes immediate recourse to the ancient right of feud, composing a notice of intent "in which he conjured Wenzel von Tronka, in the name of his own inborn rights, to bring back to Kohlhaasenbrück, within three days, the horses von Tronka had taken from him and ruined with work in the fields, and to feed them back to their original condition" (Kleist 1967, p. 32). Under the Mainz Imperial Peace of 1235 a feud, to be legitimate, "had to be proclaimed in due legal form three days in advance" (Reinhardt 1987, p. 207). As a horse-dealer, Kohlhaas would belong to the peasant class and so not enjoy the right to bear arms; under existing law he was thus disqualified from conducting feuds. By the sixteenth century, furthermore, "codified law of feud no longer existed, as the Imperial Peace declared by Maximilian I. in 1495 proscribed feuding absolutely—even among the aristocracy" (Reinhardt 1987, p. 209). In the early modern era nevertheless, prior to the institution of substantive administrative structures enabling the monopoly of power to be implemented through territorial princes, the principle and practice of feuding lived on. Also, the legislation with regard to feuding at this time was in some respects self-contradictory. In connection with the uncertainties surrounding law-and-order issues during the 16th century, it may be noted that the *Constitutio criminalis Carolina,* the criminal code promulgated in 1532 by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, treated only "malicious" feuding as a capital offense—which further underlines the equivocal legal status of feuding in that it invites the inference that, conversely, "the possibility of a *permitted* feud is conceded, or at least such an interpretation is not excluded on principle" (Reinhardt 1987, p. 209; I.J.'s italics).

It was, then, a period of chronic uncertainty about law and order, arising from a crisis in civil authority, the immense scale of which can be most succinctly indicated here by reference to the Reformation and the Peasants' Revolt, the latter driven by unendurable political and economic conditions. The key point for present purposes is that Kleist's choice of the historical Kohlhaas episode with all its legal uncertainties and political and economic upheavals reflects the questions and concerns that preoccupied him and drove him as a writer: questions and concerns about norms and codified law. Kleist's narrative works are shot through with ambivalence generally, and *Michael Kohlhaas* in particular focuses on legal uncertainties, contradictions, and disputes over law and order.

Among factors prompting Kleist's choosing particular literary themes and indeed his decision to become a writer, a prominent role was played by his so-called Kant crisis. He went through this experience at the age of twenty-three, and it shook him to the depths of his being. Until that point, Kleist had tried to live by a "life plan" that he had drawn up for himself, conceived in the spirit of Enlightenment thinking with its emphasis on individual autonomy of thought and decision, on the human quest for knowledge and truth, and the conviction that education could sustain the individual's progress toward perfection indefinitely. In a letter to Wilhelmine von Zenge, his fiancée, Kleist recalled the aims of the life plan that he had followed:

> I have lived since boyhood with the idea (I think picked up in Rhineland days from reading Wieland) that creation's ultimate goal is perfection. I believed that after death we would move forward in another world from the degree of perfection that we had attained here below, and that the precious store of truths that we collect on earth would still be of service to us when we had passed on. Such ideas gradually coalesced in me to become my personal religion, and the determination never to stand still for one moment but to strive incessantly for a higher level of education became the sole principle by which I lived. *Education* seemed to me the only goal to seek, *truth* the only asset worth possessing.—Darling Wilhelmine, I don't know if it is possible for you to envision these two ideas, *truth* and *education*, with the depth of sacredness that they have for me.—That actually would not matter, if only you can understand this course that the history of my soul has taken. For me those ideas were so hallowed that for the sake of just two causes, the gleaning of truth and the process of educating myself, I sacrificed the *most precious* things—You know what they were.—But I must be brief (Kleist 1997, p. 204f.).

Having identified the purpose of existence on earth as being to strive with the help of education and truth toward perfection, Kleist set out to fulfill this purpose through a ferociously intensive study of all existing knowledge. In April 1799 he enrolled as a student at the university of Frankfurt an der Oder, determined "to study all subjects, to feed voraciously from all branches of knowledge: physics, mathematics, philosophy, history of civilization, natural law, Latin" (Bisky 2011, p. 58). Only the scale of this aspiration gives some measure of the "deeply perturbing effect" (Kleist 1997, p. 204) on him of reading Kant's critique of knowledge:

"Recently I became acquainted with the modern Kantian philosophy, as it is called—and I must now tell you of an idea from it, not needing to fear that it will perturb you as deeply and agonizingly as it has perturbed me. Nor can you have sufficient grasp of the whole to fully understand what it means to me. However, I will tell you about it as lucidly as possible.

If all human beings had pieces of green glass as eyes, they would be bound to take for granted that all the objects they see through them *are* green—and they would never be able to tell whether their eyes are showing them things as they really are, or adding something to them that does not belong to them, but to the eye that sees them. It is just the same with our human understanding. We cannot tell whether that which we call truth truly is truth, or is merely a semblance of truth. If it is only a semblance, then when we die all the truth that we amass here in life will *no longer exist*—and any endeavor to acquire property that will go with us into the grave is in vain—

My dear Wilhelmine, if that thought is not a knife stab to your heart, I beg you not to laugh at a friend whom it has pierced and wounded in his innermost soul. My sole purpose in life, my highest purpose, has collapsed utterly, and I am left bereft—

Since the moment I became convinced, as I now am, that truth is not to be found here on earth, I have not opened a single further book. I paced blankly about in my room, I sat by the open window, I went outside into the open air, my inward turmoil drove me eventually into smoking-rooms and coffee-houses, I sat through theater performances and concerts to divert myself; I even committed a gross folly that I'd rather have Carl tell you of than confess to you myself; and still and always, the sole

thought that kept turning over and over in my mind, in my agony of fear, was this: thy *sole* purpose in life, thy *highest* purpose has collapsed—" (Kleist 1997, p. 205f.).

How deeply Kleist was affected can be appreciated in the light of his earlier "life plan." In a letter of (probably) May 1799 to his sister Ulrike, he shows himself to be at that time an adherent of Enlightenment ideas, and in particular endorses the views of Immanuel Kant on civic maturity, first published in Kant's essay "What is Enlightenment?" in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* journal in 1794. Kleist is building his life plan on the foundation provided by these ideas—which were then modern—when he writes to his sister:

> A thousand people, I hear them talk, I see them doing this and that, and I am never minded to ask them: Why? They themselves know not why: obscure wants lead them, the present moment determines their actions. They remain for ever as children, their destiny a plaything of chance. They feel as it were led and drawn onward by invisible forces which they follow, conscious of their own impotence, wherever chance takes them, be it to good fortune, that they then only half savor, or to misfortune, that they feel doubly.
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> Such a slavish subservience to the whims of the tyrant Fate is of course deeply unworthy of a free and thinking human individual. An individual thinking independently will not stand still where chance has dictated, or at least will stand there only if to do so, on reflection, is the better option. Such an individual feels that one can rise above one's destiny, and indeed, in a valid sense, actually steer it. His reason determines for him where his ultimate happiness lies, he draws up his life plan accordingly, and with all life principles firmly established sets course and advances with utmost vigor toward his goal (Kleist 1997, p. 38).

He next spells out to his sister what is special about a "life plan": "Any traveler setting out on a journey will have an itinerary, and the life plan is the equivalent for any human being. To start off on a trip without an itinerary is to leave it to chance to deliver us to the destination—and it will be an unknown destination. To live without a life plan is to leave it to chance to make us happy—how little or how much, we cannot know.

So you see, I just can't understand how anyone could live without a life plan, and the confidence with which I live my life in the present, together with the serenity of my prospect for the future, together remind me constantly what priceless joy I derive from my life plan. As for living without any life plan, directionless, always vacillating, beset by shifting desires, always at odds with my duties, a plaything of chance, a puppet jerked by the puppet-strings of Fate—that unworthy way of living seems to me contemptible, and would make me so miserable that death itself would be far sweeter" (letter to Ulrike von Kleist, May (?) 1799, p. 40).

Kleist's deliberations on composition of his own life plan, along with his belief in human educability toward perfection, his understanding of truth and reality—and of the norms that ought to be followed in our conduct—are now derailed by his study of the writings of Immanuel Kant. He also recognizes the devastating challenge to his metaphysical thinking—his "personal religion" that had assured him "we would eventually, after death, move on from the degree of perfection we attained on this planet to progress further in another place, and that we would there in the fullness of

time be able to make use of the precious store of truths that we garnered here on earth" (Kleist 1997, p. 204). On 23 March 1801 he wrote to his sister Ulrike: "The thought that here on earth we know nothing of the truth, absolutely nothing, but know that what we call truth here on earth will go by a very different name after our death, and that consequently the endeavor to acquire something of our own that will accompany us even into the grave is utterly in vain and fruitless—that thought has shaken me to my innermost soul—my sole purpose, my highest purpose in life has collapsed, and I am bereft" (Kleist 1997, p. 207f.).

In spite of much discussion over the years, Kleist scholars still disagree over whether this "deeply perturbing effect" (Kleist 1997, p. 204) on Kleist's life plan and belief in his own perfectibility really was brought about by his reading of Kant, as described in his letters to fiancée and sister, and even where this is conceded, questions remain as to which of Kant's writings made the impact that he reports. Back in 1921, for example, Ernst Cassirer attributed Kleist's crisis to a reading of Fichte's *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Human Destiny) (1800); in 1954 Ludwig Muth declared that the second part of Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Critique of Judgment) (1790) had been responsible, and in 1975 Ulrich Gall argued for Karl Leonhard Reinhold's *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens* (Essay in a New Theory of the Human Power of Representation) (1789) as the decisive confrontation (cf. Bisky 2011, p. 108f.). Other readings that may have contributed to Kleist's epistemological skepticism include Voltaire, Claude Adrien Hevétius, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Denis Diderot—in other words, the French Enlightenment could have been decisive in triggering Kleist's radical doubts about human cognitive ability: "The 'lumières' discourse interested him because it is concerned to map out the limits to human cognitive ability, focuses seriously on the mutual involvement of reason and emotion and disputes the teleological world order" (Moser 2009, S. 198).

Whatever the truth of the matter, Kleist's new and profound doubts on the goal of attaining perfection through education caused him to abandon his life plan and take a trip with a view to finding a new goal for his life—"I intend to find myself a goal, if one exists" (Kleist 1997, p. 208). In the end his journey led to the decision to take up writing as a career. The sense of order he used to derive from his earlier life plan had evaporated; the guiderail represented by education and truth would serve him no longer. Kleist's stories, set against backgrounds in which the social order is threatened, will depict events in which, often, a significant part is played by chance—that incalculable quantity that the life plan was intended to eliminate.

4.4 The Sense of Justice and the Quasi-religious Mission

The same applies to the field of law and order. Here too Kleist's world seems to be inherently "fragile" (cf. Kleist 1997, p. 11). In his *Michael Kohlhaas* narrative, he has the eponymous protagonist seek his civil rights by wholly legitimate means, only to be defeated and brought low by the justiciary circumstances of the time. Kohlhaas then

takes the law into his own hands, launching his feud against the Junker, Wenzel von Tronka. What prompts Kohlhaas to mount this personal campaign of vengeance, the narrator tells us, is his "sense of justice," which is "as finely balanced as a goldsmith's scales" (Kleist 1967, p. 9). This sense of justice drives him to become a brigand and murderer, a murderous arsonist who does not stop at destroying Tronka's castle home, the scene of the initial wrongful act, but goes on to repeatedly set fire to the city of Wittenberg. Kleist's tale in due course ensured that the individual's sense of justice (*Rechtsgefühl*) became a widely recognized concept throughout the German-speaking lands. Rudolf von Jhering and Gustav Rümelin established the term *Rechtsgefühl* in German legal discourse (cf. Meier 1986, p. 14). Jhering identifies "sense" or "feeling" as the prime instance in matters of law:

> The pain which a person experiences when his legal rights are violated, is the spontaneous, instinctive admission, wrung from him by force, of what the law is to him [. . .] The man who has not experienced this pain himself, or observed it in others, knows nothing of what law is [. . .] Not the intellect, but the feeling, is able to answer this question; and hence language has rightly designated the psychological source of all law as the *feeling of legal right (Rechtsgefühl)* (Jhering 1879, p. 57; emphasis added).

It is now accepted as axiomatic that all individuals possess a sense enabling them to distinguish between right and wrong. This sense of justice is not a function of custom and usage or of history, but a "consistently unimpeachable yardstick for the measurement and judgment of circumstances and of modes of conduct" (Braun 2001, p. 26). Both in legal practice and among non-lawyers, individuals are expected to possess an intact sense of justice. Academic discourse is a different matter: in theory of law, sociology of law, psychology of law, the "sense of justice" continues to be variously defined: "The sense of justice is an empirically demonstrable reality; but its source and the factors that determine its nature are still unknown and disputed. [. . .] There is no consensus among academic lawyers on whether justice derives from the sense of justice, or vice versa" (Miranowicz 2009, pp. 55f., 83).

In Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* the inadequacy of the social order leads to a paradoxical inversion of the sense of justice—"For it was his strong sense of justice that made of him a robber and a murderer" (Kleist 1967, p. 3). (A:) The sense of justice is thus, apparently, unreliable/ (B:) Clearly the sense of justice is unreliable. Writing to Wilhelmine von Zenge, Kleist reveals this uncertainty of stance on legal issues, first telling her of his skepticism regarding the ethical perfecting of humans through knowledge: "[. . .] but all my senses confirm for me here what my inward feeling has said all along, namely that the sciences make us neither better nor happier [. . .]" (Kleist 1997, p. 259). His skeptical view of the possibility of certainty in ethical matters goes so far as to leave him indifferent with regard to legal issues: "[. . .] at the end of the day, whether we are enlightened or ignorant, the outcome is that we lose as much as we gain.—And so even if we end up doing what we want, we will do right—" (Kleist 1997, p. 261). Such musings finally bring Kleist to the point where he declares right actions and wrong actions to be indistinguishable, questioning whether there can be any such thing as true human responsibility for human action:

> [. . .] if none of us knows the purpose of his existence and where he is headed, if human reason lacks the capacity to understand itself, the soul, and the life and things around it, if

> doubt still prevails after millennia as to whether there is such a thing as *the right*—can God then require of such beings that they show *responsibility*? Let no-one claim that a voice inside us tells us privately and distinctly what is right. The same voice that exhorts the Christian to forgive his enemy calls on the South Sea islander to roast his enemy, and in all devoutness he will eat him up [. . .] (Kleist 1997, p. 261).

In the particular case of Michael Kohlhaas, the sense of justice with which he begins—raising in its name his wholly legitimate demands for punishment for the Junker and damage compensation for himself—mutates into something quite different, a hard-line insistence that his claims and his idea of justice are absolutes that brook no tempering qualification whatever. In the first of the proclamations he publishes, Kohlhaas considers himself to be pursuing a "just war" (Kleist 1967, p. 37) against the Junker, and in the second he appeals to "all good Christians [. . .] to come to his aid [. . .] in his cause against Squire Wenzel von Tronka, the general foe of all Christians" (Kleist 1967, p. 39). In a similar context, with breathtaking hybris, Kohlhaas calls himself [. . .] "an emissary of the Archangel Michael, come to punish with fire and the sword all those who join the squire's cause in this dispute, as well as the deceitfulness into which the world was fallen." Kleist's narrator continues: "Then [. . .] he called upon the people to join forces with him to establish a better order of things. The manifesto was signed, in a kind of deranged way: 'given under our hand at the headquarters of our provisional world government, Castle Lützen'" (Kleist 1967, p. 46).

Kohlhaas thus makes use of his forename to identify himself with Michael, patron saint of the Germans, the archangel held in Christian tradition to have made war on Satan in God's name. Also a feature of Christian tradition from the twelfth century on was that, little by little, the duty of weighing souls on the Day of Judgment had been transferred from Christ to the archangel Michael—he is repeatedly portrayed as the figure who "undertakes the division of the dead into the virtuous and the sinners, and exacts the punishments" (Kissel 1997, p. 33). Michael is accordingly represented in the visual arts with the attributes of the scales for the weighing of souls and the sword of punishment. Michael Kohlhaas further promotes his allegedly God-given mission by exploiting the connotations of another Biblical symbol, the "cherubic sword" (Kleist 1967, p. 50). After firing Leipzig and issuing his third proclamation he has his henchmen bear this sword ceremonially before him on his public appearances, attempting thus to stage a symbolic visualization of his quasi-religious mission as judge of the earth. This self-arrogated status accords with Kohlhaas' vision of himself as now standing on a higher plane than society, the ruler of Saxony, and even the Emperor himself: Kohlhaas in his own eyes is "a man independent of kings and countries, and answerable only to God" (Kleist 1967, p. 40).

On grounds of its content, *Michael Kohlhaas* has been widely interpreted as the story of an individual rebelling against the existing order as such—not merely against the corruption that has affected him personally. That point will be considered more fully in the context of the *Michael Kohlhaas* reception history. But it needs to be qualified here. Kohlhaas is not so much a political rebel as, in Ernst Bloch's formulation, "a barrack-room lawyer in the cause of justice." Bloch amplifies: "Only

one complainant of stature has ever been portrayed, and that portrait is deservedly canonical: Michael Kohlhaas. Only with him does the letter of the law blaze fierily as if it came from God. Only Kohlhaas has turned the enforcement of a law into a rebellion on a scale appropriate to a law of nature, indeed a showpiece law of nature" (Bloch 1999, p. 93).

4.5 Contract Theories and State Monopoly of Power

Kohlhaas only becomes a figure of terror after it is fully clear to him that he has been excluded from the protection underwritten by positive law and thus excluded also from the civil community. This becomes abundantly clear during his night-time disputation with the theologian Luther. Kohlhaas asserts that the "war" he is waging against "society," i.e., the community, cannot be deemed a "misdeed" as long as he can claim the justification of having been expelled from this community. He goes on to clarify his position as follows: "By 'expelled' [. . .] I mean the fate of a man who is denied the protection of the law! I need this protection for the pursuit of my peaceful trade. This is why, with my family and all my worldly goods, I have fled from that society; and whoever refuses me that protection thrusts me out into the wilderness amongst the wild beasts. Can you deny that he is putting into my hand a club with which to defend myself?" (Kleist 1967, p. 52)

Michael Kohlhaas, it is clear from this, has no intention of overthrowing the existing order: he does not want a revolution. What he seeks is restitution under the law of the existing social order, the law that protects him along with his family and the pursuit of his trade. He has found that the wrong done to him, itself the result of intrigues and nepotism at court, has deprived him of his place in this social order, and this is why he is conducting his personal feud. In so doing, Kohlhaas abrogates the notional contract with state authority. In an analysis that invites empathy with Kohlhaas, Rudolf von Jhering traces the process set in motion by corrupt and conspiratorial judicial practices that turns an upright citizen into a lawbreaker: "The victim of corrupt and partial justice is driven almost violently out of the way of the law; he becomes the avenger of his own wrong, the executor of his own rights, and it not unfrequently happens that, over-shooting the mark, he becomes the sworn enemy of society, a robber and a murderer. If, like Michel Kohlhaas, his nature be noble and moral, it may guard him against going so far astray, but he will become a criminal, and by suffering the penalty of his crime, a martyr to his feeling of legal right" (Jhering 1879, p.87).

Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* can thus very well be read as a narrative explaining and legitimizing the liberal constitutional state that guarantees the rule of law and so can rightfully hold its monopoly on power. Ideas relating to some form of social contract were in fact occasionally voiced both in ancient times and in the Middle Ages. But it was not until the early modern period and the emergence of such thinkers as Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, Samuel von Pufendorf, John Locke, Christian Wolff, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and Anselm von

Feuerbach that philosophically based theories of constitution and contract were evolved—theories that "refer to states as being constituted by a totality of individuals" and that accordingly serve "to justify state power as such" (cf. Hofmann 2000, p. 60). Hobbes developed his theory from the premise of an anarchical natural state, a state that—influenced by his experience of the English Civil War and his resulting pessimistic view of human nature—he characterized as the "war of all against all": "If to the natural tendency of men to exasperate each other, the source of which is the passions and especially an empty self-esteem, you now add the right of all men to all things, by which one man rightly attacks and the other rightly resists (an unfailing spring of suspicion and mutual resentment); if you add also how difficult it is, with few men and little equipment, to take precautions against enemies who attack with the intention to overwhelm and subdue, it cannot be denied that men's natural state, before they came together into society, was War; and not simply war, but a war of every man against every man" (Hobbes 2005, p. 29).

As a way out of this individually and collectively life-threatening situation, Hobbes' treatise *Leviathan* (1651) advances a contract theory, the principle that individuals contractually transfer their innate freedom and power to a ruler. As he puts it in the Introduction: "Nature [. . .] is by the *Art* of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal. [. . .] *Art* goes even further, imitating that Rationall and most excellent worke of Nature, *Man*. For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE, (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection and defence it was intended" (Hobbes 2002, p. 9; emphases added). And in the chapter entitled "Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Common-Wealth" Hobbes elaborates:

> The final Cause, End, or Designe of men (who naturally love Liberty, and Dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves (in which wee see them live in Common-wealths) is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of Warre [. . .] The only way to erect such a Common Power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of Forraigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their owne industrie, and by the fruites of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is, to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will: Which is as much as to say, to appoint one Man, or Assembly of men, to beare their Person; and every one to owne, and acknowledge himselfe to be Author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act, or cause to be Acted, in those things which concerne the Common Peace and Safetie; and therein to submit their Wills, every one to his Will, and their Judgements, to his Judgement. This is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a reall Unitie of them all, in one and the same Person, made by Covenant of every man with every man, *I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner*. This done, the Multitude so united in one Person, is called a COMMON-WEALTH, in latine CIVITAS. This is the Generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that *Mortall God*, to which wee owe under the *Immortal God*, our peace and defence. For by this Authoritie, given him by every particular man in the Common-Wealth, he hath the use of so much Power and Strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is inabled to conforme the wills of them all, to Peace at home, and mutuall ayd against their enemies abroad (Hobbes 2002, p. 117ff.; emphases added).

The state thus holds the monopoly of power and is enabled to impose governance capable of guaranteeing the peaceable conduct of human interactions: the state protects against the use of force by monopolizing the use of force (cf. Willke 1996, p. 688).

Legitimation theory as an analysis of political rule was subsequently taken up by John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant, each of whom adapted it to suit his own contract-theory-based justification of state authority. The most relevant of these three philosophers and writers, in terms of influence on Kleist's thinking, was Rousseau. Writing on 22 March 1801 to Wilhelmine von Zenge, who was immersed at the time in Rousseau's *Emile ou de l'Éducation* (1762)—a biographical novel focused on educational issues—Kleist undertook to make her a gift of Rousseau's complete works, explaining that "Scarcely any other circumstance could have arisen to guide you as rapidly to a higher plane as your taste for Rousseau"(Kleist 1997, p. 203). And the views put forward by Michael Kohlhaas during his interview with Luther on the subject of the protective function of the state and the linked legitimation of authority do indeed have their basis in Rousseau's political philosophy of the social contract (*Du Contract social ou Principes du droit politique*, 1762). Rousseau did not share Hobbes' pessimistic view of human nature. He had already argued, in his *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* (1755):

> Above all, let us not conclude with Hobbes that because he [man; I.J.] has no idea of goodness, man is naturally wicked, that he is vicious because he does not know virtue, that he always refuses to those of his kind services which he does not believe he owes them. [. . .] Hobbes did not see that the same cause that prevents the Savages from using their reason, as our Jurists claim they do, at the same time prevents them from abusing their faculties, as he himself claims they do; so that one might say that Savages are not wicked precisely because they do not know what it is to be good; for it is neither the growth of enlightenment nor the curb of the Law, but the calm of the passions and the ignorance of vice that keep them from evil-doing (Rousseau 1986, pp. 159–160).

Michael Kohlhaas considers that the wrong he has suffered at the hands of the authorities explicitly casts him out from ordered civil society, in that the laws of the land have as a result of court intrigues ceased to protect him, his family, and his right to earn his living buying and selling horses; consequently, he regards himself as released from his part of the social contract, and resorts to "a club with which to defend myself" (Kleist 1967, p. 52)—i.e., brute force, as in the anarchic state of nature. Martin Luther categorically rejects this stance, telling Kohlhaas he must still observe the limitations imposed by the existing legal framework, irrespective of any wrongs blatantly perpetrated against him as a consequence of nepotism in high places: "Did I not write to you that the complaint you had submitted is not known to the ruler to whom you submitted it? If state servants conceal cases behind his back or, unknown to him, make a mockery of his hallowed name, who else but God himself should bring him to the seat of judgement? Are you, ungodly and wicked creature that you are, empowered to judge him for it?" (Kleist 1967, pp. 52) Even granting that Kohlhaas has suffered injustice and that this has gone unpunished, it is

nevertheless his duty to accept the God-given order of things and bear this injustice quietly, rather than turning to self-help and violence.

Luther takes the same attitude vis-à-vis Kohlhaas that he had taken earlier during the Peasants' Revolt: uncompromising support for the existing order. In a message to the rebellious landworkers, the historical Luther had written:

> You say that your rulers are wicked and not to be endured: for they do not allow you the Gospel and oppress you too sorely with taxes on your goods and are ruining you body and soul. To that I reply: that your rulers are wicked and unjust is no excuse for banding together in mobs or for tumult. For it is not given to all and sundry to punish wickedness, but to worldly authorities [. . .]. And so say also natural justice and the world's justice, that none may be judge in his own case and none should avenge himself and none may avenge himself (quotation from Mayer 1996, p. 31).

In a further document, entitled *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern* (Against the robbing and murderous peasant mobs), this one addressed to the secular authorities, Luther called for the use of force to suppress the rebellious peasants and gives his blessing to such action:

> These peasants burden themselves with three sorts of grievous sinning against God and Man whereby they have several times over made themselves deserving of death, both body and soul. Because they have sworn fealty and homage to their worldly superiors, to be subject and obedient to them, even as God commands when He says: 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's', and again in Romans 13:1: 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.' By wantonly and impiously forsaking this obedience and moreover setting themselves up against their masters they have forfeited their life, body and soul, as is the common practice of unfaithful, oath-breaking, mendacious rogues and scoundrels. [. . .] Therefore let them be broken, stifled, pierced through, privily or for all to see, by any and all men, mindful that nothing can be more baneful, more pernicious, more devilish than those that spread rebellion. [. . .] Therefore now let the worldly authority assert itself boldly and strike at the evil with a clear conscience, so long as it has life in it. For it has the advantage of knowing that the peasants have a bad conscience and are in the wrong, and that every peasant who is cut down in this reckoning is utterly lost, body and soul, and belongs eternally to the Devil. But the worldly authority can say to God in all certainty of heart: Behold, my God, Thou hast appointed me prince or lord over them, this I cannot doubt, and Thou hast placed the sword in my hand that I may wield it against them that do evil, Romans 13:4' (quotation from Mayer 1996, p. 52f.).

In Luther's view, Kohlhaas ought to have accepted the wrong committed against him and thereby duly submitted to the way things are, as ordained by God: "But all things considered, would you not have done better, for your Redeemer's sake, to forgive the squire, take the blacks, scraggy and overworked as they were, get on your horse and lead them back home to their stable in Kohlhaasenbrück for rest and fattening?" (Kleist 1967, p. 54). Luther's sole concern here is to uphold the existing medieval dispensation that sets the ruler above the servant, and he fails to understand Kohlhaas' existential need as a citizen, the need to rely confidently on the head of state to safeguard the law-and-order framework that enables him to practice his trade.

Kohlhaas thus remains consistent to himself when at the end of the narrative he accepts the death sentence passed on him by the Elector of Brandenburg for his breaches of the peace, assuring the Elector "that his dearest wish had been granted" in response to the latter's declaration: "Well, Kohlhaas, today is the day when justice is done to you! Look here, I give back to you everything you lost by force at Tronka Castle, and which I, as your ruler, was responsible for having returned to you: the blacks, the scarf, the gold florins, the clothing, and even the costs of medical treatment for your man Herse who fell at Mühlberg" (Kleist 1967, p. 128). This restores the normal civil order on which Kohlhaas has relied for protection while he goes about earning his living as a horse-dealer: the state for its part here uses its monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force so that it can protect the individuals who have submitted to its authority under the terms of the social contract.

Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* is a textbook case for study in the first place of the implications of social contract theory and of the state monopoly of power, and secondly of a concomitant phenomenon, the inherent tension that subsists between individual and state. The state, Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde points out, "is the indispensable means of extending protection to every individual against the threat of violence. The threat to freedom that violence presents, originally diffused throughout society, is collected and concentrated by the state by virtue of the monopoly it secures for itself in the exercise of legitimate force, and is subjected to processes of regulation and adjudication that create the state's violence-free internal conditions and so also personal security as the prerequisite for free activity" (Böckenförde 2006, p. 51). On this analysis it can be seen that *Michael Kohlhaas* provides suitable study material for use in civic education, in that it illustrates the rationale for political governance as such and so prepares the way for an appreciation of the basis on which the modern liberal constitution is founded, and of the relevance of law and justice.

4.6 Political Reception History and the Right of Resistance

The ambivalence of Kleist's narrative in *Michael Kohlhaas* has led to a reception history characterized by strikingly disparate readings of the text. For civic education purposes, the most relevant of these are the various political interpretations. The figure of Michael Kohlhaas has been adopted by various political camps over the past two centuries and made to serve the various purposes that suited their respective exponents best. Study of the text's political reception history in particular therefore provides students of civics with a helpful platform from which to explore and appreciate the background of contemporary actuality in which the respective political interpretations had their genesis. A further benefit of approach by way of a text's reception history is that it opens readers' eyes to the role played by contemporary perspective, including that of their own period, in determining how the text will be interpreted at any given time.

Michael Kohlhaas today brings us a political reception history marked by conflicting interpretative standpoints, along with spells of exhibit duty in the service of no less radically differing political agendas. During the Weimar Republic, Friedrich Wolf invoked the figure of Michael Kohlhaas as a role model and exemplar for the workers' movement, asserting that Kohlhaas had fought the good "fight for the kingdom of justice upon Earth" and the fight against the existing order:

> All attempts at peaceful resolution have failed. Now he goes on the rampage with his comrades, defeats the Prince of Meissen at Mühlberg, sets fire to Leipzig at three points and issues a proclamation describing himself as 'an emissary of Michael the Archangel, come to punish the deceitfulness into which the world has fallen'. No flimsy veil of euphemism here such as a common arsonist might hide under: no, this is the voice of a Thomas Müntzer, writing one last time in conciliatory vein to his 'brother, Prince Philip of Hesse', with the seal of his mission: Thomas Müntzer 'with the sword of Gideon!' [. . .] Müntzer and Hutten and Kohlhaas are not idealistic dreamers, not utopians. A hundred years before it happened, they foresaw and predicted how Germany would tear itself apart, irretrievably! They foresaw the Thirty Years War, in which ordinary people were allowed no voice, in which they and their country became a football kicked and trodden by the princes and the mercenary armies. [. . .] And so Kohlhaas, arsonist and 'demagogue', all at once becomes a fighter for justice, trailblazer for a coming age (Wolf 1981, p. 103f.).

While the Communists of the Weimar Republic period placed Michael Kohlhaas and his guerrilla warfare on a level with Thomas Müntzer, Peasants' Revolt leader and chiliastic-messianic publicist, assigning both to the tradition of a popular movement striving toward the goal of a communist society, the National Socialists for their part viewed the Kohlhaas figure as an early icon aligned against the Treaty of Versailles and with the National Socialist movement:

> Michael Kohlhaas, a real German, lives once more: in our own time, with the German people shoulder to shoulder, united in the white heat of ardent patriotism, appealing to the world for the righting of wrongs inflicted on our nation, for treaties to be honored, for the peace that Germany needs for the healing and rebuilding of its national life after the wounds suffered from without and within—at such a time, the figure of Michael Kohlhaas, created by Heinrich von Kleist from the depths of his quintessentially German soul, is a symbol for us today of German character. As the Director of our State Theater, Otto Krauss, [. . .] has said: 'All Germany stands today where Kohlhaas stood; we too have had our fine black horses confiscated and mistreated without justification. We are fighting for peace—as Kohlhaas did. We are fighting for our honor and our legitimate rights—as Kohlhaas did!' (Schröter 1990, p. 60)

Similar contentions were put forward by Hermann Böhme in an article entitled "'Wir wollen nur unser Recht'. Gedanken über Michael Kohlhaas" ("We claim only what is ours by right." Reflections on M.K.), which appeared in the *Flensburger Nachrichten* newspaper on 30 November 1933. Böhme published his article in the immediate aftermath of the Reichstag elections of 12 November 1933 and of the plebiscite on Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations, announced by Hitler a month earlier. Böhme here writes:

> And here is what makes today a very special time to be reading Kleist's narrative. [. . .] Germany too stands alone, alone among the chorus of peoples who regard Germany as a

> second-class nation and make it their scapegoat. Germany tolerated that for a long time, for years on end. But now at last it has awakened to new life. At the nation's call, men have come forward to lead it who will no longer allow the German people to be a pariah among the peoples of the world. They are demanding the same rights that others enjoy. [. . .] November 12 proved that the people stand as one man behind their leaders. And that in every one of our fellow-citizens that same sense of justice lives on that inspired Michael Kohlhaas [. . .] (quotation from Maurach 2008, p. 60).

Postwar West German history opened another phase in the interpretation of *Michael Kohlhaas* in the context of contemporary events and brought film and literary adaptations. Volker Schlöndorff, for instance, in his feature film *Michael Kohlhaas—der Rebell* (M.K.—the Rebel, 1969) chose to profile the central figure against the background of increasing radicalism in the youth and student movements after a student, Benno Ohnesorg, was shot dead (cf. Juchler 1996, p. 230f.), and makes Kohlhaas the very incarnation of the youthful outlaw. The militancy and relentlessness of Kleist's Kohlhaas, rooted in his sense of justice, his unyielding pursuit of the dogma *fiat justitia et pereat mundus* (let justice prevail though the world perish), prompted some modern Kleist readers to view the self-proclaimed envoy of the archangel Michael, and his rebellion, in the context of politically motivated terrorists. In the aftermath of the student movement, when Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin, and others launched their campaign of terror, attacking the existing order under the banner of *the Red Army Faction*, Günter Bartsch saw Michael Kohlhaas as the prototype of the German anarchist:

> If it is true, as we believe, that anarchism has nationally specific roots in each country as well as its universal roots, then it would be strange were such antecedents not to be recognized by those of artistic sensibility and given some kind of aesthetic form. And, indeed, it appears that a prototype exists already, created by Kleist in his Michael Kohlhaas. [. . .] Kohlhaas is solely concerned with what is rightful and with justice as he understands it. [. . .] So the Kleistian rebellion incarnated in Michael Kohlhaas is rebellion in its pure and abstract form: rebellion devoid of will to power, directed at restoring by personal initiative the rightful order that has been put out of joint. In this earliest incarnation, Michael Kohlhaas is in our view the prototype of all anarchists, although the form in which he has been cast has some characteristics that are specifically German. Only a German anarchist—it seems—rebels purely out of a sense of injustice. This feeling develops exceptionally vigorously with us as an inner core between the overriding power of the state and the impotence of the individual (Bartsch 1981, pp. 108 and 111).

Thus the Michael Kohlhaas figure could seem, in Wolfgang Kraushaar's eyes, "tailor-made for a place in the moral firmament of anti-system, opposition-minded actors whose fixed stars were called Protest, Resistance and Rebellion" (Kraushaar 2012, p. 589).

The reception history of *Michael Kohlhaas* in the aftermath of the 1968 student movement and in the context of the emergence of left-wing terrorist groupings in West Germany is correspondingly voluminous, and the perceived links and parallels between real-arena active terrorists and Kohlhaas are not only legion but highly diverse in character (cf. Collenberg-Gonzalez 2013). Thomas Meyer, for instance, an

academic political analyst, noted that nearly all members of the extreme left scene in the Federal Republic of the 1970s followed step by step

> along the path taken by Michael Kohlhaas, from the trivial personal injustice suffered at the outset to the greater wrong done him when he sought redress on the small issue, then on, by way of the half-hearted violence that at that point seemed the only remaining option, to the final stage, the declaration of his feud against society as a whole: [. . .] As with the Red Army Faction itself and the Second of June Group, the path taken began with protests of an unconventional nature against blatant injustices. When protesters underwent excessively forcible restraint—rough handling that might extend to hatred-driven brutality—on the part of individual police officers, the experience fuelled their own readiness to use violence next time round and led inexorably to a vicious circle of escalating violence and counter-violence (Meyer 1989, p. 115).

Horst Sendler, formerly presiding judge on the Bundes-verwaltungsgericht (Federal Administrative Court), identifies an "at least comparable attitude of mind" linking Kohlhaas and present-day terrorists. He and they share an absolutist mindset, "posing demands that, being absolute, will be enforced by absolutely any means to hand and are never relativized by other considerations, these being bound to appear secondary in the eyes of the fanatical absolutist" (Sendler 1985, pp. 26f.). And Friedmar Apel concludes that terrorist action "in the case of many terrorists, in that of Ulrike Meinhof quite obviously, is an inversion of an internalized moral rigorism," and that the left-wing terrorists behaved "analogously to Kohlhaas in invoking rights as natural rights" (cf. Apel 1987, p. 151).

For Heinrich von Kleist, writing his *Michael Kohlhaas* during the French occupation of Prussia, the high-profile recent events were the risings against Napoleon in Spain and in Tyrol during 1808, and the exploits of the Schill campaign in his own homeland of Prussia in 1809. As he wrote, real-world events kept resistance, and the question of a natural right to resistance, at the forefront of his mind. He addressed these themes in his political writings too, e.g., his *Katechismus der Deutschen, abgefasst nach dem Spanischen, zum Gebrauch für Kinder und Alte* (A German Catechism, following the Spanish model, for the use of children and old people, 1809). As indicated in the title, Kleist here adapted a Spanish pamphlet of 1808, written in support of the Spanish liberation struggle, but also translated and circulated in Austria, where patriots saw the Spanish struggle as a model and inspiration for an uprising of their own. In the *German Catechism*, Kleist refutes the conservative argument favoring submission to the authoritarian state as the God-given order of things—the same argument that he puts in the mouth of Martin Luther in the fictional confrontation in *Michael Kohlhaas* (cf. Kleist 1990). Luther here takes up the stance vis-à-vis Kohlhaas that is attributed to Paul in the *Epistle to the Romans*: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans, 13:1). Kleist thought differently: he saw it as his mission to urge the people of Prussia—irrespective of where their king stood politically—to resist the Napoleonic occupation of their country.

Both its content and the contemporary backdrop at the time of its writing make *Michael Kohlhaas* inherently suitable stimulus material for civic education purposes, with special focus on issues of natural justice and of the right of resistance in

constitutional democracies. Correlations with contemporary events can be sought and evaluated in issues such as the opposition of civic action groups and various other political groupings to nuclear energy programs including the *Castor* nuclear waste transport operation; further examples could be provided by the Occupy movement or publicity surrounding the "Stuttgart 21" railroad project. Such protests rely to a considerable extent on a natural law that appears to take precedence over positive law, and resistance, including civil disobedience in such instances as the Castor transports, while sometimes unlawful, is legitimized by these groupings. Campaigners in such causes may well turn for ideological backing to such theorists as Herbert Marcuse, a member of the Frankfurt School, who had responded to the civil rights movement's campaign of protest in the 1960s on behalf of oppressed minorities by postulating a natural right of resistance: "But I believe that there is a "natural right" of resistance for oppressed and overpowered minorities to use extralegal means if the legal ones have proved to be inadequate. Law and order are always and everywhere the law and order which protect the established hierarchy; it is nonsensical to invoke the absolute authority of this law and this order against those who suffer from it and struggle against it—not for personal advantages and revenge, but for their share of humanity. There is no other judge over them than the constituted authorities, the police, and their own conscience. If they use violence, they do not start a new chain of violence but try to break an established one" (Marcuse 1970, p. 116).

However the right to which Marcuse refers is not compatible with the laws of Germany. The right of resistance enshrined in the Basic Law of Germany (Art. 20 sect. 4) may only be invoked against "any person seeking to abolish this constitutional order." The right of resistance thus serves to protect the constitution's fundamental principles—democracy, social responsibility, federalism, and the rule of law. Protest or resistance directed against specific state measures cannot be legitimized by the right of resistance. It is true, however, that the right of resistance or civil disobedience may be necessary even in a constitutional democracy. Civil disobedience is generally held to mean "non-violent resistance against acts of sovereignty," resistance "which may be directed against despotisms or against democracies acknowledged in principle to be legitimate. [. . .] In the event that opportunities for political participation, in other words for the exercise of influence on political decision-making, are partly or wholly denied, civil disobedience methods of campaigning for such opportunities will be morally justified" (Kaufmann 2010, pp. 2991, 2993). Even in a constitutional democracy political disobedience is justified when practiced "as a means of achieving higher goals, the establishment of social justice and amelioration of environmental conditions [. . .] if all legal recourse has been exhausted and there is tangible evidence of negligence or indeed corruption on the part of the competent authorities" (Kaufmann 2010, p. 2993).

In the civic education context, study of the representative selection offered here of political slants on *Michael Kohlhaas* will afford scope for analysis and discussion of the various evaluations of the central figure, leading students in due course to an insight level from which they can form their own autonomous judgments. At the same time, approach to the text by way of its reception history entails an analysis of

the rival interpretations that will lead in time to the recognition that any and every one of these, precisely in ascribing a single unambiguous meaning to the text, undoes its capacity to confuse and unsettle the reader. The unsettling effect cited by Radbruch as emanating in Kleist's narrative from the "justice issue" is thus brought to heel, obedient to the political spin desired, and the productive uncertainty generated by Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas is neutralized. From the educational point of view, that uncertainty has to be preserved, because the ambivalence maintained in the story with respect to fundamental issues of human society and the legal codification of human relations is precisely what throws up the stumbling blocks conducive to individuals' progress toward the capacity for independent political judgment.

A yardstick by which the figure of Michael Kohlhaas can be measured, though he himself does not have it at his command, and which serves also as a safeguard against all forms of legalistic and political rigorism, is that of moderation or appropriateness, essentially the sense of proportion. The way in which Kohlhaas conducts himself provides a case study illustrative of the importance, in legal issues, of proportion—the perspective so signally lacking in this most upright and most terrible of human beings. The absoluteness and the criminal degree of hubris with which he seeks to enforce his legal petition, using arson and murder to avenge the relatively trivial injustice suffered, can be appreciated if the criterion of appropriateness and the principle of proportionality are kept in mind.

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Chapter 5
Fyodor Dostoevsky: *The Grand Inquisitor*

5.1 Introduction: The New Religious Dynamic in World Politics

In the years since 1989/1990, when a new epoch in world affairs began, religious allegiances and religious faith communities have gained new political importance (cf. Habermas 2005a, p. 119). The most spectacular and most frightening manifestation of the new religious dynamic in world affairs, most would agree, has been the series of terrorist attacks organized by Islamic fundamentalists—11 September 2001 in New York and Washington; 12 October 2002 on the Indonesian holiday island of Bali; 11 March 2003 in Madrid; 7 July 2005 in London; 7 January 2015 in Paris; 14 July 2016 in Nice; and 19 December 2016 in Berlin. These acts are links in a sequence of religion-motivated terror likely to continue.

A further challenge currently facing Western politicians is the close interlinking of state and religion in the existing theocracies and in other predominantly Islamic countries. Cases in point are the Iranian theocracy and the sharia-based constitution of Afghanistan. Afghanistan accepts religious freedom—but the state religion is Islam, and sharia law applies. Consequently, an individual who converts from Islam to Christianity is committing a form of high treason that carries a mandatory death penalty. This was eloquently illustrated by the case of the Christian convert Abdul Rahman. Islamism—meaning ideological appropriation and idealization of the Islamic faith with the objective of building a totalitarian state founded on the Islamic legal system (sharia)—has thus become a challenge to the international political status quo.

The military dimension of this challenge, at the time of writing, is the attempt by Islamic fundamentalists to establish an Islamic State in parts of Iraq and Syria. In 2014 Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed the *Islamic State in Iraq and Syria* (ISIS), with the Syrian city of Raqqa as its capital. In June 2014 ISIS was renamed *Islamic State* (IS). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as leader of the IS considers himself to be the IS caliph—and thus supreme religious and political leader of all Muslims. In the West,

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and in the Islamic world, Islamic State's "uninhibited brutality in dealing with religious minorities like the Yazidi and political opponents from both Shiite and Sunni camps, and also expulsion and in some cases murder of Christians" provoked sharp condemnation and grave concern (Seidensticker 2016, p. 102).

For the West's modern industrialized nations, at the same time, problems at the religion/state interface have been becoming more frequent. Germany has an accumulating record of friction between Muslims and Muslim communities on the one hand and the law on the other (cf. Liedhegener 2005, p. 1183). Recurrent issues in public and political debate include ritual livestock slaughter, construction of mosques, calls to prayer, forced marriages, "honor killings," the role of women in Islam, Islamic religious education and related teacher training, and Islamic extremism.

In academic political science, the topic of religion was neglected throughout the long period during which the secularization/modernization hypothesis remained almost unchallenged. Thus Edward Luttwak of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington could speak of a "missing dimension" in political science, and Jonathan Fox see religion as an "overlooked element" in the academic discipline of international relations studies. In Fox's view, this neglect of religion is partly attributable to the "liberal secular" context within which most social scientists were themselves socialized (cf. Brocker 2003, pp. 24).

This, it may be, accounts for the lack of attention paid in political science teaching to the religious dimension in politics. The relevant handbooks lack even an index entry for "religion," and cite no articles, let alone monographs, dedicated to the subject.

Now that it has become a focus of public discussion, the resurgence of religion as a potent factor in politics delivers a challenge to all engaged in civic education. The aim of the present paper is to illuminate the relationship between religion and the state, between the religious and political dimensions of public life, using Dostoevsky's "poem" *The Grand Inquisitor* as framework and focus for the analysis. To recommend a passage from *The Brothers Karamazov*, written almost a century and a half ago, as an illustrative text for modern civic education purposes may well seem didactically far-fetched and heuristically unpromising. At first sight, its account of the historical context and of the political constellations of the time will appear too remote to constitute a pedagogically useful support text for the study of the political conflicts of our own time.

I propose nevertheless to approach the *Grand Inquisitor* poem here with the primary aim of demonstrating its undiminished discursive potential and resonance in relation to present-day dilemmas. This means focusing in particular on passages whose implications can be fruitfully explored in the context of civic education. *The Grand Inquisitor* is a classic civic education text in that it provides persuasive starting points for study of major political themes and also suggests perspectives for cross-disciplinary approaches. With this broader context in mind, the immediate task is to show the potential of Dostoevsky's *Grand Inquisitor* for purposes of hermeneutically oriented civic education.

5.2 *The Grand Inquisitor*: The Action

Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* is unquestionably one of the classics of world literature. Hence the relevance of Hans-Georg Gadamer's dictum that classics themselves constitute authoritative and indispensable guidelines for all who attempt to understand them. The concept of the classical, for Gadamer, includes a normative element: "The classical is what resists historical criticism because its historical dominion, the binding power of its validity that is preserved and handed down, precedes all historical reflection and continues through it" (Gadamer 1979, p. 255). Many aspects of Dostoevsky's *Grand Inquisitor* poem remain relevant today, so that the hermeneutical process will permit the merging, in Gadamer's sense, of the historical horizon, Dostoevsky's historical novel, with the horizon of the present—the problems of our own day (Gadamer 1979, p. 273). Dostoevsky's last work, considered by most scholars to be also his greatest, is concerned with the conflicting spiritual and existential forces and psychological drives amid which the individual human being has to pursue his personal and social existence. A further concern is with the hybrid seductiveness of the pure intellect when freed from the constraints of morality and conscience. Finally, the novel examines the danger to humankind from radical ideology (cf. Kluge 1998, p. 138).

It will be useful at this point to provide a summary outline of the main action of *The Brothers Karamazov*. When the three brothers return as grown men to their parental home, their father Fyodor is an aging libertine, whom they despise and loathe. All three wish him dead. When one day Fyodor Karamazov is murdered, suspicion falls on Dmitri, the oldest of the brothers. With all the evidence pointing to him as culprit, he is found guilty and sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. The murderer is in fact Smerdyakov, the old man's illegitimate son. Smerdyakov puts into practice a maxim used by the second son, Ivan: "Anything is permitted." The murderer hangs himself out of boredom, and out of revulsion at life, but with no sense of guilt. In contrast, the three brothers accept their actual shared guilt as a precondition for atonement.

This, then, is the novel's main action—akin to what one might encounter in any crime fiction.

We turn now to Ivan's prose poem *The Grand Inquisitor*, unanimously regarded by scholars, and by Dostoevsky himself, as constituting the climactic point of the novel's idea content (Kluge 1998, p. 151). The poem, narrated by Ivan to his brother Alyosha, is set in sixteenth-century Seville, at the height of the Inquisition. Dostoevsky's choice of Spain for the setting probably reflects two circumstances: the Inquisition was omnipotent here as nowhere else and Tomás de Torquemada (1420–1498), the Dominican who was the first Spanish grand inquisitor, became emblematic of the Inquisition in general. Seville in particular may have been chosen because the office of grand inquisitor was held during the reign of Philip II by the Cardinal Archbishop of Seville, Fernando Valdes, described by the historian Prescott—whose work Dostoevsky possessed in Russian translation—as "a man of hard,

merciless temperament, fanatical to a degree unsurpassed in any grand inquisitor since the time of Torquemada." In Spain, the persecution of Protestants under the Inquisition was exceptionally savage during the years 1559–1570 and continued until the Protestant movement had been virtually wiped out (cf. Müller 1985, p. 45).

This is the Spain to which Christ comes when, in Ivan's poem, he returns to Earth. He performs a number of miracles and is recognized by the populace and promptly detained by order of the Grand Inquisitor. Visiting Christ in his cell that night, the Grand Inquisitor delivers a monologue accusing him of rejecting the Antichrist's temptations in the wilderness because he wanted to bring humans freedom. But humans had no idea what to do with freedom, the Inquisitor contends; what they really desired was prosperity, comfort, and equality. And so the Church had assumed the responsibility for effective action, had in Christ's name built its domination over the people and by this means liberated them from the onus of freedom. The relationship between freedom and equality—values central to civic education—will be examined below with reference to the dialectic of politics and religion depicted in the *Grand Inquisitor* text.

The figure of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky takes its inspiration from the corresponding Grand Inquisitor figure in the five-act drama *Don Karlos* by Friedrich Schiller, whom Dostoevsky revered. For Schiller, a passionate supporter of the Enlightenment, the Inquisition was the antipode, the darkest of dark times. Like Schiller for his *Don Karlos*, Dostoevsky chose sixteenth-century Spain and the height of the Inquisition as setting for Ivan's Grand Inquisitor narrative. In a letter to his brother Mikhail, Dostoevsky characterized his reception of Schiller: "I read everything Schiller had to say, talked in his words, dreamt of him [. . .]. The name of Schiller became dear to me and acquired a truly magical resonance that again and again set me dreaming" (cited from Tscherepanowa, 2004, p. 114). And so we turn now to the normative values of freedom and equality.

5.3 Freedom Versus Equality?

In the Grand Inquisitor's view, humans are not capable of coping with freedom; the *conditio humana* renders them unable to bear the burden of freedom that had been Christ's gift to them:

> You want to go into the world, and you are going empty-handed, with some promise of freedom, which they in their simplicity and innate unruliness cannot even comprehend, which they dread and fear—for nothing has ever been more insufferable for man and human society than freedom! (Dostoevsky, tr. R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky, 2004, p. 252).

The Grand Inquisitor disputes the very notion that humans are capable of freedom—they cannot endure it and are mere agitators, mere rebels. By nature incapable of ever achieving the "age of majority," in Kant's sense, humankind needs to be placed under the guardianship of the Church. The Grand Inquisitor thus becomes the enforcer of a protective dictatorship. The novelist uses his Grand

Inquisitor figure here to expound a problem with which he himself had grappled long and hard; and it was a problem not readily understood except in the context of the particular path along which Russia won through to the modern age. Under Alexander II (1855–81) reform legislation was initiated on a number of issues. One of these was serfdom, abolished in 1861 in the face of resistance from the nobility. While the great majority of the landworkers did as a result gain their personal liberty, and this in turn freed up manpower resources for industry, nothing at all was done to secure the economic future of the liberated peasants. Also—and this was a point of particular interest to Dostoevsky—neither the peasantry nor the Russian people in general were psychologically prepared for the modernization of society or for legal and personal freedom. A passage in his *Diary of a Writer* reflects on the uncertainty of the new that must be faced in one of "our new (upright) courts of law" by any ordinary Russian citizen summoned for jury service:

> Think, where shall we find citizens? Consider only what we had yesterday! Now, you know that civil rights (and what rights!) rolled down upon him as from a hill. They crushed him and, as yet, they are to him but a burden—indeed, a burden! (Dostoevsky, tr. B. Brasol, 1985, pp. 10–11).

A little less than a century earlier, in the West, a sharply contrasting note had been struck in Schiller's *Don Karlos*. In a key dialogue, Marquis Posa—an advocate of Enlightenment ideals—accuses King Philip II of Spain of trampling on the happiness of millions and destroying their freedom through his military occupation of Flanders. The conflicting mindsets are clear:

Marquis
A milder age will follow that of Philip,
An age of truer wisdom; hand in hand,
The subjects' welfare and the sovereign's greatness
Will walk in union. Then the careful state
Will spare her children, and necessity
No longer glory to be thus inhuman.
King
When, think you, would that blessed age arrive,
If I had shrunk before the curse of this?
Behold my Spain, see here the burgher's good
Blooms in eternal and unclouded peace.
A peace like this I will bestow on Flanders.
Marquis
The churchyard's peace!
(Schiller , tr. R.D. Boylan, 2014. *Don Karlos* Act III Sc. 10, lines 3150–3162)

The perspective from which the king here speaks is the pessimistic view of human nature advanced by Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan*—the natural human condition is *homo homini lupus*, the struggle of all against all. Consequently, Hobbes contends, humans need to subject themselves by means of a social contract to the absolutist ruler who alone can guarantee them security and peace—" ... here the burgher's good/blooms in eternal and unclouded peace." Marquis Posa, as the voice of the

Enlightenment, counters the king's remarks with his optimistic view of human nature and issues a challenge:

Marquis
Restore us all you have deprived us of,
And, generous as strong, let happiness
Flow from your horn of plenty—let man's mind
Ripen in your vast empire—give us back
All you have taken from us—and become,
Amidst a thousand kings, a king indeed! [. . .]
The kings of Europe
Pay homage to the name of Spain. Be you
The leader of these kings. One penstroke now,
One motion of your hand, can new create
The earth! but grant us liberty of thought.
(ib., lines 3195–3216 ff.)

Liberty of thought—*Gedankenfreiheit* in Don Karlos' resounding stage plea to the sixteenth-century autocrat—was still an unfamiliar concept to Schiller's first-night audience in 1787. It derived from the French Enlightenment; Voltaire coined the term *liberté de penser* and recorded it in his *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764). With his character Posa, Friedrich Schiller brought the *Gedankenfreiheit* concept into the theatergoing public's view as the use of reason in matters of religion, morality, statecraft, and the advancement of knowledge. Freedom of thought meant the reasoning power (*Vernunft*) that is inborn in every individual and can develop and flourish, given the right upbringing. So understood, freedom of thought means the individual's self-determination on the basis of his own reason (cf. Safranski 2004, p. 252). In this connection Marquis Posa sees freedom and happiness as two sides of the same coin. "Can your subjects be happy—without the right to think?" (line 3061), Posa asks the king. Notably, during the National Socialist dictatorship in Germany, Marquis Posa's moving appeal for liberty of thought sparked politically embarrassing enthusiasm in a public place. As the critic Müller-Seidel records it, "During a Bremen City Theater performance of *Don Karlos* in 1933, Posa's cry 'Geben Sie/Gedankenfreiheit!' was met with such applause among the audience that police ordered the management to lower the curtain and break off the performance" (Müller-Seidel 1999, p. 189).

Schiller's Marquis Posa represents an emotionally loaded freedom rhetoric that could only be adequately voiced in the context of the western hemisphere's Age of Enlightenment: "Modern liberalism is born of the Enlightenment, which had placed the individual in the center of society" (Zippelius 2003, p. 300). Several ideas originated or combined in the Age of Enlightenment:

- The philosophical doctrine of the moral autonomy of the individual.
- The political demand that the individuals have basic rights and liberty.
- The macroeconomic theory that frees competition in defense of individual interests, properly understood, will lead in time to a smoothly functioning economy.

These doctrines all favored reducing the influence of the state. A key element of the liberal concept of freedom is that state power, in particular, must leave a certain zone of individual liberty inviolate and guarantee personal liberty of action subject to the minimum restriction possible. The legal standing of the individual with regard to defensive rights is termed *status negativus*, and where his rights to governmental action are concerned, his standing is *status activus* (cf. Zippelius 2003, p. 355). Every individual has the right to achieve happiness in his or her own way, or, as the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 expresses it, the right to individual "pursuit of happiness."

The Grand Inquisitor for his part flatly rejects the notion that human beings are capable of freedom. He believes them to be concerned solely with the pursuit of happiness, which implies economic success and material prosperity as well. In this respect, he believes, humans demand an equality incompatible with freedom. He challenges Jesus:

> Decide yourself who was right: you or the one who questioned you then? Recall the first question [. . .]. 'Do you see these stones in this bare, scorching desert? Turn them into bread, and mankind will run after you like sheep, grateful and obedient, though eternally trembling lest you withdraw your hand and your loaves cease for them.' But you did not want to deprive man of freedom and rejected the offer, for what sort of freedom is it, you reasoned, if obedience is bought with loaves of bread? You objected that man does not live by bread alone, but do you know that in the name of this very earthly bread, the spirit of the earth will rise against you and fight with you and defeat you? (Dostoevsky, tr. R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky, 2004, pp. 252–3)

In the Grand Inquisitor's view, humans are only too willing to sacrifice their freedom—which in any case they perceive as simply a burden—for the sake of material security. For earthly bread, they make themselves into slaves and submerge their individual identity in the herd. This has made humans unfree, but equal. Here the immemorial tension between the two values, between freedom and equality, shows up with exemplary clarity. Dostoevsky here uses a literary form to address a question that half a century earlier had been pondered by Alexis de Tocqueville, the earliest political scientist to work empirically, in his treatise *Democracy in America* (De la démocratie en Amérique). Dostoevsky was familiar with this work and rated it highly. De Tocqueville came of a very old Norman noble family. His grandfather had defended Louis XVI from the mob and had paid with his life; his father was a big landowner. So when de Tocqueville, with a friend, took ship for America in 1831, commissioned by his government to study the American prison system, he was by no means predisposed in favor of the new, democratic, form of government that was then taking root in the United States. Nonetheless, his description and commentary did full justice to the merits of democratic governance. In de Tocqueville's view, the gravest threat to freedom in a democracy is the "tyranny of the majority." The danger arises from the unresolved tension between individual freedom and democratic equality of condition (égalité des conditions), an equality that in the course of history advances irresistibly:

> There is indeed a manly and legitimate passion for equality which rouses in all men the desire to be strong and respected. This passion tends to elevate the little man to the rank of

> the great. But the human heart also nourishes a debased taste for equality, which leads the weak to want to drag the strong down to their level and which induces men to prefer equality in servitude to inequality in freedom. It is not that peoples with a democratic social state naturally scorn freedom; on the contrary, they have an instinctive taste for it. But freedom is not the chief and continual object of their desires; it is equality for which they feel an eternal love; they rush on freedom with quick and sudden impulses, but if they miss their mark they resign themselves to their disappointment; but nothing will satisfy them without equality, and they would rather die than lose it. (de Tocqueville, tr. G. Lawrence, 1966, p. 57)

Faced with the conflicting values of freedom and equality, according to de Tocqueville, the citizen will opt for equality. Dostoevsky, familiar with de Tocqueville's writings, puts this view forward in extreme form in his Grand Inquisitor legend.

Dostoevsky's perspective at the time was most likely based on the rise of socialist ideas in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century. He had already treated the issues involved, especially in the novel *Demons* (also known in English translation as *The Possessed*). In this novel, a social Utopia is evoked by Shigalyov, a participant in a circle of nihilist/socialist conspirators. One of those present comments:

> Mr Shigalyov is too much devoted to his task and, besides, he is too modest. I know his book. He proposes as a final solution of the problem to divide humanity into two unequal parts. One-tenth is to be granted absolute freedom and unrestricted powers over the remaining nine-tenths. These must give up their individuality and be turned into something like a herd, and by their boundless obedience will by a series of regenerations attain a state of primeval innocence, something like the original paradise. They will have to work, however. The measures the author proposes for depriving the nine-tenths of humanity of their true will and their transformation into a herd by means of the re-education of whole generations, are very remarkable. They are based on the facts of nature and very logical (Dostoevsky, tr. D. Magarshack, 1953, p. 405).

The parallels with the social vision sketched by the Grand Inquisitor are clear. And Shigalyov himself defines his new world order in words that—in the light of the later real-life experiment with communism in Russia—must now seem positively visionary:

> I got rather muddled up in my own data, and my conclusion is in direct contradiction to the original idea with which I start. Starting from unlimited freedom, I arrived at unlimited despotism. I will add, however, that there can be no other solution of the social formula than mine (Dostoevsky, tr. D. Magarshack, 1953, p. 404).

Elimination of freedom and establishment of an absolutist despotism in the name of equality—this is the vision evoked by Dostoevsky's characters and later fulfilled in the very real historical events that took place in Russia during the Bolshevists' October Revolution and the subsequent "dictatorship of the proletariat." The same view was put forward by Albert Camus in 1958:

> On a longtemps cru que Marx était le prophète du XX^{e} siècle. On sait maintenant que sa prophétie a fait long feu. Et nous découvrons que le vrai prophète était Dostoïevski. Il a prophétisé le règne des grands Inquisiteurs et le triomphe de la puissance sur la justice. (Marx was long held to have been the prophet of the twentieth century. We know now that his prophecy is hanging fire. And we are coming to see that the real prophet was Dostoevsky. He prophesied the reign of Grand Inquisitors and the triumph of power over justice) (Camus 1962, p. 1891).

Clearly, then, Dostoevsky's legend of the Grand Inquisitor can be a pedagogically effective stimulus text for discussion of twentieth-century totalitarianism. In the name of absolute equality, the great majority of the population in the Soviet Union, and postwar in the satellite states also, became slaves, while a minority, the one-tenth visualized by Dostoevsky's Shigalyov, or the little clique of the powerful around the Grand Inquisitor, ruled the herd as members of the leadership cadre in the Communist Party and, in East Germany, the Socialist Unity Party. Individual freedom had been abolished, and ostensibly all citizens were allocated equal rations of material comfort.

The imbalance in favor of equality, as opposed to freedom, it is true, is seen in its extreme form in Stalinist-inspired totalitarianism and in National Socialism in Germany. An early manifestation of a totalitarian-type state is to be found in the Prussia of Friedrich Wilhelm I, an absolutist police state in which we can observe the tendency of state power to ramify, extending its control to as many areas of life as possible. The state took on the role of guardian and decision-maker for the people and sought actively to regulate the lives of its subjects even in highly personal matters, from religious denomination and order of service in church liturgy to street clothing and from career choices to food and drink (Zippelius 2003, p. 295).

Today, in similar fashion, the Islamic State strives to enforce totalitarian control over people living in the areas under its rule. Its regulations pervade every realm of life. Its totalitarian control has particularly impacted schools and universities. School curricula, for example, were stripped of music, art, history, philosophy, geography, and chemistry, and these subjects were replaced by religion, combat training, and military drill (cf. Neumann 2015, p. 97). According to the Islamic State's own comment: "The syllabi have been cleansed from homosexuality, evolution, music, play-acting, interfaith dialogue and all the other garbage that is taught in non-Muslim schools. In the caliphate your child's head is protected from harmful influences!" (as cited in Neumann 2015, p. 97).

The antithesis to this totalitarian tendency is to be found in the liberalist state model that had its genesis in the context of the Enlightenment. Wilhelm von Humboldt, for example, in 1792, contrasted the "nannying" practiced by both the welfare state and the police state with his ideal of *Humanität*, in which the individual is allowed unhampered development as a personality and in education and culture: "The state should refrain from any measures for the citizens' positive well-being and should not go an inch beyond what is needful for their protection against each other and against external enemies; let it not limit their freedom for any other cause" (as cited in Zippelius, p. 301).

The current debates within Western society on the future of the welfare state are a contemporary reflection of the freedom-versus-equality paradox to which Dostoevsky draws attention. How—and more importantly, with what objective—should the widely demanded reform of the welfare state be undertaken? What kind of social policy do we need if we are to end the "caring neglect" (cf. Nolte 2004, p. 68) of the lower classes and marginalized groups? Will this entail greater equality and consequently more redistribution from haves to have-nots? Or is the need in fact for a greater measure of freedom and consequently of responsibility for personal life choices—and

so, ultimately, of responsibility for one's own material circumstances? Does the welfare state's provision for a section of the population actually nurture the childlike contentment of the herd, as envisioned by the Grand Inquisitor, with its corollary of lifelong immaturity and irresponsibility?

However one answers, the constant that remains throughout all political fluctuations is the duty to find the right middle way between the equalizing policies of tutelary autocracy on the one hand and over-egged liberalism on the other: between equality and freedom. In his Grand Inquisitor figure—a shadowy, ultimately elusive exemplar for an excessive swing of the pendulum in one direction—Dostoevsky has given us a literary basis of comparison useful in a civic education context for stimulating further study of the issues concerned.

The Grand Inquisitor recognizes the political importance of religion, which he uses as a lever of power. Appointed supreme guardian of the faith, he abuses the faith of the "herd" to ensure its members remain docile. In doing so he merges his religious power with his political power; ultimately, indeed, he displaces his religious role in favor of his state role. His concern is not with religious truth, but with the retention of power and the stability of the state. He is completely clear in his own mind about his subordination of religious truth in the service of *raison d'état*; his objectives are to preserve his own power and the happiness of the human herd by means of totalitarian state welfarism. The totalitarian dictatorship that actually came to pass in Russia has been justifiably described as a political religion. Here we have the second stimulus point for civic education students.

5.4 Instrumentalized Religion Versus Freedom and Human Dignity

The Grand Inquisitor's use of religion as a tool or instrument can be observed in comparable form today: practiced by Islamist terror groups, it is likewise religiously motivated and likewise targets the dignity and freedom of the individual. Thus Osama bin Laden as leader of Al-Qaeda could assert after the terror attacks of 11 September 2001: "The values of this Western civilization under the leadership of America have been destroyed. Those awesome symbolic towers that speak of liberty, human rights, and humanity have been destroyed. They have gone up in smoke" (cited from Buruma and Margalit 2004, p. 13). The attacks on the Twin Towers were not only mass murder: they generated an exceptionally potent symbolism. The towers stood for all that people living outside the West hate about America—they stood for power and wealth, for imperial, global, capitalist hegemony, and they stood in New York City, our contemporary Babylon. The Islamist terrorists made use of the ancient myth of the destruction of the sinful city, associated as it has always been with hubris, the construction of an *imperium*, secularization, individualism, and the power and lure of money (cf. Buruma and Margalit 2004, pp. 21).

The Tower of Babel represents humans' fear of punishment for having questioned the power of God. The Grand Inquisitor's vision includes the following:

> In place of your temple a new edifice will be raised; the terrible Tower of Babel will be raised again, and though, like the former one, this one will not be completed either, still you could have avoided this new tower and shortened people's sufferings by a thousand years—for it is to us they will come [. . .]. They will find us and cry out: 'Feed us, for those who promised us fire from heaven did not give it!' And then we shall finish building their tower, for only he who feeds them will finish it, and only we shall feed them, in your name, for we shall lie that it is in your name. Oh, never, never will they feed themselves without us! No science will give them bread as long as they remain free, but in the end they will lay their freedom at our feet and say to us: 'Better that you enslave us, but feed us.' (Dostoevsky, tr. R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky, Dostoevsky 2004, p. 253)

The "fire from heaven" and the "science" invoked here stand for rationalism, greatly accelerated in its growth as the Age of Enlightenment ran its course, but distrusted by Dostoevsky. He rejected the short-term rationality, that is, reason used as means to an end, the rationality that manifests itself in economic life as the pursuit of maximum benefit to the self. Islamist fundamentalists are among those voicing the same criticism of Western materialism today.

Thus the Islamic State is endeavoring today to turn a Salafist vision of society into reality:

> Wherever Islamic State gains control the first thing that happens is that sharia courts are set up. They cost next to nothing, are free of corruption, impose order, and settle disputes in which no one has taken any interest in years. Next come the religious police. They patrol the streets, stopping women who are wearing the facial veil incorrectly, men who are smoking, listening to music or keeping their shop open at the hour of prayer. Those who commit crimes are subjected to the harsh *hudud* tariff of punishments: the lash for consuming alcohol, hands severed for theft, and stoning for adultery (Neumann 2015, p. 97).

In the Manichaean world-view of the Islamists, while the capitalist West indulges itself in the idolatrous worship of earthly and material things, the East represents the realm of deep spirituality and true veneration of the Divine. This too is a criticism that Dostoevsky voiced one and a half centuries ago. He considered the Western Enlightenment to be intimately bound up with a materialism founded on the modern scientific world-view, which he saw as linked in turn to atheism or even nihilism. Of the Karamazov brothers it is Ivan, author of the Grand Inquisitor "poem," who represents nihilism in his dialogue with Alyosha. The great stumbling-block for Ivan is the theodicy problem: how can God permit human suffering? To illustrate his point, Ivan recounts a series of stories to his brother, stories of suffering inflicted on children. One, for example, tells of an 8-year-old street urchin whose offense has consisted in throwing a stone; it hits the leg of a big landowner's favorite hunting dog, and the boy's mother has to watch while her son is hunted down by the pack and torn to pieces. The question for Ivan is not so much the issue of whether God exists, but rather how God can permit, in the world He created, such undeserved suffering as torment, pain, and the death of innocent children. Given these realities, Ivan cannot believe in the divine harmony of creation, and he prefers to hand back his entry permit to Paradise. However, if human belief in immortality is eradicated, then,

according to Ivan Karamazov, there is no longer any such thing as moral and immoral: there would be no virtue if there were no immortality, and this leads Ivan to his conclusion: "All is permitted."

Thus in handing back his entry permit, Ivan is simultaneously rejecting all the values of law and justice on which the constitutional state absolutely depends. For the religious believer Dostoevsky, however, the values deriving from religion were fundamental. Without religion, humankind was at risk not merely of moral disorientation but of nihilism and the consequent decay of all values. Ultimately, from this perspective, the state itself is dependent on humans whose religious world-view arms them with the values that sustain it.

While Dostoevsky thus uses his Ivan Karamazov figure to underline the importance of religious belief for humankind in general and for building the state in particular, existentialists respond to Ivan's standpoint by drawing a quite different inference, with no transcendental component. Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, writes:

> Dostoevsky once wrote: 'If God did not exist, everything would be permitted'; and that, for existentialism, is the starting point. Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. [. . .] in other words, there is no determinism—man is free, man *is* freedom (Sartre 1989, S. 353).

Man is condemned to freedom. However, this imposes on him the task of determining values; and for these values and for human conduct, generally he is responsible.

In the secularized state in which we live, which allows freedom of belief, responsibility for an individual's free action is bound up in turn with a central concept fundamental to democratic society: that of human dignity. Human dignity is a constitutive prerequisite of lawful action, being the basis for equal respect and recognition for all humans, i.e., equality under the law and in the political process. Human dignity constitutes the principle under which an individual may never lawfully be treated by the state only as an object for it to act upon, but must always also be recognized as a subject, i.e., as having the right to act autonomously. Immanuel Kant, in his treatise *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, comments on the relationship between means and end: "Man, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means for arbitrary use by this or that will: he must in all his actions, whether they are directed to himself or to other rational beings, always be viewed at the same time as an end" (Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, transl. H.J. Paton, 2005, p. 105). And in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant says that humans alone are an end in themselves.

This fundamental principle of human dignity is violated by the Grand Inquisitor in Schiller's *Don Karlos* and by Dostoevsky's corresponding figure. The Grand Inquisitors in these works blatantly employ instrumental reason for the preservation of power; they instrumentalize human beings for their own purposes, degrading men and women to mere tools serving a higher cause. Analogous behavior can be observed in present-day religious fundamentalists when they make living people into bombs in the name of Allah and use them as means to an end in their holy war.

And as for the West and its democracies, all of which accord due constitutional respect to the dignity of the individual, even here in the West man is still not in all respects an end in himself, but is instrumentalized in the service of a cause. In the West too, and above all in its leading power, the United States, new religious energies are increasingly invading politics. The biblical idiom of American political rhetoric dates right back, it is true, to the early seventeenth century and the Puritan first settlers: America is invoked as a "Promised Land," as "God's Own Country," and US presidents have always explicitly seen their civic and religious duty as being to the "nation under God." But under the 43rd president, George W. Bush, most of all in his foreign policy, this sense of mission became unprecedentedly conspicuous. In spelling out the purported threats facing the West, Bush used biblical rhetoric, referring to an "axis of evil" in connection with the threat of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. During the run-up to the Iraq war, similarly, Bush linked political values such as freedom, and the US mission to defend it, as a religious mission: "Liberty is God's gift to every human being in the world. (. . .) We're called to defend our nation and to lead the world to peace, and we will meet both challenges with courage and with confidence" (George W. Bush, February 10, 2003).

The wording of the United States National Security Strategy points to the mission character of US foreign policy: "We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade to every corner of the world" (NSS 2002).

But any actual benefit from the United States' civilizing mission in Iraq has still to materialize. Worse: abuses committed by American soldiery—e.g., at Abu Ghraib—have had damaging consequences. Images of the torture practiced at Abu Ghraib, where the principle of a free and democratic society's respect for human dignity was trampled underfoot, recall the question put by Ivan Karamazov to his brother Alyosha:

> Imagine that you yourself are building the edifice of human destiny with the object of making people happy in the finale, of giving them peace and rest at last, but for that you must inevitably and unavoidably torture just one tiny creature [. . .] —would you agree to be the architect on such conditions? Tell me the truth (Dostoevsky, tr. R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky, 2004, p. 245).

Ivan Karamazov's words are a reminder that torturers will always justify torture—it is tacitly accepted that the sufferings of a few are a price that must be paid in order to ensure the happiness of the remainder of society. And those—so far they have included German policy-makers—who are not directly involved in torture: do they share the guilt of the torturers if they use for their own purposes information extracted from prisoners under torture? To this Alyosha has an unambiguous answer that for didactic reasons I shall withhold for the moment. In an article in *Le Monde*, the Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman, who is a professor at Duke University in North Carolina, comments on the photographs of torture at Abu Ghraib as follows:

> Let there be no illusion: every regime that tortures does so in the name of salvation, of a higher goal, a paradise promised. Ivan Karamazov still whispers in our ears today about the

> thing that we may call communism, free trade, a free world, the national interest, Fascism, our Leader, civilization, the service of God, vitally needed information—call that thing what you will, for at least one human being somewhere, always, it will be hell (Dorfman 2004).

The Abu Ghraib torture images are a grave moral debt that the United States has taken on, an obligation also incurred at one remove by Western liberal society as a whole, for the United States has been trying to implant our common values in Iraq. Yet these values have been betrayed and rendered impotent by the barbarous deeds of at least a section of the American soldiery. Egypt's most-read newspaper, *al-Akhbar*, responded to the second set of torture photographs with a leading article sardonically headed "Freedom! Democracy! Torture!" (as cited in Follath et al. 2006, p. 108). The effect of the atrocities is thus to aid and encourage precisely those politico-religious forces in the Arab world that wage a holy war against Western values and actively seek political supremacy so that a theocracy under sharia law can be brought into being.

The West, for its part, remembers the bloodshed and suffering that accompanied the long maneuverings of religion and politics, the ravages, and mounting death toll of protracted religious civil wars across Europe that were fought out before the present-day neutrality of the state could be achieved. The nineteenth century saw religious neutrality, supplemented by ideological neutrality, become the founding principle of the liberal constitutional state. Neutrality here means that the state no longer attempts to revive the Pontius Pilate question "What is truth?" in issues of religion generally, religious affiliation, or ideology—and most certainly, in these issues, never pontificates (cf. Link 1995, p. 3353).

That is not to say, however, that religion constitutes some kind of foreign body in the secularized state. On the contrary, the liberal secularized state opens the way for pragmatic cooperation between all and any of the world-views and religions to which its citizens adhere: in other words, there is an opportunity here for a body of public law designed for general applicability to interact fruitfully with an ethical code derived from particular firmly held world-views. In the liberal secularized state, it is possible for believing and uncommitted citizens to engage in a reciprocal learning process, each broad community familiarizing itself, in the public arena, with the other's particular stance on sensitive topics; this kind of dialogue, indeed, was publicly demonstrated not long ago by the philosopher Jürgen Habermas and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), when they staged a debate on reason and religion—what might be termed the dialectic of secularization. Habermas argued that citizens who are the religious equivalent of tone-deaf should individually and self-critically determine for themselves the proper relation between faith and knowledge, and he declared that secular world-views have no *prima facie* right of precedence in public affairs over competing philosophical or religious standpoints. He argued that the philosophical neutrality of the state power as guarantor of identical ethical liberties for all citizens is incompatible with a secularist world-view: "Secularized citizens *qua* citizens of the state have no right either to dismiss on principle the potential truth of religious world-views or to contest the right of their believing fellow-citizens to contribute in religious language to public debate"

(Habermas 2005b, p. 36). Conversely, Cardinal Ratzinger declared, specifically in the context of religiously motivated terrorism, that "there are *pathologies within religion* that make it essential to regard the divine light of reason as, so to speak, a critical review faculty with reference to which religion must always periodically undergo cleansing and re-ordering—which in fact was also the view taken by the early fathers." But he added that there are also pathologies of reason constituting a kind of hubris of reason that is not by any means less dangerous but in fact a greater menace, because of its potential consequences: the atomic bomb or human beings as product, conceived in a test-tube. "Accordingly reason in its turn needs to be reminded of its limitations and to learn to listen to what the great religious traditions of the human race can tell us. If ever reason emancipates itself entirely and shrugs off this willingness to learn, to compare and correlate, it becomes destructive." And Ratzinger argues further, in the same context, that other cultures should be brought into this process and practice of correlation between reason and faith and reason and religion:

> It is important to involve them likewise (the other cultures) in attempting a polyphonic correlation process in which they open themselves up to the essential complementarity of reason and faith, so that a universal process of cleansings can grow in which ultimately the essential values and norms known or intuited in one way or another by all humans can grow more luminous, so that that which holds the universe together can once again become an effective force among humankind (Ratzinger 2005b, p. 57).

What remains fundamental to the relationship between state and church in our Western tradition is the distinction between the things which are Caesar's and the things which are God's (cf. Mt 22:21), i.e., as Second Vatican Council puts it, the autonomy of the secular sphere. [19] In his encyclical *Deus caritas est*, Pope Benedict XVI spells out: "The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State" (Ratzinger 2005a, *DCE*/Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*).

These words pinpoint the key difference from the outlook generally attributed to any Islamic theocracy; and they bring into focus the political challenge posed by religious zealots. The philosophically uncommitted state allows individuals the freedom to live according to their respective values, depending in turn on their respective religious opinions. Nonetheless, there exists even in the pluralist constitutional democracy a set of fundamental values that have been politically endorsed, and in Germany at least these are enshrined in our Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*). All citizens, whatever the religious or philosophical tradition they come from, have a duty to recognize this set of fundamental values—which incorporate freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. In the pluralist and philosophically neutral constitutional state, the justice system based on these fundamental rights should be the one and only set of norms common to all under the law of the land (cf. Pawlowski 1981, p. 405). All citizens irrespective of confessional affiliation may therefore be legitimately required to recognize the values declared in the Basic Law and binding on all. Transmission of these values to school students is the particular responsibility of civic education.

Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor is our reminder that the resurgence in religious fervor in the Islamic world gives no cause at all for the West to consider itself superior. The history of Christendom-based political theology tells us that many centuries of Inquisition were visited on the peoples of Europe before acquiescence in the face of temporal things became general. "Whenever we suffer the fury of the Islamists today, we behold the fury of our own pasts" (Meyer 2004, p. 45). If human beings are to shield themselves against exploitation by religious or indeed political zealots, they must have the capacity for freedom that constitutes the fundamental precondition for our pluralist democracy to exist. Even in our modern age, that capacity for freedom remains bound up with the competence that Immanuel Kant identifies in his "What is Enlightenment?" treatise as constitutive of our maturity as citizens: the ability to use our reason without being led by others (cf. Kant n.d, paragraph 1). The opening up of this faculty in boys and girls at school, understood as the faculty for autonomous political judgment, is still today the noblest duty for civic educators.

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Chapter 6
E. L. Doctorow: *Ragtime*

6.1 Introduction: The USA in the 1910 Decade—White Complacency, Imperialism, and Racism

In his 1975 novel *Ragtime* E. L. Doctorow depicts the political and social mores of the USA in the early years of the twentieth century. He interweaves real historical events with three fictional storylines which are themselves mutually interlinked; the three perspectives presented are those of an upper middle-class white family, an immigrant family, and an African-American couple. By involving the fictive characters of his novel with actual political events, social conditions, and historical personages of the decade that began 1810, Doctorow creates a rich cross-sectional study of US life at the time, so vivid and multifarious that we can liken it to a diorama; the figures in it and their conflicts illuminate the political challenges thrown up by social inequality, racism, and American imperialism.

The action opens during Theodore Roosevelt's term of office as US President, a period in which—from the perspective of the ignorant and complacent white middle class—everything still seems just fine: "The population customarily gathered in great numbers either out of doors for parades, public concerts, fish fries, political picnics, social outings, or indoors in meeting halls, vaudeville theatres, operas, ballrooms. There seemed to be no entertainment that did not involve great swarms of people. Trains and steamers and trolleys moved them from one place to another. That was the style, that was the way people lived. Women were stouter then. They visited the fleet carrying white parasols. Everyone wore white in summer. Tennis racquets were hefty and the racquet faces elliptical. There was a lot of sexual fainting. There were no Negroes. There were no immigrants" (Doctorow 2006, p. 3 f.). Yet before this long paragraph has ended, there follows the bald statement: "Apparently there *were* Negroes. There *were* immigrants" (Doctorow 2006, p. 5; his italics).

The massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 marked the end of the Indian Wars, and with the abolition of the Indian Territory in Oklahoma, expansion on the North

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American continent had reached its geographical limit. It was the end of the *Frontier* era, on US territory at least. Not long afterward, the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner put forward an influential thesis dealing with the *frontier* and its significance for the American national character. In Turner's view, the concept of *frontier* now had to be extended to new areas beyond current US territorial limits (cf. Kinzer 2007, p. 53 f.)

As an expanding industrial economy, the USA did indeed subsequently extend its interests beyond its home territory. The Platt Amendment, passed in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, enabled the USA to advance its interests on the island of Cuba long-term; Puerto Rico and Guam came under US sovereignty as unincorporated territories, and American troops occupied the Philippines. In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt extended the Monroe Doctrine with his Roosevelt Corollary, declaring the South American continent to be within the USA's immediate zone of influence. A keystone of the young American nation's imperialist foreign policy was the US Navy, which people "visit" in the opening pages of *Ragtime*.

A further theme in *Ragtime*—developed through Tateh and his family—is the fate of early-twentieth-century immigrants, attracted across the Atlantic in their millions by the rapid evolution of the USA, beginning late nineteenth century, from an agrarian economy to the world's foremost industrial nation. Of these new additions to the New York population, the *Ragtime* narrator says:

> Most of the immigrants came from Italy and Eastern Europe. [. . .] They went into the streets and were somehow absorbed in the tenements. They were despised by new Yorkers. They were filthy and illiterate. They stank of fish and garlic. They had running sores. They had no honor and worked for next to nothing. They stole. They drank. They raped their own daughters. They killed each other casually. Among those who despised them the most were the second-generation Irish, whose fathers had been guilty of the same crimes. Irish kids pulled the beards of old Jews and knocked them down. They upended the pushcarts of Italian peddlers (Doctorow 2006, p. 13).

In parallel and in contrast, the novel portrays the lifestyle and evokes the untold wealth of the industrial magnate and banker J. P. Morgan. These radical inequalities in US society in the first decades of the twentieth century led to recurrent industrial strife, with workers' protests sometimes suppressed by force. In *Ragtime*, Doctorow brings this theme into vivid focus through the role of the anarchist Emma Goldman.

The third of the novel's central concerns is the racism widespread among American society's white majority at the time, highlighted in the story of ragtime pianist Coalhouse Walker Jr. While slavery had been abolished in 1865, after the end of the American Civil War, by the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution, and African Americans had been granted the vote in 1868, the white majority in the early years of the twentieth century was still strongly racist in character. By now, African Americans also possessed civil rights. But their rights could still be curtailed; for instance, the right to vote could be withheld on grounds of indigence or illiteracy. Additionally, the racist Ku Klux Klan organization, founded in 1865, had been terrorizing the black population, particularly in the southern states. In *Ragtime*, the upright African-American citizen Coalhouse Walker Jr. is the victim of racially motivated injustice.

The American diorama presented in *Ragtime*, while on one level displaying the deep political and social divisions that characterized American society in the Theodore Roosevelt era, also alerts the reader to political continuities and analogies of continuing and, indeed, contemporary relevance. In an interview with Paul Levine, E. L. Doctorow commented on the motives that had led him to focus on radically contrasting facets of American society: "But in retrospect, I suppose (speaking of *Ragtime* and *The Book of Daniel*) there is some kind of disposition—and no more than that—to propose that all our radicals (and we've had an astonishing number of them) and our labor leaders and our Wobblies and our anarchists and so on, have really been intimate members of the family—black sheep, as it were, whom no one likes to talk about. And I suppose one could make a case for my disposition to suggest that they are indeed related, that they are part of the family, and that they've had an important effect on the rest of us" (Levine 1983, S. 67 f.). In *Ragtime* these radicals among the American family are represented both in fictional characters such as Coalhouse Walker Jr. and Mother's Younger Brother and in actual historical figures such as Emma Goldman and Emiliano Zapata.

6.2 *Ragtime*: The Action

In the first decade of the twentieth century, a well-to-do white family moves into its new home in New Rochelle, New York. What ensues is narrated from the perspective of the son. Sharing the new home with him and his parents are the maternal grandfather and also the mother's younger brother. The father's income comes "from the manufacture of flags and buntings and other accoutrements of patriotism" (Doctorow 2006, p. 3). In 1911 the mother takes a young black woman and her baby into the house; some time later, the baby's father—he too an African American—comes to visit. Coalhouse Walker Jr. lives in Harlem, is a professional pianist, and plays in a group that performs regularly in a casino. Sarah, the baby's mother, for some time refuses to see Coalhouse; his reaction is to continue coming to the house, every Sunday throughout the winter. It is the mother who eventually puts words to what is happening: "She said to Father I think what we are witnessing is, in fact, a courtship of the most stubborn Christian kind" (Doctorow 2006, p. 131). When he comes to visit, Coalhouse plays *Wall Street Rag* and *The Maple Leaf* by Scott Joplin to the family—but Mother's Younger Brother is the only family member who recognizes ragtime. Toward the end of the winter, Sarah agrees at last to see Coalhouse Walker, and subsequently she accepts his offer of marriage.

Then one day, returning in his Model T Ford after visiting his fiancée, Coalhouse Walker is illegally stopped and detained outside the Firehouse Lane headquarters of the Emerald Isle Engine by some of the volunteer firemen, on the pretext that he is using a private toll road: he must produce either a resident's pass or twenty-five dollars. Coalhouse Walker finds a traffic policeman 10 minutes' walk away, reports what has happened, and is offered no support. He returns to his car to find that it has been damaged and offensively soiled during his absence. Addressing the fire brigade

Chief, Will Conklin, he declares: "I want my car cleaned and the damage paid for [. . .]" (Doctorow 2006, p. 148). Not only is this wish not fulfilled, but after being placed temporarily under arrest, and released only on payment of bail, Coalhouse Walker returns again to his car and finds it "thoroughly vandalized, whether by the volunteers or others it was impossible to determine" (Doctorow 2006, p. 150). He now tries a number of means, all lawful, to obtain justice for himself. None of these measures meet with any success. This prompts Sarah, his betrothed, to attempt a personal appeal to US Vice-President James Sherman when he comes to address a pre-election gathering. She succeeds in breaking through the protection line, only to be thrust back so violently by the butt of a militiaman's rifle in her chest that she dies of her injuries a few days later.

Coalhouse Walker now abandons all restraint. He destroys the Emerald Isle Brigade's firehouse, killing four of the firemen in the process, and sends letters to local newspaper editors spelling out his demands: "I want the infamous Fire Chief of the Volunteers turned over to my justice, the letter said. I want my automobile returned to me in its original condition. If these conditions are not met I will continue to kill firemen and burn firehouses until they are" (Doctorow 2006, p. 176 f.). A week after his first act of violence, Coalhouse Walker attacks a second firehouse, killing a policeman and five other persons. A second threatening letter repeats the demands of the first and closes with the words: "Until these demands are satisfied, let the rules of war prevail. Coalhouse Walker Jr., President, Provisional American Government" (Doctorow 2006, p. 187). Finally, having banded together with five young blacks and Mother's Younger Brother, who has joined him voluntarily, he secures access to the financial tycoon J. P. Morgan's private library and gallery of valuable artworks After all-night discussions, Coalhouse Walker and his henchmen have decided to target Morgan because "More than any mayor or governor he represented [. . .] the power of the white world" (Doctorow 2006, p. 225). The group takes up position in Morgan's library; negotiations ensue, with participants including Booker T. Washington—founder of the renowned Tuskegee Institute—and the family Father. In the end, the authorities' negotiator, Charles S. Whitman, the District Attorney of New York, orders with Morgan's consent that Coalhouse's vandalized car is to be restored to its original condition by the perpetrator, Fire Chief Conklin. In return Coalhouse undertakes to surrender once this restitution has been made. He secures an agreement that his henchmen can go free. While being taken into custody himself, Coalhouse simulates an attempt to escape and is promptly shot dead by the surrounding police officers. After the successful withdrawal from the library, Mother's Younger Brother joins Emiliano Zapata's army of insurgents in Mexico. About a year after the denouement in New York he is killed in a skirmish with government troops.

In the figure of Mother's Younger Brother the novel acquires a further line of plot development, one in which, again, fictional characters are interwoven with real-life figures from the political and society worlds of the time. Younger Brother falls in love with Evelyn Nesbit and lives out an *amour fou* with her over a lengthy period. Nesbit at this time is involved in a lawsuit, her husband, Harry K. Thaw, having killed her one-time lover Stanford White from jealousy. White was one of the architects responsible for the design of the J. P. Morgan library. On one of her

trips to New York, Evelyn Nesbit encounters the impoverished immigrant Tateh and his daughter and soon takes the little girl under her wing. The story of Tateh the immigrant and his family forms the third strand of the novel's action. Evelyn Nesbit's connection with Tateh results in her meeting with the anarchist Emma Goldman and leads in turn to a link-up between Younger Brother and Goldman. One more historical figure introduced is that of Harry Houdini, the then famous escape artist and illusionist, in whose work and career the son—never named—of the La Rochelle family comes to take a more particular interest.

6.3 Racism and Imperialism

Two members of the family whose life between 1902 and 1918 forms the framework for *Ragtime*'s action—Father and his brother-in-law, Mother's Younger Brother—emerge in the course of the narrative as temperamental and political opposites. These fictional characters and the links invented in the novel with the day-to-day events and political trends of the time open out an illuminating diorama of American society in the early years of the twentieth century—in which some of the aspects depicted still have political relevance in our own day.

Father comes from a family that had made a fortune in the Civil War, only to lose it because of his own father's indulgence in risky speculation. Even so, Father studied German Philosophy for a time at Harvard and later founded a small fireworks factory. The "flamboyance" of his father has produced in him a personality "that was cautious, sober, industrious and chronically unhappy" (Doctorow 2006, p. 181). In his attitudes to people of other skin colors or other races, Father holds prejudices that at the time depicted in *Ragtime* were widespread among the white population of the USA—and in Europe. These beliefs rest on the assertion that divine providence has placed the white race above all others.

Father accordingly cultivates his racist prejudices vis-à-vis blacks in the USA, the Inuits he encounters on his polar expedition and the Filipino guerrillas against whom he has fought during the Philippines-American War. How he views Coalhouse Walker Jr.'s punctiliously correct, steadfast, and respectful courtship of Sarah, who has found shelter under his roof, is indicated by a narratorial comment: "It occurred to Father one day that Coalhouse Walker Jr. didn't know he was a Negro" (Doctorow 2006, p. 134). A remark made to Father during the expedition under the Polar explorer Robert Edwin Peary—a comment on the Eskimos—leads to further reflections: "Then Peary shuffled back along the deck, passing Father and saying to him They're children and they have to be treated like children. Father tended to agree with this view, for it suggested a consensus. He recalled an observation made in the Philippines 10 years before where he had fought under General Leonard F. Wood against the Moro guerrillas. Our little brown brothers have to be taught a lesson, a staff officer had said, sticking a campaign pin in a map" (Doctorow 2006, p. 62). General Leonard Wood was a veteran of the 1886 campaign mounted against Geronimo. Father for his part had secured an army commission during the

Philippines fighting: "He was proud of his life but never forgot that before going into business he had been to Harvard. He had heard William James lecture on the principles of Modern Psychology. Exploration became his passion: he wanted to avoid what the great Dr. James had called the habit of inferiority to the full self" (Doctorow 2006, p. 182).

William James would probably not have been remotely gratified to learn that one way Father had achieved self-fulfillment was through his "discovery" of the Philippines. As well as lecturing at Harvard on psychology and philosophy and being regarded as representing philosophical pragmatism, James opposed the Philippine-American War. He was also the cofounder in 1898 of the *American Anti-Imperialist League*, whose members included the trade-union leader Samuel Gompers, the industrial magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, Carl Schurz—formerly an activist in Germany's 1848 Revolution and subsequently US Secretary of the Interior—E. L. Godkin, founder of the magazine *The Nation* and editor of the *New York Evening Post*, and the author Mark Twain. The Philippine–American War of 1899–1902 was a consequence of the US war with Spain, which was basically about US interests in the Caribbean. The immediate result of that war (April to August 1898) had been that Spain lost its last significant colonies—Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines—and that these territories now came under American administration. In the Philippines, however, a resistance movement existed already, having been formed in opposition to the Spanish colonial power, and when Spain lost the US war in June 1898 the resistance fighters, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, declared the Philippine archipelago independent.

US military intervention in the Philippines, mentioned in Doctorow's novel in connection with Father, represents a historic turning point in American foreign policy, with repercussions still being felt today: "Americans, having conquered their own continent, were now being driven by a new dynamism toward a global role. [. . .] For the first time, U.S. soldiers fought overseas. And, for the first time, America was to acquire territory beyond its shores—the former colony itself becoming colonialist" (quoted from Karnow 1990, p. 79).

In accordance with the Treaty of Paris signed by Spain and the USA, the former Iberian colonial power ceded Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the USA in return for a payment of 20 million dollars. The US Senate, after fierce debate, ratified the treaty in February 1899. The US motivation for this deal is strongly reminiscent of that behind the European powers' acquisitions of overseas territories: a sense of mission founded on Christian ethical principles, in close alliance with economic motives. US President William McKinley, in an interview given when the Methodist Episcopal Church's *General Missionary Committee* visited Washington in 1899, recalled his motivation in occupying the Philippines as follows:

> I thought first we would take only Manila; then Luzon; then other islands, perhaps, also. I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night.
>
> And one night late it came to me this way—I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that

> we could not turn them over to France or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed and went to sleep and slept soundly. (Millis 1931, p. 384)

In the debate in the US Senate on the Paris peace treaty, equal prominence alongside these motives of civilizing and Christian intention was given to the practical arguments favoring this first incursion of American foreign policy into the Pacific arena: "The world of business was fascinated by the prospect of selling goods in China, which had been left enfeebled by its military defeat by Japan in 1895 and was incapable of withstanding interference from outside. That this immense country should become open to commercial exploitation at a time when American business was desperate to expand into new markets, seemed to entrepreneurs to be an exceptional stroke of good fortune" (Kinzer 2007, p. 79).

Nonetheless, a number of senators had spoken out during the ratification debate warning against any US occupation of the Philippines archipelago. To take such action would reduce the USA—itself once a British colony—to the same level as the European colonial powers, compromising the USA's own founding values. Senator George Hoar of Massachusetts, for example, declared that if the USA were to occupy the Philippines it would have reduced itself to "a vulgar, commonplace empire founded upon physical force, controlling subject races and vassal states, in which one class must forever rule, and other classes must forever obey" (Karnow 1990, p. 136). The Philippine peoples' struggle for independence was, moreover, often compared with the struggle of the African Americans for freedom: "Several, abolitionists before the Civil War, equated the Filipino quest for independence with the Negro struggle for freedom; some even compared Aguinaldo to John Brown" (Karnow 1990, p. 136). The same parallel would be drawn again 60 years later in the context of the Vietnam war—a point we shall consider more closely in due course.

The Filipinos proclaimed their constitution and the founding of the autonomous Republic of the Philippines in January 1899; fighting broke out between them and American troops in February and then spread to become guerrilla warfare against the occupying American force. Both sides committed atrocities and war crimes: the dynamic that came into play here was to operate again in later US interventions, such as Vietnam and Iraq. "Aware of their disadvantages, the guerrillas resorted to tactics never before encountered by the Americans. They set traps and booby-traps, slit throats, used arson and poisoning as weapons, and maimed prisoners. The Americans—some of whose officers were veterans of the Indian Wars—repaid this in kind. When two companies commanded by General Lloyd Wheaton were ambushed south-east of Manila, Wheaton ordered every village within twelve miles of the scene to be razed to the ground, and all inhabitants killed" (Kinzer 2007, p. 80). Nor did the Americans hesitate to torture their prisoners (cf. Miller 2011, p. 243 f.). These

atrocities were linked to the often racist mindset of the US soldiers, to whom the Filipinos were inferior beings, "niggers." This mindset was also clearly revealed in the letters sent home by American servicemen. One of the soldiers described the conduct of his regiment as follows: "Soon we had orders to advance, and we . . . started across the creek in mud and water up to our waists. However, we did not mind it a bit, our fighting blood was up, and we all wanted to kill 'niggers'. This shooting human beings is a 'hot game', and beats rabbit hunting all to pieces. We charged them and such a slaughter you never saw. We killed them like rabbits; hundreds, yes thousands of them. Everyone was crazy" (quoted from Miller 1982, p. 188). And they compare the war being waged against the Filipinos, whom they call "niggers," to the earlier war against the Indians on the North American continent: "The country won't be pacified until the niggers are killed off like the Indians." They would have to "blow every nigger into a nigger heaven" (quoted from Miller 1982, p. 179).

The US invasion of the Philippines and the war crimes perpetrated by the invading force were reported to the American public at home by, in particular, supporters of the *American Anti-Imperialist League*. Among the *League*'s most outspoken critics of US foreign policy was William James, the Harvard professor under whom the Father character in *Ragtime* had studied: One of the most scathing critics of McKinley's acquisition of the Philippines—"the most incredible, unbelievable piece of sneak-thief turpitude that any nation ever practiced"—James believed that our war against the Filipinos was criminal. We had brought the Filipinos terror and destruction, in the guise of "benevolent assimilation," and were guilty of "murdering another culture." By treating the Filipinos "as if they were a painted picture, an amount of mere matter in our way," we had fallen victim to the moral insensitivity of all conquerors who confused weakness with inferiority and lost the ability to understand "the humanity of the enemy." "God damn the U.S. for its vile conduct in the Philippines" (Welch 1979, p. 122).

The war between the American troops and the Philippine guerrillas was officially declared over by President Theodore Roosevelt on July 4, 1902. In fact fighting dragged on for a long time after that:—the Muslim Moros in the south of the island continued their resistance to the American occupying forces until 1916. On the American side, the war cost the lives of 4347 soldiers. On the Filipino side, some 20,000 guerrillas were killed, and the number of civilian dead as a result of the war was variously reported at figures ranging from 200,000 up to 1.5 million. As time moved on, public perceptions of the invasion diverged sharply: "In Filipino memory, these years were among the bloodiest of their entire history. The Americans soon forgot that there had ever even been a war" (Kinzer 2007, p. 87). In our own time, the Islamists of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Mindanao region of the southern Philippines have been engaged in a struggle for greater autonomy, and in March 2014 the government under President Benigno Aquino granted this to the Mindanao population through the terms of a peace treaty.

Doctorow's reference in *Ragtime* to the invasion of the Philippines by US troops can serve to prompt critical reflection on later interventions by the same superpower, notably Vietnam and Iraq. Stephen Kinzer draws a direct comparison between

President William McKinley's intervention in the Philippines and the occupation of Iraq by President George W. Bush: "The parallels between McKinley's occupation of the Philippines and Bush's occupation of Iraq are immediately obvious. Both Presidents were motivated by the prospect of economic and political advantages for the United States. Likewise, both had a deep inner conviction that the United States had a mission from God to extend its own system of government to distant lands. Neither had any doubt that the people of the countries concerned would welcome the Americans as liberators. Neither had any expectation of being forced to wage a long war to suppress nationalist insurgents" (Kinzer 2007, p. 453). In *Ragtime*'s diorama of American society at the beginning of the twentieth century, Father represents the stance of a typical WASP, complacent, yet harboring grudges against racial out-groups, a veteran who had participated in the quashing of the Moro rebellion and been commissioned as an officer while serving with the US forces in the Philippines.

6.4 Racism and Violence

A central conflict in *Ragtime* is about racism in early twentieth-century American society. The fictional clash over Coalhouse Walker's Model T Ford, willfully damaged by white racists, can serve as a reference framework anchoring discussion and study of ongoing issues of racial discrimination. Coalhouse is portrayed in *Ragtime* as a punctilious and morally upright African American doing his best to make an honest living for himself and his family through his work as a musician. The car he has bought symbolizes this endeavor. Coalhouse Walker is right on track to gain himself and his family their place in bourgeois society when he comes up against the racially motivated injustice inflicted on him by the white firemen.

In his subsequent efforts to obtain justice through the established processes of law, Coalhouse initially continues to conduct himself as an exemplary citizen. Later, forced to recognize that the state and its institutions are inhibited by endemic racism from granting him the justice he seeks, and having seen his wife killed while trying to support him, he resorts to imposing his own justice.

The figure of Coalhouse Walker Jr. is closely modeled on that of Michael Kohlhaas in Heinrich von Kleist's eponymous *Novelle*. Each of them is pressed to pay an unlawful toll, suffers damage to his property, attempts repeatedly to secure justice for himself, and is denied; each has a wife who while trying to lodge her husband's legal claim with higher authority is brutally injured by security personnel and dies as a result, and each publishes letters spelling out his demands. Michael Kohlhaas meets face-to-face with Martin Luther, who appeals to him to abandon his rebellion; Coalhouse Walker, holding out in J. P. Morgan's library, meets Booker T. Washington, sent there as a mediator by the New York District Attorney.

Booker T. Washington had achieved nationwide fame as a result of founding the Tuskegee Institute to promote the vocational education of African Americans. He spoke up for equal rights for African Americans, but wanted them introduced step by

step, thus acquiescing in the current subordination of this group to the white ascendancy. In 1901, under President Theodore Roosevelt, Washington became the first African American to be invited to the White House. He had been vehemently criticized by more radical African Americans like W. E. B. Du Bois for the restraint he showed on the issue of campaigning for full equality for African Americans. In *Ragtime* he is introduced as follows: "Booker T. Washington was at this time the most famous Negro in the country. Since the founding of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama he had become the leading exponent of vocational training for colored people. He was against all Negro agitation on questions of political and social equality" (Doctorow 2006, p. 235).

In Coalhouse Walker and Booker T. Washington the novel *Ragtime* brings two individuals face-to-face who pursue wholly different methods of coping with the negative consequences of racist behavior, in one instance the personal injustice suffered and in the other instance the injustices prevailing in society at large. It is in character that Washington should appeal to Coalhouse Walker to terminate his occupation of the Morgan Library and hand himself in to the authorities. The conversation in the library between these two men—with portraits of Martin Luther by Lucas Cranach the Elder looking down on them—reveals Washington's restrained stance with regard to the ending of racial segregation in the USA:

> For my entire life I have worked in patience and hope for a Christian brotherhood. I have had to persuade the white man that he need not fear us or murder us, because we wanted only to improve ourselves and peaceably join him in enjoyment of the fruits of American democracy. Every Negro in prison, every shiftless no-good gambling and fornicating colored man has been my enemy, and every incident of faulted Negro character has cost me a piece of my life. What will your misguided criminal recklessness cost me! (Doctorow 2006, p. 237)

Coalhouse Walker's violent rebellion against racist injustice has repercussions also for the middle-class white family who have given shelter in their home to his wife and baby son. While Coalhouse is making his multiple attempts to obtain redress for his grievances by legal methods, the matter is much discussed at family mealtimes. Father and Mother's Younger Brother are soon expressing diametrically opposed opinions on Coalhouse Walker's attempts to secure justice. Father's stance leaves no doubt of his essentially racist predispositions, while his young brother-in-law sympathizes with Coalhouse's views: "It seemed to be his fault, somehow, because he was Negro and it was the kind of problem that would only adhere to a Negro. His monumental negritude sat in front of them like a centerpiece on the table. While Sarah served, Father told her that her fiancé would have done better after all to drive away his car when he could and forget the matter. Younger Brother bristled. You speak like a man who has never been tested in his principles, he said. Father was so outraged by this remark that he could find no word" (Doctorow 2006, p. 155). A kind of bond has formed between Younger Brother and Sarah, the "unspoken complicity of two members of the same generation," and Sarah also foresees the coming, eventually violent stages of Coalhouse Walker's efforts to secure justice, for she had evidently "detected the violence underlying all principle" (Doctorow 2006, p. 157). In due course Younger Brother will discover that violence for himself and will then live by it.

It is when Coalhouse Walker carries out his first act of violence, the attack on the firehouse, that Father and his brother-in-law fall out openly. Father intends to use his army pistol, in his possession since the Philippines campaign, in self-defense against possible attempts by Coalhouse to gain entry, scolds his wife for harboring Sarah in the family, and talks of going to the police to tell them that "this murdering madman was a guest in my home" and that "we are keeping his bastard child." To that Mother's Younger Brother retorts:

> I think Coalhouse Walker Jr. would want you to tell the police everything you know. You can tell them he's the same Negro maniac whose car is lying at the bottom of Firehouse Pond. You can tell them he's the fellow who visited their own headquarters to make a complaint against Will Conklin and his thugs. You can tell them he's the same crazed black killer who sat by the bedside of someone who died in the hospital of her injuries. Father said I hope I misunderstand you. Would you defend this savage? Does he have anyone but himself to blame for Sarah's death? Anything but his damnable nigger pride? Nothing under heaven can excuse the killing of men and the destruction of property in this manner! Brother stood so abruptly that his chair fell over. The baby started and began to cry. Brother was pale and trembling. I did not hear such a eulogy at Sarah's funeral, he said. I did not hear you say then that death and the destruction of property was inexcusable (Doctorow 2006, p. 176).

Following this exchange, Younger Brother establishes contact with Coalhouse Walker—now active clandestinely—and joins the group of militants, whereas Father does all he can to help the police track down the rebel. Younger Brother still retains one link with his sister—ragtime. Listening one night as "a brass band of Negros stoutly played a rag"—one that Coalhouse used to play—"she was almost overcome by the music which was associated in her mind also with Younger Brother" (Doctorow 2006, p. 211). Mother's Younger Brother is characterized as a "strange young man" who did not make friends. "He was solitary and impassive except for a streak of indolence which he either could not hide or did not care to" (Doctorow 2006, p. 55). While employed in the fireworks section of Father's business he demonstrates wholehearted commitment, spending twelve to fifteen hours at work and designing dozens of new rockets and the like. After Evelyn Nesbit drops him and runs off with a professional ragtime dancer, he mourns for her and begins to take trips after work to New York, where he drinks with officers, stands outside Broadway stage doors, goes to cellar clubs "where hoodlums bought everyone drinks," and learns "where to find women who would go to bed with him for a modest price" (Doctorow 2006, p. 137 f.).

6.5 Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution

While exploring the city, Mother's Younger Brother finds his way to the editorial premises of the *Mother Earth* magazine published by Emma Goldman, the revolutionary, whom he had met earlier through his lover, Evelyn Nesbit. Once Goldman has recognized him and so established that he is not the police spy her associates took him to be, Younger Brother follows the anarchists to a meeting in the Cooper

Union down near the Bowery—a South Manhattan district that retained its sleazy reputation until the 1990s. The account of Younger Brother's attendance at this meeting depicts him as a naive member of the white upper-middle classes experiencing a world utterly new to him: "It was a great stinking congress garlicked and perfumed in its own perspiration. It had met in support of the Mexican Revolution. He hadn't known there was a Mexican Revolution" (Doctorow 2006, p. 139).

Various speakers address the meeting, reporting on the Mexican peasant rebellion against the regime of President Porfirio Díaz. It becomes clear that a prime need for the rebels is modern weaponry: they are attacking the Mexican government forces with wooden staves and muzzle-loading muskets. This gives Younger Brother food for thought, as his employment in Father's factory has given him relevant work experience. Of all the speakers, it is Emma Goldman who truly captures her audience: "The hall went quiet as she described the complicity of the wealthy landowners and the despised tyrant Díaz, the subjugation of the peons, the poverty and starvation and, most shameful of all, the presence of representatives of American business firms in the national counsels of the Mexican government. [. . .] She described one Emiliano Zapata, a simple farmer of the Morelos district who had turned revolutionary because he had no choice. He wore the share farmer's bleached pajama coat and trousers, bound over the chest with bandoleers and belted with a cartridge belt. My comrades, she cried, that is not a foreign costume. There are no foreign lands. There is no Mexican peasant, there is no dictator Díaz. There is only the struggle throughout the world, there is only the flame of freedom trying to light the hideous darkness of life on earth" (Doctorow 2006, p. 139). Goldman's address brings deafening applause. Money is being collected in support of the Mexican revolution, and Mother's Younger Brother is moved to give likewise to the revolutionary cause. But he has no money on him, and is ". . . mortified to see all around him people who reeked of their poverty coming up with handfuls of change" (Doctorow 2006, p. 139 f.).—Some years back, Father as a serving soldier has helped to suppress the rising of the Filipinos against the American occupation, and now Mother's Younger Brother—so far only in spirit—is standing shoulder to shoulder with the mutinous peasant farmers of Mexico as they defy an authoritarian government supported by the USA.

The links depicted in *Ragtime* between Emma Goldman and the Mexican revolution correspond to her historical support for the cause of the anarchist-inclined *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (*Liberal Party of Mexico*), which itself championed the (mostly indigenous) agricultural workers. Politically, the PLM was essentially the creation of the Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón, and he publicized its demand for *Tierra y Libertad* (*Land and Liberty*) so effectively that this became the rallying cry adopted by the rebel leaders Francisco Villa and Emiliano Zapata for the campaign attacking President Porfirio Díaz. Magón's own thinking owed much to the writings of the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin and the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta (cf. Albro 1992, p. 139 ff.). He fled to exile in the USA in 1904, but was arrested there more than once and served jail terms. Emma Goldman did what she could in many ways to support Magón and his brother Enrique (cf. Goldman 2014, p. 525 ff.). In her autobiography she recalls: "Ricardo Flores Magón and his

brother Enrique [. . .] had ripped the mask from the face of Diaz' despotic regime and the heartless exploitation of the Mexican people by both indigenous and American interests. [. . .] The revolution in Mexico was the expression of a people that no longer had any illusions as to the great political and economic injustice inflicted on its homeland. The struggle inspired large numbers of militant workers in America, among them many anarchists und IWWs (Industrial Workers of the World), to come to the aid of their Mexican brothers beyond the border. Politically aware people all along the coast, intellectuals as well as workers, were set ablaze by the spirit of the Mexican Revolution" (Goldman 2014, p.442). Ricardo Flores Magón died in an American prison in 1922.

In *Ragtime*, Younger Brother waits after the Bowery rally to speak to Emma Goldman alone: he has to know what has become of Evelyn Nesbit, the love of his life. But on this she cannot help him and asks a question instead: "Is that all you want from your life?" And she proceeds to leave Younger Brother in no doubt of her views on the bourgeois institution of matrimony: "I don't know where she is. But if I could tell you, what good would that do? [. . .] Suppose she consented to live with you after all. You're a bourgeois, you would want to marry her. You would destroy each other inside of a year. You would see her begin to turn old and bored under your very eyes. You would sit across the dinner table from each other in bondage, in terrible bondage to what you thought was love. The both of you. Believe me you are better off this way" (Doctorow 2006, p. 142).

Coming from the anarchist, who is freethinking with regard to marriage as in other respects, these words strike a chord with Mother's Younger Brother, already only too well acquainted with this unappetizing variant of marriage from his years of sharing a home with his sister and her husband. The casually vicious vandalizing of Coalhouse Walker Jr.'s car has awakened in Younger Brother a deep-seated feeling of affinity with the African-American victim, and at the same time a visceral revulsion for the prim, self-deceiving life led by his sister and her husband:

> He saw them in their suffocating parlor with its chaise and its mounted heads and fringed lampshades and he felt he couldn't breathe. He despised them. He thought they were complacent, ordinary and inconsiderate. [. . .] There is no question then that Younger Brother was fortunate to conceive a loyalty to the colored man. Standing at the pond he heard the lapping of the water against the front fenders of the Model T. [. . .] There ran through him a small current of rage, perhaps one one-hundredth, he knew, of what Coalhouse Walker must have felt, and it was salutary (Doctorow 2006, p. 152).

After meeting with Emma Goldman, Younger Brother follows a path taking him ever further away from the bourgeois lifestyle of his brother-in-law and sister and gravitates to the victim of random bigotry, Coalhouse Walker. Joining Coalhouse and his small band of supporters, he barricades himself along with them into J. P. Morgan's library.

Subsequently escaping from there with Coalhouse Walker's remaining accomplices, once Coalhouse has negotiated free passage for them, Mother's Younger Brother drives the Model T—which Conklin has been forced to refurbish—south out of New York and embarks on an odyssey through the USA that eventually brings him to the Mexican border and the opportunity to join the rebels who have mobilized

against President Porfirio Diaz. One of the US states he has traversed is Georgia, where the menace of an anti-Semitic pogrom hangs in the air: "He drove through small towns in Georgia where in the scant shade of the trees in the squares citizens spoke of hanging the Jew Leo Frank for what he had done to a fourteen-year-old Christian girl, Mary Phagan" (Doctorow 2006, p. 256). Leo Frank, Jewish and a factory manager, had been sentenced to death in 1913 after being found guilty on circumstantial evidence of the murder of a factory employee, Mary Phagan. When the Governor of Georgia commuted the sentence to life imprisonment, armed men abducted Leo Frank from the state penitentiary and hanged him in Marietta, Mary Phagan's hometown, in August 1915 (cf. Wood 2009, S. 148). This lynching is a further *Ragtime* allusion to the virulent anti-Semitism endemic in the USA in the early years of the twentieth century; the topic has surfaced already in Henry Ford's comment to J.P. Morgan (cf. Doctorow 2006, p. 122). About three months after the "Knights of Mary Phagan" lynched the Jew Leo Frank, the Ku Klux Klan was re-founded. It is a racist organization targeting primarily African Americans, Jews, and Catholics (cf. Holmes 1977, p. 292 ff.).

In Mexico, Mother's Younger Brother attaches himself to the rebel forces under Francisco Villa, who take him on as a "compañero" (cf. Doctorow 2006, p. 257). He takes part in skirmishes, wears "the cartridge belts crisscrossed over his chest," and dreams "of going on and finding Zapata" (cf. Doctorow 206, p. 257). Eventually, during a meeting of the regional insurgent chiefs, he succeeds in switching from Francisco Villa's forces to Emiliano Zapata—finding Zapata and his *campesinos* much more congenial company than the *villistas*: "The *campesinos* of the south did not like either Mexico City or the revolution of the moderates. When they left, Younger Brother went with them" (Doctorow 2006, p. 258). His sense of ideological kinship with Emiliano Zapata is by no means left unmotivated, as the Mexican revolutionary leader has likewise been influenced by the anarchist thinking of Ricardo Flores Magón—which in turn is politically and ideologically close to that of Emma Goldman.

To Emiliano Zapata Younger Brother discloses his "special knowledge" in the field of weapons maintenance, bomb-making, etc. He places these skills at the service of Zapata's guerrillas and participates actively in the insurgents' campaign: "Over the next year Younger Brother led guerilla raids on oil fields, smelters and federal garrisons. He was respected by the *zapatistas* but was thought also to be reckless" (Doctorow 2006, p. 258). Eventually he is killed in action, still fighting for the Mexican revolution: "We are not sure of the exact circumstances of his death, but it appears to have come in a skirmish with government troops near the Chinameca plantation in Morelos, the same place where several years later Zapata himself was to be gunned down in ambush" (Doctorow 2006, p. 259)—By fighting and dying for the Zapatista revolution in Mexico, Younger Brother has borne out Emma Goldman's assessment of his potential. To her partner Ben Reitman she had said of Younger Brother, after his appearance at the pro-revolution rally: "He reminds me of Czolgosz. Reitman said He is educated, a bourgeois. But the same poor boy in the eyes, Goldman said. The same poor dangerous boy" (Doctorow 2006, p. 143). Leon Czolgosz, the 28-year-old son of Polish immigrants, was an anarchist and had sought

contact with Emma Goldman (cf. Goldman 2014, p. 271 f.). He shot President William McKinley on September 6, 1901, during the Presidential visit to the *Pan-American Exposition* in Buffalo (N.Y.). McKinley died shortly afterward from his injuries. Leon Czolgosz was condemned to death for the deed and duly executed.

6.6 The Student Movement, Racism, and Violence

The figure of Mother's Younger Brother in *Ragtime* and his uncompromising backing for Coalhouse Walker Jr. and for revolutionary social change in Mexico offer parallels to the political commitment shown by "white" students during the 1968 student movement. Many of its subsequent protagonists—Tom Hayden, for example—had gained their initial experience of politics from *sit-ins* and *freedom rides* shared with African Americans during the struggle against racism and segregation in the US South in the first half of the 1960s (cf. Hayden 1962). The two organizations of greatest significance for the student movement, *Students for a Democratic Society* (SDS) and the African American grouping *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee* (SNCC), continued mutual cooperation in later years. Both these groups became steadily more radical in response to the escalation (from late 1964) of the Vietnam War and as a consequence of their links to national liberation movements in the Third World (on developments discussed here, cf. Juchler 1996, p. 51 ff.). Thus, for instance, at the invitation of the Communist North Vietnamese leadership and in defiance of a US government order, Tom Hayden, Staughton Lynd, and Herbert Aptheker visited the North Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, over Christmas and New Year 1965/1966. On their return they compiled a report aimed at making the viewpoint of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the *National Liberation Front* (NLF, the "Vietcong") on the American military operations in South Vietnam clear to their American readers. As well as outlining the political and ideological stances of Hanoi and the NLF, the authors discussed the relationship between revolution and violence and their own position on this topic. The text leaves no doubt that Hayden and Lynd considered the military struggle of the NLF against their own nation's intervention force to be justified: "In general, we believe in identifying with the revolutionary process and finding ways within one's limits to make it as humane as possible" (Lynd and Hayden 1967, p. 166). In pursuing their own political activities in the USA, Hayden and Lynd accordingly allied themselves with the "other side," an identification of common interest that proved seminal in the subsequent history of radical sections of the student movement: "We are part of the same great family on earth as those Cubans, Ghanaians, and Vietnamese who are trying to make a way independent of the Great Powers, trying to assume the responsibility for decisions which have been expropriated by others, trying to take back the stolen natural resources, the factories, the farming land, the schools, and above all the labor which has been used by others for so long" (Lynd and Hayden 1967, p. 203).

The radicalization of white students in the USA in the 1960s took place in a comparable manner to that of Mother's Younger Brother in *Ragtime*. Younger Brother is radicalized politically by the racist motivation of the injustice done to Coalhouse Walker, together with Father's imperialist attitudes, while racism in the Southern states, together with the continuing escalation of the Vietnam War, triggered the political radicalization of the American student body of the 1960s. Where Younger Brother in *Ragtime* absorbs ideology from the anarchist Emma Goldman and the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, it was the writings of the sociologist and philosopher Herbert Marcuse and of such liberation theorists as Frantz Fanon and Ernesto Che Guevara that furnished the ideological resources from which the student groups derived their increasingly hard-line worldview—alongside Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man,* Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare* was the most read political source for the SDS in 1967, indeed becoming in effect the "movement bible" (cf. Matusow 1986, p. 326). The SDS's alignment with Third World guerrilla movements was further reinforced by its long-term links with the African-American student union organization SNCC. Stokely Carmichael, who as Chair of the SNCC in summer 1966 had issued the call for *Black Power*—thus creating the rallying cry for an African-American movement of nationwide influence (cf. Carmichael 1966, p. 5 ff.)—was invited to represent the *Black Power* movement at the August 1967 conference of the *Latin American Solidarity Organization* (LASO) in Havana. Attended by 27 delegations, mostly representing Latin American guerrilla groups, the conference was aimed at coordinating their efforts (cf. Juchler 2006, p. 212 ff.). Carmichael contributed by directly linking the rioting in the African-American ghettos in Newark and other places to the ongoing struggle of Latin American guerrilla groups and roundly declared that Ernesto Che Guevara stood closer than anyone else to African Americans and that their struggle in their US ghettos should therefore take militant form.

Carmichael's presence at the side of Fidel Castro and Latin American guerrilla leaders, and the alliance proclaimed by him at this point between African Americans in the USA and the guerrilla fighters in Latin America, were covered approvingly and in depth by two publications with mainly student readership, *The Movement* and *National Guardian*. In October 1967 the Vietnam War led to the biggest protest demonstrations so far in the USA. For some sections of the US student movement, Ernesto Che Guevara's death in Bolivia on October, 6, 1967, while attempting to put his guerrilla theory into practice proved to be a further radicalizing factor. His death made Guevara into "a kind of secular saint in the Western world" (Zaroulis and Sullivan 1984, p. 133)—he became a martyr not only for the radical Leftist movements in Latin America but for the *Black Power* movement in the USA and more broadly for the student movements in the modern Western industrialized nations on both sides of the Atlantic. In the discourse of the American student movement and anti-Vietnam War movement, usage of the term *guerrilla* entered a phase of hyperinflation.

Mother's Younger Brother in *Ragtime* is attracted by the militancy of Coalhouse Walker, who in this respect contrasts sharply with the moderate African-American Booker T. Washington. The growing militancy of the American student leaders in

the 1960s, similarly, was reflected in the efforts made by the SDS to forge stronger cooperation with the radical African American *Black Panther Party* (BPP). When the SNCC, long-standing partner to the SDS, aligned itself with the BPP in February 1968, the SDS too moved rapidly toward solidarity with this militant African-American party. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King on April 4, 1968, and the ensuing riots in the African-American ghettos, the BPP's "Minister of Information," Eldridge Cleaver, announced that African Americans were "engaged in open war for their national liberation from the tyranny imposed by the white motherland." The liberation of the *Black Community* would be won by the African Americans through force of arms: "Black men know that they must pick up the gun, they must arm black people to the teeth, they must organize an army and confront the mother country with a most drastic consequence if she attempts to assert police power over the colony. If the white mother country is to have victory over the black colony, it is the duty of black revolutionaries to insure that the Imperialists receive no more than a Pyrrhic victory, written in the blood of what America might have become." (Cleaver 1968, p. 53)

These BPP arguments, very largely in line with those advanced by the SNCC from the summer of 1967 onwards, were also readily endorsed by that part of the SDS represented by the National Office. With this constituency in mind, Bernardine Dohrn set out the SDS's main future objective as follows, writing in *New Left Notes*, the SDS union journal: "The best thing that we can be doing for ourselves, as well as for the Panthers and the revolutionary black liberation struggle, is to build a fucking white revolutionary mass movement, not a national paper alliance" (Dohrn 1968, p. 5). The direct-actionist wing of the SDS continued subsequently to align itself with the political positions of militant organizations representing ethnic minorities, a stance that even brought about a short-lived nationwide alliance in summer 1969 between SDS and BPP. As a result, delegates arriving in Chicago for the student organization's annual convention in June 1969 found that a position paper had been tabled under the title *You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows*. This was a line quoted from Bob Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues.* The authors of the *Weatherman* paper, having prefaced their views with a further quotation, this one from Lin Biao's *Long Live Victory in the People's Struggle!*, declared that the next essential was to develop a strategy summarized by Ernesto Che Guevara in the words *Make it two, three, many Vietnams* and asserted that in the USA the African Americans had taken over the role of avant-garde in terms both of fostering revolutionary awareness and of active revolutionary struggle (cf. Ashley et al. 1970, pp. 51 and 60 ff.). The new SDS steering committee elected at the convention was drawn exclusively from members of the faction now styling itself *Weatherman*: Thanks to media exposure following the disturbances at Columbia University, Mark Rudd was now widely recognized as one of the protagonists of the SDS, and he took over as *National Secretary*; Bill Ayers, an activist from the *Jesse James Gang* (the SDS local group at Michigan University), became *Education Secretary,* and Jeff Jones, who had represented the SDS when he went to Cambodia in the fall of 1967, accompanied by Steve Halliwell and Cathy Wilkerson, for a meeting with the NLF, was appointed *Inter-organizational Secretary*. Subsequently,

some of the *Weathermen* traveled to Hanoi and Havana, meeting with representatives from North Vietnam, the NLF, and the Cuban government (cf. Collier and Horowitz 1989, p. 83). On their return to the USA, the *Weathermen* considered it their mission to implement the revolution in the "motherland," fighting in solidarity with the African Americans, Cubans, and Vietnamese: "As people who are located inside the monster, revolutionary Americans are in a position to do decisive damage to the U.S. ruling class's plans to continue and expand its world rule. The upcoming U.S. defeat in Vietnam will be a vital blow to those plans; we must aim to do everything we can to speed up that defeat." (Gold 1969, p. 2)

A motif linking *Ragtime* to the civil rights disturbances is that of skin color. For the Morgan Library sit-in, Mother's Younger Brother demonstratively switches color by painting his face black, and similarly, the notion of "white-skin privilege" was a psychological factor behind the real-life militancy of the *Weathermen*: "The whites in this country are insulated from the world revolution and the Third World liberation struggles because of their access to, and acceptance of, blood-soaked white-skin privileges. [. . .] The whole point of the Weatherman politics is to break down this insulation, to bring the war home, to make the coming revolution real" (Ono 1970, p. 251). The *Weathermen* gained verbal support from African-American radicals such as Eldridge Cleaver, who insisted that in a world driven by the conflict of good and evil what mattered was to pitch in on the right side, irrespective of means used: "In times of revolution, just wars and wars of liberation, I love the angels of destruction and disorder as opposed to the devils of conservation and law-and-order. [. . .] Actions speak louder than words. Moncada is Fidel's most eloquent statement of position. Bolivia was Che's. [. . .] We are either pig-killers or pig-feeders" (Cleaver 1970, p. 294). It reflected the temper of the times that the last SDS National Council—December 1969—was billed as a *National War Council* and met in the African-American ghetto of Flint, Michigan. The recurring keynote of conversations and debates among the 400 participants on this occasion was their sense of guilt that the "whites" in the USA were living off ethnic minorities and the Third World: "We are behind enemy lines. We are the sons and daughters of the enemy. Our political objective is the destruction of honkiness. We are going to wipe out the imperialist State and every vestige of honky consciousness in white people." (Anonymous/-mous 1970, p. 450)

Where Younger Brother in *Ragtime*, offspring of the American middle class, had joined up with the militant Coalhouse Walker and subsequently fought at the side of Emiliano Zapata, the radicalized students of the 1960s consistently presented their commitment to the "revolutionary process" as a cathartic act enabling the hitherto privileged "white" students from the middle classes to metamorphose into revolutionary fighters of the same status as the guerrillas of Latin America. In February1970, the *Weathermen* finally made the heralded move to actual armed struggle, breaking off all official contacts with the movement's other activists across the spectrum of the student movement as a whole, and with their families, and quit existing lodgings for apartments in faceless residential districts. Vickie Gabriner supervised the winding up of the SDS national office in Chicago. On May 21, 1970, the underground movement released its first *communiqué* to the public at large: it

was a declaration of war on "US imperialism." Once again it was made clear that the self-declared white revolutionaries considered themselves to be fighting shoulder to shoulder with revolutionary African Americans in the USA: "Within the next fourteen days we will attack a symbol or institution of American injustice. This is the way we celebrate the example of Eldridge Cleaver and H. Rap Brown and all black revolutionaries who first inspired us by their fight behind enemy lines for the liberation of their people" (Dohrn 2006, p. 151; original orthography). It was a position that Mother's Younger Brother in *Ragtime* would surely have been happy to endorse.

6.7 What Remains?

E. L. Doctorow authored historical novels that can still tell us something today. In describing past events and linking them to things that really happened, he invites us to reflect on the politics of our own day. Hence the declaration by Daniel Kehlmann, delivering the *Laudatio* for the award of the Erwin Piscator Prize to E. L. Doctorow: "The reflection that the lives of past generations, their sufferings and their humiliation matter to us, no less than do those of our contemporaries—that reflection clearly has a political dimension. [. . .] In Doctorow's writings many historical figures appear, but he keeps his greatest affection for simple people who must rely on their native wit, their strength and resilience to win through when the times are contrary. No historian will remember them, that is the nature of things. All they can expect is oblivion, and perhaps the imagination of a novelist who can render them the service of inventing them" (Kehlmann 2011).

Doctorow's use of historical subject matter in *Ragtime* imparts to his readers an effective stimulus to look critically into present-day political concerns, among which one of the most acute domestically in the USA is the still virulent phenomenon of racial prejudice. Since its publication, this historical novel has been perennially relevant—". . . [in] *Ragtime* (1975) the black musician Coalhouse Walker Jr. not only reminds us by his name of Kleist's vengeful activist, but also carries the Kohlhaas rage in his heart, an implacable rage directed not simply at an America that is sliding towards world war, but also at America as a country that, just as it did in the 1970s when *Ragtime* was first published, still treats its black population today, at the time of the author's death, as if black society were even now no part of the nation." (Wilm 2015)

Present-day political dissension over the topic of racism bears eloquent witness to the enduring relevance of Doctorow's theme. The election of Barack Obama as President made him the first African American ever to win the nation's highest office. This should be seen first and foremost as a highly significant success along the way to abolition of the centuries-old enforced separation of black and white in the USA. In view of the fact that the last obstacles to the granting of formal equal rights to African Americans were only removed as late as the 1960s and 1970s, and only under pressure from the vigorous social activism of the *civil rights movement*,

Obama's election testifies to an enormous evolution in the mindset of American society. And yet even this success has to be seen in the context of the still persisting shortfall in terms of genuine and complete equal rights for African Americans. Differences between black and white are still evident in a wide variety of social, legal, and economic contexts, whether it be healthcare provision, school and college enrolment, criminality, imposition of death sentences, housing provision, or poverty and unemployment, which impact disproportionately on African Americans. A particularly blatant failure to afford African Americans real equality of rights is to be found in the American judicial system, in which even now skin color evidently still often plays a decisive role in the administration of criminal justice, particularly in the southern states.

Racial discrimination in the judicial system and police violence against African Americans lead to loss of confidence in these institutions and ultimately in the legitimacy of the state's authority, a further central pillar of political order. American jails have recorded what criminologists term "racial disproportion," a steadily rising percentage of African Americans among the inmates: "It is a matter of fact that the enormous disparity between whites and blacks results only in part from differing predispositions to commit offenses. The disparity points rather to the thoroughly discriminatory character of police and judicial practice. Thus while 13 percent of drug users are black (roughly matching the black share of the overall population), one third of those arrested for offenses under the Controlled Substances Act, and three-quarters of those jailed for such offenses, are black" (Wacquant 2008, p. 63). From this trend the legal expert Bryan Stevenson concludes: "Poverty, racism, readiness to believe others guilty, and a whole raft of other social, structural and political mechanisms have given rise to a judicial system that is characterized by its mistakes and has put hundreds of innocents behind bars." (Stevenson 2015, p. 27)

Along with the routinely arbitrary decisions in the administration of justice, a further much-debated domestic policy issue in the USA is racially motivated police violence. The serious rioting in the small city of Ferguson, Missouri, for instance, attracted widespread media interest beyond the local region. The unrest broke out after an unarmed African-American teenager, Michael Brown, was shot dead by a white police officer, Darren Wilson, on August 9, 2014. This act provoked major protests in the city against racially motivated police violence—protests that were to flare up once again that November when a jury decided not to indict Darren Wilson. A year after the major violence in Ferguson, Marc Pitzke took stock in a sobering review: "Fresh instances of racially motivated police violence are reported almost every day. True: Americans generally are taking more interest, the media are on the alert, and the repercussions for the cops follow more promptly, partly thanks to fuller video documentation. But under this crust of largely good intentions, festering away as it always did, still alive, is the ancestral sin, racism" (Pitzke 2015).

Arbitrary dispensation of justice, racially motivated police violence ... and a third enduring phenomenon of United States society is the perpetration of violent attacks on African Americans. One such attack, exceptionally bloody and with symbolic resonance, took place on June, 17, 2015, at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Emanuel A.M.E. Church) in Charleston, South Carolina.

Evidently acting on racist motives, a 21-year-old white man killed nine African Americans during a church service in which he had earlier participated. The Emanuel A.M.E. Church, founded at the start of the nineteenth century as an independent African-American faith community, had subsequently grown and spread to other parts of the USA. In 1822 a certain Denmark Vesey, one of Emanuel A.M.E.'s founding fathers, laid the groundwork for a major rising by slaves in Charleston and other centers in South Carolina, but the plan was betrayed and came to nothing. This abortive rising was one of a string of anti-slavery rebellions that may remind the *Ragtime* reader of David Walker's radical *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, and of Coalhouse Walker Jr. Denmark Vesey was sentenced to death along with 34 further African Americans and hanged. In Charleston, a memorial to Vesey and his struggle against slavery was unveiled in 2014. During the twentieth century too, the Emanuel A.M.E. Church had played a prominent role in the history of the African-American civil rights movement, for instance hosting speeches by Booker T. Washington—who appears in *Ragtime*—and Martin Luther King Jr..

The atrocity in the Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston brought a nationwide outcry and denunciation of racist violence. But that was not all. Along with leading political figures from the Democratic and Republican parties, President Barack Obama called for the removal of the Confederacy flag from the Capitol in Columbia (South Carolina). The flag that once represented the army of the southern states still symbolizes the racist heritage of those states. The mass killer in Charleston had posed with it. Three weeks after the murders, the flag was taken down for good from its pole in South Carolina's capital city.

Shortly after the Charleston massacre, the first African-American President of the USA was in conversation with Marc Maron on the latter's WTF podcast. Barack Obama pointed to what had been achieved by the civil rights movement but at the same time emphasized that the battle against racism must go on:

> I always say to young people: Don't tell me nothing has changed on the race issue! Don't say that if you were not a black man alive in the Fifties, the Sixties. The Seventies. The opportunities and the attitudes have changed. That is a fact. But what is also true is that slavery and discrimination still cast their long shadow over the institutions of today. That has become part of our DNA. [. . .] Racism: we are not yet cured of it. The march is not yet over (quoted from Kiyak 2015).

Barack Obama's allusion to a "march," still not ended, was not random. The President was referring to the legendary *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom,* coordinated by the African-American civil rights movement. It took place on August, 28, 1963, and was the occasion on which Luther King Jr. delivered his visionary speech, *I have a dream*. President Obama has put up a bust of Martin Luther King Jr. in the Oval Office and has hung a program from the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom* on the wall. One of his favorite books is *Ragtime*.

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