

Ernest A. Menze

### Benjamin Franklin Seen with German Eyes: Selective Co-optations by German Authors

This essay examines German perceptions of Benjamin Franklin's life and work. The approach is that of an overview, letting a few representative writers come to word. Any retrospective of American influences on Germany over time will always be subject to a measure of bias, caused by the consequences of the Second World War. Notwithstanding the "many faces" of Franklin that will be alluded to in the following, he is seen here in the main as anticipating an American pragmatism that differs markedly from the idealist preoccupations of German thought. The thesis of Franklin, endorsed here, as a teacher of democracy not heeded at a critical point in German history is informed by a decided partisanship on the author's part for the American way as pioneered and lived by the Philadelphian sage. The flaws in Franklin's character and conduct, so very much present in the critical eyes of his countrymen, tend to be overlooked by his European admirers in the light of his virtues and accomplishments.

The impressive range of American Franklin scholarship, was expanded recently with the publication of Larry E. Tisch's volume, presenting the papers given at a symposium on "Franklin and Women" and H. W. Brands's biography of "The First American."<sup>1</sup> The views of American critics, conveniently assembled by Brian M. Barbour, of Franklin's many-sided face—or "multiple selves"—help the newcomer to the field find his bearing.<sup>2</sup> The flaws found by modern critics in Franklin's character and conduct make the reader of the idealized early German views pause. More telling yet is the criticism of Thoreau, Emerson, Hawthorne, Cooper, Poe, and Melville, summarized by Barbour: "so fundamental is the criticism of Franklinian assumptions carved out by the greatest American writers of the nineteenth century that in the twentieth novelists like Fitzgerald [*Gatsby*] and Faulkner found it obviously *there* to exploit."<sup>3</sup> Though Barbour may be correct in finding the famous D. H. Lawrence essay "neither gratuitous nor unprecedented" and in seeing it as a response within an established tradition,<sup>4</sup> Lawrence's contemptuous depiction of "Old Daddy Franklin" as a "cunning little Benjamin" who "drew up for himself a creed that should 'satisfy the professors of every religion, but shock none,'" continues to shock modern sensibilities.<sup>5</sup> Franklin's German admirers certainly would have been offended had such slanderous accusations reached their ears. How many—and which—of Franklin's many selves, self-made or induced by the circumstances of his life, did German eyes

get to see?<sup>6</sup>

Germans certainly had a representative selection of Franklin's writings in translation available at an early date, followed by an unbroken stream of further translations amounting, all of them by the year 1906 to eighty-three entries diligently assembled in a 1915 University of Pennsylvania dissertation.<sup>7</sup> The vast majority of these entries feature the *Autobiography* and *The Way to Wealth*, with due attention also paid during the early years to the electrical experiments and to the Franklin stove. A cursory survey of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German writers reveals a striking tone of matter-of-fact familiarity with Franklin's accomplishments. This familiarity may be said to speak out of Lessing's casual allusion to the electrical spark of faith in the paralytic to whom it did not matter whether Franklin's or Nollet's views were correct, and Goethe's eulogy in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* celebrating the "incomparable" Justus Möser, comparable to no one but Franklin.<sup>8</sup> Carl van Doren singles out Kant's tribute to Franklin that "here was another hero of the human race . . . a new Prometheus who had stolen fire from heaven,"<sup>9</sup> and Georg Friedrich Lichtenberg, struck by the profound balance of Franklin's creative imagination and scientific rigor, called him "a man of Keplerian nobility."<sup>10</sup> Franklin was looked up to as the "intellectual father" of the problems setting Lichtenberg and Wilson apart in 1779 in regard to the most desirable shape of the lightning conductor.<sup>11</sup>

But the most perceptive appreciation of Franklin during this particular period of his reception in Germany is found in the writings and correspondence of Johann Gottfried Herder. Going beyond the casual allusions of his contemporaries to the world-famous inventor and statesman, Herder co-opted Franklin in the round as the epitome of his own ideal of humanity, and he erected for him, in his *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, a lasting memorial.<sup>12</sup> One of the earliest references to Franklin in Herder's works is found in the first volume of his magnum opus, his widely known *Ideen* of 1784, where Franklin is listed among a group of the outstanding natural scientists of the century whose works promise to throw light on the evolution of human diversity in nature.<sup>13</sup> Franklin's "electrical spark," here and elsewhere in Herder's writings, constitutes a major factor in his speculations on the mysteries of life. But it is in Franklin's *Autobiography* and his *Miscellaneous Writings* that Herder finds a kindred soul, a model for his ideal of *Humanität*.<sup>14</sup> Herder's *Humanitätsbriefe*, published during the years from 1793 to 1797, continue the major theme that runs through his *Ideen*, humanity's ascent to *Humanität*. And they open with Herder's memorial to Franklin.<sup>15</sup>

Herder concentrates on Franklin's *Autobiography* and the "Rules for a Club Established for Mutual Improvement," both of which tie in closely with his objective in the *Humanitätsbriefe*, the ever closer advancement toward perfection by means of autonomous growth in terms of individuation as well as social cohesion.<sup>16</sup> Herder preeminently values the "sense of *Humanität*" in Franklin, which characterizes even "the least of his writings," and he calls him "the most noble popular author of the century," whose principles, if adhered to by only one people in all of Europe, would have an unimaginable impact.<sup>17</sup> Herder sees Franklin's *Autobiography* as the opposite of Rousseau's *Confessions*, with the latter almost always led astray by his phantasy,



whereas the former never was "bereft of his sound reason, his untiring diligence, his politeness, his practical ingenuity, and, I am inclined to say, his many-sided cleverness and calm fortitude."<sup>18</sup> Herder knows no other recent book so well suited to serve as a guide for young people "to diligence, prudence and morality"; thus, "it is not the creator of the theory of electricity and of the harmonica" who is his hero, but the man open to all "that is useful and true, the most accessible and pragmatic thinker, He, the teacher of humankind, the guide of a grand human community" who is to be our model.<sup>19</sup> Herder's paean to Franklin's *Autobiography* is then followed by a detailed discussion of the "Rules for a Club Established for Mutual Improvement" drawn up by the young Franklin and his like-minded companions in 1728.<sup>20</sup> (For a discussion of Herder's acquaintance with Franklin's *Political, Miscellaneous, and Philosophical Pieces*, the appendix of which contained the "Rules," and for a discussion of the possibility that Herder presented an earlier version of this paper to the *Freitagsgesellschaft*, chaired by Goethe at the Weimar court, see the relevant passages in Haym and Suphan, cited in note 14.) Aside from the intriguing possibility of a connection between artisan efforts at individual and collective self improvement in Philadelphia and their much later counterpart in the refinement of a German ducal court, Herder's reformulation in the *Humanitätsbriefe* of his prior version of Franklin's "Rules" serves also as an effective call to arms in the quest for the advancement of *Humanität* initiated by the publication of the first *Collection* of the *Letters*. Herder's reading of the young Franklin's "Club" strikingly captures the needs of an unfolding colonial society; at the same time, it challenges the ever more distorted priorities of a European order threatened by impending Jacobin terror. He admires Franklin's vision of the social order as the very basis of *Humanität*. An association of human souls, a mutual fund of achieved insights and intellectual capital, multiplies infinitively the yield of human cognition and practical competencies.<sup>21</sup> It remains to be seen whether Herder's claim, in introducing Franklin's "Rules," that Franklin's "Philadelphia . . . may be anywhere" is sustainable. The perception gained by some of the "German eyes" presented in the following seem to suggest strongly that this is so, whereas others take exception.<sup>22</sup> The frequent allusions to Franklin in Herder's writings, appearing in the context of a broad variety of topics reflecting the astounding diversity and modernity of the Herderian world view, suggest that he saw Franklin's Philadelphia extending in time as well as space.

A significant contribution to the appreciation of Franklin's impact on German letters was made by Ursula Wertheim, who published her 1956 essay in East Germany and related his rise from obscurity to prominence and affluence to the ideological presuppositions of her day.<sup>23</sup> Wertheim sees the German intelligentsia's concern with the events in North America determined by three "closely related" and yet "clearly distinct" factors, "... firstly, there are the general political and military developments; secondly, there is the outstanding personality of Franklin; and thirdly, the immediate involvement of German princes with England in terms of the sale of soldiers."<sup>24</sup> Wertheim views the enthusiastic reception of Franklin by the German intelligentsia during the revolutionary age as the celebration of a "demythologized Prometheus," of a "popular tribune" and citizen of lowly origins who became a symbol of the "New

World" and of a new age.<sup>25</sup>

Wertheim richly documents the interaction of these three factors which were arousing interest in Germany by reference to a broad range of writers, with particularly telling citations from Schiller, Schubart, and Georg Forster. The obituaries produced by the latter two German radicals at the time of Franklin's passing in 1790 are notable still because of the mixture of sober realism and effusive devotion that marks them. So, Forster pointed out that the Americans would have gained their independence also without the participation of Franklin, but that his exemplary teachings on moral freedom and the sacred respect for reason in the makeup of each human being have created an "eternal bulwark against the tyranny of arbitrary power." And Schubart took note, after sincere expressions of sympathy and reverence, that the lifelong Christian Franklin was also possessed by a "greed for gold" which enabled him to leave to his only daughter, Madame Bache, an enormous fortune, "little of which he enjoyed himself because of his almost miserly moderation."<sup>26</sup> Wertheim's contribution makes clear how widely Franklin was known and appreciated in German learned circles during the revolutionary age.

German awareness of Franklin may indeed be said to have ranged from grateful and admiring popular acclaim, reaching in van Doren's words "... far beyond those who did or could read his books ..." to the perceptive appreciation of the innermost working of his mind by the luminaries of the age. The exalted vision of Franklin as the supreme representative of *Humanität*, exemplified by Herder and his contemporaries, was bound to undergo during the nineteenth century the kind of leveling that befell much of the German classical heritage. Some of the subtitles of the German editions of Franklin's works reflect this transformation. Announcing the centennial of "Franklin's Diary," two publications of the year 1830 advertised it as "a trustworthy way to become industrious, judicious, popular, virtuous, and happy by way of moral perfection. Conceived in the year 1730 and placed into the limelight a hundred years later as a monument for posterity."<sup>27</sup> During the 1830s and 1840s there were several editions of Franklin's "Golden Little Treasure Chest, or guidance how one might become industrious, virtuous, religious, and happy."<sup>28</sup> "The Way to Wealth," "the art of becoming rich," and the usefulness of the *Autobiography* for the young are the themes reiterated in the German titles of Franklin's works published during the Biedermeier period. He appears to be the ideal guide for the German middle class of the industrial revolution, though he also gave food for thought to Karl Marx in his definition of man and in the formulation of his theory of surplus value.<sup>29</sup>

If, then, a sampling of German Franklinitia up to this point reveals a considerable range of perceptions, a more thorough examination of a few particularly remarkable co-operations reflecting the transformation of German society during the later nineteenth and the twentieth century appears to be called for. To this end, five individuals are examined who referred to Franklin prominently in their writings in order to reenforce their own agendas and to educate their countrymen. Two of these, Friedrich Kapp and Eduard Baumgarten, owe their familiarity with Franklin to extended residence in the United States, while the others, Berthold Auerbach, Lujo Brentano, and Max Weber, based their views primarily on the literature available to them in Germany. In



the process, mention will also be made of other writers whose comments throw light on the issues raised.

Ernest K. Bramsted has perceptively analyzed the social structure within which Berthold Auerbach, a German Jew and popular novelist now most highly regarded for his Black Forest village tales, produced his works.<sup>30</sup> Sketching the years of "Middle-Class Superiority: 1850-1870," Bramsted finds that an emphasis on middle-class self-reliance and the glorification of labor permeated the works of Freytag, Spielhagen, Auerbach, and Keller, who in turn were indebted to Alberti, Defoe, and Franklin. "The virtues that Franklin preached are the specific virtues of the European middle-class . . . It is significant that the later development of capitalism in Germany is accompanied also by a later reception of Franklin's doctrines of labor and virtue. In the liberal moral catechism in Auerbach's novel *Das Landhaus am Rhein* (1869)," Bramsted observes, "a direct reference to Franklin's model is to be found, whilst the description of modern large-scale commerce in Freytag's *Soll und Haben*, although not mentioning his name, testifies at least to the spirit of Franklin's doctrines."<sup>31</sup>

Bramsted's appreciation of Auerbach's pedagogical intentions is to the point as far as he goes. But his capsule depiction of Auerbach's treatment cannot possibly convey the magnitude of Franklin's presence in this colossal-sentimental tale of a thousand pages. Wading through endless idealizations of Rhineland scenery and people, startled by improbable co-incidences and bored by stereotypical characterizations, the modern reader nevertheless is rewarded by some truly moving and revealing snippets of social history. And these, time and again, are related to Franklin's appearance in the text. In the tutorial relationship of Erich von Dournay and his charge, Roland Franklin Sonnenkamp, the first year of which extends over the bulk of the novel, Franklin is present in spirit and in person from beginning to end.<sup>32</sup> Set in Germany, but overshadowed by the misdeeds of Roland's father as a slaver in America, the novel's plodding narrative is given substance now and then by the introduction of American issues, which are usually resolved by reference to Franklinian wisdom and the recitation of abolitionist principles.

Setting up the tutorial relationship, Auerbach lets Erich find in his father's library "the first volume of the beautiful Sparks edition of Franklin's works containing the *Autobiography* and its continuation. Attached to it were a few leaves written in his father's hand."<sup>33</sup> In the following pages Auerbach presents his own educational creed, formulated by his reading of Franklin. To become truly human and a good citizen, the student should be advised to emulate Franklin, who shaped himself. Not to Washington, but to Franklin leads the string of the great lights of humankind—Moses, Jesus, Muhamed . . . Spinoza.<sup>34</sup> There would not be much beauty in the world if all were like Franklin, who "lacks any hint of romantic airs, but the world would dwell in uprightness, truthfulness, industriousness, and helpfulness." Franklin is Socrates, he radiates benevolent humor, he "is good prose," he is the first "self-made man," he was "filled with knowledge though no one taught him," he was "filled with religion though he had no church," he "represents simple and wholesome common sense," he "is the first modern self-made human being." There is nothing special, exciting, intoxicating, mysterious, colorful, shining or dazzling in and about him, but he is the spring of life

essential to all created being. In Auerbach's ongoing paean the son of the eighteenth century—its people without a sense of "*Volkesthum*," hostile and alien to the historical and gradually grown, in the end revolutionary—becomes the epitome of nineteenth-century organicism.<sup>35</sup> Time and again, Franklin is appealed to for guidance; he appears in the student's dreams, where he is joined by Theodore Parker, whose noble cause also brings to the fore the first and ever-so-slight element of doubt in the universality of Franklin's wisdom, linked to the Founding Fathers' compromise with slavery.<sup>36</sup> It is in this context that Auerbach introduces Friedrich Kapp, the second in the line of German Franklinians presented here.

Kapp is introduced in the context of Roland's first reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and his disappointment in the consolation of the oppressed by the promise of justice in the hereafter. Auerbach praises Kapp's sober treatment of the slavery issue in his carefully researched *History of Slavery in America*, "the publication of which just now coincided marvelously with the events of the day."<sup>37</sup> A radical socialist during the years before the Revolutions of 1848, Kapp spent twenty years in exile in America, and entered, upon his return to Germany in 1870 into a successful career as a politician and author, representing national-liberal causes until his untimely death in 1884.<sup>38</sup> It stands to reason that the Franklin chapter of Kapp's American memoirs also informed his historical introduction to the editions of the *Autobiography* which also contained Auerbach's preface.

Kapp is representative of the intellectual emigrant whose views and actions must be seen in the context of his experiences and movement in time and place. His remarkable professional career and political transformation from revolutionary beginnings to national-liberal principles reveals a man who left his mark on both sides of the Atlantic. He was vitriolic in his criticism of flaws wherever he perceived them, and his writings on the evils of slavery in the United States and of the sale of German soldiers by German princes to serve the British in the American Revolutionary War remain exemplary to this day. Given the range and depth of his reading and his life experience, it is significant that he chose Benjamin Franklin as the model to be emulated. His sanguine depiction of Franklin's life and character must be seen in the light of his passion to show what America was losing by neglect, and what Germany stood to gain by Franklinian virtues.

Kapp begins his account of Franklin's life by invoking the "inner kinship" of his own Westphalian ancestors with the descendants of English yeomen in New England, bridging the gap of fourteen hundred years since the departure of the Angles and Saxons from Germany. The name Franklin, he insists, means "Freisasse" and is still used in this sense by Chaucer and Spenser. "In Benjamin Franklin there is revealed, internally and externally, and in its greatest purity, the ancient Germanic character, even though more than fifty generations separate the time of his birth from the migration of the Angles and Saxons."<sup>39</sup>

Owing to this kinship, it was the German historian Friedrich Christoph Schlosser who was best among the German (and much better than English and American) historians in giving an account of Franklin.<sup>40</sup> And like Goethe before him, Kapp finds in the character of Justus Möser a parallel to Franklin's virtues, "the same firm



historical sense," "public spirit," "deft sense of humor," and "the same heart for his people."<sup>41</sup> Kapp had gained a good understanding of the significance of Franklin's Puritan roots in the shaping of his economic thought, a topic that will be explored further below. For now, however, we should note Kapp's admonition to his countrymen not to view Franklin's diligence and conscientiousness as the contemptible chase after the almighty dollar, but rather to learn from his example. He finds his countrymen far behind the materially more developed nations, especially the Americans, in the proper understanding of the role of money in the attainment of intellectual and moral ends, and he criticizes their reliance on idealistic notions and selfless enthusiasm and their mistaken contempt for labor spent in the pursuit of money (which might have been spent for good causes). He holds up the Americans as the people who, "though expending all their energies in the pursuit of money, become indifferent to the metal as such, as soon as they have it, and spend it with open hands to public ends, making it serve the common weal." He cites the great sum given to philanthropy in one year—1873—in the United States "not by 'the luminaries of society,' but by mostly little people grown rich by their own labor," and he concludes that "no American has promoted this great national virtue more than Franklin, and none has contributed to the same degree as he in raising it to become a significant part of the national identity. He ennobled by his example for all generations to come what his countrymen, in part consciously, had already felt and done before him."<sup>42</sup> The Franklin essay was evidently written after Kapp's return to Germany in 1870. It reflects the high esteem in which Kapp held the Founding Fathers, but it differs markedly in tone and substance from his assessment of American society during the two decades of his stay within it. Many of the letters edited by Wehler express contempt for America. Kapp insists, in a letter of the year 1856 to his friend Ludwig Feuerbach, "that a German of culture never will be able to take root here. The conceited, hypocritical character of the American, arising from a Christian *Weltanschauung*, conflicts directly with any kind of sane humanity." And, in an earlier letter to Feuerbach, written in 1851, he sharply criticized the flaws inherited from England: "... the religious superstition, which descends to complete idiocy, the lack of sensibility for art and of science, and the blockheaded national pride." And in a letter to Eduard Cohen in 1856, he praised the leadership of the Founding Fathers who "saved the day" during the Revolutionary War in the face of the "worthlessness" of the people, as opposed to the high quality of the people during the Civil War as they endured poor leadership that drove the entire country into misery.<sup>43</sup> Kapp writes as the well-off emigre who returned to Germany to help his people in the transformation to a functioning democracy. For him, Franklin was the ideal teacher. It was Franklin's *Poor Richard* upon which were modeled "all of the significant and famous almanacs," such as Johann Peter Hebel's *Schatzkeästlein* and Berthold Auerbach's *Gevattersmann*.<sup>44</sup> Franklin's life-long contributions as a journalist and essayist, including his effective use of the literary feud, humor, ridicule and satire, to thoroughly enlighten his readers, are demonstrated by appropriate examples, as is his "well-conceived, pleasing, pure, and universally comprehensible style."<sup>45</sup>

Kapp's brief summary of Franklin's life—amounting to hardly fifty pages—gives a remarkably accurate account of his public service. However, with reference to Kapp's

"German eyes," his comparison of Rousseau and Franklin should be noted. Prompted by his reading of French critics, who attributed to Franklin's autobiographical project the sole purpose of counteracting the increasing and pernicious impact of Rousseau's confessions on developing youth, an attribution he finds grossly mistaken, Kapp examines the two men in depth.<sup>46</sup>

Kapp begins his comparison of Franklin and Rousseau by pointing to "the only likeness between them, . . . their profound and enduring impact on their century as writers and human beings." The rest of the comparison is framed in terms of an "irreconcilable contrast" between "sense of duty" on the one hand and "arbitrary subjectivism" on the other, between "Germanic and Latin *Weltanschauung*."<sup>47</sup> Rousseau escapes into "the state of nature," Franklin seeks to "ennoble" it; the one casts away *Bildung* as an evil, the other seeks it as the highest good. The European wants to become the backwoods American, the American, conversely, European. Rousseau, "despicably" sentimental, knows only rights, not duties; he erects altars to self-seeking sensibility and subordinates justice and morality to the judgment of the greater number, the accidental majority. "Franklin, on the other hand, treats private and public matters with the seriousness of the businessman; never the dilettante, he humbly puts his whole self . . . into even the most minute of tasks," enriching humanity with his deeds to the last day of his life. "Thus his life becomes the apotheosis of duty." "The more deeply we penetrate Rousseau," Kapp goes on, "the more we are repelled by his often despicable sensibility, his inner dishonesty, yes, the deliberate lying of this great mind." "The longer we remain with Franklin," Kapp finds, "the more we are attracted by him, the better we like him because of his energy, his inexhaustible benevolence and his refreshing pleasantries." Looking at Rousseau's disciples and followers, who lack their master's talents, we are left with "literary or social gypsies, vain moralists, or political terrorists, radical *Biedermeier* or untruthful scoundrels," whereas those who emulate Franklin, even those who are lacking in intellectual distinction, must yet be valued as "honorable citizens," "quietly industrious," "the neighbor eager to help," "the benevolent friend," and the "patriot who will not shy away from any sacrifice." In a fit of pertinent "self-revelation," Kapp concludes, Rousseau once called himself "half ne'er-do-well, half hero. Franklin did not need to tell the world what and who he was."<sup>48</sup> But Kapp does not fail to cite Franklin's own "self revelation," expressed in the context of his successful work as a diplomat on the international stage, reporting him as saying: "My honesty was my only finesse."<sup>49</sup> Much as Kapp did justice to the greatness of Franklin, he apparently was not sufficiently immunized by his twenty years of exile in America to resist the nationalist temptations of the German *Gründerjahre*, and he thus gave to his countrymen, in tandem with Auerbach's idealization, a Germanic Franklin, captive to a droning sense of duty but without the liberating rascality, a significant omission indeed.

A somewhat different Franklin emerges from another pair of Franklinians, for whom he became the subject of academic controversy. One of them, Lujo Brentano (1844-1931), scion of the literary clan and prominent economist of the New Historical School, has finally come to be noted in the United States as well.<sup>50</sup> The other, Max Weber (1864-1920), for most of his life a respectful junior to Brentano's eminence,



has by now himself become a *bona fide* eminence in the field of sociology in Germany and in the United States. Their dispute over Franklin arose in the context of the still ongoing controversy over Weber's groundbreaking essays of the years 1904-5 on "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism."<sup>51</sup>

Seen in the context of Wilhelminian Germany—united and yet marked by the fissures of historical and religious divisions, riding prosperity, driven by nationalist and imperialist ambition, beset by social tension, and edging closer and closer to international conflict—these two men are exemplary representatives of the German professoriate at its best, though they, too, in the end were drawn into the ugly disputes over war-guilt recriminations. Their disagreement over the place of Franklin in the origins of modern capitalism throws light on many facets of that scholarly controversy, as well as on the gradual transformation of Franklin's reception in Germany. Both Brentano and Weber refer frequently to Franklin in building their respective cases, though it must be remembered that the 1920 edition of Weber's essays cited below was revised to take account of the criticism that had arisen since their original publication, and that the extensive notes added in 1920 contain a point-by-point refutation of Brentano's criticism. What then, in brief, was Weber's view of Franklin? What was Brentano's response, and how did Weber deal with this response and those of others?

Franklin appears in the beginning of the second chapter of Weber's essay, where he is cited at length in the initial definition of "the spirit of capitalism." In order to give a "provisional description" of the "object" to be analyzed and historically explained, Weber turns "to a document of that spirit which contains in almost classical purity what we are looking for, and at the same time has the advantage of being free from all direct relationship to religion, being thus, for our purpose, free of preconceptions."<sup>52</sup> Weber's extensive citation is actually taken from two sources, the "Necessary Hints to Those That Would Be Rich" of 1736 and the "Advice to a Young Tradesman" of 1748.<sup>53</sup> Weber points out that Franklin's utilitarian "virtues" were satirized in Ferdinand Kürnberger's "clever and malicious *Portrait of American Culture*," published in 1855, "well known" as "an imaginative paraphrase of Lenau's impressions of America," and constituting an "incomparable . . . document of the (now long-since blurred-over) difference between the German and the American outlook," i.e., the lingering German medieval mysticism vs. the "Puritan capitalistic valuation of action."<sup>54</sup> Impatient with the German distortion as "pure hypocrisy" of "the virtues professed by Americanism"—a view epitomized by Kürnberger's shocking phrase "out of cattle one makes tallow, out of humans, money"<sup>55</sup>—Weber stresses "virtue and proficiency in a calling" in the legal pursuit of money as "the real Alpha and Omega of Franklin's ethic, as expressed in the passages quoted, as well as in all his works without exception."<sup>56</sup> For Weber, the entire issue boils down to "rational conduct based on the idea of the calling," which "was born . . . from the spirit of Christian asceticism."<sup>57</sup> In his extensive and explicit refutation of Weber's views, Lujo Brentano insists that Franklin's life and teaching are for him evidence of the correctness of his own apprehension. Weber allowed himself to be misled by Kürnberger's characterization of American culture, "a characterization spraying venom," in Weber's own words, into a gross distortion of Franklin.<sup>58</sup> Accusing

both Sombart and Weber of depicting the urge for profit as basically irrational and unnatural in view of the human need for happiness and general utility, Brentano rejects Weber's portrait of the Calvinistic disciplining—i.e., “rationalization”—of life into an “irrational conduct of life” as the key to capitalist development. He finds that Weber actually contradicts himself when, after attributing such irrationality to Franklin, he later establishes the “overcoming of the *status naturae* and of the irrational drives” as the precondition for the education of humankind “to strive for money and ever more money.”<sup>59</sup> By insisting upon ethically colored maxims of life as the *sine qua non* of the spirit of capitalism, Weber, in Brentano's reading, denies its very existence before as well as after Calvin.<sup>60</sup> Speaking shortly after Weber's death, and acknowledging fully his contribution to the study of the relations between religion and social theory, R. H. Tawney nevertheless found Brentano's criticism of Weber's excesses for the most part sound.<sup>61</sup>

The sophistication and depth of the discussion carried on by Weber and Brentano in their disagreement over Franklin's role in the rise of capitalism gains significance in the light of the progressive deterioration of Werner Sombart's scholarship in addressing the issues. Sombart's effort, in his *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben*, to redirect Weber's thesis by deriving Puritanism from Judaism was doomed to fail because of his compulsive hostility to capitalism. Writing at a time that witnessed an increasingly virulent form of anti-Semitism in Germany, Sombart found his work praised for his courage in publishing it as well as criticized for his lack of discretion in doing so. Viewed in the context of his intellectual biography, with its end station in the fascist camp, Sombart's rigorous scholarship, his insistence upon abstaining from “value judgments” in his examination of “The contribution of the Jews to Modern Economic Life,” “The aptitude of the Jews for Modern Capitalism,” and “the Origin of the Jewish Genius,” entailing “the race problem” and “the vicissitudes of the Jewish people,” is open to question. Sombart's scholarly study, together with subsequent publications, was to lend itself to the worst possible abuses by the propagandists of a later day.<sup>62</sup> Whereas Sombart's treatment of the issues raised by Weber demeans Franklin's capitalist virtues, Brentano's disagreement with Weber over their roots in the long run enhanced the Philadelphian's stature.

Introducing the publications resulting from the 1993 Washington symposium on the Weber thesis, Guenther Roth regrets that “Weber's reading of Benjamin Franklin as representing the spirit of capitalism” was not part of the meeting's agenda.<sup>63</sup> The Lehmann-Roth volume provides most valuable insights; it confirms some of the findings presented in this paper, it helped tie some of the strands together, and it opened new vistas. Roth confirms and sharpens Brentano's critique of Weber, in particular Weber's reading of Franklin as a “secularized Puritan” who “would subscribe to an ultimately irrational ethic.”<sup>64</sup> Roth establishes a connection between Weber and Friedrich Kapp's “exuberant apologia” of Franklin, observing that “Weber visited Kapp's estate at age 16”—that is, 1880—and that he “must have known Kapp's Franklin interpretation.”<sup>65</sup> And, most valuable of all, Roth introduced Eduard Baumgarten, who rounds out this survey of German eyes beholding Benjamin Franklin. Baumgarten was a nephew of Max Weber who lived in the United States from 1924 until 1929 and lectured and



wrote about Franklin after his return to Germany. His keen analysis of Weber's misreading of Franklin, of Weber's "not getting the jokes," provides food for thought about the tragic transformation of Germany that was taking place during the very year that Baumgarten's Franklin lecture was delivered: 1933.<sup>66</sup> Baumgarten demonstrates considerable familiarity with the nuances of American life and a profound grasp of Benjamin Franklin's significance. The stated objective of Baumgarten's lecture is to answer the question, what is "the American concept of community"?<sup>67</sup> The person who epitomizes colonial community life is Benjamin Franklin, who provides the key to answering the question and reveals himself in the process as a precursor of American philosophical Pragmatism.<sup>68</sup> Baumgarten refuses to deal with the caricature of the American pragmatic style that is commonplace in Germany. Rather, he seeks to establish an inner relationship with its "positive content" by way of its "original" representative, Benjamin Franklin, "the first American self-made man."<sup>69</sup> Baumgarten bemoans the "barbaric-dark instructions" drawn in Germany from Franklin's "merry arsenal," which miss the "literally Mark Twainian jest behind them" and present Franklin "instead as the arch representative of the ascetic economic ethos" and thus, "in short (with Max Weber) . . . as the intellectual father of modern 'rational' enterprise capitalism." In reality, there was not even the slightest hint of such an attitude in Franklin, who did not raise the rational pursuit of money to an "inhuman end in itself," but, exactly to the contrary, considered it a means to the independent and happy life of a "specifically uncaptalist" consumer.<sup>70</sup>

It is remarkable that Baumgarten, in 1933, turned to Herder's initial *Humanitätsbrief* as confirmation of his Franklin interpretation. Herder, according to Baumgarten, loved Franklin because of his rootedness in reality as opposed to the aesthetic soaring of classical *Bildung* represented by Schiller. But Baumgarten takes issue with Herder's proclamation that "Philadelphia can be anywhere," holding that the colonial world of Franklin cannot be transplanted to Weimar, and that, from the vantage point of 1933, Schiller was the realist and Herder the one who "nourished a utopian hope in his love for Franklin." Herder, Baumgarten continues, "would have been taken aback by Franklin's *Humanität* as it unfolded from his principle of community." The remainder of Baumgarten's lecture to his countrymen boils down to a patient civics lesson on the vital importance of tolerance in political discourse, with Franklin as the teacher.<sup>71</sup>

On the basis of Franklin's career, Baumgarten demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of "Socratic uncertainty" as method, of the communal experiencing of truth as preferable to its manifest possession, and of the utility of compromise based on toleration, the acceptance of flaws, and the appearance of unanimity. Baumgarten doubts whether Herder would have been comfortable in this Franklinian atmosphere of appearance and compromise, of pragmatic "truth-in-becoming," and of such truth not as a "lesser evil," but as "elastic" wisdom.<sup>72</sup> Denouncing the "deification of objectivity" prevalent in Germany and criticizing as "superficial" the German understanding of the "American game of civility" as a form of dishonesty, Baumgarten arrives at the equation that, in America, "to be truthful means to be of good will." And here we are led by Baumgarten back to the young Franklin's rules for the Junto, and to

the old Franklin's *Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America*, stressing the importance of "talking with one another" and of accepting one another's truth.<sup>73</sup>

All of the major figures sketched in this essay with respect mainly to their reception of Franklin's virtues had departed by the time the "German Catastrophe" of the twentieth century unfolded, except for one, Eduard Baumgarten. Lessing, Kant, Herder and Goethe, Schubart and Forster, Auerbach and Kapp, Brentano and Weber, all of them were taken by the uncomplicated clarity and the "can do" cleverness of the most famous of all the American ambassadors to a Europe in the throes of the Enlightenment. Baumgarten, overcome by the sober power of American Pragmatism, which he saw anticipated by Franklin's world view, upon his return to Europe, was compelled to face a Germany that was abandoning the noble idealism of its past, embracing a brutal totalitarian pragmatism varnished by an empty ideology.

Retrospect cannot fully reveal the difficulties faced by an adherent of John Dewey seeking a professorial appointment in Nazi Germany. In the introduction to his *Learning by Dewey?: John Dewey und die Deutsche Pädagogie 1900-2000*, Stefan Bittner suggests that the very title of his book evokes an image of fire and water, of the collision of disparate elements, and he concludes that, on the face of it, American pragmatism and German idealism are mutually exclusive and incompatible.<sup>74</sup> In a subchapter entitled "Eduard Baumgarten: Zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur," Bittner presents a man whose record is clouded by ambiguity, who after World War II was suspected of National Socialist ties as well as celebrated as one of the few scholars competent to deal with American philosophy and ways of thought.<sup>75</sup> Bittner suggests that Baumgarten, who in 1933 had presented Franklin to his countrymen as a teacher of democracy, and who, in the same year, had been denounced to the newly established regime by Heidegger because of his *Amerikanismus* and his association with a Jewish professor, during the years of the National Socialist dictatorship manipulated Dewey's writings to align them with the needs of the brutal pragmatism that had taken control.<sup>76</sup> Notwithstanding his hateful allusion to Professor Fränkel's Jewishness, Safranski does not consider Heidegger anti-Semitic in terms of the "ideological madness" of the National Socialists. It seems here that it was Baumgarten's *Amerikanismus*, his attribution of democratic virtues to a power which for Heidegger stood, with Russia, "in the avant garde of the deplorable race for technological superiority," which made him persona non grata in the Heideggerian philosophical universe.<sup>77</sup> Men of brilliance and method, with world-wide reputations and connections, such as Sombart and Heidegger, who genuinely abhorred American style capitalism and democracy, and who did not have use for a man such as Benjamin Franklin and his German advocates, shored up the Hitler regime immensely, even if their support was brief, intermittent, and wavering. But the fact that Baumgarten's 1933 Franklin lecture could be republished in Germany in 1937 under the title *Benjamin Franklin—Der Lehrmeister der amerikanischen Revolution*, suggests that, though distorted, the continuity of Franklin's impact on Germany could not even be broken during those dark years.

To the "German eyes" of this observer, the many faces of Franklin co-opted selectively over time by German authors to satisfy German needs were not so much masks misapprehended. Rather, they were representative of a creed lived out by a truly



many-sided man, appealing to moments in German history. It is saddening to realize that the very best of Franklin was revealed to Germany by Baumgarten at a time when Germans were most blind to it. It is troubling to conclude that Baumgarten himself, like so many others, was compelled to make his peace with the regime while it lasted. But his sustained championing of Dewey and American Pragmatism in the decades following the war, in line with his conviction of Franklin's anticipation of the movement, is currently yielding rich fruit in the Dewey renaissance in Germany that, by extension, may also be looked at as yet another chapter of the German Franklin reception.<sup>78</sup>

Iona College  
New Rochelle, New York

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Larry E. Tise, ed., *Franklin and Women* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2000); H. W. Brands, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Brian M. Barbour, ed., *Benjamin Franklin: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc., 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2-5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>5</sup> D. H. Lawrence, "Benjamin Franklin," in Barbour, 63-74, 63-64.

<sup>6</sup> Understanding the *Autobiography* as a conscious "portrayal" rather than "an outpouring of those multiple selves that Lawrence celebrates," David Levin concludes that "the technique of humor, and the disarming candor about techniques of influence and persuasion—these occasionally make us wonder which of several selves Benjamin Franklin is;" David Levin, "The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin," in Barbour, 75-92, 78. Observing that "the sheer variety of his character has made possible to praise him and damn him with equal vigor," John William Ward asserts "that he was . . . in other words, so many different characters . . . is the single most important thing about Franklin." John William Franklin, "Benjamin Franklin: The Making of an American Character," in Barbour, 50-62, 50-51. For Carl L. Becker, "Franklin was indeed many-sided! From the varied facets of his powerful mind he threw a brilliant light on all aspects of human life; it is only in his character of natural philosopher that he emits a light quite unclouded." Carl L. Becker, "Franklin's Character," in Barbour, pp. 9-13, 12-13. One of Franklin's biographers cites John William Ward's uneasiness "with the man who wears so many masks that we are never sure who is there behind them" and he confirms that "there emerges in the later 1740's and the 1750's the multi-faceted Franklin who is able to play a diversity of parts not only in Pennsylvania but on that wider stage where the fate of Europe and of North America was to be decided." Ronald W. Clark, *Benjamin Franklin: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1983), 35, 93. In a chapter entitled "*Franklin's Autobiography: A Persona for the Abused*," Melvin H. Buxbaum chronicles the abuses Franklin suffered over a lifetime and his efforts to refute them by "inventing himself" in stages in the *Autobiography* as an ideal American. Melvin H. Buxbaum, *Benjamin Franklin and the Zealous Presbyterians* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1975), 7-46. And Ormond Seavey, comparing the self-doubt expressed by Augustine and John Stuart Mill in their "confessions" with Franklin's *Autobiography*, points to the latter's "capacity to adjust to his surroundings and to resolve the apparent dilemmas of his experience." Ormond Seavey, *Becoming Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and the Life* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1989), 7. Seavey's book leaves the reader with the impression that Franklin manipulated the facts of his own life, that he "co-opted" his own times and exploited them. Seavey asserts that there were late marginal insertions in the *Autobiography* representing an elaborate construct of temperance, frugality, industry, and virtue. Seavey, 93-96. No wonder, then, that Clark, adding to the array the charge of nepotism in the Postal Service, quotes approvingly "the conclusion that was expressed by some wicked wag who said that Franklin

so loved the truth that he was rather sparing in the use of it." Clark, 101.

<sup>7</sup> Beatrice Marguerite Victory, *Benjamin Franklin and Germany: Americana Germanica* Nr. 21, Publications of the University of Pennsylvania (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1915), 160-66. A recent German dissertation that came to my attention as I was preparing this essay for publication, focuses on ten German biographies of Franklin published between 1806 and 1893. Organized thematically, the detailed examination of the various authors' approaches and biases undergirds my own findings. See Karl Heinz Denecke, *Der Bürger im Spannungsfeld von Sittlichkeit und Selbstbestimmung: Studien zur Franklin-Rezeption im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Mainzer Studien zur Germanistik, 33 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> In 1778, in the "Gegensätze" to the Reimarus *Fragmente*, Lessing observes: "Wenn der Paralytikus die wohlthätigen Schläge des elektrischen Funkens erfährt, was kümmert es ihn, ob Nollet oder Franklin oder keiner von beiden recht hat." *Lessings Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe in fünfundzwanzig Teilen*, Julius Petersen und Waldemar von Olshausen, eds. (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co., n.d.), part 22, 186. Goethe celebrates Justus Möser in Book 13 of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: "den herrlichen Justus Möser, dieses unvergleichlichen Mannes, . . . vollkommener Geschäftsmann, . . . poetisch . . . in dem besten Sinn . . . rhetorisch . . . bald hinter dieser, bald hinter jener Maske halb versteckt, bald in eigener Person sprechend, immer vollständig und erschöpfend, dabei immer froh, mehr oder weniger ironisch, durchaus tüchtig, rechtschaffen, wohlmeinend, ja manchmal derb und heftig, und dieses alles so abgemessen, daß man zugleich den Geist, den Verstand die Leichtigkeit, Gewandtheit, den Geschmack und Charakter des Schriftstellers bewundern muß. In Absicht auf Wahl gemeinnütziger Gegenstände, auf tiefe Einsicht, freie Übersicht, glückliche Behandlung, so gründlichen als freien Humor, wüßte ich ihm niemand als Franklin zu vergleichen." *Goethes Werke in Vier Bänden* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, n.d.), 658, 660.

<sup>9</sup> Carl van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 171.

<sup>10</sup> Franz H. Mautner, *Lichtenberg: Geschichte seines Geistes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968). Lichtenberg was referring to "Franklin's Geological Phantasies," his speculations on the origin of the earth in the "Two other Papers written by Dr. Franklin," *European Magazine* (August 1793): 84-87.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>12</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, in *Johann Gottfried Herder Werke in zehn Bänden* (henceforth "FA"), ed. Hans Dietrich Irmischer (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991), 7: 14-26. The editor considers "the presentation of Franklin's thoughts an example of Herder's frequently practiced productive interpretation of received texts" (846).

<sup>13</sup> *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, FA (1989), ed. Martin Bollacher, 6:38-40, 953-54.

<sup>14</sup> The dates and circumstances of Herder's acquaintance with Franklin's writings were the subject of some friendly scholarly disagreement between his biographer and the editor of the 33-volume standard edition of his works. See Rudolf Haym, *Herder nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1877-85, reprint, Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1978), 2:485ff., and Bernhard Suphan, "Schlußbericht zu Band XVII. XVIII" in *Johann Gottfried Herder Sämtliche Werke*, 33 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann Verlag Anstalt, 1877-1913, reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, n.d.), 518-607, 538-42. Suphan provides rich detail, including evidence that Franklin was read "in the circle of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Schlosser"; references in Herder's correspondence with Jacobi confirm the familiarity of both with Franklin's writings. For guidance to this correspondence see Günter Arnold's very helpful "Register" volume of Herder's letters. *Johann Gottfried Herder Briefe Gesamtausgabe 1763-1803*, 10 vols., eds. Wilhelm Dobbek and Günter Arnold (Weimar: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1977-96), 10:6, 166.

<sup>15</sup> FA 7:14-26. For a lucid account of their composition, form, and structure, and Herder's understanding of *Humanität*, see Irmischer's "Kommentar," 809-40.

<sup>16</sup> FA 7:826-30; in Irmischer's words, "Die Aufgabe des Menschen, Humanität zu verwirklichen, ist also nicht nur seine Selbstbestimmung als Individualität, sondern in gleicher Weise deren Aufhebung und Rückkehr zur Einheit" (829).

<sup>17</sup> FA 7:15. "Sie wissen was ich von *Franklin* immer gehalten habe, wie hoch ich seinen gesunden Verstand, seinen hellen und schönen Geist, seine sokratische Methode, vorzüglich aber den *Sinn der Humanität* in ihm geschätzt habe, der seine kleinsten Aufsätze bezeichnet . . . daß ich ihn den *edelsten Volksschriftsteller* unseres Jahrhunderts nennen möchte . . . Wollte Gott wir hätten in ganz Europa ein Volk, das ihn läse; wo wären wir sodann!"

<sup>18</sup> FA 7:16. "Hören Sie nun den guten Alten, und Sie finden in seiner Lebensbeschreibung durchaus ein Gegenbild zu Rousseaus Konfessionen. Wie diesen die Phantasie fast immer irre führte; so verläßt jenen nie sein guter Verstand, sein unermüdlicher Fleiß, seine Gefälligkeit, seine erfindende Tätigkeit, ich



möchte sagen, seine Vielschichtigkeit und ruhige Beherrschung."

<sup>19</sup> FA 7:16-17. "Für junge Leute kenne ich fast kein neueres Buch, das ihnen so ganz eine Schule des Fleißes, der Klugheit und Sittlichkeit sein könnte, als dieses ... Nicht der Erfinder der Theorie elektrischer Materie und der Harmonika ist mein Held, ... der zu allem Nützlichen und Wahren aufgelegte, und auf die bequemste Weise werktätige Geist, Er, der Menschheit Lehrer, einer großen Menschengesellschaft Ordner sei unser Vorbild."

<sup>20</sup> FA 7:18-23. See van Doren, *op.cit.*, 75-76.

<sup>21</sup> FA 7:18. "Geselligkeit ist der Grund der Humanität, und eine Gesellung menschlicher Seelen, ein wechselseitiger Darlehn erworbener Gedanken und Verstandeskkräfte vermehrt die Masse menschlicher Erkenntnisse und Fertigkeiten unendlich."

<sup>22</sup> FA 7:17-18. "Nächstens sende ich Ihnen Franklins Plan zu einer seiner früheren Gesellschaften; lassen Sie unsere Freunde daraus oder dabei bemerken, was für uns dienet: denn das Philadelphia, für welches diese Gesellschaft gestiftet ist, kann überall liegen."

<sup>23</sup> Ursula Wertheim, "Der amerikanische Unabhängigkeitskampf im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen deutschen Literatur," *Weimarer Beiträge, Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte*, 3 (1957): 429-70.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 431. "einmal sind es die allgemeinen politischen und militärischen Ereignisse, zum anderen ist es die hervorragende Persönlichkeit Franklins, zum dritten die unmittelbare Beteiligung durch den Soldatenhandel deutscher Fürsten mit England."

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 467-68. "Er hinterließ ein ungeheures Vermögen, und genoß bei seiner fast kargen Mäßigkeit nur wenig—Madame Bache, seine einzige Tochter, ererbte seinen Goldhügel."

<sup>27</sup> Victory, *op.cit.*, 162, entries XXXIII and XXXIV. *Franklin's Tagebuch, ein sicheres Mittel durch moral. Vollkommenheit, thätig, verständig, beliebt, tugendhaft u. glücklich zu werden*. Entworfen im Jahre 1730 u. nach 100 Jahren als ein Denkmal für die Nachwelt an das Licht gestellt (Eschwege: 1830 [Hoffmann]); wolfeilen Ausgabe Cassel, Kriegerbuchhandlung. Beginning to write his Autobiography in 1771 during his visit to Twyford, Franklin brought his account to the year 1730. See van Doren, *op.cit.*, 414-15.

<sup>28</sup> Victory, 162-63, entries XXXV-XXXVII. *Goldenes Schatzkästlein, oder Anweisung wie man thätig, tugendhaft, religiös und glücklich werden kann*.

<sup>29</sup> In volume one of *Capital*, Marx refers to Franklin's definition of "man as a tool-making animal" and in his address at the sessions of the General Council of the First International in June of 1865, he cited Franklin's 1729 essay "A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a paper Currency," singling him out as "one of the first [to] hit upon the true nature of value." See David Caute, ed., *Essential Writings of Karl Marx* (New York: Collier Books, 1967), 96, and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works in One Volume* (New York: International Publishers, 1960), 186-229, 204. Wertheim presented the following citation from Karl Marx: "Die erste bewußte, beinahe trivial klare Analyse des Tauschwerths auf Arbeitszeit findet sich bei einem Mann der Neuen Welt, wo die bürgerlichen Produktionsverhältnisse gleichzeitig mit ihren Trägern importiert, rasch aufschossen in einem Boden, der seinen Mangel an historischer Tradition durch einen Überfluß von Humus aufwog. Der Mann ist Benjamin Franklin ... der, ... das Grundgesetz der modernen politischen Ökonomie formulierte. Er erklärte es für nötig, ein anderes Maß der Werte als die edlen Metalle zu suchen. Dies sei die Arbeit." Wertheim, 468.

<sup>30</sup> Ernest K. Bramsted, *Aristocracy and the Middle-Classes in German Literature 1830-1900*, rev. ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 107-49, 109. Denecke's work, cited in note 7, includes detailed discussions of Friedrich Kapp's introduction to the 1876 German edition of Franklin's *Autobiography* and brief references to Auerbach's editorial preface. However, Denecke does not take account of Franklin's significant and pervading presence throughout the three volumes of Auerbach's novel *Das Landhaus am Rhein*, to be discussed below.

<sup>31</sup> Bramsted, 110-11; Berthold Auerbach, *Das Landhaus am Rhein*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Verlag der Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1869). Freytag's relationship with Auerbach would make an interesting study in itself. Deeply appreciative of the lasting merits of Auerbach's *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten*, Freytag speaks of a life long friendship, even though he had to hurt Auerbach's feelings with some of his reviews. Freytag's memoirs do not conceal an element of condescension towards the man at whose wedding he served as best man, slightly puzzled by the unfamiliar surroundings. On the whole, he considered Auerbach "a good comrade" ["ein guter Kamerad"]. See Gustav Freytag, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1899), 190-92.

<sup>32</sup> Auerbach, *Landhaus*, 1: 68, Roland Franklin Sonnenkamp is introduced; 3: 274-75, Roland at the

end of the novel, justifies his planned marriage at an early age by reference to Franklin's betrothal to Miss Read at age 18, and, intending to pay tribute at Franklin's grave at the Acropolis of the New World, he first encounters Lincoln, one of Franklin's greatest successors, "in whose eyes he beheld the spirit of Socrates, Aristides, Moses, Washington, and Franklin."

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 1: 262-63. "es war der erste Band der schönen Sparks'schen Ausgabe von Benjamin Franklins Werken. Dieser Band enthielt die Selbstbiographie und deren Fortsetzung. Einige Blätter waren eingeklebt, von der Hand des Vaters beschrieben."

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 263-64.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 264-66.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 2: 29-32, 121-23, 129-33, 136-37, 154, 178, 186; 3: 25-26, 122-23, 247-49.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 3: 247.

<sup>38</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ed., *Friedrich Kapp: Vom radikalen Frühsozialisten des Vormärz zum liberalen Parteipolitiker des Bismarckreichs. Briefe 1843-1884* (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1969). Wehler's introduction provides a good survey of Kapp's transformation from his adherence to radical socialism to his embrace of national-liberal principles. But he shortchanges the reader with reference to Kapp's two decades in America, and his relationship with Auerbach. Of Kapp's many writings, his *Aus und über America: Thatsachen und Erlebnisse*, (Berlin: Verlag von Julius Springer, 1876), was the most important for this study. It contains a chapter entitled "Benjamin Franklin" (37-89) which served also as the introduction to the 1876, 1877, and 1882 German editions of Franklin's *Autobiography* prefaced by Auerbach. See Victory, op.cit., 165, entry LXV. It seems that Auerbach and Kapp collaborated with regard to Franklin more closely than appears to be suggested by the Wehler volume, which provides only one short letter by Kapp to Auerbach and alludes to Franklin only very briefly. In addition to Kapp's indictment of slavery in America, praised by Auerbach, his *Der Soldatenhandel deutscher Fürsten nach Amerika (1776-1783)* (Berlin, 1864) is noteworthy.

<sup>39</sup> Kapp, "Benjamin Franklin," 39. "In Benjamin Franklin zeigt sich die altgermanische Eigenart, trotzdem mehr als fünfzig Geschlechter zwischen seiner Geburt und der Auswanderung der Angelsachsen liegen, innerlich und äußerlich in ihrer vollsten Reinheit."

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. "... denselben festen historischen Sinn, denselben aus dem Boden seiner nächsten Umgebungen hervordachsenden Gemeingeist, denselben kernigen Humor und dasselbe Herz für sein Volk."

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 46-47. "Kein Amerikaner hat mehr als Franklin diese große nationale Tugend fördern, keiner sie in demselben Grade, wie er, zu einem wesentlichen Bestandtheil des Volksbewußtseins erheben helfen. Er hat, was seine Landsleute theilweise bewußt und unbewußt schon vor ihm fühlten und thaten, durch sein Beispiel für alle späteren Geschlechter geadelt."

<sup>43</sup> Wehler, 67, 73, 82. "... daß ein gebildeter Deutscher hier nie Wurzel fassen kann. Das selbstgefällige, heuchlerische, aus einer christlichen Weltanschauung hervorgehende Wesen des Amerikaners steht in direktem Gegensatz zu jedem gesunden Menschen. ... den religiösen Aberglauben, der zum vollständigen Blödsinn ausartet, den Mangel an Kunstsinn und Wissenschaft, den bornierten Nationalstolz."

<sup>44</sup> Kapp, "Franklin," 48. Johann Peter Hebel (1760-1826), *Schatzkästlein des rheinischen Hausfreundes* (1811); Auerbach, *Der Gevattersmann* (1845-48), and *Schatzkästlein des Gevattersmanns* (1856).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 56. Kapp's reflections on Rousseau must be read in the context of his "war psychosis," expressed in letters of 12 August 1870, to Ludwig Bamberger, and of 8 August and 24 August, to his uncle Ernst Kapp. See Wehler, op.cit., 93-95.

<sup>47</sup> Kapp, "Franklin," 56. "... unveröhnlicher Gegensatz ... zwischen dem Gefühl der Pflicht und subjektivem Belieben, wie zwischen germanischer und romanischer Weltanschauung."

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 57-58. "So wird sein ganzes Leben zur Apotheose der Pflicht. ... Rousseau nennt sich selbst einmal in richtiger Selbsterkenntnis halb Taugenichts, halb Held; Franklin braucht der Welt nicht erst zu sagen, was und wer er war."

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 66. "Meine Aufrichtigkeit war meine einzige Verschmittheit."

<sup>50</sup> See James J. Sheehan, *The Career of Lujo Brentano* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966); Ernest A. Menze, "Historicism, Economic Theory and Social Harmony: Lujo Brentano and the Methodenstreit in Historical Perspective," *Canadian Journal of History* 1, 6 and 3 (Dec. 1971): 258, 283; idem, "War Aims and the Liberal Conscience: Lujo Brentano and Annexationism During the First World War," *Central European History*, 17, 2-3 (September 1984): 140-58.

<sup>51</sup> Max Weber, "Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft*



und Sozialpolitik, 20 and 21 (1904-5). The essays were republished in revised form in 1920 and translated into English in 1930 by Talcott Parsons under the title *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). I cite from this edition. The literature on the Weber thesis is extensive. See in particular, Hartmut Lehmann and Guenther Roth, eds., *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For the longevity of the controversy, see Malcolm H. Mackinson, "The Longevity of the Thesis: A Critique of the Critics," in Lehmann-Roth, 210-43.

<sup>52</sup> Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 48.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-50; Weber's note refers to the Sparks edition, 2:80, 87 ff.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-52, 192, n. 3. Ferdinand Kürnberger, *Der Amerikamüde: Amerikanisches Kulturbild* (Frankfurt: 1855), I cite from the Reclam edition (Leipzig: 1889), 22-24. For Lenau, see Norbert Oellers, "Der zerstörte Traum," in Karl Menges, *Literatur und Geschichte: Festschrift für Wulf Koepke zum 70. Geburtstag*, (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1998), 139-53. Hugo Schmidt, *Nikolaus Lenau* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1971), 71-8. Eduard Castle, "Amerikamüde: Lenau und Kürnberger," *Jahrbuch der Grillparzergesellschaft*, 12 (1906): 15-42. George A. Mulfinger, "Lenau in America," *Americana Germanica*, 1, 2 (1897): 7-61, 3: 1-16, considered by Schmidt "the most authoritative discussion of Lenau's journey to America," Schmidt, 166.

<sup>55</sup> Kürnberger, 24. Kürnberger's ingenuous reconstruction of an American classroom session on Franklin—composed without the benefit of personal experience in America—a session attended by a visitor from Germany, dichotomizes the German and the American interpretations of Franklin. The German visitor departs with these words: "Der Mann hat jedenfalls in der Wissenschaft noch mehr als in der Bank hinterlassen, und durch sein eigenes Leben ein höheres Ideal aufgestellt, als welches in jener Schrift dem menschlichen Trachten zugemutet wird. Diese Ausmünzung der menschlichen Existenz in Schillinge und Pfunde gewinnt erst durch die Erfindung des Blitzableiters den Anspruch auf unsere Verzeihung. Ohne sie würden wir die Doktrin eines Mannes vor uns haben, der sich so weit vergessen hätte, unsere Bestimmung dahin zu definieren: Aus dem Rinde macht man Talg, aus dem Menschen Geld. Mag sein, daß ein unfertiges Volk eine Zeitlang auf diesen Standpunkt sich herablassen muß, ein fertiges aber sagt: Geist macht man aus dem Menschen nicht Geld! . . . Unter der Tür ergriff er verstoßen die Hand desselben und flüsterte mit bewegter Stimme: Ich danke Ihnen für dieses deutsche Wort!" (24). For a sympathetic sketch of Kürnberger see Ernst Alker, *Die deutsche Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert, 1832-1914*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1962), 618-21.

<sup>56</sup> Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 53-54.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>58</sup> Lujo Brentano, *Die Anfänge des modernen Kapitalismus: Feste gehalten in der öffentlichen Sitzung der K. Akademie der Wissenschaften am 15. März 1913* (München: Verlag der K.B. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1916), 148. Brentano's 1913 *Feste*, to which he added when it was published upon his retirement from teaching in 1916 three "excurses" addressing principal issues of his life work, was republished after Weber's death in *Der wirtschaftende Mensch in der Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1923). The section of the third "excursus," subtitled "Puritanism and Capitalism," comes to the heart of the matter. It follows upon the reiteration of his lifelong conviction that trade was the mainspring of modern capitalism, focusing upon Werner Sombart's erroneous interpretation of that topic in *Der moderne Kapitalismus* (1902), and it is followed by his critique of Sombart's gross distortion of Judaism as the "ideational basis of capitalism" in the third "excursus" (170). And Franklin is at the center of Brentano's argument with Weber. Brentano shows his class in the refutation of Sombart's distortion of Judaism by his poignant reference to Herder's *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (171). Notwithstanding his sometimes severe disagreements with Weber, he paid tribute to his genius after his untimely death as a "great human being, of astonishing versatility of knowledge and richness of ideas" ["einen großen Menschen, von erstaunlicher Vielseitigkeit des Wissens und reich an Ideen"]. See Lujo Brentano, *Mein Leben im Kampf um die soziale Entwicklung Deutschlands* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1931), 330-31.

<sup>59</sup> Lujo Brentano, *Die Anfänge*, 127.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-32.

<sup>61</sup> R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study*, Holland Memorial Lectures, 1922 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. Inc, 1926, 1961), 261-63.

<sup>62</sup> Werner Sombart, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (Duncker und Humblot: Leipzig, 1911), tr. by M. Epstein with an introduction to the American edition by Bert F. Hoselitz under the title *The Jews and Modern*

*Capitalism* (The Free Press: Glencoe, Illinois: 1951), v-xiii. For a thorough discussion of Sombart's work see Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, "Werner Sombart's: *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*. An Analysis of its Ideological Premises," in *Year Book XXI, 1976, Publications of the Leo Baeck Institute*, ed., Robert Weltsch (London: Secker & Warburg, 1976), 87-107, esp. 87-88, n. 6 and 7.

<sup>63</sup> Guenther Roth, "Introduction," in Lehmann-Roth, op.cit., 1-24, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 17. Since Kapp had passed away by the time Weber was twenty in 1884, the depth of the relationship is open to question. Nevertheless, an account of it from Weber's point of view should be of interest.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 16-20. Roth refers to Baumgarten's Göttingen lecture "Benjamin Franklin und die Psychologie des amerikanischen Alltags" (1933), published in Eduard Baumgarten, *Gewissen und Macht*, ed. Michael Sukale (Meisenheim: Hain, 1971), 62-82, and to his *Benjamin Franklin, Der Lehrmeister der amerikanischen Revolution* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1936). On Weber, see *Gewissen und Macht*, 68, and *Lehrmeister*, 138-40.

<sup>67</sup> *Gewissen und Macht*, 65.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 71-72. See Baumgarten, *Lehrmeister*, 23-24. In 1936, Baumgarten planned a series of essays on the Franklin-Herder relationship.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 72-75.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 78-82. "Wahrsein der Person heißt: guten Willens sein," (80). Baumgarten claims that there is no equivalent to the German word *Sachlichkeit* in the American vocabulary because the feudal relationship signified by it does not exist in the United States. Alluding to Emerson and Dewey, he insists that there is not in American terminology the slightest notion expressed of the "feudal metaphysics" entailed by the German *Sachlichkeit* which "deifies the being of matter," (78). For Franklins reference to the Indians, see also Baumgarten, *Lehrmeister*, 132-34. For the *Junto*, see 136.

<sup>74</sup> (Bad Heilbrunn, Obb.: Julius Klinkhardt, 2001), 9.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 111-16, 111.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 112-14. For the details of Heidegger's denunciation of Baumgarten see Rüdiger Safranski, *Ein Meister aus Deutschland: Heidegger und seine Zeit* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), 305-10. Safranski points out that Baumgarten was willing to accommodate himself politically and that he applied for admission to the SA and the NS Dozentenbund. Heidegger's letter of 16 Dec. 1933 to the NS Dozentenbund was written as Baumgarten's applications were pending: "Dr. Baumgarten kommt verwandtschaftlich und seiner geistigen Haltung nach aus dem liberal-demokratischen Heidelberger Intellektuellenkreis um Max Weber. Während seines hiesigen Aufenthalts war er alles andere als Nationalsozialist . . . Nachdem Baumgarten bei mir gescheitert war, verkehrte er sehr lebhaft mit dem früher in Göttingen tätig gewesen und nunmehr entlassenen Juden Fränkel. Ich vermute, daß Baumgarten sich auf diesem Wege in Göttingen untergebracht hat . . . Ich halte zur Zeit seine Aufnahme in die SA für ebenso unmöglich wie die in die Dozentenschaft. Baumgarten ist rednerisch außergewöhnlich geschickt. Auf dem Gebiet der Philosophie jedenfalls halte ich ihn für einen Blender." The head of the Göttingen *Dozentenbund* found Heidegger's letter so "charged with hatred" that it was "useless" and thus he filed it without taking any action (307). Baumgarten's career was not impeded.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 287-292, 324, 332, 365. "trostlosen Raserei der entfesselten Technik." For Heidegger's characterization of Baumgarten as a man "very Americanized," with "a solid understanding of that country and its inhabitants" but questionable political instincts and judgments, see Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger and the Nazis," *The New York Review of Books*, 35, 10 (June 16, 1988): 38-47, 39.

<sup>78</sup> I am deeply indebted to Glen Pate of Hamburg University for bibliographical information on Dewey research in Germany, including Stefan Bittner's important study.