

“DAS GESTALTLOSE ZUR GESTALT BRINGEN”:

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MASS IN THE

WORKS OF HERMANN BROCH

By

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

German

August, 2013

Nashville, Tennessee

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To my beloved wife, Jenny, and to Honeybee.

You inspire and sustain me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like first to express my sincere gratitude to my adviser and committee chair, Dr. Meike Werner. Her keen insights helped give shape to a topic that began as my own personal struggle with the relationship between political/social engagement and the pursuit of academic study. Her guidance and support were instrumental in bringing this dissertation to fruition, and her encouragement at every step of the process helped me to find my voice and become a scholar.

I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Barbara Hahn, Dr. John A. McCarthy, Dr. Helmut Walser Smith, and Dr. Christoph Zeller. Their advice during the conceptual stage of my dissertation was invaluable in opening up new directions in my approach to Hermann Broch's writings. I am also thankful for the affirmation and intellectual challenge each provided in conversations throughout the writing process and in the dissertation defense. For introducing me to my "Gesinnungsgenosse" Hermann Broch, I would like to thank Dr. Ralf Klausnitzer of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

For reading and critically engaging with my text in its various iterations, I am extremely grateful to my colleagues, Dr. Kathryn McEwen and Jessica Riviere. Their comments and critiques helped smooth out the rough patches in my work, theoretical as well as compositional. Additionally, I am indebted to my friend Benjamin R. Farley for enhancing and deepening my understanding of Broch through hours of inquiry, discussion, and debate.

I would also like to thank my family for their constant encouragement and positivity during my entire graduate career. Most importantly, I owe my success and sanity to my wonderful wife, Jenny. Without her limitless patience and unwavering faith, I would never have made it this far. And lastly, I would like to credit our unborn son for giving me the excitement and energy to finish.

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INTRODUCTION

In her introduction to the first volume of Hermann Broch's essays, *Dichten und Erkennen* (1955), published as part of the *Gesammelte Werke*, Hannah Arendt describes Broch as a unique individual in the world of literature, a man whose life and work were defined by the attempt to balance three distinct activities: literature, knowledge, and action.

Der Lebens- und Schaffensumkreis, der Horizont, in welchem sich auch erfahrungsmäßig Brochs Werk bewegt, war eben kein Kreis, sondern glich eher einem Dreieck, dessen Seiten man am präzisesten mit den Worten: Dichten – Erkennen – Handeln bezeichnen kann und dessen räumlichen Inhalt nur sein Wesen in seiner Einmaligkeit ausfüllen konnte.¹

The triangular field that Arendt describes is useful for an understanding of the various paths taken and conflicts present in Broch's life and work, specifically his ambivalent relationship to literature. As Arendt explains, Broch had high expectations for literature and its ability to combine the intellectual achievements of science with practical action in the political and social sphere:

Daß diese drei grundsätzlich voneinander geschiedenen Tätigkeiten des Menschen, denen wir ganz und gar verschiedene Begabungsqualitäten zuordnen, die künstlerische, die wissenschaftliche und die politische, eigentlich zusammenfallen und eines sein müßten, war die nie ganz offen ausgesprochene, aber überall latent sich geltend machende Forderung an den Menschen und an sein irdisches Leben, mit der Broch auf die Welt gekommen ist. Was er verlangte, war, daß die Dichtung die gleiche zwingende Gültigkeit besitzen solle wie die Wissenschaft, daß die Wissenschaft die "Totalität der Welt" genau so entstehen lasse wie das Kunstwerk, dessen "Aufgabe die ständige Neuschöpfung der Welt ist", und daß beide zusammen, diese erkenntnis-gesättigte Dichtung und diese visionär gewordene Erkenntnis, alles praktische, ja alltägliche Tun des Menschen in sich begreifen und einschließen sollen.²

¹ Hannah Arendt, Introduction, *Dichten und Erkennen*, by Hermann Broch, ed. Hannah Arendt (Zürich: Rhein Verlag, 1955) 5.

² Arendt, Introduction, 5-6.

It is clear that Broch's expectations were too high, not only for literature, but for science and politics as well. These three poles were, however, essential to Broch's understanding of the world and the individual's place in it. Broch's biography and writings—literary, theoretical, and epistolary—reveal oscillations between the poles of literature, science, and politics, as Broch sought to reconcile the three within himself.

As a young man, Broch received a specialized education in textile engineering, which prepared him for taking over the family textile factory. This technical education proved insufficient for satisfying Broch's intellectual curiosity, leading him to sit in on courses in philosophy and mathematics at Vienna University in the winter of 1904. Twenty-one years later, established in his business career as chairman of the board of the family business, Broch again visited the university in search of intellectual fulfillment. Mathematics was Broch's first great passion; prior to his successful literary debut with *Die Schlafwandler*, Broch introduced himself in private conversations as a mathematician.³ The scientific community that Broch encountered in Vienna first in 1904 and later between 1925 and 1930 was dominated by the school of logical positivism espoused by the Vienna Circle. Broch recognized quickly, and with great disappointment, that the brand of science and philosophy being taught and researched by the Vienna Circle was incapable of offering answers to the metaphysical questions that to him seemed most pressing. Finding science an inadequate means of understanding the world in its totality (the empirical as well as the metaphysical), Broch shifted his focus from the scientific establishment to the realm of literature.

Broch's first novel, the *Schlafwandler* trilogy, is a testament to, and example of Broch's conception of literature's purpose. In the "Methodologischer Prospekt" to *Die*

³ Paul Michael Lützel, *Hermann Broch: Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988) 96.

Schlafwandler, Broch describes how his novel is intended to carry out the metaphysical inquiry that philosophy and science no longer could:

Dieser Roman hat zur Voraussetzung, daß die Literatur mit jenen menschlichen Problemen sich zu befassen hat, die einesteils von der Wissenschaft ausgeschieden werden, weil sie einer rationalen Behandlung überhaupt nicht zugänglich sind und nur mehr in einem absterbenden philosophischen Feuilletonismus ein Scheinleben führen, andererseits mit jenen Problemen, deren Erfassung die Wissenschaft in ihrem langsameren, exakteren Fortschritt noch nicht erreicht hat.⁴

For Broch, life is composed of both rational and irrational components. The positivistic scientific establishment rejected the existence of the irrational in life, but Broch held that merely rejecting the irrational was not sufficient to banish it from the world: “Aber die Ausschaltung des Irrationalen aus der rationalen Wissenschaftlichkeit kann das Irrationale nicht erschlagen. Es ist da. Und es meldet sich unausgesetzt.”⁵ The task Broch sets for literature is to combine both halves of existence—the rational and the irrational—into a harmonious whole. Human beings demand a totality of understanding, according to Broch, and literature is the path along which humanity attempts to attain total knowledge of the world. In the 1936 essay “James Joyce und die Gegenwart,” Broch defines literature’s mission as follows: “[die] Mission einer totalitätserfassenden Erkenntnis, die über jeder empirischen oder sozialen Bedingtheit steht [...], Pflicht der Dichtung zur Absolutheit der Erkenntnis schlechthin.”⁶ For Broch at this stage, literature is driven to race ahead of rational cognition in search of irrational knowledge and the metaphysical aspects of human experience. Broch describes this attribute as an “Ungeduld der Erkenntnis”: “Man mag diesen Erkenntniswillen des Dichterischen, wie es sich als

⁴ Hermann Broch, “Der Roman *Die Schlafwandler*,” *Die Schlafwandler*, KW 1, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978) 719.

⁵ Hermann Broch, “Über die Grundlagen des Romans *Die Schlafwandler*,” *Die Schlafwandler*, 730.

⁶ Hermann Broch, “James Joyce und die Gegenwart,” *Schriften zur Literatur 1. Kritik*, KW 9/1, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1975) 85. Bracketed ellipses are used throughout to distinguish between my own omissions and ellipses present in the source material.

Funktion des umfassenden Erkenntnisstrebens darstellt, eine Ungeduld der Erkenntnis nennen, ein Vorseilen vor der rationalen Erkenntnis, die bloß schrittweise und niemals sie erreichend zu solcher Totalität vordringt.”⁷ Scientific inquiry will never be able to encompass every aspect of human experience, Broch claims, because it is incapable of accounting for the rationally inexplicable experiences in life. Literature, on the other hand, is capable of creating and encapsulating entire worlds⁸—in their rational and irrational aspects—in “Totalitätskunstwerke.” Broch attempted to create “Totalitätskunstwerke” with his novels, especially in *Die Schlafwandler*, but as the political situation in Europe worsened throughout the 1930s, Broch began to doubt the legitimacy of his literary enterprise.

In July 1938, Broch fled Austria first to England and Scotland, and finally to the United States. Throughout his exile, and especially during the war years, Broch repeatedly commented on the uselessness of literature in times of political and humanitarian crisis. In September 1938, Broch wrote from Scotland to the Swiss author Carl Seelig, explaining how the terror of post-Anschluß Vienna had reinforced this conviction: “das Grauen, in dessen sogenanntes Antlitz ich geblickt habe, war eine allzu starke Bestätigung meiner alten These von der Überflüssigkeit des Künstlerischen in dieser Zeit.”⁹ Despite his ambivalence to writing literature while the fate of Europe was so uncertain, Broch nevertheless continued to create novels, including *Der Tod des Vergil*, *Die Schuldlosen*, and the incomplete *Die Verzauberung*. Broch’s own statements about the production of these novels demonstrate that, on the one hand, Broch felt writing

⁷ Broch, “James Joyce,” 86.

⁸ “[...] bloß wenn das Kunstwerk in sich die Welttotalität produziert (nicht als naturalistischer Weltabklatsch, sondern kraft seiner eigenen Welt-Autonomie), nur dann verdient es den Namen eines Kunstwerkes.” Hermann Broch, “Brief an Friedrich Torberg vom 10.4.1943,” *Briefe 1938-1945*, KW 13/2, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1981) 320.

⁹ Broch, “Brief an Carl Seelig vom 23.8.1938,” *Briefe 1938-1945*, 24.

them was a futile exercise, while on the other hand justifying his actions primarily on economic grounds, but also out of the confidence that he was contributing something worthwhile and unique to Western literature. In a letter to British author Stephen Hudson, Broch expresses his belief that *Der Tod des Vergil* will occupy a place in the literary canon alongside Joyce's *Ulysses*:

Natürlich muß ich zuerst einmal meine beiden Bücher fertig haben, und eben darum arbeite ich mit solcher Intensität an ihnen, gewiß nicht freudvoll, da sie mir angesichts der Weltsituation und meiner persönlichen Sorgen so vollkommen überflüssig erscheinen, immerhin aber wissend, daß sie innerhalb der so überflüssig gewordenen Literaturkategorie ihren Rang behaupten werden. Ich glaube sogar behaupten zu dürfen, daß innerhalb der Literatur mein 'Vergil' nicht viel weniger Aufsehen und Eindruck machen wird als der Joycesche Ulysses – doch was bedeutet dies in einer Welt, in der das Entsetzen regiert? nichts und aber nichts.¹⁰

The plot of *Der Tod des Vergil* itself picks up Broch's doubts about the efficacy of literature and the ethical duty of the artist.

In the novel, the titular Roman poet of the Aeneid repeatedly attempts to burn his master work, the *Aeneid*, which he considers an adulteration of the ethical obligations of the author. In the opening pages of the novel, Vergil describes the weakness of art that aims to beautify rather than to truly represent its object:

nichts vermag der Dichter, keinem Übel vermag er abzuhelfen; er wird nur dann gehört, wenn er die Welt verherrlicht, nicht jedoch, wenn er sie darstellt, wie sie ist. Bloß die Lüge ist Ruhm, nicht die Erkenntnis! Und wäre es da denkbar, daß der Äneis eine andere, eine bessere Wirkung vergönnt sein sollte?¹¹

Vergil reinforces the mission Broch described for literature in "James Joyce und die Gegenwart," namely to pursue a path of knowledge and cognition aimed at total, all-encompassing understanding. As Vergil explains to fellow poets Lucius and Plotius, "Echte Kunst durchbricht Grenzen, durchbricht sie und betritt neue, bisher unbekannte

¹⁰ Broch, "Brief an Stephen Hudson vom 9.12.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 52.

¹¹ Broch, *Der Tod des Vergil*, KW 4, ed. Paul Michael Lützler (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1976) 15.

Bereiche der Seele, der Schau, des Ausdruckes, bricht durch ins Ursprüngliche, ins Unmittelbare, ins Wirkliche...”¹² While literature is repeatedly presented as the path to new realms of understanding, indeed the only activity capable of encompassing the final knowledge of death¹³, Vergil recognizes that an author who creates art in ignorance of human suffering is ethically reprehensible: “Unfähig war er zur tätigen Hilfe, unfähig war er zur liebenden Tat, unbewegt hatte er Menschenleid beobachtet, lediglich um des zur Unkeuschheit erstarrten Gedächtnisses willen, lediglich um der unkeusch schönen Aufzeichnung willen hatte er die Geschehensfurchtbarkeit betrachtet [...]”¹⁴ The author must be prepared, like every human being, to become engaged in worldly affairs, offering help to his fellow man. This is the fundamental duty of humankind: “Die Pflicht, die irdische Pflicht, die Pflicht zur Hilfe, die Erwekungspflicht; es gibt keine andere Pflicht, und selbst die Gottesverpflichtung des Menschen, die Menschheitsverpflichtung des Gottes ist Hilfe.”¹⁵ Vergil’s inner conflict between the demands of literature and philanthropic action mirrors Broch’s own experience during his exile, a period spent frantically assisting European asylum seekers, writing novels, and developing humanitarian and democratic initiatives to counter the destructive influence of German fascism.

In America, Broch moved further from the poles of science and literature to the realm of politics, where he hoped to do his part for the protection of humanity. In December 1938, Broch wrote to Carl Seelig that “das Humane [...] verteidigen” was the

¹² Broch, *Vergil*, 239.

¹³ “Dichtung[,] diese seltsamste aller menschlichen Tätigkeiten, [die einzige,] die der Todeserkenntnis dient.” Broch, *Vergil*, 77.

¹⁴ Broch, *Vergil*, 145.

¹⁵ Broch, *Vergil*, 126.

only legitimate task he could envision for an author.¹⁶ In August 1939, two weeks before the German invasion of Poland, Broch described an increasing desire to become involved in politics, if only so that his death in the war to come would not have been in vain: “es brennt mich das Politische immer mehr und mehr, vielleicht auch nur, um nicht völlig grundlos erschlagen zu werden.”¹⁷ From 1937 until his death in 1951, Broch wrote several essays on human rights and democracy, drafted a resolution to the League of Nations, and collaborated on the “City of Man” project, an initiative for the development of a greater world democracy. In this same period, Broch was adamant about the illegitimacy of an artistic or scholarly existence disconnected from the problems of society at large. Shortly after publishing *Der Tod des Vergil*, in May 1945, Broch expressed his rejection of “ivory tower” intellectualism in a letter to Aldous Huxley: “Ich glaube nämlich, daß in dieser Zeit der ivory tower unmoralisch geworden ist; siebzehn Jahre an ein esoterisches Werk zu verwenden, wie Joyce es getan hat, ist heute unerlaubt, besonders wenn man in der Lage ist, etwas Sozialeres zu unternehmen.”¹⁸ Broch’s exile period is marked by a stated rejection of “Geschichtel-Erzählen,”¹⁹ or literature for literature’s sake, and an increased engagement with concrete political problems in the form of theoretical writing and personal engagement among the exile community.

This brief overview of Broch’s biography illustrates the changing trajectory of his production within the field “Dichten – Erkennen – Handeln” proposed by Hannah Arendt. When each of these three activities is identified with its respective field—literature, science, and politics, respectively—Broch’s life does seem to move from pole

¹⁶ Broch, “Brief an Carl Seelig vom 10.12.1938,” *Briefe 1938-1945*, 54.

¹⁷ Broch, “Brief an Stefan Zweig vom 18.8.1939,” *Briefe 1938-1945*, 131.

¹⁸ Broch, “Brief an Aldous Huxley vom 10.5.1945,” *Briefe 1938-1945*, 453.

¹⁹ Broch, “Brief an Ernst Polak vom 27.11.1939,” *Briefe 1938-1945*, 153.

to pole, beginning with his scientific studies in the 1920s, through his period of greatest literary production between 1930 and 1938, and finally to the political activity of the 1940s. I argue, though, that identifying “Erkennen” with science, as Arendt does, presents a misleading image of Broch’s central intellectual interests. I propose that the process of “Erkenntnis”—the act of cognition, the attainment of knowledge, and the understanding of that knowledge that results from analysis—is the constant force in Broch’s production, underlying and uniting his interests in science, philosophy, literature, and politics. Broch’s oeuvre is the attempt by one man, by means of divergent paths, to arrive at a total understanding of the world. The individual in search of totality is at the core of Broch’s value theory and epistemology, and as such, Broch’s literary works as well as his theoretical essays are part of a larger attempt at understanding the world in its infinite expanse.

The dissertation that follows traces the development of a single concept along the path of Broch’s search for totality through “Erkenntnis.” The concept in question is “Masse”: the masses, the mass, the crowd. As a result of the increased urbanization of society and the population booms that followed, the mass became a prominent figure in the popular and political consciousness. As the lower classes became ever more numerous, the ruling few were forced to recognize the power of the mass, especially when their dissatisfaction was vented in the form of destructive riots. The shift from agrarian to urban societies also resulted in higher population concentrations within cities, increasing the likelihood and potential might of crowds. The mob, whether derided as lower class, degenerate rabble, or recognized as the organized arm of urban labor movements, became a specter that haunted the governments and industrial employers of

late 19th and early 20th century Europe. It was in this same climate that Broch first encountered the mass in 1918, in which he perceived an immediate threat. Until his death in 1951, Broch was concerned with the dangers that the mass posed to the rest of society, specifically the phenomenon of mass hysteria, the psychological experience whereby rational, self-aware individuals act erratically, often following the whim of others. So great was Broch's preoccupation with the mass that it appears throughout his works, both literary and theoretical.

As a result of its fluctuating, unpredictable nature, the mass has repeatedly proven difficult to define, and even more difficult to represent. This is especially true in the works of Hermann Broch, where the mass appears repeatedly, in greater or lesser clarity. Broch's diminished ability, or unwillingness to represent the mass directly as a physical entity in his works is tied, I claim, to a larger difficulty of conception in Broch's thinking. In the end, Broch's inability to represent the mass as a figure will be shown to be a primary reason that his theoretical challenge to mass hysteria, the *Massenwahntheorie*, remains ineffective.

The dissertation begins with Broch's first exposure to a mass event, specifically the public euphoria that accompanied the declaration of the Austrian Republic on November 12, 1918. In an open letter entitled "Die Straße," Broch describes his deep mistrust of the jubilant crowd, which, for him represents the degradation of the individual, of community, and of democratic politics. "Die Straße" is analyzed as Broch's emotional first response to the phenomenon of the mass, but also as the beginning of a deeper theoretical examination of the mass's nature.

The second chapter provides an overview of the development of “Masse” as a term and concept in its historical, social, and political contexts. After an examination of possible definitions, the chapter explores competing theories of the mass and their relationship to one another. Beginning with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel’s *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, the chapter analyzes key works of mass psychology from Gustave Le Bon (*La psychologie des foules*), Sigmund Freud (“Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse”), Theodor Geiger (*Die Masse und ihre Aktion*), and José Ortega y Gasset (*The Revolt of the Masses*). Finally, Broch’s initial essay “Die Straße” is viewed within the context of the prevailing mass theories of its time.

After establishing a working definition of the mass, the third chapter questions the absence of the concept in Broch’s writing between the publication of “Die Straße” in 1918 and the beginning of work on *Die Schlafwandler* in 1929. Viewing Broch’s biography alongside the political developments in Europe during this period reveals initial intellectual engagement with politics that is quickly overshadowed by the pressures of work and married life. Exhausted and distracted, Broch moves away from the mass until he severs ties to the family factory and to his wife, finally deciding to pursue literature as an occupation in 1927.

The fourth chapter traces the growing presence of the mass in Broch’s literary work after it resurfaces in the novel trilogy *Die Schlafwandler*, especially in the second volume *Esch oder Die Anarchie*. The chapter focuses on the representation of the mass as a figure in Broch’s work, as it takes on greater contours over time. Exemplary scenes of mass events from the novels *Die Schlafwandler*, *Die Unbekannte Größe*, and *Der Tod des Vergil*, as well as the lesser known drama *Die Entsöhnung*, are analyzed with especial

emphasis placed on the relationship between the mass and the respective work's individual protagonists.

In the fifth chapter, we move from external representations of the mass, that is, representations provided by outside spectators, to a depiction of complete immersion in the mass. In Broch's unfinished novel *Die Verzauberung*, the reader is exposed to the experience of losing oneself in the mass, precisely what Broch most feared in "Die Straße." The chapter examines the effect of two competing "Führer" personalities on the novel's narrator—an educated individual like Broch—and his subsequent culpability in the euphoric murder of a young woman by one of these two figures, the demonic Marius Ratti. *Die Verzauberung* presents a vivid example of the violence and destruction that can result when mass hysteria overcomes even the most self-aware individuals.

Finally, the sixth chapter addresses Broch's response to the cataclysmic outburst of mass hysteria in *Die Verzauberung*, namely the incomplete *Massenwahntheorie*. Having followed the phantom of the mass through Broch's literary works, this chapter seeks it again within the theoretical construction of his mass psychology. As essential as one would consider the figure of the mass to any theory of mass psychology, an investigation of the *Massenwahntheorie* reveals a nearly complete absence of the mass as a figure in Broch's theoretical conception. Rather, the *Massenwahntheorie* proves to be concerned first and foremost with the individual, as do the majority of Broch's novels. Broch's refusal to recognize the existence of the mass as a figure in his theory contributes directly, as will be shown, to its inapplicability in real life political settings.

Overview of Scholarship

Prior to the 1950s, Broch's reception was limited to a few reviews of his novels (*Die Schlafwandler*, *Die unbekannte Größe*, and *Der Tod des Vergil*) in daily newspapers, including the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt*, and the *New York Times Book Review*. The first wave of scholarly engagement with Broch's works was largely conducted by individuals who were personally acquainted with Broch and who held him in high esteem. Shortly after Broch's death in 1951, his publisher Daniel Brody, in cooperation with American and exiled European intellectuals (including Hermann Weigand, Hannah Arendt, Erich von Kahler, and Robert Pick) edited the first collection of his works, the ten-volume *Gesammelte Werke* (Rhein-Verlag, 1953-1961). With the publication of this edition, Broch was reintroduced to a German-speaking audience largely unfamiliar with his work. Each volume of the *Gesammelte Werke* is introduced by an essay that is often the first scholarly reflection on the presented work, for example Hannah Arendt's introduction to the two volumes of Broch's essays *Dichten und Erkennen* and *Erkennen und Handeln* and Wolfgang Rothe's introduction to the *Massenpsychologie*, which collected fragments from Broch's literary remains. The former essay by Arendt provides an insightful assessment of Broch's character as a "Dichter wider Willen," (a term still used and dissected by Broch scholars) and initial analyses of Broch's value theory, epistemology, and his concept of the "Irdisch-Absolute," but it remains largely laudatory and descriptive.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Broch was primarily known for *Die Schlafwandler* and *Der Tod des Vergil*. The intellectual and narrative complexity of these works led quickly to Broch's establishment as an avant-garde writer and one of the

foremost producers of the modern novel, a characterization that persists today. While this categorization brought with it greater recognition, it also limited reception of Broch's works to those aspects that conformed to conceptions of the avant-garde.²⁰ The first engagement with Broch's theory of mass hysteria was published by Wolfgang Rothe under the title "Hermann Broch als politischer Denker" (1959), shortly before the publication of the *Massenpsychologie* volume (which Rothe edited) in the *Gesammelte Werke*. In 1959, few people had even seen Broch's posthumous papers, which are held in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in New Haven. Rothe presents a description of the various fragments on mass psychology found in the Broch archive, as well as a discussion of the main concepts covered within the texts themselves. With the exception of a short section in Erich von Kahler's *Die Philosophie von Hermann Broch* (1962), Broch's theory of mass hysteria is largely overlooked until the 1970s, when it is addressed by a new generation of highly critical scholars.

The 1970s saw a surge in Broch scholarship—with the publication of around 300 titles in that decade alone²¹—as attention began to be paid to other works in Broch's oeuvre. An increased interest in the topic of human rights during this time period also led to new involvement with Broch's lesser-known political texts. This rise in scholarly involvement was aided by the publication of the seminal *Kurbainzationommentierte Werkausgabe*, a complete 17-volume edition edited by Paul Michael Lützeler and published by Suhrkamp between 1974 and 1980, and several symposia (Vienna 1976, "Broch heute"; New Haven 1979; Nice 1979, "Broch und seine Zeit") dedicated to the

²⁰ Paul Michael Lützeler, "Introduction: Broch, our Contemporary," *Hermann Broch, Visionary in Exile: The 2001 Yale Symposium*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003) 2.

²¹ Klaus W. Jonas, "Bibliographie der Sekundärliteratur zu Hermann Broch 1971-1984," *Hermann Broch*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986) 333.

discussion of Broch's works.²² In 1971, Ernestine Schlant published a comprehensive study on Broch's philosophical concepts, *Die Philosophie Hermann Brochs*, which deepened the work begun a decade earlier by Broch's friend Erich von Kahler. In her book, Schlant presents Broch's value theory, epistemology, and mass psychology as intersecting layers in Broch's conception, frequently operating with the same termini, but not always on the same level of experience. Around the same time, several highly critical interpretations of Broch's work were released to the displeasure of older scholars with greater emotional connection to Broch. In his *Kritische Studien zur Wertphilosophie Hermann Brochs* (1970), Karl Menges claimed to be the first scholar to move beyond pure acclamation and address the "unmittelbare philosophische und dichterische Wirklichkeit Brochs."²³ Menges criticized Broch's philosophy as overly subjective and, in the mass psychology, dangerously close to espousing the authoritarian fascism he claimed to oppose. The charge of fascist ideology proved especially provocative, leading Joseph Strelka to dismiss Menges's claims as "törichter Unsinn."²⁴ Lützeler also rejected Menges and others' accusations,²⁵ claiming that their arguments were misinterpretations, which resulted from a lack of access to clarifying material found in Broch's archived work.²⁶ Dagmar Barnouw follows Menges's call for critical engagement with Broch's work, challenging the basic assumptions with which both Broch and the bulk of scholarship approached his mass psychology. In her 1977 article "Massenpsychologie als

²² Jonas, "Bibliographie," 333.

²³ Karl Menges, *Kritische Studien zur Wertphilosophie Hermann Brochs* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1970) 3.

²⁴ Joseph Strelka, "Broch heute," *Broch heute*, ed. Joseph Strelka (Bern: Francke, 1978) 13.

²⁵ Heinz D. Osterle, "Hermann Broch: 'Die Schlafwandler'. Kritik der zentralen Metapher," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* 44.2 (1970): 220-268; Wolfgang Freese and Karl Menges, *Broch-Forschung. Überlegungen zur Methode und Problematik eines literarischen Rezeptionsvorgangs* (München: Fink, 1977).

²⁶ Paul Michael Lützeler, *Hermann Broch. Ethik und Politik* (München: Winkler, 1973) 11.

Metaphysik: zu Brochs Begriff eines Irdisch-Absoluten,” Barnouw advances the thesis that “Brochs massenpsychologische Fragmente [...] weder mit Masse noch mit Psychologie etwas zu tun [haben].”²⁷ Barnouw analyzes the *Massenpsychologie* as an overly abstract collection of arbitrary postulates which Broch makes no effort to support with empirical evidence. Barnouw also identifies and challenges the trend in Broch scholarship to accept Broch’s good intentions as equivalent with successful theoretical production.

Since the heated debates of the 1970s, several larger studies have been done on Broch’s theory of mass psychology from varying perspectives. Hubertus Venzlaff’s *Hermann Broch. Ekstase und Masse* (1981) is dedicated primarily to an exploration of Broch’s concept of ecstasy from its beginnings in early aesthetic essays to its central place in the *Massenpsychologie*. Like Barnouw, Venzlaff treats the *Massenpsychologie* as a theory of the individual, rather than of the mass, as he defines “Ekstase” as a transcendental actualization of the individual in contradistinction to the mass. While Menges, Barnouw, and Venzlaff include short excursions on the parallels between Broch’s mass theory and his literary works, Robert G. Weigel presents analyses of Broch’s major novels through the lens of the *Massenwahntheorie*.²⁸ Weigel’s *Zur geistigen Einheit von Hermann Brochs Werk: Massenpsychologie. Politologie. Romane* (1994) recognizes the central importance of Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie* for his entire written production, including his theoretical and literary works. The most recent study on the *Massenwahntheorie* is Rolf Schuhmann’s *Die Massenwahntheorie im Spiegel der*

²⁷ Dagmar Barnouw, “Massenpsychologie als Metaphysik: zu Brochs Begriff eines Irdisch-Absoluten,” *Musil-Forum* 3 (1977): 159.

²⁸ The earlier studies relied on the *Massenpsychologie* volume of the *Gesammelte Werke*. Weigel’s book instead uses the more complete *Massenwahntheorie* assembled by Lützel.

Autorenkrise, which focuses primarily on the individual, while also exploring Broch's theoretical relationship to Le Bon, Freud, Fichte, and phenomenology. Katja Schettler's *Berlin, Wien... Wovon man spricht: das Thema Masse in deutschsprachigen Texten der zwanziger und Anfang der dreißiger Jahre* (2006) includes a discourse analysis of Broch's *Die Schlafwandler* in connection with the *Massenwahntheorie* as part of a larger exploration of the mass phenomenon in the 1920s and 1930s. Similar to Barnouw, Schettler identifies ambiguities—semantic and representational—in Broch's mass theory, especially in the relationship between the individual, the mass, and community.

Over the past three decades, numerous articles and shorter pieces have been produced that deal with particular aspects of Broch's mass theory or that identify traces of that theory in individual literary works. In particular, three major international symposia have featured important discussions of Broch's mass theory. In 1986, two symposia were held to commemorate Broch's 100th birthday, one presented by the Österreichische Kultur-Institut in Budapest, the other at Yale University, where a second symposium was held in 2001 to mark the 50th anniversary of Broch's death. At the Budapest conference, Joseph Strelka presented an essay titled "Hermann Brochs Massenpsychologie," in which he details the main points of the theory with an emphasis on Broch's insistence on the value of human rights. Strelka presents the *Massenwahntheorie* as the pure expression of a singular mind, "ein Werk aus einem Guß, das zur Gänze aus Brochs Geistigkeit stammt,"²⁹ existing apart from any intellectual predecessors. Strelka calls on scholars to work past the *Massenwahntheorie*'s difficult prose and complex ideas, as he feels that knowledge of the theory is central to

²⁹ Joseph Strelka, "Hermann Brochs Modell einer umfassenden Massenpsychologie," *Romanstruktur und Menschenrecht bei Hermann Broch*, ed. Hartmut Steinecke and Joseph Strelka (Bern: Peter Lang, 1990) 59.

understanding Broch's oeuvre. At the 1986 Yale symposium, organized by Stephen Dowden, Strelka presented a modified version of this same paper in English under the title, "Politics and the Human Condition: Broch's Model of a Mass Psychology." Responses by Erich W. Skwara and Hartmut Jäckel call into question the fruitfulness of an accomplished poet working at science or politics. Skwara criticizes the vacillation between theory and literature in Broch's work, stating that "poets should not comment on their own work and scientists should not walk away from what can be proven."³⁰ Jäckel considers Broch's political writings to have been more or less a waste of effort, detracting from Broch's creative potential as an author: "it is tempting to consider his political turn to be *objectively wrong*, though obviously no one can say what literary work might have been turned out had he devoted himself to it."³¹ The 2001 Yale symposium, organized by Paul Michael Lützeler with a focus on Broch's exile period, featured yet another essay on the mass theory, Wolfgang Müller-Funk's "Fear in Culture: Broch's *Massenwahntheorie*." Müller-Funk presents a comparison between the *Massenwahntheorie* and Elias Canetti's *Masse und Macht*, placing both theories in the context of a shared Austrian experience. His analysis identifies contradictions in Broch's theory that are, in Müller-Funk's view, inherent in Broch's ideas, rather than a result of the fragmentary nature of the *Massenwahntheorie*.

As this brief overview of the scholarship has shown, there have been several studies written on the *Massenwahntheorie* itself, often focused on a particular aspect of Broch's theoretical framework, for example Endre Kiss's analysis of the

³⁰ Erich W. Skwara, "Mind and World and No Way Out: A Response to Joseph Strelka," *Hermann Broch: Literature, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Stephen D. Dowden (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1988) 90.

³¹ Hartmut Jäckel, "Hermann Broch and Politics," *Hermann Broch: Literature, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Stephen D. Dowden (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1988) 99.

“Dämmerzustand”³² and Venzlaff’s study on the concept of “Ekstase.” Other scholars have used Broch’s theory as a lens for interpreting his novels, and vice versa (Weigel, Schettler, Schuhmann, James Hardin,³³ Helmut Koopmann³⁴) or placed the *Massenwahntheorie* in a larger cultural and historical context, frequently in dialog with its closest contemporary, Elias Canetti’s *Masse und Macht* (Sigrid Schmid-Bortenschlager,³⁵ Wolfgang Müller-Funk). By contrast, this dissertation is interested in the presentation and representation of the mass as a physical entity that makes its presence felt in mass events. Rather than focusing on mass hysteria, which, as will be shown, is dominant in Broch’s thinking, I am primarily concerned with the correlation between the (in)ability to depict the mass in words and images, and the (in)ability to conceive of the mass as an abstract concept. The majority of Broch scholarship, by examining the psychological effect of mass hysteria on individuals within Broch’s novels essentially takes the existence of an entity called “Masse” for granted. This dissertation, rather than operating under the assumption that such a figure exists, pursues textual evidence for its existence. In the process, I will demonstrate how Broch’s mass psychological theory systematically evades discussion of its presumed object, the mass, to the detriment of its use in understanding and confronting mass hysteria.

³² Endre Kiss, “Der Dämmerzustand in philosophischer, psychologischer und romanästhetischer Beleuchtung,” *Austriaca* 55 (2003): 155-172.

³³ James Hardin, “Hermann Broch’s Theories on Mass Psychology and *Der Versucher*,” *The German Quarterly* 47.1 (1974): 24-33.

³⁴ Helmut Koopmann, “‘Verrückte Erlösung’. Der Wahn von der neuen Gemeinschaft und der Glaube an die Unzerstörbarkeit des Ich in Brochs *Verzauberung*,” *Brochs “Verzauberung”*, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983) 186-208.

³⁵ Sigrid Schmid-Bortenschlager, “Der Einzelne und seine Masse. Massentheorie und Literaturkonzeption bei Elias Canetti und Hermann Broch,” *Elias Canetti, Experte der Macht*, ed. Kurt Bartsch and Gerhard Melzer (Graz: Droschl, 1985) 116-132.

CHAPTER I

“DIE STRASSE”: BROCH’S NASCENT MASS THEORY

Hermann Broch’s first political essay was created in 1918 in response to the tumultuous atmosphere that followed the end of World War I and the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. On November 12, 1918, Broch was with his friends in the Café Herrenhof in Vienna, a favorite of Broch’s and the regular gathering place of a group of intellectuals and artists centered on author and critic Franz Blei. In advance of the planned proclamation of an Austrian Republic, huge masses of people crowded into the city center toward the Parliament building. While his friends³⁶ followed the crowd out into the street, Broch remained behind in the café. According to Gina Kaus, in his enthusiasm, Franz Werfel tore off his hat and shouted, “Nieder mit Habsburg! Hoch die Republik!”³⁷ Far from sharing his friends’ optimism and enthusiasm, Broch viewed the mass event of November 12 with fear, disgust, and foreboding. In order to explain these feelings to his peers, Broch penned an open letter to Franz Blei entitled “Die Straße.” Blei was so impressed by Broch’s letter that he subsequently published it in his new magazine *Die Rettung* on December 20, 1918.

In the first lines of “Die Straße,” Broch is quick to clarify that his flight from the mass was not ideologically motivated; in fact, he reaffirms his commitment to communist economic principles: “Ich bin mit jeder Art kommunistischer Wirtschaft von vornherein einverstanden, wie sie einzurichten die Welt für gut findet. Keinerlei Besitz besitzt

³⁶ These included Franz Werfel, the muse of the Blei group Gina Kaus, and Milena Jesenská, married to Ernst Polak and one of Broch’s paramours.

³⁷ Lützel, *Biographie*, 73.

mich.”³⁸ Rather than having been put off by the Socialist politics of the mass, Broch’s misgivings were with the mass itself. According to Broch, masses exert a powerful attraction and influence on most individuals, including on Broch himself: “Ich bin, wie die meisten Menschen, von Massenpsychosen sehr leicht beeinflussbar. Wenn 3000 Menschen die Wacht am Rhein singen, würgt es mich ebenso gerührt und erschüttert im Hals, wie wenn sie die Marseillaise sängen.”³⁹ What Broch describes here is the ability of the mass to involve individuals in an ecstatic experience that can be instigated by any number of disparate, even contradictory causes (religious, national, ethnic, ideological, etc.). This type of ecstasy, it seems, is able to transcend the initial impetus that gathered and subsequently drives the mass; Broch would be equally sensitive to the nationalist anthems of the French and the Germans, though he himself is Austrian. It is Broch’s recognition of his own—and the mass’s—susceptibility to influence by the mass that leads him to escape the events of November 12, 1918.

Broch further explores the reasons behind his wariness and mistrust of the mass by grounding his feelings not in snobbish aestheticism (“die Masse stinkt”) or unforgiving skepticism (“alles ist ein Schwindel”),⁴⁰ but rather in an insight into the inner workings of the mass itself. As indicated in Broch’s example of the interchangeability of ecstatic emotion from the communal singing of the “Wacht am Rhein” or the “Marseillaise,” masses are capable of influencing even those individuals who do not directly share in the specific cause of the mass. Equally troubling is Broch’s next

³⁸ Hermann Broch, “Die Straße,” *Briefe 1913-1938*, KW 13/1, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1981) 30.

³⁹ Broch, “Die Straße,” 30.

⁴⁰ Broch, “Die Straße,” 31.

revelation that not only is the particular cause irrelevant to affected individuals outside the mass, but even to the mass as well:

Es ist vollkommen Nebensache, daß dieselbe Masse heute imperialistisch und morgen gegenteilig begeistert ist. Ja selbst das halte ich für Schwindel, daß die imperialistische Begeisterung die echtere ist, und daß der Freiheitstaumel von *jedem einzelnen* als ein ‘Ersatz’ für den nationalistischen gefühlt wird, der jetzt in Prag oder in Paris tanzen macht.”⁴¹

According to Broch’s understanding, the mass can be moved by any number of external emotional stimuli, and no single ideology or emotion can claim to be more legitimate than any other, including nationalism and liberty.

Gemeinschaft

A central concept in Broch’s early political essay is community (*Gemeinschaft*). In “Die Straße,” Broch treats the concept of community as a degeneration of the human individual resulting in indifference to the pursuit of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) that is the central preoccupation of the intellectual:

Radikal genommen, ist jede Gemeinschaft eine menschliche Entartung. Ihr Werterlebnis beruht zum größten Teil auf jener billigen Ekstase des gemeinsamen Rhythmus, auf jener erkenntnislosen billigen Hilfe, von der beispielsweise das Christentum als Kult ganz erfüllt ist. Das gemeinsame Gebet steht jedem, dem das Gott-Erkennen wie jedes Erkennen eine Angelegenheit der stets brückenlosen und immer ohne Hilfe bleiben müssenden Person ist, auf unterer Stufe.⁴²

Communal prayer is for Broch nothing but cheap ecstasy to be accorded little value by any individual that recognizes the essential value of the search for knowledge and its attendant isolation. To seek to understand God or the world is—for Broch—necessarily

⁴¹ Broch, “Die Straße,” 31.

⁴² Broch, “Die Straße,” 31.

to do so alone, without help from, or connection to others. Community, though, rests on connection, on the dissolution of division between individuals and a resultant unity of purpose or identification. For Broch, the basis of community is a common conception of truth rooted in a single faith: “Das Wesentliche der Gemeinschaft ist das gemeinsame metaphysische Wahrheitsgefühl und Verankerung der letzten Einsicht in einem Glauben.”⁴³ To arrive at a common conception of, or feel for the truth requires a common, binding interpretation of events, or what Broch calls “eine Dogmatisierung der Ursachenreihen.”⁴⁴ In other words, the community’s shared understanding of the truth is a result of a deliberate and indisputable interpretation of history from the particular perspective of the community in question. This dogmatic, inflexible reinterpretation of the truth from a singular perspective is a primary cause of Broch’s negative view of community.

Though Broch mistrusts community for its essentially dogmatized version of truth, he does use it as a criterion for judging the legitimacy of masses. In “Die Straße,” Broch introduces a distinction between masses united by genuine and false community:

Und weil die Hohlheit und Verkrampfung – jeder Krampf ist Kraft ins Leere gestossen – des Freiheitsrufes so offenkundig ist, und weil die falsche Gemeinschaft, in die hier die Masse tritt, jedem einzelnen manifest ist, deswegen ist der Übergang von der hohl erregten Masse zum Zweckverband des Plünderns ungleich leichter zu vollziehen als von der national erregten Menge, die den Schimmer, eine leise Ahnung einer echten Gemeinschaft, der sprachlichen nämlich, in sich trägt.⁴⁵

Since a national group is united by a shared language, the individuals in that group are part of a genuine community, while individuals in pursuit of freedom have no actual

⁴³ Broch, “Die Straße,” 31.

⁴⁴ Broch, “Die Straße,” 31.

⁴⁵ Broch, “Die Straße,” 31.

connection to one another. As a result, the mass that assembles in pursuit of freedom is based on a false community, incited by an insubstantial and malleable impetus.

According to Broch, the hollowness of this type of mass's motivations and the false nature of its community makes it easier to manipulate and employ for destructive purposes, as a "Zweckverband des Plünderns."

This lack of genuine community and substantial motivations is characteristic of the modern mass according to Broch. Not only is the modern mass not governed by a common conception of truth, but it is not even entitled to genuine community: "Nun ist aber dieses gemeinsame Wahrheitsgefühl in der modernen Masse gar nicht vorhanden! [...] Sie ist zur Gemeinschaft nicht mehr *berechtigt!*"⁴⁶ But the modern mass is capable of creating the semblance of community by dogmatizing any arbitrary content and passing it off as genuine community. Without a substantial, unifying motivation, the mass is capable of being employed for any cause or ideology, though the mass's connection to each individual cause remains tenuous and illusory:

[Die moderne Masse] ist in der Lage, jeden beliebigen Inhalt zu dogmatisieren und darauf den psychologischen Nimbus einer Gemeinschaft sich zu geben – aber es bleibt bei dem Nimbus, da die letzte Evidenz fehlt. Deswegen ist es möglich, die gleiche Masse heute nationalistisch und morgen sozialistisch zu begeistern [...]⁴⁷

For the modern mass, ideologies are nothing more than interchangeable psychological catalysts necessary to set the mass in motion.

⁴⁶ Broch, "Die Straße," 32.

⁴⁷ Broch, "Die Straße," 32.

Genuss

The problem with the modern mass is that, in place of a substantial and lofty motivation, its ultimate catalyst is the pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment (*Genuss*). Much in the vein of Enlightenment Idealism, Broch sees the possibility for the betterment of human society in notions like freedom, justice, and equality. For Broch, these concepts possess value in the sense that they improve life for all of humanity on a basic level. The modern mass, however, is interested only in the personal, individual pleasure associated with such concepts, rather than the abstract benefits guaranteed to society as a whole. Such an adulteration of Enlightenment ideals fills Broch with disgust for the modern mass:

Wenn ein Vollbart die Wacht am Rhein singt, so ist das noch irgendwie adäquat; wenn aber derselbe Vollbart, und er ist derselbe, nach der Freiheit ruft, so wird die Idee der Freiheit so inhaltslos, so dreckig, so sehr die Forderung nach dem ‘Genuß’ der Freiheit, daß es einem den Magen umkehrt.⁴⁸

This establishes a dichotomy in Broch’s thinking that remains present throughout his oeuvre, an elitist division between the intellectual and the mass. The mass can be whipped up into a frenzy, demanding something as admirable as freedom, but they do not comprehend what it is for which they clamor. Such hollow ecstasy in the name of a lofty goal defiles the goal itself, reducing it to base consumption. From this Broch extrapolates that politics in modern times must dilute the concept of freedom to make it palatable to the masses and their desire for simple pleasure: “Das Grauenvolle ist nämlich, daß die Dogmatisierung und Verhunzung der Idee *notwendig* ist! Daß das Wesen des Politischen darinnen liegt und daß das Politische *notwendig* ist aus dem Geiste dieser Zeit und dazu

⁴⁸ Broch, “Die Straße,” 32.

bestellt, ihre letzte Erniedrigung zu sein!”⁴⁹ Since politics concerns the whole of society, its extension to the simplistic masses then entails the corruption and degradation of ideas for mass consumption, and as a result the final degradation of modern times.

Politik

In Broch’s definition of politics, it is clear that he is convinced that democracy—based on an undefined concept of justice—is the only legitimate form of political organization. Justice, for Broch, is the defining characteristic of politics: “Der Begriff des Politischen deckt sich mit dem der Gerechtigkeit. Eine andere Politik als eine, die zur Gerechtigkeit strebt, gibt es nicht.”⁵⁰ Broch explains that any political system or conception *not* based on justice is in fact not politics at all. For example, Broch claims, politics in pursuit of special interests is merely business in disguise: “Interessenpolitik ist nicht Politik, sondern einfach Geschäft, mehr oder weniger verhüllt.”⁵¹

According to Broch’s conception, justice brings about freedom: “Das Resultat der Gerechtigkeit ist Freiheit.”⁵² Though Broch makes no attempt to explain why this should be so, it seems that justice as he understands it entails the protection of individual human rights (an area of utmost importance for Broch’s later political works).⁵³ As such, a political system that guaranteed the inviolability of the human individual would seem to also ensure the freedom of that individual.

⁴⁹ Broch, “Die Straße,” 32.

⁵⁰ Broch, “Die Straße,” 32.

⁵¹ Broch, “Die Straße,” 32.

⁵² Broch, “Die Straße,” 32.

⁵³ Indeed, in the 1919 essay “Konstitutionelle Diktatur als demokratisches Rätssystem,” Broch states: “Gerechtigkeit bedeutet immer Freiheit des Individuums [...]” Broch, *Politische Schriften*, KW 11, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978) 12.

All three of the central concepts here—*Politik, Gerechtigkeit, Freiheit*—remain in the abstract, especially when Broch steps back and introduces the notion of “reine Politik”:

Das reine Politische ist nichts sonst als Idee und als solche von höchster Notwendigkeit und hat mit keiner körperlichen Verdunkelung etwas zu tun. Die reine Politik ist aus der Autonomie des Geistigen geboren, während die zeitlich frühere Zweckpolitik als Dienerin der seienden Gesellschaft gedient hat. Dem Wesen nicht nur des Politischen gemäß, sondern im Sinn jedes sittlichen Tuns muß das reine politische Wollen seine Realisierung in vernunftmäßiger, ästhetischer Formung finden. Reine Politik ist die zum formalen Gebilde gewordene reine sittliche Forderung.⁵⁴

Pure politics, then, occupies a higher, abstract sphere, having emerged from the intellectual realm and existing divorced from concrete, physical reality as “idea.” Further, pure politics is moral requirement made manifest, given form and structure. This manifestation of moral requirement must occur within concrete reality, though, and in order to do so, it must be directed at people. Here Broch seems to make an implicit distinction between politics as theory and politics as practice. Pure politics in theory is the idea, while pure politics in practice is the formalization of moral requirement and action. To move from the abstract and theoretical to the concrete and practical, politics must address itself to humanity in general, and the masses in specific. Pure politics does this, Broch claims, with a hitherto unknown immediacy and directness: “sie wendet sich aus ihrem Wesen direkt an den Menschen und mit einer Unmittelbarkeit so, wie sie eine frühere teleologische und theologische Politik, die mit vorgebauten Evidenzen zu tun hatte, gar nicht gekannt hat.”⁵⁵ This intimate connection to humanity provides the basis for Broch’s identification of pure politics with democracy.

⁵⁴ Broch, “Die Straße,” 32-33.

⁵⁵ Broch, “Die Straße,” 33.

But pure politics is more for Broch than just democratic in form. Rather, pure politics is inherently and exclusively concerned with the human masses:

Daraus folgt, daß die reine Politik nicht nur Demokratie ist, sondern sich auch direkt an die Menschenmasse als solche als ihr einziges Formungsobjekt und zugleich als ihr einziges Mogens wenden muß. Sie ist also auf ihre Dogmatisierung innerhalb des Massenaggregates von Mündern, Nasen, Bärten, Bäuchen angewiesen.⁵⁶

Broch's negative assessment of the masses is again visible when he describes the mass not as a gathering of individuals, but rather as a "Massenaggregat" of body parts divested of humanity and consciousness. It is also telling that Broch neglects to include brains among the constituent parts of the mass, thus reinforcing his distinction between the high-minded intellectual and the blindly manipulable masses. And yet Broch recognizes that democracy is the specific sphere of the masses, and in order to create a democratic government and social structure, pure politics must be made accessible to the masses. In order to achieve this, though, it is necessary to distill the intellectual (*das Geistige*) into a form palatable to the mass: the slogan. "Es gibt keinen anderen Weg für das Geistige, als den der absoluten Erniedrigung als leeres Massenschlagwort, und je höher und je reiner das sittliche Wollen ist, das sich im Politischen manifestiert, desto tiefer ist sein Sturz und seine Verlüderung in der billigen Ekstase der Masse."⁵⁷ Here Broch reveals his skepticism about the possibility of moral improvement by means of a democratic political process. Pure politics is composed of the ideas that underlie a just and free society and the subsequent formation of those abstract ideas into pure moral requirement executed in the concrete reality of everyday life. However, in order to make such ideas accessible to the masses, they must be diluted to such a degree as to be nothing more than a further

⁵⁶ Broch, "Die Straße," 33.

⁵⁷ Broch, "Die Straße," 33.

form of pleasure to be pursued uncritically and incessantly by the masses. As a result, the incorporation of morality into mass society must necessarily occur by means of pleasure: “Die Dogmatisierung des Sittlichen innerhalb der reinen Politik ist daher nur im Wege des Genusses zu erreichen [...]”⁵⁸

This combination of dogmatism and pleasure is not found only among the masses. In fact, Broch states that dogmatism and pleasure are “die konstituierenden Bestandteile des Philisters und Bourgeois.”⁵⁹ This means, then, that the proletariat is actually following the pattern of its oppressor class. Broch asserts that the socialist worker, rather than being diametrically opposed to the bourgeoisie, is actually “[der letzte] Schwanz der Bourgeoisie und damit [der letzte] Imitator einer vergangenen Gemeinschaftskultur.”⁶⁰ Far from creating a new community of workers, Broch claims, the socialist movement is merely the last gasp of the bourgeoisie.⁶¹

Die Periode des absolut Politischen

For Broch, this last gasp of the bourgeoisie represents the culmination of the dissolution of values (*Zerfall der Werte*) described at length in *Die Schlafwandler*, which will usher in a new era of justice and democracy:

Gleichwie es dieser Zeit vorbehalten war, alle Werte sukzessive erstarren und hypertrophieren zu lassen, so muß in notwendiger und nicht abwendbarer Folge nunmehr die Periode des absolut Politischen, d.h. nichts anderes, als die Periode der dogmatisierten Gerechtigkeit und damit Demokratie kommen.⁶²

⁵⁸ Broch, “Die Straße,” 33.

⁵⁹ Broch, “Die Straße,” 33.

⁶⁰ Broch, “Die Straße,” 33.

⁶¹ Broch, “Die Straße,” 33.

⁶² Broch, “Die Straße,” 34.

It is difficult to see much of anything desirable in Broch's description of democracy in "Die Straße." Though justice will form the basis of the new social order, the "Periode des absolut Politischen" would be the death knell of the intellectual in favor of the popular, "[denn] dieser Periode ist es vorbehalten, auch den letzten Wert, den der reinen Geistigkeit, auf nichts zu reduzieren."⁶³ The total diminishment of the intellectual realm would result in the limitation of politics and rational discourse to slogans shouted from balconies, designed solely to motivate and direct the masses. Where the Christian community has the homily to guide its members, the mass is confined to a poverty of speech and thought possibilities: "Die gemeinschaftslose Masse hat nur ein paar in die Straße gebrüllte Vokabeln, Silben von Vokabeln."⁶⁴

The result of Broch's analysis of the contemporary and future state of politics is a damning rejection of politics, at least in its form for popular consumption. By dogmatizing and simplifying morality, modern mass society has transformed politics from a force for the implementation of lofty ideas in the service of bettering society as a whole to a radical evil designed to appeal to and manipulate the masses:

Politik ist das Unabwendbare schlechthin. In ihr wird, was sich am Wesen des praktischen Politikers zeigt, [...] das Allererbärmlichste in die Welt getragen. Sie ist die letzte und böseste Verflachung des Menschen. Das radikal Böse als notwendige Folge der Dogmatisierung des Sittlichen schlechthin. Kurzum die Hölle.⁶⁵

Broch's open letter was written in order to express the depression and exasperation he felt after witnessing the events of November 12, 1918. These feelings are palpable in his

⁶³ Broch, "Die Straße," 34.

⁶⁴ Broch, "Die Straße," 34.

⁶⁵ Broch, "Die Straße," 34.

pessimistic rejection of politics at the close of “Die Straße.” In fact, it seems that this conclusion is necessarily linked to the context in which it was written.

In the wake of the First World War, amid the ruins of the Habsburg Empire, violence and uncertainty were two of the only constants. For Broch, who always had a keen understanding of the world situation, the rising importance of the masses in society signaled a shift in the social and political direction not just of Austria, but of the Industrial world as a whole. Broch saw that the masses, easily manipulated and urged to action, would determine the course of history, moving in whichever direction they were most effectively led. The realization that masses function differently than individuals, that ecstatic experience can move individuals to act in uncharacteristic ways, and that the masses are highly susceptible to manipulation by charismatic leaders led Broch to occupy himself with the development of a comprehensive mass psychology. “Die Straße” provides an important glimpse of Broch’s early insights into the threats posed by masses and the development of a mass society in which individual thought was becoming less and less valued. In fact, many of the ideas first explored here persist and are further developed in Broch’s later work.

The Intellectual vs. the Mass

Der Tod des Vergil

In “Die Straße,” Broch establishes a stark distinction between the intellectual and the masses, which is at the center of modern political development. In his novel, *Der Tod des Vergil*, which will be discussed in greater length in the fourth chapter, Broch provides

a striking illustration of this divide. Vergil, the famed Roman poet and intellectual arrives in Brundisium as a passenger with the imperial fleet. Waiting to greet the emperor, Augustus Caesar, are throngs of people brimming with anticipation. The narrator immediately creates a break between the masses and the other characters in the novel—especially Vergil—by describing the mass as a singular inhuman beast, as “das dumpf brütende Massentier.”⁶⁶ Immediately thereafter, the narrator reiterates Broch’s earlier insistence on the importance of the masses for democratic rule:

Dies also war die Masse, für die der Cäsar lebte, für die das Imperium geschaffen worden war, für die Gallien hatte erobert werden müssen, für die das Partherreich besiegt, Germanien bekämpft wurde, dies war die Masse, für die des Augustus großer Frieden geschaffen wurde und die für solches Friedenswerk wieder zu staatlicher Zucht und Ordnung gebracht werden sollte, zum Glauben an die Götter und zur göttlich-menschlichen Sittlichkeit. Und dies war die Masse, ohne die keine Politik betrieben werden konnte und auf die auch der Augustus sich stützen mußte, soferne er sich zu behaupten wünschte [...].⁶⁷

Like the novel as a whole, this passage draws clear parallels between Augustan Rome and modern European civilization, specifically Broch’s Austria. After a period of war and turmoil, Austria was faced with the challenge of instituting a system of government that would ensure peace, stability, and order. To achieve this, the chosen system would have to have the approval of the masses, or at least be made palatable to them. The challenge for the government, then, would be to engage the support of the masses while also controlling them; again Broch cites the importance (and difficulty) of imbuing the masses with a sense of morality (*Sittlichkeit*).

⁶⁶ Broch, *Vergil*, 21.

⁶⁷ Broch, *Vergil*, 21-22.

At the sight of the numberless agitated bodies assembled to greet Caesar, Vergil has a reaction of deep disgust and uncertainty that mirrors Broch's own experience from November, 1918:

Unheil, ein Schwall von Unheil, ein ungeheurer Schwall unsäglichen, unaussprechbaren, unerfaßlichen Unheils brodelte in dem Behälter des Platzes, fünfzigtausend, hunderttausend Mündel brüllten das Unheil aus sich heraus, brüllten es einander zu, ohne es zu hören, ohne um das Unheil zu wissen, dennoch gewillt, es in höllischem Gebrüll, in Lärm und Geschrei zu ersticken und zu übertäuben [...].⁶⁸

Like the image of the "Massenaggregat" of body parts, the assemblage at Brundisium is composed not of human beings, but of seething mouths emanating evil into the surrounding air. Importantly, the masses do not comprehend their own actions; they howl at one another without hearing or understanding what they do. The narrator proceeds to explain Vergil's reaction in greater detail, describing the fear that arises from the realization of the masses' potential danger:

nicht Haß war es, was er gegen die Masse empfand, nicht einmal Verachtung, nicht einmal Abneigung, so wenig wie eh und je wollte er sich vom Volke absondern oder gar sich über das Volk erheben, aber es war etwas Neues in Erscheinung getreten, etwas, das er bei all seiner Berührung mit dem Volke niemals hatte zur Kenntnis nehmen wollen, [...] nämlich des Volkes Unheilsabgründigkeit in ihrem ganzen Umfang, des Menschen Absinken zum Großstadtpöbel und damit die Verkehrung des Menschen ins Gegenmenschliche [...].⁶⁹

Like Broch in "Die Straße," Vergil sees the masses' capacity for baseness. Where Broch focuses on the masses' pursuit of pleasure and incapacity for—or unwillingness to make use of—higher intellectual inquiry, Vergil becomes aware of the potential the mass represents for the devolution of the human individual into something completely

⁶⁸ Broch, *Vergil*, 22.

⁶⁹ Broch, *Vergil*, 23.

inhuman, even antihuman. While “Die Straße” was written in the shadow of the previously unknown human destruction of the First World War, *Der Tod des Vergil* followed the inconceivable horror of the Holocaust. Broch, like his entire generation, was dismayed and fundamentally unsettled by witnessing the destructive capacity of the war machines of World War I, but the added knowledge of the atrocities of the Holocaust pushes his conception of (in)human capability to a radical extreme, as evident in Vergil’s realization. Through the remainder of the scene, Vergil is carried by attendants above the erupting mass and down a dismal alleyway, where he views women and children in squalor and must endure their coarse insults as he passes.

Vergil’s concern throughout the entire novel is the pursuit and attainment of knowledge, and the subsequent compilation of that knowledge in literary form. From the opening scene, Broch establishes a division between the smoldering, unknowing mass waiting for ecstatic release and the contemplative knowledge-seeker, determined to better the world with the fruits of his search. This elitist vision, which sees promise in the intellectual and peril in the masses, is repeated in several of Broch’s later political essays.

“Ethische Pflicht”

In a 1940 essay published in the *Saturday Review of Literature* entitled “Ethische Pflicht,”⁷⁰ Broch addressed the exiled intellectual community in the United States with the aim of convincing them of the important role that the intellectual had to play in contemporary world affairs. First, Broch briefly traces the development of democracy from the Christian belief that all men are equal before God, to the Enlightenment contention that all men are equal before the law, and finally to the attempt

⁷⁰ Originally written in English and titled “Ethical Duty.”

to eliminate social division by means of socialist economic equalization. Second, Broch makes the claim that the pursuit of a democratic society, like all political ideals, has as its goal the “civitas dei als Verkörperung des Friedens, der Freiheit und der Gerechtigkeit für alle.”⁷¹ Here, as in “Die Straße,” Broch identifies freedom and justice as central to pure political ambitions. Having established the basis for a democratic political system and invoking the socialist goal of a classless society, Broch nevertheless details a leading role for intellectuals that seems strikingly like a class distinction.

Broch begins by comparing modern intellectuals to the medieval clergy who, as representatives of the “civitas dei,” were responsible for advising and guiding the laity. With the collapse of the ubiquity and universal relevance of the Church, it falls to the intellectual to take up the mantle of society’s guide. Broch then attempts to demonstrate that both the clergy and the intellectuals are classless—at least socially: “es ist bezeichnend, daß die Sozialfunktion dieser beiden Gruppen gleicherweise einem ‘klassenlosen und vertikalen Stratum’ angehört, das sich mit allen horizontalen Gesellschaftsschichten überschneidet [...]”⁷² Thus far, this seems a reasonable argument as intellect and piety are aspects available to all social classes. Next, however, Broch grants the socially open intellectual group a distinction and exclusivity that seem again to establish a class: “nur der Priester und der Intellektuelle sind den Geboten der führenden Schicht enthoben, ja sie fordern ganz im Gegenteil, daß diese oberen Gesellschaftsklassen sich jenem Geiste zu beugen haben, der alle Klassen eint.”⁷³ Working within the existing hierarchical social structure, Broch places priests and intellectuals above the highest ruling classes, even if he does claim that all social classes

⁷¹ Hermann Broch, “Ethische Pflicht,” *Politische Schriften*, 412.

⁷² Broch, “Ethische Pflicht,” 412.

⁷³ Broch, “Ethische Pflicht,” 412.

are united by a singular spirit. Then Broch goes one step further and asserts that the intellectuals are especially designated to lead in the creation of that essential unifying spirit: “Soziales Gleichgewicht, d.h. also die gewaltlose Aufrechterhaltung sozialer Ordnung, ist nur unter Leitung eines solchen einenden Geistes denkbar, und in dessen Erlangung ist eben den intellektuellen Kreisen [...] eine führende Rolle zuzuschreiben.”⁷⁴

Broch ends his appeal to the exiled intellectual community by reaffirming the intellectual’s “Sonderstellung gegenüber den anderen Gesellschaftsschichten,” and reminding his audience that the ethical detachment and desire of European intellectuals for inclusion among the ruling classes was largely responsible for the rise of European dictatorships.⁷⁵ The message for exiled European and American intellectuals is to come down from their ivory towers, “[denn,] da die Demokratie selber aufs schwerste bedroht scheint, bedarf er mehr denn je jener geistigen Einsatzbereitschaft, die alle Klassen überbrückt[;] jedem Intellektuellen [ist] das Gebot seiner ethischen Pflicht in dringlichster Unmittelbarkeit auferlegt.”⁷⁶

This short essay is important in that it represents an attempted reclamation of political efficacy from the uncritical masses Broch so fears in “Die Straße.” In 1918, Broch saw politics doomed to follow the whims of the masses, constantly shifting direction as their catalysts changed. By 1940, Broch had already seen the political effects of mass ecstasy in the rise of German and Italian fascism and Soviet communism. However, in the latter essay, Broch is, if not more optimistic about the political future of the world, more convinced of his ability to work against mass hysteria. So while “Ethische Pflicht” does not directly address the masses, it actively sets up the intellectual

⁷⁴ Broch, “Ethische Pflicht,” 412.

⁷⁵ Broch, “Ethische Pflicht,” 413.

⁷⁶ Broch, “Ethische Pflicht,” 413.

as a political force (hopefully) capable of countering mass hysteria in Europe and the United States.

“Die Intellektuellen und der Kampf um die Menschenrechte”

In similar fashion, Broch submitted an address to the *Kongreß für kulturelle Freiheit* held in West Berlin in 1950. The talk, which he was unable to give personally due to time conflicts, was titled “Die Intellektuellen und der Kampf um die Menschenrechte.” As in “Ethische Pflicht,” Broch endeavors here to explain the position of the intellectual in relation to the difficult political reality of the time. Broch describes the role of the intellectual in society in a similarly grand fashion as with his intellectual priesthood in “Ethische Pflicht.”

According to Broch, the intellectual is a utopian thinker, derided perhaps by pragmatists, but nonetheless important for the trajectory of history. Broch says of himself and his audience, “Wir verlangen von der Realität mehr als sie gemeinhin herzugeben bereit ist; wir sind voller ‘wishful thinking.’”⁷⁷ Despite the skepticism and naysaying of pragmatists, these wishful thoughts and miniature utopias, when multiplied on a large scale, become for Broch the vehicles of human progress: “Billionen anonymer Klein-Utopien bilden das Vehikel des Fortschrittes, und ihre Verdichtungsstellen nennen wir Revolution.”⁷⁸ From this statement, Broch extrapolates that intellectuals are both utopian and revolutionaries distinct from their materially conscious fellow citizens in all classes: “Denn im Gegensatz zu den materiellen Interessen des Bürgers (auch des proletarischen Bürgers) kennt der geistige Mensch nur ein einziges Interesse, und das heißt Erkenntnis

⁷⁷ Hermann Broch, “Die Intellektuellen und der Kampf um die Menschenrechte,” *Politische Schriften*, 453.

⁷⁸ Broch, “Die Intellektuellen,” 453.

und Menschlichkeit.”⁷⁹ This echoes Broch’s earlier presentations of the intellectual, both in “Die Straße” and in the character of Vergil, where the quest for knowledge is coupled with a desire to promote and reinforce humanity within society. Broch further intensifies his image of the intellectual by equating him with the selfless instigator and motor of all revolutions, destined to be betrayed once the revolution is successful:

Alle Revolutionen sind von der utopischen Menschlichkeit des Intellektuellen entfacht worden, haben sich unter seiner Führung gegen die Unmenschlichkeit erstarrender Institutionen gewandt, und jede siegreich gewordene Revolution hat ihn und die Menschlichkeit letztlich wieder verraten [...]. So war es immer, so wird es wohl immer wieder sein, unweigerlich, und darum wird der Intellektuelle immer wieder zu seinem endlosen Kampf aufgerufen werden, ewig besiegt, trotzdem der ewige Sieger.⁸⁰

From the guiding priesthood of the modern “civitas dei,” Broch has inserted the intellectual into the center of every major development in human history as a beleaguered Sisyphus working for the greater good.

As a means of motivating his audience to become engaged in the rebuilding of the postwar world, Broch removes the intellectual from his background role as detached utopian revolutionary and places him in the midst of practical politics: “Der geistige Arbeiter, an sich der unpolitischste Mensch, ist [...] dauernd gezwungen, Politik zu wollen und zu betreiben, und er, der utopischste aller Menschen, erweist sich am Ende doch als Realpolitiker par excellence.”⁸¹ Though the intellectual is apolitical—presumably in the sense of unaffected by political affiliations—and utopian, his efforts as a revolutionary have resulted in the establishment of human rights and the reduction of human suffering. As such, the intellectual’s utopian actions have important physical

⁷⁹ Broch, “Die Intellektuellen,” 453.

⁸⁰ Broch, “Die Intellektuellen,” 453.

⁸¹ Broch, “Die Intellektuellen,” 453-54.

results for humanity. This point forms the crux of Broch's argument and is paired with a call for immediate action by all intellectuals to bring about political and social reform, thus ensuring the sanctity of human rights and dignity.

In both of these essays—"Ethische Pflicht" and "Die Intellektuellen und der Kampf um die Menschenrechte"—Broch shows himself to be the same kind of utopian character as all intellectuals supposedly are. And while he credits the intellectual with immense potency and an ability to change the world for the better, perhaps his most utopian idea is that intellectuals are inherently concerned with the protection of humanity and the reduction of human suffering. If defined solely by mental ability and sharpness of insight, then one can find intellectuals at all levels of totalitarian regimes and destructive organizations. For Broch, though, the intellectual is not just "der Intellektuelle," but also "der geistige Mensch," and as such necessarily guided by the same Enlightenment Idealism that guides Broch's own thoughts and actions. In these two final essays, one can see Broch's optimism renewed from the initial desperation of "Die Straße" and the looming degradation of politics at the hands of the masses.

Hermann Broch's political writings did not begin in earnest until the late 1930s when Hitler's annexation of Austria forced him to flee into exile, first to Great Britain, then to the United States. Broch's political essays during his exile period cover numerous topics pertinent to the historical situation, including democracy, human rights, totalitarianism, and mass hysteria. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Broch explored each of these concepts at length in essays, letters, proposals, and in the case of mass hysteria, a sprawling, unfinished multivolume work, his *Massenwahntheorie*. In 1918, Broch was an industrialist still running the family textile mill south of Vienna. He had neither begun his

scientific and philosophical studies at the University of Vienna, nor had he yet decided to become a professional author.

“Die Straße” shows Broch’s political conceptions in a formative state. In the short epistolary essay, Broch reveals concepts and developments that not only resurface in his later political writings, but that also inform his literary production. Broch’s image of the masses is one of frighteningly unreflective caprice, an ecstatic mob motivated by a search for pleasure in whatever form it might take at a given moment. A false community passing off arbitrary causes as the basis for its coherence, the masses mimic genuine communities by dogmatizing each new cause into a binding truth. Since the masses are unable or unwilling to reflect on their own actions or think for themselves on a higher level, the abstract goals of what Broch terms pure politics—justice and freedom—must necessarily be degraded to the form of slogans appropriate for consumption by the masses. The fate of politics, Broch concludes at the end of his essay, is to be debased so completely that it no longer represents the possibility of positive development within society, but rather an inevitable and radical evil.

Broch’s occupation with democracy and mass phenomena continued until the end of his life, and the tension between the two never slackened. However, in later works Broch came to reassert the political ability of the intellectual as an opposing force to the potential inhumanity of the masses. In *Der Tod des Vergil*, Broch depicted the masses at their most vile and unpredictable, while positioning the intellectual artist Vergil not necessarily above them, but endowing his protagonist with an understanding of the danger of the mass. Broch later called on his fellow intellectuals in “Ethische Pflicht” and “Die Intellektuellen und der Kampf um die Menschenrechte” to recognize their ethical

duty and personal capacity to effect positive change in a violent world. As shown, several of Broch's later political writings draw on the concepts and problems first addressed in "Die Straße." Perhaps these later works were an attempt by Broch to reassert his political agency, in turn restoring optimism to capable thinkers who had long since abandoned hope of changing the world. Before moving to a discussion of Broch's later literary and political writings, it will be useful to explore both the theoretical and political situations in which these works were written, thus enabling a better understanding of Broch's own conceptions.

CHAPTER II

THE MASSES, THE MASS, AND THE CROWD:

THE CONCEPT OF “MASSE” IN ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

It seems no coincidence that Broch’s first political essay was a visceral response to the phenomenon “Masse.” In “Die Straße,” Broch tapped into a concept that had become ever-present in the political and social discourse of Western Europe from the late 19th century through to the end of World War I. The term and concept of “Masse,” however, have semantic and conceptual roots that begin hundreds of years prior to the uprisings of 1918. In order to better frame Broch’s own early understanding of “Masse,” this chapter will trace the development of “Masse” from its origins as a culinary term to its adoption as a key scientific concept, and finally its rise to prominence as a social and political entity over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Following this latter development, the chapter will analyze seminal texts on the subject of “Masse” from Karl Marx, Gustave Le Bon, Sigmund Freud, Theodor Geiger, and José Ortega y Gasset.⁸²

The Origins of “Masse”

The word “Masse” derives from the Latin *massa* (dough, clump), the Greek μάζα (barley-cake), and the Hebrew *mazza* (unleavened bread).⁸³ In its scientific meaning as a

⁸² The omission of Elias Canetti’s *Masse und Macht* (1961) is purposeful. The works discussed in this chapter are limited to those that were available during Broch’s lifetime.

⁸³ “Masse, Massen,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 5, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1980) 825.

“Menge der Materie” or “Trägheitswiderstand gegen beschleunigende Kräfte,” “Masse” overlaps with the English term “mass.” Used in the 14th century by Albert von Sachsen in his *Quaestiones super octo libros Physicorum I*, “Masse” has been common in scientific discourse since the 17th century.⁸⁴ It was not until the French Revolution that the term became politicized and applied variously to large groups of people, the bulk of society, or the faceless multitude of the lower classes. “Masse” has historically carried a multiplicity of – often conflicting – meanings depending on the perspective and intentions of the individual that used it.

In Adelung’s *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart* of 1811, “Masse” is viewed only from the scientific perspective as “die Menge der Materie eines Körpers.”⁸⁵ Prior to the French Revolution, there were few cases of “Masse” being used to refer to groups of people. In “Das römische Carneval” (1788), Goethe identifies a crowd of Roman carnival guests as a “Masse”:

ein Gedränge, das alle Begriffe übersteigt [...]. Niemand vermag sich mehr von dem Platze, wo er steht oder sitzt, zu rühren; die Wärme so vieler Menschen, so vieler Lichter, [...] das Geschrei so vieler Menschen [...] machen zuletzt selbst den gesunden Sinn schwindeln [...]. Und doch weil sich endlich jeder weniger oder mehr hinweg sehnt, [...] lös’t sich diese Masse auch auf, schmilzt von den Enden nach der Mitte zu, und dieses Fest allgemeiner Freiheit und Losgebundenheit [...] endigt sich mit einer allgemeinen Betäubung.⁸⁶

In Goethe’s description, the “Masse” is a discomfiting presence: the close press of innumerable bodies, the immobility of those caught in the crowd, and the cacophony of voices pose a threat to the sanity of even the healthiest individual. But Goethe’s carnival crowd is a transitory agglomeration that disperses as quickly and easily as it forms, not a

⁸⁴ “Masse, Massen,” 826.

⁸⁵ Johann Christoph Adelung, “Die Masse,” *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart* (Wien: Bauer, 1811), *Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum*, <http://lexika.digitale-sammlungen.de/adelung/lemma/bsb00009133_1_0_625>.

⁸⁶ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Das römische Carneval,” *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 15/1 (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993) 550-51.

persistent social entity. As Reinhart Koselleck explains in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, for Goethe, the “Masse” was “ein bloßes Aggregat heterogener Personen, die der diffuse Wunsch nach Teilhabe an einer großen Lustbarkeit zufällig an einem Orte zusammengeführt hatte.”⁸⁷ The emphasis here is on the arbitrariness of the assembly and the lack of genuine, lasting connections between individuals in the crowd: they come together by chance, are moved to assemble for diverse reasons, and do not necessarily share any commonality.

Schiller also makes use of the term “Masse,” though in a more abstract sense than Goethe, approaching the pejorative connotations the word would acquire in the 19th and 20th centuries. In his essay “Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken?” (1784), Schiller contrasts the “Masse des Volks[, die sklavisch] an Ketten des Vorurteils und der Meinung gefangen liegt” and the “wenige *einzelne* Köpfe,” whom “die reinern Strahlen der Wahrheit [...] beleuchten.”⁸⁸ Though Schiller categorizes the masses as encumbered by prejudice, piling in comparison with the few enlightened minds present in society, his elitist distinction is not applied to the concept “Masse,” but rather to the “Masse des Volks.” In Schiller’s essay, “Masse” is used to indicate a quantity of something rather than standing independently for the bulk of human society. If one follows Koselleck, “Masse” was not yet understood as a sociopolitical term in the period around 1800:

Die Gründe dafür, daß der Massenbegriff um 1800 noch keine politisch-soziale Qualität zu erreichen vermocht hatte, hängen mit der Geschichte des Volksbegriffs zusammen. ‘Volk’ war seit Jahrhunderten immer auch als Sozialbegriff für die gemeinen Leute, den großen Haufen, die untersten Klassen

⁸⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, “Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse,” *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Bd. 7, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992) 336.

⁸⁸ Friedrich Schiller, “Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken?” *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 5 (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004) 828.

der Besitzlosen und Nichtgebildeten sowie – besonders pejorativ – für den Pöbel verwandt worden.⁸⁹

After “Volk” began to be embraced positively as an overarching social concept after the French Revolution, a semantic gap arose where the language had lost a suitable negative description for the lowest levels of society. This gap provided the opportunity for “Masse” to develop into a political and social term between 1815 and 1871.⁹⁰

As a result of the revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848, and the industrialization of Western Europe, the feudal social order gave way to a new mass sociological structure. The new “Masse” was no longer transient as Goethe’s Roman crowd, but rather an enduring social entity: “eine nicht bloß ephemere, sondern eine ‘permanente Masse’, die unabhängig von ihrer konkreten sinnlichen Wahrnehmbarkeit zumindest solange existieren würde wie die soziale Dauerkrise, aus der sie hervorgegangen war.”⁹¹ This represents a significant development in the meaning of “Masse,” with the term referring now to more than the spatially delimited crowd, and identifying a social group that existed even when its members were not physically present.

As Western European nations moved from agrarian to industrial economies throughout the 19th century, a significant portion of the lower classes became part of the industrial means of production. Distinct from the rural peasantry, the frequently urban industrial working class became ever more associated not only with the term “Masse,” but also with “Proletair,” a term popularized in Germany by Catholic philosopher and theologian Franz von Baader in 1835.⁹² Baader identified the enormous disparity between the wealthy upper classes who controlled the means of production, and the laboring poor,

⁸⁹ Koselleck 336.

⁹⁰ Koselleck 336-37, 366.

⁹¹ Koselleck 366.

⁹² Koselleck 366.

whose treatment he considered more cruel, inhumane, and unchristian than serfdom.⁹³ If the working population seemed ready for violent revolution, according to Baader, it was only because they had been convinced by some demagogue to believe it necessary. Baader saw the remedy for the violent potential of the proletariat in the church, which he thought should resume its pastoral role as guide and advisor to the common people, teaching them how best to use their limited rights to representation.⁹⁴ Franz von Baader correctly identified the plight of the masses, but in attempting to use the church as a revolutionary inhibitor, he failed to recognize the proletariat's potential as a force for social and political change.

This potential was later acknowledged by sociologist Lorenz von Stein, who saw the proletariat's revolutionary strength as contingent upon a conscious realization of that strength. In 1842, Stein wrote: "Unter den gewaltigsten Stürmen der Revolution lernte das Proletariat zweierlei; zuerst begriff es sich selber allmählich als einen eignen Stand, dann aber erkannte es seine Bedeutung in allem, was Revolution heißt."⁹⁵ After the proletariat recognizes that it exists as a cohesive group, each proletarian then begins to realize that he has his own individual desires, distinct from the demands of his employers. After the individual proletarian becomes aware of his own individuality and agency, common goals unite him with other members of the proletariat, forming a unified force capable of challenging the oppressive social order:

Das beginnt jetzt der Proletarier zu fühlen; er beginnt allmählig ein selbstständiges Wollen, einen eignen Zweck zu haben, und zu erkennen, daß er bis dahin nur für andere gearbeitet und geblutet hat. Dazu kommt das Bewußtsein seiner Kraft [...]; er weiß, daß diese ihm nicht fehlen wird, wenn er nur erst das

⁹³ Koselleck 366.

⁹⁴ Koselleck 367.

⁹⁵ Lorenz von Stein, *Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs. Ein Beitrag zur Zeitgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1842) 8-9.

bestimmte Ziel gesetzt hat, und so wird allmählig aus dem Chaos dieser eigentums- und bildungslosen Masse ein Ganzes [...].⁹⁶

It is this revelation on the part of the individual proletarian that he can and should have a purpose distinct from the desires of his employers that causes the amorphous mass to coalesce into a coherent class with common goals.

Similarly to Stein, Karl Marx recognizes self-awareness as the distinguishing characteristic that separates “Masse” from “Klasse”:

Die ökonomischen Verhältnisse haben zuerst die Masse der Bevölkerung in Arbeiter verwandelt. Die Herrschaft des Kapitals hat für diese Masse eine gemeinsame Situation, gemeinsame Interessen geschaffen. So ist diese Masse bereits eine Klasse gegenüber dem Kapital, aber noch nicht für sich selbst.⁹⁷

The economic model of industrial capitalism utilizes the masses in the same way that factories use machines: for the production of capital. As such, the masses are viewed by employers as having value only in relation to the capital they create, rather than possessing any inherent value: they are human capital, labor personified. In the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848), Marx and Engels define the role of the Communist Party as identical to those of other proletarian parties: “Bildung des Proletariats zur Klasse, Sturz der Bourgeoisieherrschaft, Eroberung der politischen Macht durch das Proletariat.”⁹⁸ Where Franz von Baader attempted to curb the revolutionary impulses of the “Masse,” Marx, Engels, and the Communist Party intended to bring the proletariat to a realization of its own potential, then to harness that potential to overthrow the bourgeois political, social, and economic systems. In the French Revolution, the masses demonstrated that, though they were at the lowest level of the socioeconomic hierarchy,

⁹⁶ Stein 9.

⁹⁷ Karl Marx, “Das Elend der Philosophie. Antwort auf Proudhons ‘Philosophie des Elends’,” *Karl Marx. Friedrich Engels. Werke*, Bd. 4 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1971) 180-81.

⁹⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1999) 34.

they were capable of dismantling and upending an entire government and society. The aristocratic governments of Western Europe were reminded of this in no uncertain terms by Marx and Engels's manifesto: not only were the masses capable of unseating their present rulers, for Communists and other workers' parties, that was their express intent. While the Communists saw the mass of the proletariat as the force that would restructure the means of production and usher in a classless society, the bourgeoisie and aristocracy saw it as a threat to their way of life.

In keeping with the assessment of the working class as human capital, the masses were looked down upon as lacking in civility, intelligence, and individual willpower. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1882) refers to "Masse" as "die breiten reihen des volks, das volk in seiner menge."⁹⁹ Though the initial definition is neutral, it is followed by a maxim from Goethe that clearly indicates the masses' shortcomings as perceived by the upper levels of society: "Nichts ist widerwärtiger als die Majorität: denn sie besteht aus wenigen kräftigen Vorgängern, aus Schelmen die sich accommodiren, aus Schwachen die sich assimiliren, und der Masse, die nachtrollt, ohne nur im mindesten zu wissen was sie will."¹⁰⁰ This negative assessment of the masses' faculties is also present in *Duden*'s current definition of "Masse": "[ein] großer Teil der Bevölkerung besonders im Hinblick auf das Fehlen individuellen, selbstständigen Denkens und Handelns."¹⁰¹ Goethe's pronouncement and *Duden*'s definition both portray the "Masse" as consisting of individuals lacking the capacity for independent thought and action. While this seems to indicate that that inability is inherent to the types of

⁹⁹ "Masse," *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Bd. 6, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1885) 1709.

¹⁰⁰ "Masse," *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1709; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Maxime 604," *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 13, ed. Harald Fricke (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993) 51-52.

¹⁰¹ "Masse," *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch* (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 2011) 1164.

individuals that constitute the mass, this is not the only possible explanation. In fact, numerous sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers have considered that it is the experience of being part of the “Masse” which accounts for an individual’s loss of individuality.

From the Masses to the Crowd

An analysis of “Masse” is made more difficult by the semantic ambiguity surrounding the term itself. Thus far we have examined “Masse” as a more or less well-defined designation for the largest portion of society, whether or not that portion is seen to constitute a discrete class. Since the late 1870s, “Masse” has often been used to indicate another distinct social phenomenon that corresponds to the English term “crowd.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a crowd as “a large number of persons gathered so closely together as to press upon or impede each other; a throng, a dense multitude.”¹⁰² Though “Masse” is frequently used to refer to large gatherings of people – as with Goethe’s Roman carnival crowd – this aspect is absent from any definition of the term. A much more direct correlate is the German “Menge”: “große Zahl von dicht beieinander befindlichen Menschen; Menschenmenge.”¹⁰³ The association of “Masse” with the crowd seems to be an extension of the term as a general description for a large number of anything (“stärkerer Ausdruck für menge oder fülle,” Grimm; “große Anzahl, Menge,” Duden) to the specific designation of large numbers of people. Despite the absence of a direct correlation between the explicit definition of “Masse” and the concept

¹⁰² “Crowd, n.3,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., Vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) 67.

¹⁰³ “Menge,” *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch* (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 2011) 1179.

of the crowd, the term has been used both in translations and in original works pertaining to crowd theory, from Gustave Le Bon's *La psychologie des foules* (*Psychologie der Massen*, 1895) to Freud's *Massenpsychologie* (1921) and Canetti's *Masse und Macht* (1960). While the concept of "Masse" as synonymous with the proletariat continued to be of utmost importance to European communists and socialists especially in the first decades of the 20th century, as an object of theoretical sociological inquiry, "Masse" came more and more to be associated with the perplexing and threatening phenomenon of the crowd.

Beginning with the violent popular uprising of the French Revolution, the crowd established itself as a dangerous physical force within society. When gathered in a crowd, even the lowest and most cowed of individuals could engage in brutal acts of violence against an enemy, real or perceived. As a result, fear and mistrust were common starting points for many of the early attempts at understanding the crowd. Social psychologist Serge Moscovici details three main conceptions of the crowd that arose in response to the crowd's emergence as a social and political entity since the French Revolution. First, the crowd has been viewed as a "mass of individuals *on the fringe* of the establishment who have taken a stand against the establishment in a period of crisis."¹⁰⁴ Such a crowd is often referred to as a mob, rabble, or even lumpenproletariat, indicating its lack of organization, structure, and justification.¹⁰⁵ This type of crowd is a collection of societal outliers, and as a result it is inherently asocial and a disruption to the existing system. A second view held that crowds are "*insane, unbridled, hysterical,*" and epitomized by

¹⁰⁴ Serge Moscovici, "The Discovery of the Masses," *Changing Conceptions of Crowd Mind and Behavior*, ed. Carl F. Graumann and Serge Moscovici (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1986) 7.

¹⁰⁵ Moscovici 7.

emotional outbursts, tumultuous activity, and ecstatic expression.¹⁰⁶ According to this view, crowds are capable of extremes of behavior in the course of zealously following an individual or an idea. These crowds act as if their component individuals were delirious or hallucinatory and demonstrate a complete lack of self-control. The third view contended that crowds are criminal: “They are composed of the rabble and the riff-raff, intent on pillage, destruction, and blind violence [...]; their fury is unleashed for no apparent reason and expressed in acts of hooliganism or even murder.”¹⁰⁷ The criminal crowd opposes the authorities and demonstrates contempt for the law. This final view was especially favored by criminal sociologists in the 1870s and 1880s such as the French Gabriel Tarde and the Italian Scipio Sighele. According to this definition, the violent potential of the crowd is explained by positing that members of violent crowds are hereditarily predisposed to violence and delinquency.¹⁰⁸ By extension, to be a member of a crowd is to show oneself to be delinquent and indicate violent proclivities, thus furthering the negative image of the crowd in the popular mind. Indeed, the crowd theory of the outgoing 19th century propagated, and in the following case capitalized on a conception of the crowd as dangerous, wanton, and depraved.

Gustave Le Bon

In 1895, the French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon catapulted the study of “Masse” into the mainstream with the publication of his landmark book *La psychologie des foules*. Serge Moscovici summarizes the crux of Le Bon’s theory of crowd

¹⁰⁶ Moscovici 7.

¹⁰⁷ Moscovici 8.

¹⁰⁸ Moscovici 8.

psychology in a single, simple notion: “the peculiarity of crowds is the fusion of individuals into a common mind and emotion.”¹⁰⁹ This constitutes what Le Bon refers to as the psychological law of the mental unity of crowds. As a result of being subsumed in a crowd, the individual’s individuality melts away, leaving him without personality, devoid of class distinction, and with a weakened intellectual capacity. According to Le Bon, membership in a crowd breaks down the inhibitions that normally serve to keep the average person’s behavior in accordance with societal and moral codes of conduct. Though the individual in the crowd loses both his sense of self and his sense of responsibility, he gains a “sentiment of invincible power” by virtue of the sheer numbers of the crowd.¹¹⁰ The individual in the crowd is stripped of reason and conscious thought: the crowd is supremely irrational, the unconscious in physical form. Being in such a state makes individuals vulnerable to manipulation by contagion. As Stephen Reicher explains in his article “The Psychology of Crowd Dynamics”:

Once individual identity and the capability to control behavior disappears, crowd members become subject to contagion. That is, they are unable to resist any passing idea or, more particularly and because the intellect is all but obliterated, any passing emotion. This may even lead crowd members to sacrifice their personal interests – a further sign of irrationality. Contagion, however, is but an effect of suggestibility. That is, the ideas and emotions, which sweep unhindered through the crowd, derive primarily from the “racial unconscious” – an atavistic substrate which underlies our conscious personality and which is revealed when the conscious personality is swept away.¹¹¹

In seizing on contagion as the means of transference of ideas and impulses from one crowd individual to another, Le Bon reveals the method by which demagogues may most effectively manipulate and steer the crowd: suggestion. In fact, it is widely recognized

¹⁰⁹ Moscovici 8.

¹¹⁰ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: Viking, 1960) 30.

¹¹¹ Stephen Reicher, “The Psychology of Crowd Dynamics,” *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes*, ed. Michael A. Hogg and R. Scott Tindale (Blackwell Publishing, 2002), doi: 10.1111/b.9781405106535.2002.00010.x.

that Le Bon's highly popular book on crowd psychology is less a scientific analysis of crowd function and mechanisms and more a guide to the charismatic control of the masses: "Le Bon exhorts the would-be demagogue to direct the primitive mass by simplifying ideas, substituting affirmation and exaggeration for proof, and by repeating points over and again."¹¹² Rather than trying to understand how crowds formed or functioned, as Theodor Geiger, Broch, and Canetti did later, Le Bon appealed to the public fear of the crowd that was at a peak after the violence of the Paris Commune in 1871.

Sigmund Freud

While Le Bon's text has since been largely discredited as derivative,¹¹³ even plagiaristic,¹¹⁴ his ideas found numerous admirers at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, among them Sigmund Freud. Freud even begins his 1921 essay "Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse" with an analysis of Le Bon's group mind concept. The essay sets out to determine how exactly the psychology of crowds differs from the psychology of the individual, though Freud claims in the first paragraph that the distinction between the two is not as stark as it would seem at first glance. Although psychoanalysis focuses on the individual, Freud points out that an analysis of the individual often involves examining the interactions and relationships between that

¹¹² Reicher, "Crowd Dynamics."

¹¹³ Robert K. Merton, Introduction, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, Gustave Le Bon (New York: Viking, 1960) v.

¹¹⁴ J.S. McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob: From Plato to Canetti* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989) 197.

individual and others, a result of man's social nature. Mass psychology, then, focuses on the individual as he functions as a member of various groups:

Die Massenpsychologie behandelt also den einzelnen Menschen als Mitglied eines Stammes, eines Volkes, einer Kaste, eines Standes, einer Institution oder als Bestandteil eines Menschenhaufens, der sich zu einer gewissen Zeit für einen bestimmten Zweck zur Masse organisiert.¹¹⁵

From Freud's formulation it is clear that the purview of mass psychology is not limited to the crowd, but can be applied to numerous other forms of social association and organization. Mass psychology is concerned with the effects of individual membership in groups ranging from the immense – the historical line (*Stamm*) and the nation (*Volk*) – to the intimate – the family. Indeed, Freud asserts that such a strong emphasis on number as seen in Le Bon is unnecessary: whatever particular forces and desires are at work within the numerous mass should also be observable in the family unit.¹¹⁶ Freud's goal in the "Massenpsychologie" is to examine human behavior as it is modified in group situations and to determine the root cause(s) of that modification.

To begin his study, Freud uses Le Bon's *The Crowd* to provide an illustration of the "Massenseele," or the essential characteristics of the individual subsumed in the crowd. Freud acknowledges at the outset that the phenomenon of aberrant individual behavior in a crowd is perplexing to existing psychological conceptions. The purpose of psychology is to understand the actions, desires, motives, and intentions of the human individual. Were established psychology to have finally attained a clear and complete understanding of the individual, it would then suddenly be faced with the challenge of

¹¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, "Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse," *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 13 (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 1940) 74.

¹¹⁶ Freud 74.

accounting for the inconsistency between the actions of the individual alone and the actions of the same individual in a mass:

Sie [die Psychologie] müßte die überraschende Tatsache erklären, daß dies ihr verständlich gewordene Individuum unter einer bestimmten Bedingung ganz anders fühlt, denkt und handelt, als von ihm zu erwarten stand, und diese Bedingung ist die Einreihung in eine Menschenmenge, welche die Eigenschaft einer "psychologischen Masse" erworben hat.¹¹⁷

In light of the unexpected fact that individuals think and act differently as members of large groups, it is the role of mass psychology to answer three central questions about the nature of this phenomenon: what is a mass, by what means does it acquire the ability to so profoundly influence the psychic life of the individual, and what sort of psychic changes does it cause in the individual?

Beginning with the formation of the crowd, which Le Bon neglects to analyze, Freud asks what sort of bonds initially unite and subsequently hold the mass together. In answer to this question, Freud proposes that the bond that holds the crowd together is the same one that holds everything together: love, in its many guises.

Wir werden es also mit der Voraussetzung versuchen, daß Liebesbeziehungen (indifferent ausgedrückt: Gefühlsbindungen) auch das Wesen der Massenseele ausmachen. [...] Auf zwei flüchtige Gedanken stützen wir zunächst unsere Erwartung. Erstens, daß die Masse offenbar durch irgend eine Macht zusammengehalten wird. Welcher Macht könnte man aber diese Leistung eher zuschreiben als dem Eros, der alles in der Welt zusammenhält? Zweitens, daß man den Eindruck empfängt, wenn der Einzelne in der Masse seine Eigenart aufgibt und sich von den Anderen suggerieren läßt, er tue es, weil ein Bedürfnis bei ihm besteht, eher im Einvernehmen mit ihnen als im Gegensatz zu ihnen zu sein, also vielleicht doch "ihnen zuliebe".¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Freud 76.

¹¹⁸ Freud 100.

Freud treats love – or libido¹¹⁹ – as the primal force at work in human society, and even credits it as the essential characteristic of the group mind. As a result of the essential libidinal connection that exists in the crowd, Freud is able to explain the loss of individuality that occurs therein as an act of camaraderie on the part of the individual toward his fellow crowd members. This highlights one of the two operative connections in the crowd: the connection between members. For Freud, however, this connection is secondary to that which exists between the leader and the led.¹²⁰

To illustrate the central role played by love and libido in the formation and persistence of groups, Freud first examines two “artificial groups,” the church and the army. These two groups are “artificial” because they did not generate spontaneously and because they rely on outside compulsion and restrictions to prevent their dissolution.¹²¹ The key to keeping both of these groups together, according to Freud, is the maintenance of the illusion that there exists a leader who loves all members of the group to an equal degree. For the Catholic Church, the leader is Jesus Christ, while in the case of the army there is a hierarchy of officers, each in turn loving his subordinates and loved by his superiors. The strong libidinal connection between leader and led is constitutive for the group in that it binds multiple individuals to a common leader, and as a result of that shared bond, it binds members to one another: “Es ist nicht zu bezweifeln, daß die Bindung jedes Einzelnen an Christus auch die Ursache ihrer Bindung untereinander ist. Ähnliches gilt für das Heer; der Feldherr ist der Vater, der alle seine Soldaten gleich liebt,

¹¹⁹ Freud defines libido as “die als quantitative Größe betrachtete [...]. Energie solcher Triebe, welche mit all dem zu tun haben, was man als Liebe zusammenfassen kann.” This includes sexual desire, narcissism (self-love), familial love, friendship, philanthropy, and dedication to objects and ideas. Freud 98.

¹²⁰ Freud 109.

¹²¹ Freud 101.

und darum sind sie Kameraden untereinander.”¹²² Freud argues that the libidinal bonds between leader and led, and between individual group members, are vital to the prolonged existence of groups. Without them, Freud claims, it would be impossible to overcome the narcissistic urges in each individual, that is, the desire of each individual to do what is in his or her best interest. A group united solely by common interests is doomed to collapse as soon as it ceases to be in the individuals’ best interest. Love, however, is capable of trumping the individual’s inherent narcissism and joining him or her to others.

Freud traces the formation of the group back to the earliest stages of human development in childhood. The first libidinal connection an individual experiences is one of identification.¹²³ As explained by Freud’s Oedipus complex, this identification occurs between the son and the father. The son sees in the father an ideal and wishes to be exactly like him. Simultaneously, the son experiences a desire to possess the mother as a sexual object. For a time these two connections are able to coexist, until the child realizes that the father stands in the way of his possessing the mother. At this point the son’s identification with the father becomes a desire to replace him as sexual possessor of the mother. In the psychology of a particular individual, though, the conflicting desires of identification and possession can be interchanged. For instance, if one is incapable of possessing a chosen sexual object, that object can become a source of identification and subsequently consumed, or introjected, into one’s own ego: if one cannot possess the beloved, one becomes the beloved. Identification can also occur between individuals who

¹²² Freud 102.

¹²³ Freud 115.

share a commonality and are not objects of sexual desire.¹²⁴ Freud identifies this last phenomenon as the libidinal force at work between members in a group: “Wir ahnen bereits, daß die gegenseitige Bindung der Massenindividuen von der Natur einer solchen Identifizierung durch eine wichtige affektive Gemeinsamkeit ist, und können vermuten, diese Gemeinsamkeit liege in der Art der Bindung an den Führer.”¹²⁵ Thus the members of any group are united to one another by mutual identification as a result of their connection to a common leader, as seen in Freud’s examples of the Catholic Church and the army. The connection between leader and led is also one of identification, but rather than consisting in the recognition of a commonality as between group members, it is instead the perception of the leader as an ideal to be introjected as a guiding principle in the individual ego.

As with the son’s relation to the father in childhood, the leader is perceived by the members of the group as an ideal. When Freud published the “Massenpsychologie” in 1921, he had yet to adopt the phrase “Über-Ich” (Super-ego) to refer to the internal censor in the individual psyche. Instead, Freud refers here to the same concept with the term “Ichideal”: “Wir nannten sie das ‘Ichideal’ und schrieben ihr an Funktionen die Selbstbeobachtung, das moralische Gewissen, die Traumzensur und den Haupteinfluß bei der Verdrängung zu.”¹²⁶ While each person already possesses such an ideal when treated individually, this personal ideal is replaced by the leader in a group. Further, Freud posits that the replacement of the personal ego ideal by a common object or individual is constitutive for a primary group (a group that has a leader, but is not so organized as to accrue the characteristics of an individual): “Eine solche primäre Masse ist eine Anzahl

¹²⁴ Freud 118.

¹²⁵ Freud 118.

¹²⁶ Freud 121.

von Individuen, die ein und dasselbe Objekt an die Stelle ihres Ichideals gesetzt und sich infolgedessen in ihrem Ich miteinander identifiziert haben.”¹²⁷ Viewed in connection with Freud’s earlier examples, members of the Church have identified with and introjected Christ as the ideal against which the appropriateness of their actions and drives is judged, while the same phenomenon occurs between soldiers and their superior officers.

The figure of the leader is essential to Freud’s “Massenpsychologie,” so much so that Freud claims crowds are incomprehensible without one.¹²⁸ Freud finds an example of the leaderless crowd in the work of British surgeon and social psychologist Wilfred Trotter, specifically his book *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916). Trotter argues that humans, like many other animals, are driven by gregariousness, or the “herd instinct” to congregate in ever larger groups. According to Trotter, the human instinct to group together is a primal and indivisible one.¹²⁹ The gregariousness of the human individual is then at the root of civilization, language, and society as we know it. Freud, however, finds fault with Trotter’s herd concept. Using the example of a frightened child left alone, Freud shows that the child cannot be calmed by the presence of any random individual or member of the herd, but rather only by its parents, by individuals with whom the child identifies.¹³⁰ Trotter’s herd is a mass of individuals united by a primal instinct to hold together, but Freud does not grant this instinct the power to overcome the narcissistic drives of each and every arbitrarily assembled individual. To remove the feelings of competition and enmity that exist between such individuals, Freud claims

¹²⁷ Freud 128.

¹²⁸ Freud 132.

¹²⁹ Freud 131.

¹³⁰ Freud 132.

there must be an outside figure to love and rule each individual with equal intensity, creating a sense of equality and identification amongst the group members:

Alle Einzelnen sollen einander gleich sein, aber alle wollen sie von einem beherrscht werden. Viele Gleiche, die sich miteinander identifizieren können, und ein einziger, ihnen allen Überlegener, das ist die Situation, die wir in der lebensfähigen Masse verwirklicht finden.¹³¹

While each member of the group is equal to others by virtue of the equal love he or she receives from the leader, the group needs a leader, one set apart from the rest in order to unite the whole. To accommodate this distinction, Freud alters Trotter's image of man from a "herd" animal to a "horde" animal.

Following Charles Darwin's notion of the "survival of the fittest," Freud sees the origin of the "Masse" in the primal form of human society: the unencumbered rule of a horde by a single powerful individual.¹³² The members of a horde ruled exclusively by one physically dominant individual display a psychology identical to that of the "Masse": dissolution of conscious individuality, orientation of thoughts and emotions in the same direction, predominance of affect and the unconscious, tendency to act on momentary impulses.¹³³ By virtue of this example, Freud asserts that mass psychology is the oldest, most primal form of human psychology. The modern mass, like the primeval horde, is ruled completely by a single powerful individual. But where the ruler of the horde, the "Urvater," ruled by means of sexual prohibition and control, the leader controls the mass by projecting perceived feelings of love for each and every member of the mass. As the leader is completely self-sufficient and set apart from the group, though, he need not actually feel anything at all for the mass individuals. At the end of Freud's analysis, the

¹³¹ Freud 135.

¹³² Freud 136.

¹³³ Freud 137.

bonds of love previously deemed essential for the constitution of the mass are supplemented by feelings of fear and repression left over from the “Urvater” and the previous stages of human development:

Der Führer der Masse ist noch immer der gefürchtete Urvater, die Masse will immer noch von unbeschränkter Gewalt beherrscht werden, sie ist im höchsten Grade autoritätssüchtig, hat nach Le Bons Ausdruck den Durst nach Unterwerfung. Der Urvater ist das Massenideal, das an Stelle des Ichideals das Ich beherrscht.¹³⁴

Simultaneously loved and feared, the leader of the mass becomes the ideal, the super-ego and measure of all things for the members of the mass. From the image of a benevolent leader, Christ, Freud moves to a more authoritarian model of the “Führer,” which later became synonymous with that title as applied to Adolf Hitler.

To summarize, Freud began with an acceptance of Le Bon’s conception of the “Massenseele,” the particular characteristics and behaviors demonstrated by individuals once they become subsumed in a crowd. Such a crowd forms and persists as a result of libidinal bonds between individuals, which in turn result from a common love for – and perceived love from – a leader who stands apart from the crowd. Having identified with the leader, each member of the crowd, upon failing to possess the leader as an object, introjects the leader into his or her ego. Once established as the ego ideal or “Super-ego,” the leader becomes the governing principle behind the actions of every individual crowd member, controlling both by means of love and of fear. In the “Massenpsychologie,” however, Freud ends his analysis after explaining the nature of the crowd and the psychology of the individuals therein. As a psychologist, Freud was more interested in how the psyche was affected by inclusion in a crowd, and less so in the potential power the crowd possessed.

¹³⁴ Freud 142.

Theodor Geiger

Shortly after the publication of Freud's "Massenpsychologie," German sociologist Theodor Geiger attempted to cut through the confusion surrounding "Masse" and analyze the nature of the crowd's political and revolutionary strength. Geiger's analytical study, *Die Masse und ihre Aktion* (1926), is a far cry from Le Bon's declarative, pseudo-scientific text, going even further than Freud in its attempt to thoroughly dissect and understand the organization, behavior, and function of the mass within society. Geiger begins by providing an illuminating semantic exploration of the various conflicting definitions and connotations of the term "Masse." Geiger first identifies two common characteristics of "Masse" across its many interpretations: 1) the conception of an indefinite multiplicity of entities that, due to their similarity, are not distinguished as individuals; 2) the conception of this multiplicity as unformed.¹³⁵ Taken together, these two conceptions of "Masse" present the picture of an "ungegliederten Komplexes nicht zählbarer, jedenfalls nicht gezählter, gleichartiger Teileinheiten."¹³⁶ Beyond these two characteristics, though, definitions of "Masse" vary widely in application and implication.

Geiger points first to the physical interpretation of "Masse" seen above: "eine Vielheit von zu einem Körper verbundenen, kohärierenden Molekeln" that is the bearer of potential energy.¹³⁷ In colloquial speech, "Masse" is used to refer to raw material, to physically and compositionally ambiguous "Stoff" that has not yet been formed or

¹³⁵ Theodor Geiger, *Die Masse und ihre Aktion* (Stuttgart: Verlag von Ferdinand Enke, 1926) 1.

¹³⁶ Geiger 1.

¹³⁷ Geiger 2.

processed (“eine formlose Masse,” “Gußmasse,” “Papiermasse”).¹³⁸ Similarly, “Masse” is colloquially applied to any uncounted multitude of similar objects (“eine Masse Geld,” “eine Masse Ungeziefer”) and as such is synonymous with the German “Haufen,” and the English “heap.” This particular definition usually refers to a physically present, visible quantity of objects, and as such it can also be applied to assembled groups of people. For Geiger, the preceding interpretations of “Masse” are of little importance, since they contain no information about “Masse” as a sociological entity. Yet even sociological conceptions of “Masse” draw on the notion of a formless group of indistinguishable (or undistinguished) individuals.

Having arrived at the central concern of his analysis, Geiger moves to an explication of four distinct sociological conceptions of “Masse.” One either treats “Masse” as merely a large quantity (“Massenkundgebung, Massenwirkung, Massenversammlung”), or as any group of people, irrespective of size.¹³⁹ In the second case, the “Masse” arises whenever individuals join in numbers. This is where, Geiger states, the antithesis of individual and mass originates. A third conception views the “Masse” as the remnant left behind whenever certain individuals are selected from the whole of society based on any number of criteria (intelligence, specific qualities, personality, etc.). When the choicest individuals are removed from the social pool, what remains is “Masse,” the undesired residue: “ein Auslese-Überbleibsel.”¹⁴⁰ Since those individuals not chosen possess little or none of the desired qualities, they are then treated by the selective observer as equal and undifferentiated amongst themselves. As a result, such a mass is completely homogeneous relative to the selected elite. This concept of

¹³⁸ Geiger 2.

¹³⁹ Geiger 3.

¹⁴⁰ Geiger 4.

“Masse” reveals and highlights the scorn with which the elite (intellectual, economic, class, etc.) views the unendowed masses. A final conception, which is Geiger’s main concern throughout his study, is the revolutionary or “explosive Masse.” The “explosive Masse” embodies the physical concept of potential energy in the political and social sphere. Like Marx, Geiger recognizes the revolutionary potential of the masses, but where Marx is concerned with the dynamics of class struggle, Geiger is instead interested in the “Masse” as a particular form of human grouping in possession of a unique and powerful dynamic energy.

In agreement with Freud, Geiger rejects the notion that sheer numbers alone constitute a “Masse,” but he claims that neither can a sociological definition of term be based upon the psychic condition of the mass’s constituent individuals.¹⁴¹ Since there exist numerous varieties of human groupings, differing in number as well as in structure, and since the psychic conditions deemed typical of masses (increase in emotion, loss of individual identity, decrease in overall intelligence, etc.) can be witnessed in multiple sociologically distinct groups, these prove unsatisfactory criteria for grounding an appropriate conception of “Masse.” Rather, Geiger claims, “Masse” is first and foremost a particular type of social grouping. Importantly, this group is not simply an aggregate of random individuals (“Personenaggregat”), instead possessing an objective character. That is to say, a “Masse” can be recognized as a discrete entity, unlike, for example, the assortment of people present on a given city street at a busy time of day. According to Geiger’s definition, “Masse” – which for Geiger always refers specifically to the “revolutionäre” or “explosive Masse” mentioned above – is an objectively recognizable social group with a particular relationship to, and role in, revolutions. Namely, the role of

¹⁴¹ Geiger 34.

the “Masse” in a revolution is fundamentally a destructive one: “So nennen wir ‘Masse’ den von der destruktiv-revolutionär bewegten Vielheit getragenen sozialen Verband, für welchen es einen besonderen Namen bisher nicht gibt.”¹⁴² The revolutionary mass thus fills a sociological conceptual void in understanding historical events, revealing particularly the mass’s function as a wrecking ball to tear down crumbling social institutions.

Geiger’s conception of society is similar to Marx’s, except that Geiger does not recognize the aristocracy as a distinct class: “Es kann streng genommen nur *zwei* Klassen raum-zeitlich nebeneinander geben: die konservative Oberklasse der wenigen und die fortschrittlich-revolutionäre der vielen. Heute heißen sie: Bourgeoisie und Proletariat.”¹⁴³ As with earlier definitions of “Masse,” Geiger locates the concept among the proletariat, the oppressed masses. However, Geiger does not see “Masse” as synonymous with the proletariat. “Masse” is rather one of three manifestations of the proletariat, along with the mechanical multitude (“mechanische Vielheit”) and the organized proletariat. The mechanical multitude applies to the broad, inert masses: the oppressed underclass, divested of all culture and ignorant of their revolutionary potential.¹⁴⁴ The organized proletariat encompasses all the organizational apparatus of the proletariat, including political, economic, and cultural institutions and programs. Where the mechanical multitude is passive, even static, the organized proletariat is aggressive, combative, and engaged in revolutionary activity aimed at overturning the existing social and economic systems. The revolutionary mass is a combination of these two aspects of the proletariat. With guidance and incitement from the organized proletariat, the revolutionary mass

¹⁴² Geiger 37.

¹⁴³ Geiger 40.

¹⁴⁴ Geiger 46.

arises from the mechanical multitude, turning latent energy into destructive action. It is important to note that the revolutionary mass does not instigate the revolution, but rather comes into being as a result of the revolutionary situation: “Ihr *Vorhandensein* ist mit der revolutionären Lage gegeben; ihr *aktives Auftreten* erfolgt unter der Einwirkung äußerer Anreize.”¹⁴⁵ A revolutionary situation arises when existing societal constructs no longer reflect the values of the larger part of society.

With the advent of new values, the old constructs must be eliminated to make way for corresponding new constructs. According to Geiger, social forms are “wertbedingt,” that is, they are determined and formed by specific values. Revolution, then, is rooted in a reevaluation of values – “eine Umwertung der Werte” – and subsequent reordering of society.¹⁴⁶ This reveals a twofold process of destruction and reconstruction within every revolution, where the revolutionary “Masse” is responsible for the former:

Revolution bedeutet – als Umgestaltung – zweierlei: Beseitigung von Bestehendem und Aufbau von Neuem. Im wesentlichen wird die zweite, planmäßig konstruktive Aufgabe vom organisierten Proletariat erfüllt, während die erste, destruktive Funktion in der Hauptsache der Masse zufällt.¹⁴⁷

According to Geiger’s understanding, the only role that “Masse” is capable of playing in revolution is that of destroyer. But while the mass’s function within the revolution is limited, its importance cannot be underestimated. Indeed, in Geiger’s view every revolution requires the destructive power of the “Masse” to succeed: “Alle Revolutionen sind Massenrevolutionen – sofern der Masse die destruktive Rolle in jeder Revolution zukommt; keine Revolution ist Massenrevolution in dem Sinne, daß sie in ihrem ganzen

¹⁴⁵ Geiger 50.

¹⁴⁶ Geiger 56.

¹⁴⁷ Geiger 53.

Umfang Werk der Masse wäre.”¹⁴⁸ Thus the revolutionary mass and the organized proletariat work in tandem to overturn the ruling social order and erect a new one in its place.

That the revolutionary mass should be limited in its capacity to purely destructive acts seems an overly narrow view. However, Geiger bases this view on what he claims is the essential spirit of the “Masse”: negation. The characteristic response of the “Masse” is to say “no,” to radically reject and hate that which it opposes. Passive acceptance is the realm of the mechanical multitude and active affirmation that of the victorious organized proletariat. It is left to the “Masse” to negate with no thought to what comes next: “Das Spezifische an der Haltung der Masse ist nicht die *Negativität* als Haltung, sondern die *Negation* des Bestehenden, wobei die Vorstellung des Künftigen nur sehr vage und phantastisch vorhanden ist.”¹⁴⁹ Rooted in negation, the revolutionary mass is by nature unsustainable. In response to an outside catalyst, the “Masse” ignites and explodes, destroying its target in a mass action, then subsiding again into passivity, leaving the rebuilding of society to the organized proletariat. But the explosion of the mass is not sudden, not in the sense that it comes from nowhere. Rather, the mass explodes as the critical result of a longer process of societal change.¹⁵⁰

Beyond the function of the revolutionary mass, Geiger also discusses its particular structure. First, though he earlier states that number alone is not a sufficient criterion for defining “Masse” as a sociological concept, Geiger claims that a large number of individuals are indeed necessary to form a mass. The reason being that at lower concentrations, each individual retains his or her own opinions, which serve to

¹⁴⁸ Geiger 61-62.

¹⁴⁹ Geiger 76.

¹⁵⁰ Geiger 73-74.

distinguish and divide him or her from the rest of the group. Once the mass reaches a certain size, individual opinions are replaced by common emotion.¹⁵¹ In this way, Geiger is able to account for the homogenization of heterogeneous individuals in the mass.

A second factor contributing to the composition of the mass is the strength of an individual's social bonds. Essentially, the greater an individual's ties to existing social structures, the less likely that individual is to lay those ties aside and join the mass.

Geiger claims that, all things being equal, an individual who stands lower in the proletarian hierarchy is also more likely to join in mass action:

je tiefer das Individuum objektiv auf der innerproletarischen Stufenleiter steht, desto mehr wird es – bei sonst gleichen Umständen – geneigt sein, an der Massenaktion tätig teilzunehmen. Je stärker im Individuum soziale Dauerbindungen wirksam sind, desto weniger wird es fähig und geneigt sein, seine Dauerbindungen vorübergehend im Massenakt zu vergessen.¹⁵²

Where Le Bon and Freud diagnosed in the mass individual a lack of adherence to prevalent social norms as a result of racial regression on the one hand and the uncovering of unconscious desire on the other, Geiger focuses not on the mass individual's aberrant behavior, but on his lack of connection to the established social order. The lower an individual is in the proletariat, the more he is oppressed and the more distanced he is from the benefits of the existing society. Subsequently, such an individual's ties to the present society would be tenuous at best.

The third structural element that Geiger discusses is the key notion of leadership. For Le Bon, the crowd could be manipulated by a charismatic demagogue who steered it by means of suggestion. In Freud, mass individuals saw in the leader an idealized version of themselves, which they then subsumed into their own consciousnesses and used as a

¹⁵¹ Geiger 86.

¹⁵² Geiger 94.

guiding principle. Once in place as each individual's ego-ideal, the leader can then guide the mass by means of love and fear. Geiger presents a vision of a much less powerful, less iconic leader figure. In Geiger's account, a mass leader is very much beholden to the mass itself. If the mass leader does not speak to the collective disposition of the mass, he risks losing control. This could result either in the dissolution of the mass or in the supplanting of the present leader with one more in tune with the mass¹⁵³:

Der Massenführer – will er es sein – *darf* nur emphatisch negieren oder ganz allgemeine, gestalthaft unbestimmte Ideen äußern – nicht weil “die Masse ihn sonst nicht versteht”, sondern, weil er sofort an das rühren würde, was die vermassten Individuen differenziert: an die *Meinungen*; er aber muß sich an die *Stimmung* wenden.¹⁵⁴

As mentioned above, common emotion is necessary for the formation of a homogeneous whole from numerous heterogeneous individuals. Opinions are the key to interpersonal division in Geiger's conception, and they must be avoided if the mass is to cohere.

The mass leader is further limited by the nature of the revolutionary mass. Existing only to negate, and then only long enough to destroy the existing social structure, the revolutionary mass is an ephemeral group; it arises and dissolves quickly. Since the revolutionary mass exists only temporarily, it requires only temporary leadership. As a general rule, the leader of a revolutionary mass arises from the ranks of that mass in the course of a mass action:

Da die Masse im wesentlichen sich in Ausdrucksakten ergeht, bedarf sie keiner veranstaltenden Dauerführung, noch einer einheitlich gegliederten und gestuften Führung. (Organisatorischer Apparat.) Sie bedarf der Führung nur als aktuelle Masse und als solcher erstet ihr der Führer im Vollzugsakt selbst. Führer der aktuellen Masse ist, wer den adäquaten Ausdruck für die seelische Stimmung der aktuell Vereinten findet.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Geiger 129.

¹⁵⁴ Geiger 98.

¹⁵⁵ Geiger 147-48.

A mass leader emerges from every revolutionary mass in the course of a mass action, and as a result the mass viewed as a general group has numerous leaders. These leaders are then fated to fade away without fanfare or recognition at the conclusion of the mass action in the same way that the mass's other members disperse upon completion of their communal task: "Er ist als Massenführer anonym wie die Glieder der Masse."¹⁵⁶ The role of the mass leader is not to unilaterally dictate the actions of the mass, but rather to be an exponent of the mass, adequately formulating the disposition of the mass at a given moment:

Der typische Führer beeinflusst die Massen gar nicht in einer Richtung, sondern er findet die Grundrichtung vor und ist selbst ein Besessener unter Besessenen. Der typische Massenführer ist nicht "Demagoge", er lenkt nicht bewußt und kühlen Kopfes die Masse in einer bestimmten Richtung, sondern er ist selbst von der Ekstase des Massenerlebnisses am stärksten erfaßt, ist selbst der Bewußtlosesten einer.¹⁵⁷

The mass leader facilitates the execution of the mass action from its midst, not from a position above and outside the mass. As such, Geiger's typical mass leader differs greatly from the type envisioned by both Le Bon and Freud. At the end of his analysis, though, Geiger explains how it is possible for a demagogue to manipulate the actions of the mass: "Der Demagoge ist als Führer der Masse trotz unserer These von der kollektiven Abhängigkeit des Massenführers dadurch möglich, daß er diese Abhängigkeit bewußt vortäuscht, sich als massenberauscht gibt, um dann die Wucht des Massenerlebnisses entweder durch ein Ventil abzulassen oder planmäßig einzusetzen."¹⁵⁸ To effectively guide the mass, a demagogue must feign his connection and allegiance to it and thus appear to speak with its voice. This is not entirely different than Freud's leader, although

¹⁵⁶ Geiger 148.

¹⁵⁷ Geiger 149.

¹⁵⁸ Geiger 162-63.

under Freud's conception it is not necessary for the leader to mislead the mass individuals, but only for those individuals to *believe* that a bond of love exists between them and the leader (even if it does not). Geiger, though, insists that this is not the typical situation, and that such leadership is a form of seduction.

Geiger offers a highly detailed and scientific analysis of the phenomenon "Masse," first performing the necessary semantic clarification and continuing on to explore the term not merely as a physical presence in the streets, but as a sociological entity in its own right. Where others saw in "Masse" a riotous mob or a hypnotized crowd, Geiger saw a revolutionary force as yet unrecognized in its historical importance. So central was the "Masse" to revolution that Geiger even claims no revolution can occur without it. Incited by the political agitation and productive social activities of the organized proletariat, the revolutionary mass emerges from amongst the former and the oppressed legions of the mechanical multitude to sweep aside the inadequate social edifices in favor of the new. Unlike the demagogues present in the theories of Le Bon and Freud, Geiger envisions the mass being led organically from within during its short tenure, then yielding the field of action to the productive efforts of the organized proletariat. Geiger's theory sees in the mass great potential for change, especially from his viewpoint as a socialist. A further theory, though, sees mass not as a positive revolutionary actor, but as the greatest threat to modern society.

José Ortega y Gasset

From Marx through Freud and Geiger, “Masse” has been used to refer to a social class, a psychological phenomenon, and a revolutionary force. In his work *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930), though, Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset defines mass in a very different way. For Ortega, the rise of the masses to positions of prominence and power in society represents the greatest crisis of modernity. In earlier centuries, the world was less crowded. Not only was the world population much smaller, but a greater percentage of the total population lived scattered throughout rural areas. As society became industrialized and ever more people flocked from the country to cities to find greater opportunities for work, education, and culture, humans began to congregate in unprecedented numbers and concentrations. Advancements in medicine, sanitation, and agricultural production all affected the outlook for human lives, reducing infant mortality and extending the average life expectancy. This all had a dramatic effect on the human population, as Ortega notes:

These are the facts: from the beginnings of European history in the sixth century to the year 1800 – that is, through the course of twelve centuries – the population of Europe never exceeded 180 million. Then: from 1800 to 1914 – that is, in little over a century – the population of Europe increased from 180 million to 460 million!¹⁵⁹

As a result of such rapid and explosive growth, European society was faced with a previously unknown dilemma: crowding. Ortega admits that these masses of people did not come out of nowhere, but previously they existed as individuals dispersed across vast geographical space. From the 19th to 20th century, this ceased to be the case. Today these

¹⁵⁹ José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985) 39-40.

individuals are present not only in greater concentration and proximity than ever before, but also more visible. The institutions of modern culture, previously reserved for the exclusive enjoyment of select minorities, have become universally available. It is in such places that the masses can be found, a fact that Ortega accounts with disapproval:

The masses, suddenly, have made themselves visible, and have installed themselves in the preferred places of society. In the past, the mass, where it existed, went unnoticed. It was a background to the social scene, to the stage of society. Now it has advanced to the footlights, and plays the part of the leading character. There are no longer protagonists as such: there is only the chorus.¹⁶⁰

It is clear from Ortega's tone that the masses rise to prominence represents a usurpation of social agency historically reserved for an elite, but not a social elite in the manner of the aristocracy. Rather, Ortega sees society as divided into two groups, masses and minorities, where the masses are understood as similar to Geiger's image of the "Auslese-Überbleibsel," or that which remains when an elite group has been removed from the total of all individuals in a society or group:

Society is always a dynamic unity composed of two factors: masses and minorities. The latter are comprised of especially qualified individuals and groups. The masses are made up of persons not especially qualified. By masses, we do not therefore mean, either simply or even principally, the "working class," the working masses as a whole. The mass is the "average man." Thus, the merely quantitative – the multitude, the mass – becomes a qualitative determinant: it is the common quality, the social animal as stray, man in the measure in which he is undifferentiated from other men, man repeating in himself a generic type.¹⁶¹

The mass man, the "average man," is the man without qualities. Where there is some distinguishing characteristic that elevates the minority from the mass, the mass is sheer, undifferentiated human multiplicity. The crisis for Ortega then consists in a shift from a society and culture that celebrates exceptionalism to one that unabashedly revels in

¹⁶⁰ Ortega y Gasset 5.

¹⁶¹ Ortega y Gasset 6.

mediocrity. Ortega's elitism is not grounded in class division, cultural refinement, or even intellectual ability, but rather in the recognition that the human individual is not perfect and the subsequent drive to enrich oneself by any number of means.

For Ortega, the difference between the mass individual and the select individual is effort. "The mass-man," Ortega explains, "is anyone who does not value himself, for good or ill, by any particular criterion, and who says instead that he is 'just like everybody else.'"¹⁶² The true mass man will be in no way bothered by this realization, but will embrace it even with a sense of pride. On the contrary, the select individual is never self-satisfied:

the select individual is not the petulant snob who thinks he is superior to others, but is, rather, the person who demands more from himself than do others, even when these demands are unattainable. For undoubtedly the most radical division to be made of humanity is between two types: those who demand much of themselves and assign themselves great tasks and duties, and those who demand nothing in particular of themselves, for whom living is to be at all times what they already are, without any effort at perfection – buoys floating on the waves.¹⁶³

An important aspect of Ortega's elitism is that it does not demand success, only the attempt at becoming more than one is. The select individual need not be the most intelligent or gifted person, provided he or she is willing to work at perfection. And yet the select individual remains a minority. Ortega demonstrates that the mass-men still compose the mass of society. The difference in the 20th century is that an entire society and culture have developed to cater specifically to the avowedly mediocre masses, aptly termed "mass culture." With the advent of mass media, such as illustrated magazines, radio, and film, cultural material became commoditized.

¹⁶² Ortega y Gasset 7.

¹⁶³ Ortega y Gasset 7.

As Walter Benjamin later recognized in his seminal essay “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit“ (1935), in the 19th and 20th century technology advanced to a point where artworks could be reproduced millions of times, both quickly and cheaply. As a result, the artwork loses its aura and ceases to be a unique object. Reproduction simultaneously made culture universally accessible and wholly commonplace. Additionally, the low cost of production paired with the minimal intellectual demand of the growing cultural public resulted in an entire culture built around unchallenging and disposable artistic material. Where art had traditionally provided the opportunity for reflection and personal enrichment, in the 20th century a culture industry was developed to produce art purely for entertainment. This type of culture was specifically tailored to the minimal demands of the mass public, namely that it make no demands on them whatsoever. From culture to politics, on every level of society, Ortega sees this type of individual, the self-satisfied mediocrity, implanting himself and imposing his notions on the whole: “The characteristic note of our time is the dire truth that the mediocre soul, the commonplace mind, knowing itself to be mediocre, has the gall to assert its right to mediocrity, and goes on to impose itself wherever it can.”¹⁶⁴ Where a select individual, upon realizing his mediocre talents or attributes would endeavor to perfect himself, the mass-man champions his mediocrity and insists that all of society sink to that level.

However, as Ortega explains, the mass-man did not emerge merely as a result of the invention of mass media. Rather, Ortega identifies three historical developments that enabled the mass-man type to exist: liberal democracy, scientific experimentation, and industrialization. Because democracy recognizes all human individuals as equal, its

¹⁶⁴ Ortega y Gasset 10.

implementation as a political model removes any differences between individuals, whether societal, intellectual, economic, or otherwise. Scientific experimentation further enabled the advances in hygiene and medicine that spurred the unprecedented population growth mentioned above. Also, a greater understanding of human biology provided a factual basis for the philosophical claim of the universal equality of men. Finally, industrialization (as a result of scientific experimentation) enabled the production of goods on a hitherto unknown scale. As more goods were able to be produced more quickly and more cheaply, even the lower strata of the economy were able to purchase goods. Prior to these three developments, life was extremely restricted for the majority of the society: “For the populace, the *vulgus*, of all epochs, ‘life’ had meant, first of all, limitation, obligation, dependence: in a word, pressure.”¹⁶⁵ By contrast, as the masses were deemed equal in the eyes of the law, became more secure from disease and death, and were able to afford food, goods, and technological implements to make life easier, these limitations dropped away: “Whereas in past times life for the average man meant difficulties, dangers, want, limitations on his destiny, and dependency, the new world makes its appearance as a sphere of practically limitless possibilities, a world of security in which one is independent of others.”¹⁶⁶ Here Ortega reveals the mass-man to be inherently selfish, desirous only to go his own way and satisfy his own desires.

Where Freud saw the libidinal forces of the crowd as capable of overcoming the natural narcissism at work in every individual, Ortega’s mass is of a different sort. Rather than being dependent on physical congregation, social or psychological identification, or the mutual love of/for a common leader, Ortega’s mass is a grouping of individuals. By

¹⁶⁵ Ortega y Gasset 46.

¹⁶⁶ Ortega y Gasset 50.

definition the mass-man is nondescript, indistinguishable from other mass-men, but he acts as if he were the only person in the world. His actions concern only him, affect only him, and are enacted solely for his own benefit. From the hyperdemocracy that created and defines the masses comes a countervailing hyperindividualism, the deep-seated narcissism of the mass-man who sees himself as complete and perfect in himself. This highlights another distinction between the mass-man and the select individual: the (in)ability to recognize an authority higher than oneself. The mass-man sees himself as self-sufficient, the ultimate authority, while the select individual feels that “life lacks sense and savor unless he feels it serves a transcendental purpose. Thus he does not regard the need to serve as oppressive.”¹⁶⁷ Serving a higher purpose in life distinguishes the “noble life” – “life lived as a discipline” – from the common life.¹⁶⁸ As with the effort to better oneself, the commitment to higher ideals and philanthropy as opposed to self-service defines the select individual. The mass-man is closed to the world, to the existence and thoughts of others, while the select man is constantly open and aware.

The closed nature of the mass-man is at the heart of the threat Ortega sees in the modern masses:

Theirs is the way of the obliterated soul, hermetically closed: it is a case of intellectual hermetism. This kind of person finds himself with a fixed repertory of ideas. He decides to conform to these and thinks of himself as intellectually complete. Since he feels no need for anything outside himself, he settles back, content with his fixed repertory. Such is the mechanism of obliteration.¹⁶⁹

The mass-man considers himself perfect and already has ideas on everything. As a result, he has lost the ability to listen. Ortega claims, though, that the mass-man’s ideas are no real ideas, because ideas and opinions are formed in the search for truth, something for

¹⁶⁷ Ortega y Gasset 52.

¹⁶⁸ Ortega y Gasset 52.

¹⁶⁹ Ortega y Gasset 57.

which the mass-man has no interest or concern. Such a man, according to Ortega, was essential to the development of fascism:

The Fascist and Syndicalist species were characterized by the first appearance of a type of man who *did not care to give reasons or even to be right*, but who was simply resolved to impose his opinions. That was the novelty: the right not to be right, not to be reasonable: “the reason of unreason.”¹⁷⁰

Here as elsewhere in Ortega’s text, an idealistic desire to strive for truth and human perfection is set against the unreasonable and staunch insistence by the mass-man to assert an existence not worth asserting. In the political realm this unreason expresses itself in the repression of dissenting thought, speech, and opinion. Similarly, the unreason of the mass-man can be executed by a power other than government, namely by the crowd.

Since the mass-man is content in his own repertory of ideas, he is also unwilling to tolerate those ideas that differ from his own. Whenever he encounters such a disagreement, he feels compelled to involve himself and replace the errant idea, policy, etc. with his own. This involvement comes in the form of “direct action,” which, according to Ortega, is always physically violent, though it remains unclear why that must be the case. Ortega even goes so far as to assert that the only kind of action the mass is capable of undertaking on its own is a lynching.¹⁷¹ The mass-man, convinced of his perfection and completeness, capable of acting on his own only by means of violence, poses a direct threat to European society as Ortega understands it. Ortega also identifies the mass-man’s analog in the monolithic state mechanisms of authoritarian regimes. The mass-man sees in the state an anonymous power and, since the mass-man also feels himself to be anonymous, he sees a relationship between himself and the state. As a

¹⁷⁰ Ortega y Gasset 62.

¹⁷¹ Ortega y Gasset 102.

result, the mass-man looks to the state to solve whatever problems or crises might arise in public life, which it does with the sizeable power it possesses:

And this is the greatest danger threatening civilization today: the statification of life, state intervention, the taking over by the state of all social spontaneity. And this amounts to the annulment of historical spontaneity, which is what sustains, nourishes, and impels all human destiny. Whenever the mass suspects some misfortune, or when it is moved by its prurient appetite, the temptation is there to look to the permanent and secure possibility of getting everything – without effort, argument, doubt, or risk – to call on this marvelous machinery which goes into action with the touch of a button.¹⁷²

The mass identifies directly with the state, considering the two to be identical. When it encounters any aberration from its chosen ideas, the mass employs its perceived counterpart, the state, to quash the offending novelty, what Ortega calls “social spontaneity.” The mass, along with the authoritarian state mechanism that is its analog, is highly conservative and reactionary, and bent on preventing progress in any form it may take. And though the only commonality that exists between the state and the mass is their anonymity, the mass-man continues to view the two as one and the same, the result of which being his further reliance on the state to police creativity, innovation, and change: “But the mass-man nevertheless believes that he is the state, and he will increasingly tend to want it to be set in motion on the least pretext, to crush any creative minority which disturbs it, disturbs it in any way whatsoever: in politics, ideas, industry.”¹⁷³ Should the mass-man persist in guiding the course of society, and through his support of an authoritarian state of politics, then the dynamic ascent of Western society is fated to come to a grinding halt. The possibility of social stagnation at the hands of a legion of mediocrities is Ortega’s doomsday scenario, but one that he only diagnoses without proposing a remedy.

¹⁷² Ortega y Gasset 106.

¹⁷³ Ortega y Gasset 106.

“Die Straße” in Context

With the Storming of the Bastille and the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789, the ruling classes were forced to recognize “Masse” as a legitimate entity capable of violently overthrowing whole governments and changing the shape of societies. As a result, all subsequent generations of politicians were no longer able to ignore the potential danger and opportunity embodied in the masses. With Marx’s recognition of the revolutionary role that would, he claimed, inevitably be played by the oppressed underclass of the proletariat, the masses came to occupy a central position in the strategic thinking of politicians and political parties. The popular violence of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the turbulent revolutions in Russia in 1917 and Germany in 1918 reinforced the fears and hopes surrounding the masses and their physical expression, the crowd. This climate of fear and upheaval had a profound effect on the responses of the various thinkers mentioned above, as well as on Broch’s own response to “Masse.”

As seen in the previous chapter, Broch’s initial reflections on “Masse” in “Die Straße” were especially negative. Where Marx, Geiger, and to an extent even Ortega recognize the positive capacity of the masses as a force for change, Broch sees in the masses the lowest common denominator of human society. While on the one hand championing individual freedom and democracy, Broch on the other hand deeply mistrusts the core of society most associated with a democratic political system. Essentially, Broch’s idealistic conception of a democratic political utopia rooted in abstract concepts such as justice and freedom runs aground on the inability – in Broch’s perception – of the masses to grasp such central notions in their pure form. In order to

make these notions understandable to the broad masses, politicians are forced to distill their abstract ideas to slogans, effectively destroying the ideas in the process. This quandary renders Broch's utopia untenable, at least for the majority of society.

In highlighting the divide between the intellectual and the masses, Broch also taps into the important aspect of crowd theory that emphasizes the diminished intellectual and comprehensive capacity of individuals in the crowd. It remains unclear in "Die Straße," however, whether "Masse" is a social, intellectual, or political designation. That is to say, Broch makes no direct claims as to who composes the "Masse." While Broch seems to clearly associate the "Masse" with the bulk of society, as is common in several definitions of the term, he never explicitly restricts membership in the "Masse" to the lower classes. Broch also neglects to explain whether, as in the theories of Le Bon and Freud, an otherwise intellectual, highly reflective individual can degrade in his or her abilities as a result of inclusion in the mass. Though, his emphasis on the distinction between an intellectual elite and the masses would seem to speak against this.

What Broch lays out in "Die Straße" is far from a working theory of either the genesis of, or the psychological mechanisms at work in the "Masse." The creation of a systematic theory of the masses and mass hysteria became the focus of Broch's writings only after his flight into exile and the outbreak of the Second World War. In fact, after "Die Straße" in 1918 and the political essay "Konstitutionelle Diktatur als demokratisches Räte-system," published in April, 1919, Broch was oddly silent on "Masse" in specific, and politics in general until writing his "Völkerbund-Resolution" in 1937 and beginning work on his *Massenwahntheorie* in 1939. As the next chapter will argue, the peculiarities of Broch's personal life, including a troubled marriage and subsequent divorce, an

equally difficult love affair, the business demands of the Broch family textile factory, and intensive study at the University of Vienna served to occupy the majority of Broch's time and energy prior to his shift to a literary career with the 1930 publication of *Die Schlafwandler*. To better understand Broch's personal situation in a historical context, it will also be useful to briefly sketch the political and social situation within Austria after the end of the First World War.

CHAPTER III

1918-1929: AUSTRIAN POLITICS AND BROCH'S PRIVATE LIFE

After the events of November 12, 1918, and the publishing of “Die Straße,” the concept of the mass becomes less visible in Broch’s writings until the 1930s. While the workers’ movement remained an influential part of Austrian society and a key target of Austrian politics after the war, Broch deals with the mass less directly after writing “Die Straße.” To better understand the diminished prominence of the mass in Broch’s writings, it will be necessary to view Broch’s ideas and experiences within the context of Austrian society and politics after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire. Following an overview of the important events and political constellations in the First Austrian Republic, this chapter will assess Broch’s biographical connection and relationship to them. Finally, the chapter will focus on the situation in Broch’s personal life as a contributing factor to his near lack of written engagement with the political developments around him.

Austria After the War

As the end of the First World War approached in the fall of 1918, the defeat of the Central Powers became increasingly inevitable. On January 8, 1918, the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, delivered a speech to the Congress detailing a fourteen point plan to a secure peace in Europe. At the core of this plan was not the humiliation and evisceration of the belligerent nations (as eventually contained in the Treaty of

Versailles), but rather the principles of freedom and self-determination that constitute the “American Dream.” Applied to the international stage, Wilson’s self-determination referred to the right of all nations united by common ethnicity, language, culture, or history to govern themselves autonomously, either within or independent of a larger state. In the context of the First World War, this was of particular importance and relevance in the territories of eastern and southern Europe controlled by the Central Powers. In addition to a cessation of hostilities between all parties, Wilson requested the full evacuation of troops from French, Belgian, and Russian territory as well as from Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro. The tenth point in Wilson’s plan, though, was of especial significance for the fate of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: “The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development.”¹⁷⁴ While not explicitly demanding full sovereignty for the individual subject nations of Austria-Hungary, Wilson’s plan bolstered the claims for self-determination of the numerous ethnic groups that would soon dissolve the entire empire.

As internal pressure from minority groups mounted and defeat seemed imminent, Emperor Charles I issued a manifesto on October 16, 1918, which addressed Wilson’s call for the autonomous development of the minority populations of the empire:

Österreich soll dem Willen seiner Völker gemäß zu einem Bundesstaate werden, in dem jeder Volksstamm auf seinem Siedlungsgebiete sein eigenes staatliches Gemeinwesen bildet. [...] Bis diese Umgestaltung auf gesetzlichem Wege vollendet ist, bleiben die bestehenden Einrichtungen zur Wahrung der allgemeinen Interessen unverändert aufrecht. Meine Regierung ist beauftragt, zum Neuaufbau Österreichs ohne Verzug alle Arbeiten vorzubereiten. An die Völker, auf deren Selbstbestimmungsrecht das neue Reich sich gründen wird, ergeht Mein Ruf, an dem großen Werke durch Nationalräte mitzuwirken, die – gebildet aus

¹⁷⁴ Woodrow Wilson, “Fourteen Points Speech,” United States Congress, 8 Jan. 1918.

den Reichstagsabgeordneten jeder Nation – die Interessen der Völker zueinander sowie im Verkehr mit Meiner Regierung zur Geltung bringen sollen.¹⁷⁵

The emperor's manifesto indicates that his advisors had become convinced of the necessity of making concessions to national minorities. This manifesto represents an attempt on the emperor's part to proactively accommodate the eventual demands of the Entente Powers in the peace proceedings that would soon commence. However, the emperor overestimated the dedication of his minority subjects to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the manifesto, Charles I attempted to placate national minorities by offering them autonomous governance, but not as independent states, rather as members of an overarching federal state still governed by the Austrian Emperor. Charles I's offer proved insufficient to maintain unity within the Empire, which quickly unraveled in the last months of 1918.

One by one the crown lands broke away from Austria-Hungary and established independent nations. On October 28, Czechs peacefully took over the governance of Bohemia at Prague and Galicia rejoined Poland.¹⁷⁶ On October 29, Czechs seized control of Moravia at Brünn (Brno), Croats and Slovenes declared the independence of their territories from Austria, and the Croats announced the creation of the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs in Agram (Zagreb).¹⁷⁷ Two days later on the 31st, Hungary gained independence through a royally sanctioned takeover of government under Prime Minister Mihály Károlyi and the dissolution of the personal union between Austria and Hungary,

¹⁷⁵ Emperor Charles I. of Austria-Hungary, "Völkermanifest," 16 October 1918. In: Helmut Rumpler, *Das Völkermanifest Kaiser Karls vom 16. Oktober 1918* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1966) 89-91.

¹⁷⁶ Wolfdieter Bihl, "Der Weg zum Zusammenbruch – Österreich-Ungarn unter Karl I. (IV.)," *Österreich 1918-1938. Geschichte der Ersten Republik*, Vol. 1, ed. Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalnik (Graz: Styria, 1983) 48.

¹⁷⁷ Bihl 48.

and the Slovene territories joined the nascent State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs.¹⁷⁸ By December, Hungary and Czechoslovakia were republics, Poland had gained its independence, Serbia had joined the other South Slavs to create the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, and Romania had annexed Bukovina and Transylvania.¹⁷⁹

This massive loss of territory left rump Austria in a very precarious situation. Without its Bohemian and Hungarian territories, rump Austria was left without access to supplies of coal and grain. Following their unwillingness to accept Charles I's solution of a federal multinational state, Austria-Hungary's successor states dealt with Vienna with extreme enmity. During the harsh winter of 1918/1919, Czechoslovakia and Hungary flatly refused to supply Austria with the resources it so desperately needed, exacerbating what became an extreme famine.¹⁸⁰ Without internal access to necessary heating fuels or foodstuffs, Austria was forced to beg for assistance from the Entente Powers. On May 2, 1919, France invited the Austrian government to assemble a delegation to participate in peace talks in St. Germain-en-Laye ten days later on May 12. After deliberation among the three major parties, the government chose Chancellor Karl Renner, a Social Democrat, assisted by the Christian Social Alfred Gurtler and the Greater German Ernst Schönbauer.¹⁸¹ After waiting three weeks, isolated from the general population, the Austrian delegation finally received the Allied terms of peace on June 2, 1919. Even prior to the delegation's arrival in St. Germain, Chancellor Renner recognized that Austria would be treated much as its wartime ally, Germany. On May 8, 1919, the day after Germany received its terms of peace in Versailles, Renner addressed the national

¹⁷⁸ Bihl 49-50.

¹⁷⁹ Bihl 48-49.

¹⁸⁰ Heinrich Drimmel, *Vom Umsturz zum Bürgerkrieg* (Vienna: Amalthea, 1985) 220.

¹⁸¹ Walter Goldinger and Dieter Binder, eds., *Geschichte der Republik Österreich 1918-1938* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1992) 41.

assembly: “Nach der Unglücksbotschaft von gestern wird der Gang, den die Friedensdelegation jetzt unternimmt, nicht sosehr einem Gang an den Beratungstisch als einem Bußgang gleichen.”¹⁸²

The “negotiations” in St. Germain turned out to be a dictation of allied expectations, rather than an actual opportunity for the newly-formed Republic of German Austria to bargain for an acceptable peace. The Austrian delegation arrived in St. Germain with a clear list of goals for any peace settlement. This list included: the neutrality of Tyrol, or the maintenance of Austrian authority over South Tyrol, while allowing Italy the right to garrison troops there; full control of Carinthia and Styria; if possible, the annexation of Western Hungary (Burgenland); full self-determination for the Sudetenland, or at least autonomy, a currency union with Austria, and neutrality under international law; the distribution of war debts among all successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; and the annexation of Austria to Germany. Despite months of spirited debate from the Austrian delegation under Renner, the Allied Powers, led primarily by France, made it clear that the Republic of German Austria – by Austrian argument legally discontinuous with the Habsburg Monarchy that preceded it – was continuous and identical with Cisleithania, the traditional territory of the Austrian Empire north and west of the river Leitha, which divides Austria from Hungary. Since the Austrian people played a leading role in the governance and direction of Cisleithania, the Allies thus accorded the new Austrian republic with full responsibility for starting the First World War. Accordingly, Austria was to pay war reparations to the Allied Powers and renounce all claims to territories claimed by Italy, Czechoslovakia, and the State of

¹⁸² Goldinger/Binder 42.

Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs.¹⁸³ Throughout negotiations, Austria maintained that, in order to survive, it must either join in a free economic union with its fellow successor states, or join with Germany. The Allies, however, sided with French, Czech, and Italian interests in forbidding Austrian annexation to Germany as a violation of Article 80 of the Treaty of Versailles, which required Germany to recognize Austria's immutable independence.¹⁸⁴ The Austrian delegation finally conceded to the Allied terms of peace and signed the Treaty of St. Germain on September 10, 1919. Austria officially abandoned its ambitions of uniting with Germany on October 21, 1919, when the National Assembly struck the annexation clause from the bill determining the form of government, and the nation was renamed the Republic of Austria.¹⁸⁵

Politics in a New Key

The government of the First Austrian Republic was faced with the difficult and unenviable task of creating political order from the chaos resulting from the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the defeat of the Empire by the Allied Powers, and the end of Habsburg rule in Austria. Growing from a provisional national assembly convened on October 21, 1918, the government of the Republic of Austria was formed out of a coalition of the three leading parties: the Social Democrats, the Christian Socials, and the much smaller, loosely-affiliated German National parties.

The Christian Socials, a party which rose to prominence under Vienna mayor Karl Lueger at the turn of the 20th century, were staunchly Catholic and conservative,

¹⁸³ Goldinger/Binder 44.

¹⁸⁴ Goldinger/Binder 76.

¹⁸⁵ Goldinger/Binder 76.

perceiving themselves as the political arm of the Church in Austria. Strongly opposed to the separation of church and state, the Christian Social party was known for “Kapitalismus-, Liberalismus-, Sozialismus- und Modernismuskritik,” as well as “antisemitische Positionsbestimmungen populistischer Natur.”¹⁸⁶ The party was largely influential among farmers and the petit bourgeoisie, as well as the clergy, and was dedicated to the ruling Habsburg dynasty and to the Empire itself. Despite attempts to gain ground among Christian workers through the formation of Christian unions, the Christian Socials were unable to wrest political control of even the faithful proletariat from the Social Democrats.

The Social Democratic Party achieved majority control in Vienna by 1911, leading to the capital’s later appellation: “Red Vienna.” From revolutionary beginnings, the Social Democrats followed a more moderate, though still distinctly leftist line under party leader Victor Adler. Adler and the Social Democrats fought to obtain political power for the proletariat, which they attempted to mobilize for a full takeover of power under the auspices of class warfare. Though this was the party’s stated mission, there were movements within the party that, rather than desiring the downfall of the Empire, preferred to pursue social welfare programs within the imperial structure. Karl Renner emerged as the leader of this particular strand of Austrian social democracy. The internal division between more radical and more moderate directions necessitated a balancing act by party leaders to negotiate between total stagnation and proletarian revolution, constantly maneuvering the party into the most advantageous position. While Austrian socialism has often been praised for its skilled manipulation of the workers’ movement, it has also been criticized for ignoring its constituency in deference to the Habsburg regime

¹⁸⁶ Goldinger/Binder 14.

and a bourgeois elite. In his book, *The Austrian Mind. An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938*, William M. Johnston elaborates: “The chief failing of Austrian socialism under Viktor Adler was a tendency to ignore the misery of the masses. The SDAP proved so loyal to Franz Joseph that it recruited an elite among labor while ignoring the nameless many.”¹⁸⁷ In addition to fighting the plight of the Austrian worker, the Social Democrats were proponents of the separation of church and state, a conviction often coupled with virulent anti-clericalism, putting them in hostile opposition to the Christian Socials.

The various groups that comprised the German Nationalist block in the new Austrian government shared a mentality and vision grounded in the context of “Großraum,” the expansive territory of the former Empire. As such, the leaders of these parties could not fathom existence in the by comparison minuscule rump Austrian state and sought annexation to Germany if Austria were to lose her leadership role among the Habsburg successor states. The German Nationalists found greatest support among ethnic Germans in the Sudetenland and Alpine regions, with leadership drawn from fraternities (*Burschenschaften*) and student organizations. Along with the Social Democrats, the German Nationalists tended toward anti-clericalism, though they also often espoused anti-Semitism.¹⁸⁸

Society on the Brink of Collapse: Hunger, Outrage, Desperation

While the three majority parties in government struggled to determine the form and direction of the new Austrian state after the fall of the Habsburg Empire, the majority

¹⁸⁷ William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind. An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1918* (Berkeley: U California Press, 1972) 101.

¹⁸⁸ Goldinger/Binder 16.

of the population was more concerned with material security: “Für die breiten Massen gab es jetzt, da die leidvollen Kriegsjahre ihrem Ende entgegengingen, nur den Gedanken: Frieden und Nahrung.”¹⁸⁹ Throughout the war, Austria suffered from a lack of foodstuffs, which the government attempted to counteract through importation from Romania and the Ukraine and by instituting rationing among the citizenry. As food shortages became increasingly acute, so food rationing became increasingly austere. In fact, it was nearly hunger, not an Allied victory or the spread of Bolshevism that toppled the Empire. On January 14, 1918, the Austrian worker population was outraged by the reduction by half of flour rations for individuals. As a result, workers in Wiener Neustadt went on spontaneous strike, which resulted in strikes by industrial workers throughout Lower Austria, Vienna, Upper Austria, and Styria over the following days. Referred to as the “Jännerstreik,” the sudden cessation of production throughout Austria (and soon Hungary) brought the war industry to an abrupt halt, leaving the Empire faced with the very real and sudden threat of revolution:

Als dann noch die ungarische Arbeiterschaft ihren österreichischen Genossen folgte und viele Hunderttausende Streikende die Kriegsproduktion lahmlegten, in stürmischen Massenversammlungen ihre Forderungen aufstellten und die ersten Arbeiterräte wählten, schien die Monarchie vor einer Revolution zu stehen.¹⁹⁰

The “Jännerstreik” confronted Victor Adler and the Social Democrats with the choice between adherence to the present system or supporting a revolution of the proletariat. After careful calculation, Adler determined that a full out revolution would be brutally crushed by the Empire through the use of ethnically non-German troops and could even result in the creation of a military dictatorship. Failing that, the strike zones could be

¹⁸⁹ Goldinger/Binder 16.

¹⁹⁰ Karl R. Stadler, “Die Gründung der Republik,” *Österreich 1918-1938. Geschichte der Ersten Republik*, Vol. 1, ed. Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalnik (Graz: Styria, 1983) 63.

occupied by the armies of the German Empire, which were greatly strengthened after the cessation of hostilities with Russia. In a move demonstrative of Adler's skill in assessing and negotiating the political intricacies of a given situation, the Social Democrats decided that a revolution would neither be in their interest, nor would it be in the interest of the workers' movement. Instead, the party incorporated the heads of the individual strike movements into the workers' councils and thus into the party hierarchy, and then pursued desired concessions from the government through negotiation.

Following the "Jännerstreik" through to the mid-1920s, there were numerous strikes and demonstrations in Austria from the political left. Though the Austrian Communist Party remained small in numbers throughout the life of the First Republic, they represented a threat to the delicate hold the Social Democrats had on Austrian workers. As early as the declaration of the Republic on November 12, 1918, the Communists under the leadership of the "Rote Garde" demanded the establishment of an Austrian Soviet Republic. The threat of a Soviet Austria became even more serious with the establishment of Soviet Republics in Bavaria to the north and Hungary to the east. When Communists again demanded the creation of an Austrian Soviet Republic in a demonstration against unemployment on April 18, 1919, police fired on the crowd. Police again clashed with Communists at a demonstration on June 15, resulting in 20 dead and 80 wounded.¹⁹¹ Attempts by the Communist Party to draw the workers' movement away from the more moderate Social Democrats proved unsuccessful, despite their active demonstrations and deadly clashes with police.

¹⁹¹ Herbert Steiner, "Die Kommunistische Partei," *Österreich 1918-1938. Geschichte der Ersten Republik*, Vol. 1, ed. Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalnik (Graz: Styria, 1983) 319.

The early years of the First Austrian Republic were marked, especially in industrial Vienna, by extreme material shortages and the resultant cold and hunger among large portions of the population, unemployment, and uncertainty. Given the (for many) unexpected fall of the Empire and its defeat by the Allied Powers, it was unclear which direction events would take. Would there be a federal union of the Habsburg successor states; an economic and currency union; annexation as an autonomous state of the German Empire; a Soviet Republic; or something else entirely? The fall of the Empire had shattered the unity surrounding the cult of personality of the Habsburg Dynasty, ended the great multicultural experiment of the “Vielvölkerstaat,” and destroyed the ineffectual, but deeply entrenched bureaucracy so memorably evoked in Kafka’s novels. The crisis of the Empire brought with it personal crises affecting those left to reappraise and reconsider their lives under the new circumstances of the Austrian Republic or its fellow successor states. This brings us back to Hermann Broch, an industrialist whose family’s factory achieved great financial success during the war years producing yarn for uniforms. In a time of such uncertainty and turmoil, where does Broch fit in the political and social context of the Austrian Republic?

The Industrial Socialist: Broch in Post-War Austrian Politics and Society

As shown, during 1918 and 1919, Austria came precariously close to proletarian revolution, avoided only by the skillful intervention of Victor Adler and the Social Democratic Party. In many ways, the lasting legacy of the Social Democrats in Austria is not merely the achievements they made in the area of social welfare (the eight hour

workday, unemployment insurance, Works Councils Act, vacations for workers), but the control of the workers' movement and the avoidance of proletarian revolution.

The masses of workers were of key importance for the development of the Austrian Republic and, as seen in "Die Straße," for Broch as well. While the concept of the mass is not explicitly mentioned in Broch's writings between the publication of "Die Straße" in 1918 and *Die Schlafwandler* in 1930, there is a significant aspect of Broch's life that brought him into direct contact with the masses during this period. In late 1919, Broch became a board member of the Association of the Austrian Textile Industry. Subsequently, Broch served on a mediation commission for the industry court (*Gewerbegericht*) in Wiener Neustadt. Broch served there until 1921, mediating conflicts between employers and employees and learning a great deal about the tactics and strategy of strikes, as well as the mechanisms used by large companies to counter them. Broch made a name for himself soon after joining the commission as a skilled arbitrator in strike cases.¹⁹² His work on the mediation commission is indicative of Broch's personal position as a conscientious industrialist, eager to better the situation of industrial workers, but not by any means supportive of outright class revolution and expropriation of the upper classes. In fact, a rare mention of Broch's activities on the mediation commission reveals the tension between his position as an industrialist – and thus a representative of the capitalist system – and the communist ideology of the workers' movement:

3.9.20 Neustadt. Habe mir Tagebuchpapier mitgenommen u. sitze – nach der Verhandlung – auf die Wiener Nummer wartend im Gerichtssaal. [...] Heute war hier der Neunkirchner Fall, er war ganz interessant – endigte schließlich in einem

¹⁹² Lützel, *Biographie*, 77.

Vergleich, was mir sehr angenehm ist, weil ich sonst maßlos von den Kommunisten angegriffen worden wäre.¹⁹³

Although Broch does not provide additional information about the specifics of this particular case, or his contribution to the mediation process, Lützelers speculates that Broch had been called as an expert witness to respond to a situation that had occurred at one of two cotton spinning plants in Neunkirchen, a town some 25 km southwest of Wiener Neustadt. Broch is delighted that the case could be settled, because in the event of a prolonged dispute between workers and the employer, Broch would likely have been identified by the workers' representatives as an enemy fighting for the interests of the factory owner rather than those of the workers. However, it will be shown that Broch was primarily interested in finding a peaceful compromise, both in strike cases in specific and in Austrian politics and society more generally, between the capitalist business and production leaders and the proletariat. In this sense, Broch fits well into the framework of Austrian Social Democratic politics by attempting to affect social change through mechanisms of mediation and reconciliation between workers and employers in industrial society. Shortly after the publication of "Die Straße" on December 20, 1918, Broch sketched out a plan for governing the new Austrian Republic that would incorporate his ideas on employee-employer cooperation. His plan was published under the title "Konstitutionelle Diktatur als demokratisches Rätssystem" on April 11, 1919, in Benno Karpeles's *Der Friede*, a pacifist political newspaper that focused on analyzing the development of the new Austrian state.

¹⁹³ Hermann Broch, *Das Teesdorfer Tagebuch für Ea von Allesch*, ed. Paul Michael Lützelers (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1995) 90.

“Konstitutionelle Diktatur als demokratisches Rätssystem”

In this essay, Broch voices his opinion on the possible formation of the new Austrian government as a “Räterepublik” (council republic), a highly topical political subject after the creation of Soviet republics in Hungary and Bavaria in late March and early April, 1919, respectively. Broch begins by establishing his definition of dictatorship, which occurs when a particular group exerts its power to realize a central idea, which then necessitates an organizational structure that must be defended by law:

Jeder Staat ist Machtauswirkung seiner Idee. Auch der sozialistische Staat – auch wenn er letzten Endes nicht Staat, sondern “Gesellschaft” sein will – muß zur Aufrechterhaltung seiner Organisation, in der sich seine Idee eben inkarniert, den Machtfaktor, das heißt das Gesetz einstellen. Wer die Idee akzeptiert, akzeptiert damit auch den Machtwillen der Idee. Paradox, oder nicht einmal paradox gesprochen: jeder gesunde Staat ist diktatorisch.¹⁹⁴

In Broch’s terms, dictatorship is the absolute dedication to, and defense of the organizing principle or ideology of a particular state. Even the socialist state, though it may view itself as a social entity (*Gesellschaft*) rather than a political one, is the execution of a specific ideology. Such an ideology, if it is to form the basis of a state and survive as such, must be solidified into law. Broch ends with a paradox: “jeder gesunde Staat ist diktatorisch.” Labeling this statement a paradox recognizes the association of dictatorship with oppression and the limitation or elimination of civil rights. Such a state, viewed from a pro-democracy standpoint, would be decidedly unhealthy, even anathema. In the employ of certain ideologies, dictatorship can curtail the freedoms and crush the initiatives of dissenting members of society, as Broch saw in the budding Soviet Russian state. Broch reveals, though, that the guiding principle of Social Democracy is the kind of

¹⁹⁴ Broch, “Konstitutionelle Diktatur,” 11.

idea that, when made the absolute center of the state, is expressly intended to guarantee the freedoms of all citizens. This guiding principle, Broch reminds Social Democrats, is democracy itself: “Die Sozialdemokratie erinnerte, daß sie nicht nur Sozialismus, sondern auch Demokratie, also Ausdruck des gesamten Volkswillens zu sein anstrebe, und daß sie [...] mit dem Verlust des demokratischen Gedankens einen wesentlichen Bestandteil ihres politischen Ideals einbüße.”¹⁹⁵ Using the concept of a democratic society, Broch argues against the exclusively proletarian revolution as espoused by Bolshevism. Since democracy is the expression of the will of *all* people in a state, a revolution guided by the intentions of one part of society to the detriment of another is inherently anti-democratic. Broch explains that various parts of the Social Democratic party reject such a revolution based on the principle and the will to justice (“Wille zur Gerechtigkeit”).¹⁹⁶ In the pursuit of justice, the Social Democrats and any other group or individual that is guided by the idea of democracy and the freedom of all individuals must reject all forms of injustice and absolutism. By grounding this system in the seemingly unassailable concepts of justice, freedom, and democracy, Broch attempts to claim the moral and political high ground for himself and the Social Democrats.

Broch makes clear his support for the socialist state above all other possibilities because of its dedication to personal freedom. For the socialist state to function, according to Broch, it must create an unflinching dictatorship based on maximal personal freedom. In other words, the individual must be inviolable, and the protection and maintenance of universal personal freedom must be the highest tasks of a dictatorship of democracy:

¹⁹⁵ Broch, “Konstitutionelle Diktatur,” 11.

¹⁹⁶ Broch, “Konstitutionelle Diktatur,” 11.

Gerechtigkeit bedeutet immer Freiheit des Individuums, und wenn auch jeder Staat Machtidee ist und daher einen Teil der persönlichen Freiheit des Individuums quasi als grundlegende Staatssteuer für sich beansprucht, so will der sozialistische Staat – deswegen nennt er sich ja auch bloß Gesellschaft – das Maximum an Freiheit seinen Bürgern gewährleisten: er will eine Gesellschaft freier Menschen sein. Sein politisches Ideal ist also die Identität der vollkommenen Demokratie mit der vollkommenen Diktatur der neuen Staatsidee; erstrebt einen Zustand, in welchem die Idee des neuen Staates und seiner Machtdiktatur von all seinen Bürgern auch gleichmäßig gewollt werde [...].¹⁹⁷

Aside from the social contract between citizen and government, according to which the citizen agrees to forfeit a measure of personal freedom to the government in exchange for security, the socialist state strives to ensure the maximum amount of personal freedom for its citizens. As a society of free individuals, the socialist state can only survive as a democratic dictatorship if the citizenry actively desires the absolute democracy on which the state rests. Broch presents this as the ideal of the socialist state, but it is also Broch's personal ideal, and one that persists throughout his later writings in the form of vehement defenses of democracy and human rights. After establishing social democracy as the ideal political form, Broch begins to describe his own conception of the "Rätesystem" and how it differs from the model of the soviet.

Broch argues that Socialism is an economic principle concerned with the material realities of wealth and production across social boundaries that are anchored in the existing economic order. As such, since farms and factories are the nucleus of the economy, farmers and industrial workers should be the nucleus of the government.¹⁹⁸ But Broch sees a problem in this system not with the industrial workers, whose efforts had thus far been geared toward greater and fairer distribution of wealth amongst all workers,

¹⁹⁷ Broch, "Konstitutionelle Diktatur," 12.

¹⁹⁸ Broch, "Konstitutionelle Diktatur," 13.

but with farmers. Agreeing with the Social Democrat Otto Bauer, Broch does not feel that farmers' councils are feasible in the same way that workers' and soldiers' councils are, since farmers operate from an inherently capitalist mindset focused on possession and expansion of land. Broch also sees no future for soldiers' councils, which must necessarily disappear as the militarism of the First World War faded into a pacifist society. Therefore, the extant workers', soldiers', and farmers' councils can only be a temporary solution on the path to governance by the entire population. In order to achieve a comprehensive governmental system in which the state is not run by a few groups while shutting out others, the capitalist "enemies" must be reconciled with the proletariat and incorporated into the "Rätesystem."

A central goal of communist ideology is the successful attainment of political power for the proletariat and the subsequent expropriation of the upper classes. For Broch, perhaps for personal as much as ideological reasons, this practice constituted an abhorrent violation of personal freedom:

Wenn die Gewalt aber imperativ in die Hände einzelner Volksteile – ganz gleichgültig ob diese die numerische Majorität besitzen oder nicht – gelegt wird, so wird sich der andere Volksteil – wieder völlig gleichgültig ob er zahlenmäßig über- oder unterlegen ist – mit vollem Rechte in seiner Freiheit geschmälert, in seiner Würde als Mensch beleidigt fühlen. Naivere Kommunisten werden eine solche Beleidigung als die gerechte Strafe ansehen, mit der nunmehr der einzelne Kapitalist für seine ausbeuterische Tätigkeit oder die seiner Vorfahren belegt wird – aber [...] so muß, eben aus dem Geist des Sozialismus heraus, immer wieder darauf verwiesen werden, daß jede imperative Vergewaltigung der Freiheit an sich, ausgeübt von Menschen gegen Menschen, daß jede Beleidigung der Menschenwürde fluchwürdigstes Verbrechen ist und bleibt.¹⁹⁹

In order to avoid all out civil war between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, the former must disavow the communist strategy of expropriation as retribution against the latter. As

¹⁹⁹ Broch, "Konstitutionelle Diktatur," 14.

Broch points out, such a policy of revenge represents a crime against the freedom of a large segment of society and against the inalienable human dignity of those individuals. Though some Bolsheviks may have considered such a punishment a fair response to the appalling treatment of workers during the early Industrial Era, democracy demands that grievances between classes be settled without violating the freedom of either group. This point is central to an understanding of Broch's political stance, which proposes a policy of reconciliation between the classes on the grounds of universal human freedom and dignity. Civil war would serve the needs of only one facet of society, while contributing to the "weitere Verrohung und Vertierung des Menschen [und] die Aufhebung jener äußeren Zivilisation, die den Stolz der Moderne bildet."²⁰⁰ In addition to his appeals to the protection of human dignity and modern civilization, Broch presents an economic argument for avoiding class warfare.

Should the proletariat expropriate and drive the upper classes from society, they do so at the risk of destroying the nation's economic viability: it is the bourgeoisie, not the workers, that possesses the knowledge of production and distribution on which the economy is based:

die eigentlichen Träger des Wirtschaftslebens – sowohl die Leiter der Großproduktion, der Finanzen und des Verkehrs, als auch eben die Bauern und Kleingewerbetreibenden und schließlich die freien Berufe – nicht dem Proletariat, zumindest nicht der Arbeiterschaft angehören.²⁰¹

By removing these groups from society, the workers effectively eradicate all knowledge of how to manage an economy and the means of production. The result is that a

²⁰⁰ Broch, "Konstitutionelle Diktatur," 15-16.

²⁰¹ Broch, "Konstitutionelle Diktatur," 16.

successful proletarian revolution would necessitate not only the rebuilding of society, but also of the entire economic and industrial apparatus:

Ein Kriegszustand mit diesen Gruppen bringt, wie es eben in Rußland geschehen ist, das gesamte ökonomische Getriebe in die Gefahr der Verelendung und stellt die Arbeiterschaft in einer Zeit, wo es ohnehin um Leben und Tod geht, vor die ungeheure Aufgabe, ein Wirtschaftsleben, das sie organisatorisch halbwegs intakt übernehmen hätte können, neu aufbauen und ausbauen zu müssen.²⁰²

Broch's suggestion to the proletariat is to heed, if not moral compunction, economic good sense and accept their victory by inviting the bourgeoisie to participate on equal footing in a new society. Such a just and magnanimous act would, according to Broch, be accepted without bitterness by the defeated party. Again Broch uses the notions of "Gerechtigkeit" and democracy to bolster his plan for reconciliation: "die Sozialdemokratie darf ihr eingeborenes demokratisches Prinzip nicht aufgeben; auch nicht zugunsten des Rätessystems."²⁰³ To this end Broch proposes a modification of the prevailing "Rätessystem" that incorporates the representation of bourgeoisie business and industrial interests, thus transforming the "Rätessystem" from a transitional to a definite system of democratic economic representation.

At this point in Broch's argumentation, his reasoning, while ostensibly – and I would argue genuinely – based on democracy and the protection of human freedom, borders on an attempt at reclaiming the capitalist actor for socialist society. This is important, because it could be read as a desire on Broch's part to legitimize his own personal position as factory owner and capitalist. First, Broch tries to create a space for the bourgeoisie within communist ideology by reassessing the term "Arbeiter":

²⁰² Broch, "Konstitutionelle Diktatur," 16.

²⁰³ Broch, "Konstitutionelle Diktatur," 16.

Und sind jene nicht auch schon jetzt werktätige Arbeiter? Leisten nicht selbst auch die spezifischen Träger des Kapitalismus, der Finanzier und Kaufmann, deren Verschwinden ja einmal nur zu begrüßen sein wird, leistet aber vor allem der industrielle Unternehmer nicht eine, für die Gemeinschaft jetzt noch unumgänglich notwendige, werktätige Arbeit?²⁰⁴

If one is forced to concede that capitalists work and perform necessary services for society, then this creates a space for them within a society of workers. It is striking that Broch accords the most importance to his own profession, the industrial businessman. Broch attempts, by broadly defining “Arbeiter” to include all individuals who perform a task, rather than using the narrower communist definition which refers to skilled and unskilled manual laborers within an industrial setting, to establish his profession as part of the economic vanguard. More importantly, Broch seems to be creating an image of industrial business as not only essential to the economy and society, but also as compatriots of the industrial working class. This is obviously problematic, since oppressive factory owners were the arch-enemies and primary targets of the proletarian revolution.

Second, in seeing himself as an exception within his profession, or perhaps wanting to convince himself of this, one could argue that Broch makes surprisingly naive, apologetic statements about capitalism and his fellow industrialists. By way of defending and promoting the cooperation of factory owners in the restructuring of the industrial landscape according to socialist principles, Broch accords the average factory owner an unrealistic amount of care for his work. Rather than tirelessly pursuing profit, Broch’s image of the industrialist is more like a small business owner, for whom the factory is a labor of love: “man darf die Liebe, die er [der Unternehmer] zu seinem Werke hegt, das

²⁰⁴ Broch, “Konstitutionelle Diktatur,” 17.

meistenteils seine Lebensarbeit ist, nicht unterschätzen. Auch er arbeitet ja meistens nicht ‘für sich selbst’ – die Einfachheit der Lebensführung vieler Kapitalisten ist bekannt –, sondern für das ‘Werk’, manchmal für seine Erben.”²⁰⁵ At best, this view of the average industrialist is an overly optimistic estimation of Broch’s peers based on his own experience in the profession. At worst, it is complete delusion. As frequently in his work, Broch simply states that these things are true, without any attempt to provide examples. To whom, exactly, was the simplicity of many capitalists’ lifestyles well-known? These statements are especially difficult to understand when compared to Broch’s later portrayals of businessmen and capitalism in *Die Schlafwandler*. The image of the sensitive, modest industrialist stands in direct contrast to the cold, calculating character of Huguenau, who is willing to rape and murder his way to success and personal gain. It is difficult, then, to understand these naïve pronouncements about capitalism without viewing them as an attempt by Broch to secure a blameless position for himself in the new socialist society.

Finally, having convinced himself that the bourgeoisie, as productive members of society possessing essential and irreplaceable economic and industrial knowledge, and generally uninterested in the blind pursuit of profit, Broch presents his plan for a hybrid socialist/capitalist governmental structure. Broch envisions a bicameral system composed of a higher chamber – a democratic parliament – responsible for legislation and political direction of the nation, and a lower chamber – the “Rätekommer” – composed of “specialists” (*Fachmänner*) from all classes and branches of the economy and responsible for the socialization of the nation. While parliament is to remain a political body, the “Rätekommer” is expressly apolitical and concerned only with the effective socialization

²⁰⁵ Broch, “Konstitutionelle Diktatur,” 18.

of society. The “Rätekommer” is given political guidance by parliament, and should thus be spared any obstacles of political infighting. According to Broch, this system is necessary as a bridge between a politically divided society – Austria after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire – and the ultimate goal of an apolitical socialist state:

Denn war das Ziel der Parlamente völlige Demokratisierung der Welt, und machte erst diese die Monarchie überflüssig, so ist das Ziel des Räteystems völlige Entpolitisierung der Menschheit und kann erst durchdringen, bis diese die politischen Schlacken abgestreift hat.²⁰⁶

For Broch, ridding society of political division and strife is the only means to secure a maximum amount of freedom for every human individual: “Denn erst wenn der politische Staat völlig von der apolitischen Idee durchdrungen sein wird, wird er zur Gesellschaft des freien Menschen werden.”²⁰⁷ Broch’s essay ends by returning to the ideas of democracy and freedom, with justice as the means of achieving and maintaining both. “Konstitutionelle Diktatur als demokratisches Räteystem” could be read as Broch’s response to the political, social, and economic uncertainty of the post-war, post-Habsburg era. This essay is not only important for establishing early on Broch’s fierce dedication to democracy, but also for directly addressing the demands of the impending Bolshevik threat and attempting to reconcile them with Austria’s existing capitalist system, to which Broch belonged. The threat of Bolshevism, though, was not fated to vanish with the publication of Broch’s essay. When the essay was written, Central European borders and ideologies were in flux, leaving Broch and the rest of Europe unsure as to how the political situation might progress.

²⁰⁶ Broch, “Konstitutionelle Diktatur,” 22.

²⁰⁷ Broch, “Konstitutionelle Diktatur,” 23.

Bolshevism on the Horizon

Throughout 1919 and 1920, Poland and Soviet Russia were engaged in a conflict over disputed territories not firmly defined by the Treaty of Versailles. Following the end of the war, the nascent Republic of Poland under Józef Piłsudski took advantage of the confusion to reclaim lands it had lost during the Partitions of Poland in the 18th century. Simultaneously, the newly-formed Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic attempted to push its borders and Bolshevik ideology westward toward the heart of Europe. It was unclear at the time what the outcome of the conflict would be, which led those in the West to seriously fear the imminent westward spread of Bolshevist ideology by way of a conquered Poland. This fear was briefly heightened by the creation of Soviet Republics on two of Austria's borders in Bavaria and Hungary. In letters to his lover Eva von Allesch, Broch frequently refers to the uncertainty surrounding the Polish-Soviet War, becoming increasingly convinced of the inevitability of a Soviet victory and the resultant destruction of bourgeois culture, of which—for better or worse—Broch was a product and participant.

As a liberally educated, wealthy industrialist, Broch was, according to Bolshevist ideology, a sworn enemy of the proletariat. While Broch's work on strike mediation derived from his humanitarian desire to secure basic rights and improved conditions for workers, he also had a vested interest in the cultural and intellectual institutions of the bourgeoisie. In his expressions of foreboding, Broch equates the victory of Bolshevism with the end of his own academic production: "*Tagebuch* 7. VII. 20. Mittags Zeitung u. vom bolschewistischen Sieg gelesen. Ich behalte Recht: der Bolschewismus u. Kaus

werden kommen u. ich werde meine Bücher niemals fertig schreiben.”²⁰⁸ In this passage, “Kaus” refers to the Austrian essayist and psychologist Otto Kaus, a mutual acquaintance of Broch and Ea von Allesch and enthusiastic proponent of the 1918 Russian Revolution. Already by the end of July 1920, Broch began to consider Bolshevism’s success a matter of certainty, one to which he would need to proactively adapt: “Ich hoffe nur, daß sich der Bolschewismus erst nach Karlsbad einsetzt. Ob die Kandidatur mit Rücksicht auf den Bolschewismus – allerdings nur unter gewissen Vorbedingungen – nicht doch ratsam wäre, wäre zu erwägen.”²⁰⁹ Here Broch is so convinced of the impending arrival of Bolshevism that he feels it necessary to incorporate it into his travel plans, in this case a planned trip to Karlsbad with Ea von Allesch. Though Broch professes in “Die Straße” to espouse Communist ideology insofar as it applies to theoretical materialism (“Keinerlei Besitz besitzt mich”),²¹⁰ in its practical application, Bolshevism threatened Broch’s property, – whether it possessed him or not – the free and unencumbered pursuit of his intellectual interests, and even his life. That Broch mentions plans to run as a Social Democratic candidate for the Lower Austrian state parliament is curious. On the one hand, Broch seems to think that a Bolshevik takeover in Austria is inevitable and will, in days or weeks, completely upend his present life. On the other, Broch proposes to run for office as a member of the party most in control of the industrial masses in Austria. Perhaps Broch thought that, if he were to become actively engaged in politics, he might be able to help deflect the Bolshevik threat from a position of actual power. If not, it is unclear how such a move would be advisable: if he were to be elected as an official of the Social Democratic party directly preceding a Bolshevik victory, he would win himself

²⁰⁸ Broch, *Tagebuch*, 19.

²⁰⁹ Broch, *Tagebuch*, 40.

²¹⁰ Broch, “Die Straße,” 30.

little favor from the victors, in whose eyes the Social Democrats in Austria had sacrificed social revolution for political stability.

Competing Demands: Broch's Life Between Work, Family, and Learning

Both the essay “Konstitutionelle Diktatur als demokratisches Rätssystem” and Broch's diary entries for Ea von Allesch attest to the fact that Broch was aware of political developments in Austria and the rest of Europe. These texts also show that Broch did indeed take a position on contemporary political arguments, even if his position remained conceptual. Given the gravity of the social and political situation in post-war Austria, and in Vienna in particular, one is moved to ask why Broch as a conscientious industrialist with humanitarian ideals does not deal more directly with these issues in writing. By looking at Broch's biography, though, one can find several convincing reasons for this absence of written engagement.

Since 1915, Broch had worked as the chairman of the board of his family's textile factory in Teesdorf, a small town 15 miles southwest of Vienna. In this capacity, Broch had numerous daily tasks to perform, both around Teesdorf and in Vienna. These included answering correspondence, both written and by telephone, leading foreign investors around the factory grounds, settling employee grievances, attending board meetings in Vienna, negotiating with electricity and water boards, etc. The workload required of Broch during the 1910s and 1920s was, according to Broch's own admission, utterly exhausting.²¹¹ But Broch's days did not end after his business duties were

²¹¹ Broch, *Tagebuch*. In his letters to Ea von Allesch, Broch makes almost daily mention of the physical and mental exhaustion resulting from his business duties.

completed. Rather, Broch spent his evenings—and often late nights—pursuing his interests in philosophy, science, and mathematics.

As a result of the demands of his dual career as industrialist and scholar, Broch's marriage suffered and eventually collapsed. Broch's work kept him frequently apart from his family, either away in Vienna on business, or sequestered in his study. This left Broch's wife, Franziska von Rothermann, stranded in the dull village of Teesdorf alone and with little to occupy herself, while Broch made constant trips into Vienna, both for business and for pleasure.²¹² Franziska von Rothermann, two years older than Broch, was the daughter of Rudolf von Rothermann, a wealthy owner of sugar factories in nearby Burgenland. At the end of 1907, Broch, then 21 years old, met Franziska on a train to Vienna. The couple's courtship was initially met with considerable resistance from Franziska's family. The Rothermanns were significantly wealthier than the Brochs, living in the fashion of the Hungarian country nobility in Hirm (formerly Fölszerfalva). In addition to the marked social and financial distance between the two families, there was the issue of religion: the Rothermanns were Catholic, while the Brochs were Jewish. In the summer of 1908, the Rothermanns made a last desperate attempt at quashing the budding romance between their daughter and the young Broch by sending the former on vacation to the Riviera with her aunt. The family hoped that this would distract Franziska, causing her to forget Broch in the process. The Rothermanns' plan was unsuccessful, though, as Broch followed Franziska and the two shared a romantic getaway together. For the next year, Broch was a frequent guest at the Rothermanns' villa in Hirm. Despite their initial misgivings about Franziska's suitor, soon the entire Rothermann family was

²¹² Lützel, *Biographie*, 53.

won over by Broch's charms.²¹³ After Broch's conversion to Catholicism on July 16, 1909 and his appointment to the board of directors of the Teesdorfer factory, the way was clear for Broch and Franziska to be married. The wedding took place on December 11, 1909 in St. Helena's church in Baden-Weikersdorf bei Wien and was followed by a lavish reception paid for by the bride's family, which—along with the sizeable dowry—was especially flattering to Broch's family. Ten months later, the couple's first and only child, Hermann Friedrich Maria Broch, was born on October 4, 1910.

After the wedding, the young family lived in Teesdorf in a two-story house on the factory grounds, while retaining three rooms in the Broch family apartment at Gonzagagasse 7 for use during visits to Vienna. Broch's parents lived mainly in Vienna, but they spent the summer months in Teesdorf, living on the top floor of the family residence. Although Franziska got along well with her in-laws, she was troubled by the Brochs' constant, almost obsessive concern with financial matters, which often led to quarreling. Hermann Broch, however, seemed to be the only family member capable of considering any other topic of conversation.²¹⁴ Teesdorf, only 15 miles southwest of Vienna, was, as Paul Michael Lützeler describes it, "ein gottverlassenes Nest."²¹⁵ While Broch was constantly called to the capital for business meetings and his own social engagements, Franziska was left to her boredom in Teesdorf. Added to the crushing ennui of her daily life, Franziska also suffered from Broch's study patterns. After a long day of tedious travel, meetings, business obligations, and visits, Broch would retire to his study to occupy himself with what he felt was his real work: the acquisition and contemplation of knowledge on a range of topics including philosophy and mathematics.

²¹³ Lützeler, *Biographie*, 48.

²¹⁴ Lützeler, *Biographie*, 53.

²¹⁵ Lützeler, *Biographie*, 53.

Although Broch accorded the utmost value to his philosophic and academic endeavors, his nightly studies had the added benefit of providing an escape from family strife and his hated daytime occupation. Initially Broch's studies were limited to "das in gebildeten bürgerlichen Familien übliche Feierabend-Maß,"²¹⁶ but after 1913 Broch devoted increasingly more time and energy to intellectual pursuits at the expense of his family life. Additionally, differences of personality and interest—in contrast to Broch the philosophical mind, Franziska von Rothermann was a lover of fashion and uncomplicated amusement—emphasized the couple's incompatibility and exacerbated their marital problems. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, Broch and Franziska began to drift apart, with Broch entering into a number of affairs before their divorce was finalized in 1923.

In an epistolary diary written at the behest of, and intended for, Broch's mistress Ea von Allesch from 1920 to 1921, Broch detailed his exhaustion and dissatisfaction with his family and career, while also lamenting the difficulty and inadequacy of his first forays into philosophical writing. Throughout the diary, Broch repeatedly expresses his fear that his insights will either arrive in published form too late to gain him the proper acclaim for his theories, or that they will never be completed at all: "Abends Dr. Adler als Gast. Habe ihm mein Buch erzählen müssen u. war dann so erregt u. verzweifelt über das Nicht-fertig-werden, daß ich überhaupt nicht geschlafen habe."²¹⁷ The book to which Broch refers is his study "Theorie der Geschichtsschreibung und der Geschichtsphilosophie," which was Broch's attempt at a synthesis of empirical science and philosophy with respect to the study of historical events. This study—which in confirmation of his fears Broch was never to finish—is a precursor to Broch's later goal

²¹⁶ Lützel, *Biographie*, 53.

²¹⁷ Broch, *Tagebuch*, 14.

of reconciling philosophy and science through literature, a goal detailed and pursued in *Die Schlafwandler*. Broch's theory of "Geschichtsphilosophie" tries to incorporate the empirical facts of history with philosophical inquiry into the deeper meaning, motives, and causation of occurrences. The problem lies in addressing the "what" and the "why" without limiting oneself to the sheer accumulation of facts on the one hand and without succumbing to dilettantism in the pursuit of individual subjective interpretations of events on the other. While formulating his ideas, Broch was plagued by seeing the ghosts of his own ideas in other writings, at once further convincing him of the need for haste in finishing his work and casting doubt on the worth of ideas he found written in the works of what he considered lesser minds. In a diary passage from July 29, 1920, Broch formulates his fears more dramatically: "Ich komme bestimmt zu spät: dann erschieße ich mich auch bestimmt."²¹⁸ Though the threat of suicide seems more hyperbole than threat, the passage makes it clear how acutely aware Broch was of the time-sensitive nature of academic discovery.

A contributing factor to Broch's fears of intellectual tardiness was his perceived lack of formal education and fundamental theoretical knowledge in the field of philosophy: "*Ich bin überzeugt zu spät zu kommen, umsomehr als ich noch eine Menge zuzulernen habe*"²¹⁹; and: "ich weiß wirklich nicht, was ich tun werde, wenn ich jetzt mit der Arbeit zu spät komme. *Dabei habe ich noch so entsetzlich viel zu lernen.*"²²⁰ As a result of Broch's father's success in the field of textile production, Broch was given an education geared specifically toward preparing him to one day take over the family factory. After graduating from the K.K. Staats-Realschule in Vienna's first district in

²¹⁸ Broch, *Tagebuch*, 54.

²¹⁹ Broch, *Tagebuch*, 93.

²²⁰ Broch, *Tagebuch*, 80.

1904, Broch attended four semesters at the Höhere Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt für Textilindustrie (“Wiener Webschule”) in the fifth district. At the same time, in the winter semester 1904/05, Broch audited several lectures and seminars at the University of Vienna against his father’s wishes, namely “Praktische Philosophie” and “Aristoteles” with Laurenz Müllner, “Algebra” with Franz Mertens, “Elemente der Differentiale und Integrale” with Wilhelm Wirtinger, and “Prinzipien der Naturphilosophie” with Ludwig Boltzmann.²²¹ However, the demands of the Wiener Webschule left little time or energy for extra studies, and Broch was soon forced to give up his courses at the University. In 1906, Broch transferred to a second technical school for two semesters, the Obere Spinn- und Webschule zu Mühlhausen in Alsace. Having learned weaving techniques during his studies in Vienna, Broch began studying spinning technology in Mühlhausen. In the summer of 1907, Broch graduated with a degree in engineering and was able to patent a machine for mixing textile materials that was the focus of his thesis. In a letter to Helene Wolff in 1947, Broch describes his undesired educational path:

Geboren am 1. November 1886 in Wien. Schulen in Wien. Mit 19 zum ersten Mal in Amerika, um den Baumwollhandel zu lernen. Nichts gelernt. Mit Müh und Not sodann Textilmaschinenbau und -technologie erlernt und darin diplomiert. Voller Widerwillen, weil ich eigentlich Mathematik habe studieren wollen, aber statt dessen gab es bloß Handelsfächer für mich [...].²²²

Broch’s entire education was controlled by his father, and as a result he accrued technical experience in his father’s field of choice, but contrary to Broch’s actual interests. In order to fill in the gaps left by an education geared primarily toward industrial management—

²²¹ Lützel, *Biographie*, 37.

²²² Broch, “Brief an Helene Wolff vom 25.10.1947,” *Briefe 1945-1951*, KW 13/3, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1981) 179-80.

and not already addressed by Broch's leisure time studies—Broch decided to reenroll in the University of Vienna.

By 1925, Broch had grown tired of the rigors of business life and the relentless pursuit of profit emphasized by industrial capitalism and embodied in the person of his father, Josef Broch. In early 1925, Broch decided finally to sell the family's factory, thus freeing himself to study philosophy and mathematics, both integral parts of "ein stetes Arbeiten um die Erkenntnis der Welt,"²²³ which Broch saw as the essential goal of human existence. In a letter from February 5, 1925, Broch attempted to explain this conviction to his father, for whom intellectual pursuits seemed a waste of time and effort. Following Descartes's famous dictum "cogito ergo sum," Broch presented the human individual in its two-fold nature as a physical being (one among many bipedal organisms bound by death and the laws of nature) and a mental being (the singular ego, whose consciousness is the ultimate measure of reality). By realizing that reality is contingent on the singular perception of the individual ego, one transcends the limits of physicality and becomes simply "das 'Denkende.'"²²⁴ As pure consciousness, the ego has no convincing evidence that it will or must ever cease to exist: from the individual perspective, the consciousness has always existed and there is no compelling reason to assume it should ever be otherwise. The assumption of the infinity of consciousness in contradistinction to the finitude of the physical organism forms, according to Broch, the logical basis for the religious conception of everlasting life. Broch further posits that, if the individual consciousness could be separated from mortal flesh, it could achieve true understanding of reality *as* reality, and thus become godlike: "Würde das Ich vom Körperlichen

²²³ Broch, "Brief an Joseph Broch vom 5.2.1925," *Briefe 1913-1938*, 63.

²²⁴ Broch, "Brief an Joseph Broch vom 5.2.1925," 62.

losgelöst sein und faktisch die gesamte Wirklichkeit nicht nur als Traum, sondern wirklich als Wirklichkeit erkennen können, so hätte es das Bewußtsein eines Gottes und müßte als solcher unsterblich sein.”²²⁵ As Broch notes, however, this is an impossibility. Humans do, though, possess a means to approach such understanding and immortality, namely through the pursuit of knowledge:

jeder Schritt in der Erkenntnisarbeit aber führt zu diesem Ziel, und das unerhörte Glücksgefühl, das man empfindet, wenn man einmal selbst eine kleine neue Erkenntnis gefunden hat, beweist, wie richtig diese Anschauung ist. Ich bin fest überzeugt, daß ein stetes Arbeiten um die Erkenntnis der Welt am Schluß des Lebens nicht verloren geht, nicht nur, weil man der Welt eine neue Erkenntnis gebracht hat, die unverloren bleibt, sondern weil sich das Ich eine Annäherung an die Unsterblichkeit erkämpft hat.²²⁶

Broch explains here, in all sincerity and without cynicism, his faith in the pursuit of knowledge as a means by which the human individual can challenge death’s ultimate victory by attaining an ever greater understanding of reality. The emphasis here is that the pursuit of knowledge is not merely a general human pursuit, but an emphatically individual one. Were it enough for reality to be understood by humanity in general, then Broch would have no need to study himself; perhaps this would have been the view taken by Broch’s father, if he even felt it worthy of consideration. Rather, it is up to every individual to seek knowledge on his own, profiting from the insights of those who have come before, while contributing new insights of one’s own. It is this notion and conviction that motivated the course of Broch’s life, redirecting him from his father’s path as a businessman to the constant search for understanding through the accumulation of knowledge about the world.

²²⁵ Broch, “Brief an Joseph Broch vom 5.2.1925,” 63.

²²⁶ Broch, “Brief an Joseph Broch vom 5.2.1925,” 63.

Though the sale of the family factory was not finalized until 1927, Broch began attending lectures and seminars at the University of Vienna in the winter of 1925. At this point in his life, Broch had not yet decided to pursue a literary career. In fact, before Broch had made a name for himself as an author with *Die Schlafwandler* (1930-32), he often told others in conversation that he was a mathematician.²²⁷ During his nine semesters at university, Broch never took a single literature course. Instead, he immersed himself in advanced mathematics and, importantly, in the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle: Broch took numerous courses with Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Hans Hahn, and Karl Menger, as well as a single lecture by Viktor Kraft. This period of Broch's life was intended primarily for the accumulation of the philosophical and mathematical knowledge necessary to bolster his academic work, specifically in the areas of logic, epistemology, natural philosophy, geometry, set theory, differential and integral calculus, and algebra, among others. Consequently, Broch's student years from 1925 to 1929 are marked by a minimum of publication, limited to one mathematical review and the study, "Die sogenannten philosophischen Grundfragen einer empirischen Wissenschaft," which was likely the beginning of his planned dissertation.²²⁸

Looking at this period in Broch's life, one can find many potential reasons for his lack of direct engagement with the concept of the mass. Until 1927, Broch was burdened by the constant requirements of his career as an industrial businessman. While he frequented coffee houses and salons in Vienna, he was more often than not run ragged by the obligations of his work for the Teesdorfer factory. This created an image of a man who was constantly in a hurry, rushing from visit to appointment, from meeting to

²²⁷ Lützel, *Biographie*, 96.

²²⁸ Lützel, *Biographie*, 99.

mediation. In Elias Canetti's *Augenspiel*, Broch is portrayed as constantly moving, fleeing from engagement to engagement, even fleeing from those he chanced to meet on the way:

Die Eile, in der man ihn sah, wenn man ihn zufällig auf der Straße traf, war sein einziger Schutz. Er sagte als erstes – und obwohl es statt eines Grußes war, war es freundlich –, “Ich bin in Eile” [...]. Es war eine doppelte Flucht, in der er sich so befand: von denen, mit denen er gerade beisammen war, mußte er sich losreißen, denn er wurde erwartet, und auf dem Weg mußte er allen entlaufen, die ihm begegnen konnten und ihn festzuhalten suchten.²²⁹

Canetti describes Broch as a man who was excessively accommodating of others: “Ich begriff bald, daß er niemanden abzuschütteln vermochte. Ich habe nie ein Nein von ihm gehört.”²³⁰ This “doppelte Flucht,” the hectic flight from one person to another, was the only way Broch could escape absolute devotion to any particular person's needs: “Jede Begegnung war für ihn eine Gefahr, denn er konnte sich ihr nicht mehr entziehen.”²³¹ This sense of being hounded from one place or individual to another is also evident in the rapid lists that chart Broch's trajectory on a given day in the diary for Ea von Allesch.

The entry for July 31, 1920 is a prime example:

Kabasta, [...] dann zu Dir [Ea von Allesch]. [...] Mit Dir zur Elektrischen. Bleistiftwerk, Wohnungsbüro, Friseur, Advokat, Bayer (Mathematika gekauft), Rosner, Schönfeld, mein Jugendspiel Marta [...], Rathaus (Boubick), Elektrische, Schelle, 1 h bei Dir gegessen [...]. Aber um ½3 h schon weg, da Ernst Sch. nach T. hätte kommen sollen. Kam aber nicht. Mit meiner Mutter gefahren; Fabrik, dann exzerpiert u. Bücher geordnet, weil ich so müde war.²³²

The fast pace of Broch's business life made it extremely difficult for him to dedicate more than a few evening hours stolen from family and sleep to his studies and writings.

²²⁹ Elias Canetti, *Das Augenspiel. Lebensgeschichte 1931-1937* (München: Hanser, 1994) 35.

²³⁰ Canetti 34.

²³¹ Canetti 34.

²³² Broch, *Tagebuch*, 54-55.

As is evident in Broch's entry, though, the physical toll of his daily routine made it all but impossible for him to accomplish much at day's end.

At home, Broch was confronted with an unhappy marriage and a family consumed by financial rather than intellectual considerations. When Broch escaped from family and factory to what he considered his real work – academic writing – he was consumed by insecurity and frustration at his lack of fundamental knowledge and the slow pace of production. Compounded by the social and political uncertainty of post-war European, Austrian, and Viennese society, Broch attempted to establish a foundation and direction for himself. In the essay “Konstitutionelle Diktatur als demokratisches Rätssystem,” Broch assessed the Austrian political situation with the clear goal of conceptualizing a system that would incorporate him – a capitalist industrialist – into a society governed by socialist, if not communist ideology. In 1920 and 1921, Broch expressed his constant fear that Bolshevism would shortly conquer Austria, indicating the untenability or unlikely acceptance by Bolsheviks of his “konstitutionelle Diktatur.” Yet these texts deal with the concept of the mass only insofar as it is essential to the workers' movement and Bolshevism. Given the desperate conditions for the Viennese population after the war, with cold and hunger claiming numerous lives in 1919 and 1920, it seems odd that Broch did not express his feelings on the situation in writing. Perhaps this was a topic discussed feverishly among acquaintances in the Café Central, a topic so ubiquitous as to be beyond mentioning in correspondence or letters to a paramour living in Vienna among the suffering. After Broch's shift to a predominantly literary career in 1929 when he began writing *Die Schlafwandler* and as Fascist governments arose in Italy, Germany, and, in 1938, Austria, both the concept of the mass and politics in general were given

increasing attention in Broch's works. To see how Broch incorporated political theory into literature, it will be necessary to start at the beginning of his production, with Broch's *Schlafwandler* trilogy.

CHAPTER IV

LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS. SCENES OF THE MASS IN BROCH'S FICTION

With the publication of "Die Straße," Broch addressed the mass for the first time, a concept that would prove to be of importance for the bulk of his writing. Through the 1920s, Broch's energies were consumed by the demands of his occupation as the head of the family textile works, an ailing marriage, social obligations, as well as a rigorous program of academic study at the University of Vienna and a complicated love affair. In light of these challenges, the mass seems to have receded into the background of Broch's considerations, at least as evidenced by the content of his correspondence and the works published during this period.

In Broch's first novel, though, the mass resurfaces, marking the beginning of an extensive literary occupation with the phenomenon. As Broch's literary career developed, the mass became increasingly central to the content and plot of his novels, culminating in the unfinished and posthumously published *Die Verzauberung*, a work fundamentally concerned with the circumstances and results of mass hysteria. To illustrate the increasing visibility and importance of the mass in Broch's literary writing prior to *Die Verzauberung*, this chapter will analyze scenes of mass events in *Die Schlafwandler*, *Die Entsöhnung* (1932), *Die Unbekannte Größe* (1933), and *Der Tod des Vergil* (1945).

As Broch accorded greater importance to the mass in each subsequent novel, he in turn described the mass in ever greater detail. Viewing each scene side by side reveals questions about the representational difficulties of the mass. In the same way that the

concept of the mass challenged generations of philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, and politicians by evading easy definition, so too did it pose a challenge to those who attempted to portray it, both visually as well as literarily. What is it then about the mass that makes it unrepresentable, or that at least problematizes its representation? In his comprehensive study *Masse lesen, Masse schreiben*, Michael Gamper grounds the mass's problematic representation in its fleeting, performative nature:

Die 'Masse' ist als konkrete Erscheinung nie von Dauer, sie vermittelt sich stets nur in der Performanz ihres momentanen Zusammen- und Auftretens; wenn sie sich nicht als performatives Ereignis zeigt, kann sie nur als virtuelle beziehungsweise potentielle 'Masse' imaginiert werden. Die 'Masse' gibt sich damit nicht wie etwa die 'Nation' in ihren Repräsentationen zu erkennen, sondern verweigert sich geradezu einer solchen festen Semantik.²³³

Gamper's assessment draws a distinction between the present and the absent mass.

According to Gamper, the mass is always expressed as a performance, meaning that the mass exists as a concrete entity only for the brief period that it is physically present. If the mass is absent, it can only be imagined as the possibility of performance. The ephemerality of the mass confounds its abstract representation, that is, the representation of the mass which is not physically present. In a separate study, Gamper and Peter Schnyder refer to the mass, along with the "Zeitgeist," as a "kollektives Gespenst" and an "unfaßbarer Körper." Gamper and Schnyder argue that as traditional hierarchical structures of power—specifically European feudalism—gave way to more complex and opaque forms of social organization, the resulting collective structures defied clear understanding:

Die Bezeichnung der verhandelten Objekte als "kollektive Gespenster" verweist zunächst auf die ungesicherte Seinsweise der sozialen Mächte und Aggregate. Sie macht deutlich, daß sich die disparaten Dinge, wie ihre Bildspender, letztlich jeder konzeptuellen Vereinheitlichung entziehen, daß sie weder praktisch noch

²³³ Michael Gamper, *Masse lesen, Masse schreiben* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2007) 20.

diskursiv ‘in den Griff’ zu bekommen sind, daß sie eben ‘unfaßbar’ bleiben. Die Umschreibung als “unfaßbare Körper” wiederum versteht sich dahingehend, daß die aufgegriffenen Phänomene sich nicht mehr zu festen Formen, zu organischen und klar konturierten ‘Körpern’ verfestigen.²³⁴

The inherent transience of the mass coupled with the opacity of collective social structures results in a phenomenon that is both difficult to represent and to comprehend. The various mass psychologies explored earlier, including those of Le Bon, Freud, and Geiger, are all attempts to cut through the confusion identified by Gamper and Schnyder. Each seeks to arrive at an understanding of the fundamental structural elements that unite the mass and govern its peculiar behavior. Such theories strive to make the mass graspable (*fassbar*) by revealing a systematic logic in its apparently erratic actions.

While Gamper and Schnyder highlight the difficulty of conceptualizing the mass as a coherent body, Gamper sees literature as a possible means of circumventing the theoretical ambiguity of the mass through aesthetic representation:

Die ‘Masse’ [...] verweigert sich geradezu einer solchen festen Semantik. Umso offener steht sie freilich dadurch den Zuschreibungen, die an sie herangetragen werden, mithin auch der Bearbeitung durch die Literatur, die in ihrer Diskursivierung zur ‘Dichtung’ sprachliche Techniken entwickelt hat, welche auch dem Flüchtigen und Abwesenden zu ästhetischer Darstellung verhelfen. Literatur ist damit als Vermittlerin der ‘Masse’ gleich in doppelter Weise angesprochen: einerseits als Nachrichtenmedium, das Informationen übermittelt über eine nicht-präsente Sache, andererseits als Erfahrungsmedium, das den Rezipienten durch die spezifische Darstellungsweise von Stoffen und Inhalten neue Bereiche des Verstehens und des Empfindens erschließt.²³⁵

According to Gamper, literature provides a unique language and space for imagining ambiguous phenomena such as the mass. Like theoretical writing, literature can relay information about a subject, but literature can also replicate or create the experience of

²³⁴ Michael Gamper and Peter Schnyder, “Kollektive Gespenster: Eine Einleitung,” *Kollektive Gespenster: Die Masse, der Zeitgeist und andere unfaßbare Körper*, ed. Michael Gamper and Peter Schnyder (Freiburg i.Br.: Rombach, 2006) 12.

²³⁵ Gamper 20.

diffuse phenomena. As such, literature provides access to regions of understanding and experience otherwise inaccessible via other media. This concept of literature closely parallels Broch's own assessment in the "Methodologischer Prospekt" to *Die Schlafwandler* (1930-32), wherein Broch assigns literature the task of incorporating and representing those aspects of human life which defy rational explanation and explication:

Dieser Roman hat zur Voraussetzung, daß die Literatur mit jenen menschlichen Problemen sich zu befassen hat, die einesteils von der Wissenschaft ausgeschieden werden, weil sie einer rationalen Behandlung überhaupt nicht zugänglich sind und nur mehr in einem absterbenden philosophischen Feuilletonismus ein Scheinleben führen, andererseits mit jenen Problemen, deren Erfassung die Wissenschaft in ihrem langsameren, exakteren Fortschritt noch nicht erreicht hat.²³⁶

In Broch's view, literature is charged with addressing the problems that science—as represented by the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle—rejects or is not yet prepared to address.

However well-suited literature might be in theory to represent the mass, such representation seems more difficult than either Gamper's or Broch's pronouncements would indicate. In her study, *Die Masse als Erzählproblem*, Annette Graczyk explores the various methods authors have used to represent the mass as an entity and the experience of being included in one. The difficulty derives, Graczyk argues, from the fundamental confrontation between mass and individual.²³⁷ Many literary representations of the mass attempt to present the mass from an individual or individualizing perspective, for example, in mass scenes that are viewed from without by an individual spectator. An author can also treat the mass as a single human subject, focusing on actions performed in unison, for example when a mass is described as shouting as if from one mouth or as

²³⁶ Broch, "Der Roman *Die Schlafwandler*," *Die Schlafwandler*, 719.

²³⁷ Annette Graczyk, *Die Masse als Erzählproblem* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993) 53.

rising as one individual.²³⁸ This view of the mass from an outside perspective is comparatively easier to represent than the view from within the mass itself, as Graczyk notes:

Die schwierigste Aufgabe für die Literatur ist es, die Verhältnisse *in* der Menge zu gestalten, denn hier stößt sie an ein verschärftes Darstellungsproblem: die literarische Vergegenwärtigung von Gleichzeitigkeit. Es ist dies eine Aufgabe, die zu komplexen Raum/Zeit-Strukturen führt, die nicht ohne weiteres mit den Möglichkeiten der traditionellen Literatur zu leisten sind und also nicht ohne weiteres an eine entsprechende Erfahrung und Rezeptionsgewohnheit des Lesers anknüpfen können.²³⁹

Graczyk explains that the representation of the mass is a challenge for more media than just literature. While the visual arts, specifically painting and drawing, can display the mass in its full spatial dimension, “auf einen Blick” so to speak, literature can present the mass only in its temporal progression. Both media, however, are incapable of representing the simultaneity of the mass, which, given its fleeting nature, is central to an accurate representation of a mass event. Attempts to express simultaneity in writing, however, require different methods than those common in traditional literature. The implementation of such novel methods would then fall under the purview of avant-garde and experimental literature.

Broch identified the author who, to his mind, set the standard for the creation and adept use of experimental literary techniques: James Joyce. According to Broch, Joyce managed to create the best example of what Broch calls the “polyhistorischer Roman,” that is, a novel that in both content and form encompasses all aspects of life and creative possibility. The polyhistoric novel must strive to create and contain a “Totalität des

²³⁸ Graczyk 47.

²³⁹ Graczyk 53.

Weltbildes,”²⁴⁰ and in so doing unite the fractured strands of human thought, experience, and value in the tumultuous 20th century. This seems a monumental task, even for as revered an author as James Joyce, but Broch sees in his own production an attempt to create polyhistoric, total novels. As such, Broch places himself among those who are engaged in the project of devising and generating an experimental, all-encompassing literature, the kind which would lend itself to such novel representations of time and space as are called for to introduce simultaneity into a written medium. In the analysis of the following scenes from Broch’s oeuvre, particular attention will be paid to the way in which Broch represents the experience of the mass and to what extent Broch does or does not pierce the veil between the outside spectator and the man in the crowd.

Despite the extensive amount of Broch scholarship that exists, the representation of the mass in Broch’s fiction has been largely overlooked. When the mass has been addressed, it has most often been with reference to the novel *Die Verzauberung*, which will be discussed in the next chapter, or to Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie*. The scenes that follow come from Broch’s two most famous works, *Die Schlafwandler* and *Der Tod des Vergil*, as well as from two of his least well known, *Die Entsöhnung* and *Die Unbekannte Größe*. The scene presented from *Die Schlafwandler* is discussed only once, by Paul Michael Lützeler,²⁴¹ while the latter works are hardly present in the scholarship at all. Though these scenes, when they have been analyzed, have been analyzed only infrequently, they reveal the growing importance of the mass in Broch’s overall social and political conception. As the mass becomes the focus of Broch’s intellectual energies, it is of necessity incorporated into his polyhistoric novels in order to construct and

²⁴⁰ Broch, “Über die Grundlagen des Romans *Die Schlafwandler*,” *Die Schlafwandler*, 732.

²⁴¹ Paul Michael Lützeler, *Hermann Broch: Ethik und Politik* (1973) 117-18.

present a total world within each work. To chart this progression, Broch's representations of the mass will be examined chronologically, beginning with his first novel, *Die Schlafwandler*.

Esch oder die Anarchie

In *Esch oder die Anarchie*, the second volume of the *Schlafwandler* trilogy, Broch invokes the mass by making direct reference to the workers' movement and its importance in the lives of the principal characters. This can be seen most notably in a short sequence surrounding a transportation workers' strike. Having accepted a position with a shipping company in Mannheim, the titular character August Esch is placed squarely within the workers' milieu, coming in contact with sailors, dockworkers, and other industrial laborers. While working there, Esch receives a visit from Martin Geyring, a socialist union functionary, who has come to Mannheim because of a potential transportation workers' strike. The strike as a negotiating tool is inherently a mass phenomenon: in order to force employers to concede to employee demands, it is necessary to engage a large enough number of individuals to strike, so that the employer's business is prevented from functioning. While strikes can be used to peacefully effect changes in working conditions, the response by employers to strikes prior to the establishment of legal rights to engage in such demonstrations were often severe and violent. Aware of this fact and disinclined to pursue a revolutionary strategy, Geyring is deeply concerned with preventing the Mannheim strike.

The meeting is held in a small tavern crowded to overflowing with people. The entrance is monitored by two guards who examine each newcomer before allowing them admittance. Curious to observe the proceedings, Esch arrives at the tavern only to be greeted by the district inspector of the harbor watch, a man Esch knows through work. The inspector advises Esch to leave, since it could be potentially damaging for an employee of the shipping company to be discovered at such a meeting. But Esch's curiosity is stronger than his concern for his job, so he decides to enter the meeting for just a moment. The scenery inside the tavern seems remarkably unsuited to the purposes of the meeting: "Der niedere Saal, geziert mit den Bildnissen des Kaisers, des Großherzogs von Baden und des Königs von Württemberg, war dicht gefüllt. Auf der Estrade stand ein weißgedeckter Tisch, hinter dem vier Männer saßen; einer von ihnen war Martin."²⁴² Surrounded by portraits of the ruling aristocracy, the socialist workers and organizers are gathered under the figurative gaze and scrutiny of the status quo authority. Conversely, against the backdrop of these emblems of the establishment, Geyring and his fellow organizers appear like traitors operating under the influence of capitalist and aristocratic interests. Likely aware of this pictorial connection, provocateurs in the employ of the shipping companies emphasize in vitriolic shouts the close relationship between Geyring, his colleagues, and the oppressive regime:

Esch [...] wunderte sich im nächsten Augenblick, daß er jenen Tisch überhaupt wahrgenommen hatte, so wüst lärmte das Chaos im Saale. Ja, es dauerte eine Zeitlang, bis er bemerkte, daß mitten im Saale ein Mensch auf einen Stuhl gestiegen war und eine unverständliche Sprache von sich gab, wobei er jedes Wort – besonders liebte er das Wort "Demagoge" – mit einer Schleudergeste unterstrich und zu dem Tische auf dem Podium hinaufwarf.²⁴³

²⁴² Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 227.

²⁴³ Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 227.

Geyring, however, seems undeterred by the verbal abuse he receives from the crowd, remaining calm and professional in his response. Perhaps recognizing the meeting for the orchestrated farce it is, Geyring speaks to the crowd without caring if his message is understood or even heard:

die Antwort vom Tische war dünnes Bimmeln einer Glocke, die nicht durchdrang, schließlich aber das letzte Wort behielt, als Martin, auf Krücke und Stuhllehne gestützt, sich erhob und der Lärm verebbte. Zwar war nicht ganz deutlich zu verstehen, was Martin mit der etwas müden und ironischen Routine des gewiegten Versammlungsredners sagte, aber daß er mehr wert war als alle, die um ihn herumbrüllten, das fühlte Esch. Beinahe war es, als käme es Martin gar nicht darauf an, sich Gehör zu verschaffen, denn leicht lächelnd verstummte er und ließ die Rufe "Kapitalistensöldling", "Schweinestaat", "Kaiserlicher Sozialist" ruhig über sich ergehen [...].²⁴⁴

It is clear at this point that the meeting no longer serves any real constructive purpose.

Rather, the agitators hired by the industry employers have created the clear impression that this is an assembly of radicals bent on overthrowing the current regime, the "Schweinestaat." As a result, the meeting is beyond Geyring's control and the incident must be allowed to run its course.

Once the meeting reaches the peak of its intensity, the police move in to break up the event, ordering all those assembled to vacate the tavern: "Wie einer Verabredung gemäß hatten sich die meisten zu dem Hofausgang des Lokales gedrängt. Freilich nützte das den Leuten nichts, denn das ganze Haus war inzwischen von der Polizei umstellt worden, und ein jeder mußte sich legitimieren oder mit auf die Polizeiwache."²⁴⁵

Everything happens "as if" on cue, making it clear that the entire event has been designed and planned by the police in tandem with the industrial employers. Esch is able to avoid interrogation only as a result of his acquaintanceship with the district inspector, whom

²⁴⁴ Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 227-28.

²⁴⁵ Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 228.

Esch promises never to attend such a meeting again: “Sie haben recht gehabt, einmal und nie wieder [...]”²⁴⁶ Despite the seeming flawlessness of the police’s plan, Esch witnesses how quickly the mood of a crowd can shift:

Die Leute standen nun vor dem Lokal, verhielten sich ruhig und schimpften bloß leise auf das Komitee, auf die Gewerkschaft und auf Geyring. Doch mit einem Male wurde es ruchbar, daß das Komitee und Geyring verhaftet worden seien und daß man bloß warte, bis sich die Menge verzöge, um sie abzutransportieren. Da warf die Stimmung jählings um; Pfiffe wurden wieder laut und die Menge schickte sich an, gegen die Polizei loszugehen. Der freundliche Polizeiinspektor, in dessen Nähe Esch geblieben war, gab ihm einen Stoß: “Jetzt verschwinden Sie wohl endlich, Herr Esch”, und Esch, der einsah, daß er hier nichts mehr nützen könne, verzog sich bis zur nächsten Straßenecke [...].²⁴⁷

Where minutes before the crowd had followed the taunts of the company agitators and complained about Geyring and his ilk, the mere rumor that the committee has been arrested is enough to change their allegiance. Additionally, the same rumor awakens among previously docile individuals the desire to attack and physically prevent the police from arresting the committee members.

A strike is inherently a mass action, requiring the involvement of many individuals. Despite the central importance of the mass in executing a strike, in Broch’s strike scene, the mass is mentioned only briefly. What the reader sees is a room filled with a chaotic mass of people, but this mass is never described, only invoked. The only actors in the room appear to be the provocateurs, all of whom are disembodied voices, shouted slogans, except for the man standing on the chair above the crowd. It is not until the crowd exits the tavern and gathers in the street that Broch directly addresses it. As indicated in Broch’s first political essay “Die Straße,” the street is the realm of the mass. Protests, marches, demonstrations, and riots, predominantly occur in the street. On the

²⁴⁶ Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 228.

²⁴⁷ Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 228.

street, the crowd coheres in a mass (here: “die Menge”). Like Le Bon’s crowd, Broch’s mass in this scene is capricious and both quick to anger and action. Without a leader, this mass is driven by emotional contagion, causing an initially peaceful group of people to go from quiet grumbling to being ready to confront the police. Broch’s mass also demonstrates a primitiveness described by Freud’s mass psychology. Namely the crowd has a “magical” response to the mounted policemen’s horses:

Vor dem Lokal hielt der Lärm noch eine gute Weile an. Dann kamen in raschem Trab sechs berittene Schutzleute, und weil Pferde, die zwar fügsame, dennoch etwas irrsinnige Tiere sind, auf viele Menschen eine Art magischen Einfluß ausüben, so war diese kleine hippische Verstärkung entscheidend.²⁴⁸

Whether from fear or fascination, the crowd is again subdued and dispersed with the help of the horses.

It is important to note that the mass does not act in this scene. Rather, the energy of the crowd remains pure potential. As a result, Broch’s strike scene does not stage a mass event in the sense that it examines an outbreak of mass hysteria (*Massenwahn*). The mass remains a secondary character present to facilitate and witness Geyring’s arrest. Even the strike itself remains of secondary importance. The scene we see is only a meeting to discuss the strike, not the strike itself. The strike is mentioned a few pages later in the novel, but only from Esch’s outside perspective. For Esch, the strike is simply a nuisance period, which he passes by playing cards all day. As such, the workers’ struggle and the politics surrounding it are absent from the narrative. Geyring’s arrest becomes a focal point in Esch’s thinking, but not for political or social reasons.

Throughout the novel, Esch is obsessed with the recurrence in various iterations of an initial “Buchungsfehler,” the primal injustice in Esch’s life that appears when he is fired

²⁴⁸ Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 228.

by a superior he suspects of embezzling from the company. This leads Esch to see injustice everywhere, each time involving a victim figure. Esch is the first victim of injustice at the hands of Nentwig, the corrupt bookkeeper. Next is Ilona, a performer in a variety act, who Esch believes must be protected from the danger and defilement represented by the knives thrown at her throughout the show. Finally, Geyring is the innocent victim of an insidious scheme by corrupt police. Esch is then consumed by the desire to expose the police corruption and thus win Geyring's freedom. Each of these victim figures becomes a martyr in Esch's mind, an active sacrifice to heal the rift in the world represented by the "Buchungsfehler": "solange man zusieht, daß Unrecht geschieht, gibt es keine Erlösung auf der Welt...warum hat Martin sich geopfert und sitzt?"²⁴⁹ Esch's conception of justice is extremely narrow, focusing on Geyring's imprisonment rather than on the larger social and political forces that necessitated the planned strike to begin with. As such, the mass remains outside the realm of Esch's, and by extension the rest of the narrative's concern.

Thus far we have examined the first of Hermann Broch's texts where the mass is mentioned, in "Die Straße" (1918) and *Esch oder die Anarchie* (1931). Remarkably, though, neither of these texts contains much of an actual representation of the mass. Rather, the mass remains primarily abstract and conceptual. Beginning with "Die Straße," one can observe that, though the essay contains an early analysis of the phenomenon of "Massenwahn" and, as a result, is primarily a text about the mass, Broch includes only minimal descriptions of how the mass appears. Even the public displays of November 12, 1918, which served as the impetus for Broch's open letter to Franz Blei, are absent from the letter itself. What remains of this initial event is Broch's acknowledgement, "daß [er]

²⁴⁹ Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 240.

damals vor der Volksmasse die Flucht ergriff.“²⁵⁰ Admittedly, it would seem unnecessary for Broch to describe in detail an event for which Blei himself was present. However, it is still striking that, in offering an explanation for his panicked retreat from the gathering crowds, Broch offers no description of his own perception of events as they transpired. Again, though, one must recognize that “Die Straße” is a theoretical text. While it remains on the level of an initial reaction, “Die Straße” is clearly concerned more with analyzing the precarious political situation facing the emergent Austrian Republic in the form of mass democracy than it is in presenting an image of the mass in action.

Broch does provide an example of a mass action and its potential effect on his own person when he refers to the emotional power exerted “wenn 3000 Menschen die Wacht am Rhein singen.”²⁵¹ Yet neither the individuals nor the singing is described. It is characteristic of the mass that the individuality of those included therein is effaced as a direct result of that inclusion. Broch continues with a reference to the appearance of the mass:

Ich bin vollkommen überzeugt, daß die Masse “schön” ist und auf obgeschilderter Basis eine ungeheure Erschütterung geben kann. Wenn es mich trotzdem vor Ekel schüttelt, wenn es mir trotzdem in einer nicht zu schildernden Weise graust, so geschieht das [...] nicht von einer albernen Ästhetisiererei aus, der die Masse stinkt, noch aus einer vulgär-platten Skepsis, der eben alles ein Schwindel ist.²⁵²

By alluding to the charge that the mass stinks, Broch invokes a more concrete image of the masses as they might be perceived by the upper classes. Those at the upper levels of society might deem the masses repugnant because they smell as a result of their labors. But this is not the reason for Broch’s revulsion: in fact, he claims to be convinced of the mass’s beauty, though he does not explain how that beauty is to be understood. The terms

²⁵⁰ Broch, “Die Straße,” 30.

²⁵¹ Broch, “Die Straße,” 30.

²⁵² Broch, “Die Straße,” 30-31.

that Broch uses to describe the mass are unqualified, and thus remain in the realm of abstraction and generality, like the mass itself. Broch's last description of the mass in "Die Straße" emphasizes its nondescript nature, namely as a "Massenaggregat von Mündern, Nasen, Bärten, Bäuchen."²⁵³ The mention of beards indicates that this is a predominantly, if not exclusively male crowd, but the constitution of the crowd remains nondescript. The mass is so deindividualized as to reduce every person to anonymous body parts. It seems no coincidence that the body parts Broch chooses to illustrate those points are those usually cited as identifying characteristics of an individual. Broch takes the face, the physical representation of individuality and personality, and deconstructs it into a random assortment of indistinct elements. It is also interesting to note the absence of eyes from Broch's "Massenaggregat," but given the close connection between eyes and individual identity, their omission is hardly surprising.

Similarly, the strike scene in *Esch oder die Anarchie* is marked by an almost complete lack of description of the mass. Where in "Die Straße" Broch provides the image of 3000 individuals singing, in the strike scene all the reader knows is that there is a room full to overcrowding: "Der niedere Saal [...] war dicht gefüllt."²⁵⁴ The noise in the room is deafening, but it is not clear whether this noise is generated by the crowd or by the handful of provocateurs sent to disrupt the meeting. While the crowd may be responsible for the general din, the only words discernible in the room come from the provocateurs, from individual agents capable of expression. Once the meeting is broken up and the crowd pours into the street, there remains an assembled mass, although no mention is made to its scale. The only description is of a placid group of people standing

²⁵³ Broch, "Die Straße," 33.

²⁵⁴ Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 227.

outside the tavern, complaining idly about the preceding meeting. Broch comes closest to representing the crowd when he demonstrates the fickle nature of the crowd's mood. Once the rumor circulates throughout the crowd that Geyring and the union committee are to be arrested, the formerly calm group quickly becomes aggressive: "Da warf die Stimmung jählings um; Pfliffe wurden wieder laut und die Menge schickte sich an, gegen die Polizei loszugehen."²⁵⁵ But the aggressive impulses of the crowd are never transformed into action, and the mass remains as inactive in the strike scene as it was in "Die Straße." In Broch's later works, the passive masses of *Die Schlafwandler* and "Die Straße" are replaced by increasingly active ones. The first example of such an active mass can be seen in Broch's 1932 drama, *Die Entsöhnung*.

Die Entsöhnung

Broch's first drama provides a panoramic view of industrial society in late Weimar Germany around 1930. Against the backdrop of the international stock market crash, Broch portrays characters on both sides of the workers' conflict struggling to survive in the face of financial collapse. *Die Entsöhnung* is titled a tragedy in three acts, and accordingly the drama is dominated by a general sense of desperation among the various characters. The drama centers on the ailing Filsmannwerke, an industrial concern threatened with insolvency on the market and revolt among the workforce. In order to remain competitive against the rival Durig concern, the Filsmannwerke had been forced to shut down one of their three plants, to lay off numerous workers, and to consider instituting wage cuts. The workers at the Filsmann factory are plagued by hunger and job

²⁵⁵ Broch, *Schlafwandler*, 228.

insecurity, while the board members, particularly Friedrich Johann Filmsmann, the aging founder and vice president of the eponymous factory, and his son Herbert, watch with increasing desperation as their life's work and livelihood crumbles before their eyes. Interestingly, each side of the conflict feels that it is the real victim. Broch emphasizes the similarity between the two camps by placing the same arguments and phrases into the mouths or characters from each side; often the last lines of a scene involving one group will be echoed in the opening lines of the following scene by the opposing group. While both groups discuss their respective fates, in the workers' canteen and a board room meeting, each sees itself oppressed by the other:

FILSMANN JUNIOR. Heute steht die Industrie unter dem Diktat der
Arbeiterschaft. [...] Wir haben eine schleichende bolschewistische Diktatur.

Dritte Szene

KRAITZAK. So lange das Volk unter der Diktatur des Kapitals steht, gibts keine
Gesinnung...²⁵⁶

A majority of the scenes in the drama are divided by milieu, depicting either the upper class factory board and its associated social circle, or the factory's workers. Though the drama spends more time following the travails of the upper classes, it does indicate an understanding of the suffering of the working classes and the desperation of their situation.

As in the essay "Konstitutionelle Diktatur als demokratisches Rätssystem" (1919), *Die Entsöhnung* appears to be Broch's attempt to recognize the miserable conditions among the industrial working class while also demonstrating (or purporting to demonstrate) through positive characterization that not all factory owners are cruel and

²⁵⁶ Hermann Broch, *Die Entsöhnung (Buchfassung), Dramen*, KW 7, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979) 19.

oppressive. More directly than the strike scene in *Die Schlafwandler*, *Die Entsöhnung* places the reader in the center of the workers' struggle. The tension between factory owners and workers at the Filsmannwerke then provides the necessary catalyst for mass action, although that action proves very different than the nonviolent resistance tactic of striking seen in *Die Schlafwandler*.

In the conflict between workers' and employers, both sides focus their ire on a single unfortunate character, the factory's general director Ernst Hügli. Hügli was employed by the Filsmannwerke to reorganize the factories, and in so doing cut costs and increase productivity. To accomplish this, Hügli purchased and implemented new technologies to speed up the production process, but he was also forced to lay off 400 workers. As general director, Hügli attempts to occupy a position as mediator between workers and the board. He makes clear that he has worked hard to develop a rapport and a sense of trust between himself and the workers. At the same time, though, it falls to Hügli to implement the board's will in the factories. This puts Hügli in an unenviable and untenable position trying to appease both the board and the workers. The workers see in Hügli the root of all their problems, holding him accountable for the earlier lay-offs and the rumored upcoming wage cuts. The board, though, feels that Hügli's actions have not gone far enough. Against Hügli's protestations, the board calls for immediate wage cuts. Should the workers refuse to accept these cuts, the younger Filsmann is completely content with enforcing a lockout of the Filsmann factories until the workers acquiesce. The tension among the workers is heightened when Gustav Woritzki, a victim of the earlier lay-offs, murders the chairman of the shop council, Georg Rychner, accusing him of conspiring with Hügli to choose which workers would be let go. Since no one

witnessed the murder, speculation over the identity of the murderer and the nature of his or motives increases the fear and anger among the factory workers. The rumors of impending wage cuts combined with the police-enforced prohibition on public assembly are the impetus necessary to move the workers to action.

In the third act of the drama, the workers begin to gather outside the factory where Rychner was murdered. As the workers assemble, they do so insecurely, each one conscious that his actions constitute a violation of the assembly prohibition. But the workers do not disperse, as they have no place to go: they are unemployed and without direction:

ERSTER ARBEITER. *in der Gruppe, ohne daß man den Sprecher sieht, leise*
Geht weiter...wenn die Polizei kommt. Ansammlungen sind verboten...
Pause, keiner rührt sich.
ZWEITER ARBEITER. *ebenso* Warum gehst du denn nicht selber?
ERSTE ARBEITERIN. *ebenso* Wohin sollen wir denn gehen?
STIMMEN. *heiser* Wohin sollen wir gehen?...Wohin?...Wir sind
arbeitslos...arbeitslos...Wohin?²⁵⁷

Unlike the crowd in *Die Schlafwandler*, the crowd here is nearly silent and looking to avoid detection. The crowd members come together initially only because there is nowhere for them to go, but soon an individual emerges from the crowd to give them that direction. An anonymous, transitory leader like that found in Freud's "Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse" arises from among the featureless mass to provide a goal and move the mass to action before fading back into the mass. In dramatic fashion, the anonymous man leaps onto a nearby lamppost to address the crowd:

EINER. *springt aus der Gruppe und auf den Sockel der Gaslaterne. Mit der Rechten hält er sich am Laternenpfahl. Er hängt schräg wie ein Matrose am Mast.*
Zischend Es ist Mittagszeit ...wer von Euch hat gegessen?
Keiner rührt sich, unbewegt starren sie alle auf den Redner.

²⁵⁷ Broch, *Entsöhnung*, 103.

Pause.

ERSTER ARBEITER. *flüsternd* Geh herunter, geh rasch herunter, sie sperren dich sonst ein.

[...]

DER REDNER. *am Laternenpfahl, leise* Ich gehe nicht runter...Arbeiterblut ist an dieser Stelle geflossen. Im Kampf gegen das Kapital ist einer gefallen...wer von Euch hat zu Mittag gegessen?²⁵⁸

The speaker captures the crowd's attention by appealing the common, visceral experience of hunger, which he then categorizes as one aspect of the larger struggle of the worker versus the interests of capitalism. Standing on the site of Rychner's murder, the speaker incorporates that death into a larger narrative of capitalist oppression, wherein the murderer is as much a victim as Rychner:

DER REDNER. Auch der hat Hunger gehabt...

STIMMEN. *heiser* Wir sind arbeitslos...Wir haben Hunger.

DER REDNER. Auch der hat Hunger gehabt...und wenn er sogar die Tat begangen hätte? wer hat ihn dazu angestiftet? das werden wir nie erfahren...wir wissen bloß, daß er ein Opfer des Kapitalismus ist...

DER ZWEITE ARBEITER. *in der noch immer unbewegten Gruppe, heiser und leise* Nieder mit den Ausbeutern...Nieder.

STIMMEN. *heiser* Nieder mit den Ausbeutern...Nieder mit den Mördern...²⁵⁹

In this larger narrative, the guilt of the murderer is relativized by comparison to the greater guilt of the capitalist system in which he functions. All we can know for certain about the murderer, the speaker claims, is that he is a victim of capitalism. His specific motives are unknown, but we can know that he, too, suffered hunger, making him one with his fellow workers. Having thus reclaimed the murderer for the workers' cause, a new enemy must be made responsible for the workers' hunger and the murder of one of their own. This person is the factory director Hügli.

The workers, lamenting their own hunger and the hunger of their children, look enviously at the workers of the competing Durig concern, who are still employed and

²⁵⁸ Broch, *Entsöhnung*, 103.

²⁵⁹ Broch, *Entsöhnung*, 103-104.

receiving wages. The Durig workers, the speaker assures the crowd, will soon come to the same fate as they have when they are inevitably betrayed by a person they trust, by their own Hügli:

DER REDNER. *heiser, fast geheimnisvoll* Auch für die Durigarbeiter gibt es einen Hügli, auch für sie wird es einen geben, der ihnen die Aufrechterhaltung der Löhne verspricht, auch für sie gibt es einen Hügli, der sein Wort brechen wird, der sie auf die Straße setzen wird...

Die Gruppe löst sich auf.

STIMMEN. Nieder mit Hügli...nieder mit Filsmann...nieder mit Hügli...haut ihm die Fenster ein...zum Hügli...*alles leise, geduckt, heiser.*²⁶⁰

After establishing their target, the group breaks off to storm the Hügli household. The next scene finds Hügli in his living room with his wife and newborn son. While Hügli informs his wife about his upcoming promotion, whereby he would oversee all three Filsmann factories, the audience hears voices coming from the street. As the cries of “Pfui Hügli,” “Nieder mit Hügli”, and “Pfui” intensify, Hügli goes to the window to see what the commotion is. At that moment the living room windows are shattered by flying rocks, one of which strikes Hügli in the arm. Then the audience can hear the police arrive, commanding the workers to disperse immediately or they will be shot. Once the clamor has died down, Mrs. Hügli realizes that her baby was struck in the temple and killed by one of the thrown rocks. For the spectator, whatever righteousness may have been in the workers’ actions is eliminated through the killing of an innocent. As Hügli comes to the realization that his child is dead, the curtain falls.

The mass action depicted in *Die Entsühnung* is the result of political and economic forces, but it is motivated by an appeal to the workers’ hunger, to biological necessity and survival instincts. The division between workers and employers is widened by the board’s attempts to increase the solvency of the Filsmannwerke and the decision to

²⁶⁰ Broch, *Entsühnung*, 104.

do so by means of lay-offs and wage cuts. Left with no jobs and no means to feed themselves, the workers are moved in their desperation to find a more tangible scapegoat than the anonymous *Filsmannwerke*. In *Hügli* they find a person they can hold responsible for all of their misery, without realizing how hard *Hügli* has worked to protect the workers from the board's radical restructuring tactics. In these two scenes, Broch brings the crowd into greater relief than in *Die Schlafwandler* or "Die Straße," but he does so in a way that emphasizes the ambiguity of the crowd as a figure.

Of the works examined in this chapter, *Die Entführung* is the only drama. As a drama, it necessarily operates differently than the prose texts discussed here. By choosing a drama as the form to depict a mass event, Broch is theoretically able to override the representational difficulty identified by Graczyk, namely literature's inability to depict the simultaneity of the mass. Indeed, the drama is distinguished as a genre by its ability to and reliance on depicting action in simultaneous progression. As Manfred Pfister explains in *Das Drama*:

Das Ausfallen des vermittelnden Kommunikationssystems in dramatischen Texten erzeugt gleichzeitig den Eindruck unmittelbarer Gegenwärtigkeit des dargestellten Geschehens, der Gleichzeitigkeit des Dargestellten mit der Darstellung und dem Vorgang der Rezeption, während im Gegensatz dazu sich in narrativen Texten eine Überlagerung der Zeitebene des Erzählten in die Vergangenheit findet. Diese zeitliche Gegenwärtigkeit des Dargestellten im Drama ist *eine* Voraussetzung für seine physisch-konkrete Vergegenwärtigung in der Bühnenrealisation.²⁶¹

Where narrative texts often rely on a narrating figure to relay the thoughts, actions, and utterances of individual characters, the drama presents the characters immediately on stage, letting them speak directly to one another and/or the audience. This physical and temporal immediacy and spontaneity is a key distinction between the drama and narrative

²⁶¹ Manfred Pfister, *Das Drama: Theorie und Analyse* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1977) 23.

forms, which makes the former a seemingly more apt medium for the representation of masses. Additionally, the drama distinguishes itself from written narrative forms by its performative nature. As such, the drama is not limited to linguistic modes of expression: “Der dramatische Text als ein ‘aufgeführter’ Text bedient sich, im Gegensatz zu rein literarischen Texten, nicht nur sprachlicher, sondern auch außersprachlich-akustischer und optischer Codes; er ist ein synästhetischer Text.”²⁶² Indeed, Broch makes use of drama’s ability to use sound (or its absence) and light in *Die Entsöhnung* not only to depict the mass as a physical entity, but also to obfuscate it. In numerous stage directions, Broch presents an image of the mass that, while visible to the spectator, nevertheless defies clear perception.

In the first scene, the audience is presented with a crowd that is physically present and visible on stage. However, this crowd remains very small, perhaps partially a result of the workers’ fear of violating the prohibition against assembly. Broch’s stage directions for this scene are telling. The crowd is to be depicted as follows: “Arbeiter, meist junge Leute, einige Frauen darunter, sie füllen keineswegs die ganze Bühne aus, sondern bilden rechts eine scheue, geduckte Gruppe [...]. Die Szene ist geduckt, schattenhaft, marionettenhaft zu spielen, alle Bewegungen lautlos [...]”²⁶³ Broch is explicit that the group must remain small, which is counter to the expectation for a scene about a mass action. And though such a small group is more easily perceived than a larger one, the shadowy nature of the scene obscures the group, making the figures harder to see. The reference to marionettes is also important, emphasizing the lack of control that the characters have over their actions in the context of the larger forces at work in

²⁶² Pfister 24-25.

²⁶³ Broch, *Entsöhnung*, 102-103.

their world, as well as the ease with which the members of the crowd are manipulated by a charismatic, authoritative figure. Where the crowd in *Die Schlafwandler* was marked by sound rather than visual description, the crowd of workers here is surrounded by silence and speaks only in rasping whispers. Though several individual workers speak throughout the course of the scene, they are often echoed by nondescript voices, replacing individual statements with communal ones. As the workers depart to confront Hügli, Broch's stage directions again advise explicitly against the kind of mass depiction that one might expect:

die Gruppe hat sich aufgelöst, läuft unter Drohgesten über die Bühne links ab. [...] Einige, die zurückgeblieben sind, winken in die Kulisse rechts; worauf von dort wieder kleine Gruppen von drei bis vier Arbeitern erscheinen, die gleichfalls andere lautlos heranwinken, wobei sie sich gegenseitig flüsternd zurufen "Zum Hügli". Das Ganze hat aber nicht den Charakter eines Volksaufstandes. Selbst mit den herangewinkten Nachzüglern sind es nicht mehr als 20 Personen.²⁶⁴

For a workers' revolt, the entire proceeding appears very restrained. Broch makes it clear that this mass action should not appear like a popular uprising. Yet even without the obscurity of overwhelming quantity, the crowd is staged in such a manner as to remain ambiguous to the spectator.

In the second scene, the crowd retreats from view, asserting its presence audibly as in *Die Schlafwandler*. Here the view is limited to a single room in Hügli's home, with only three characters present. Broch describes the crowd's utterances initially as "Stimmengewirr," which later becomes more clearly articulated in threatening shouts, though these remain disembodied. Even the crowd's violent actions appear disconnected from any actors. While it is clearly implied that the building is surrounded by people, their vengeance is manifested as a hail of stones which emerge on the scene as if from

²⁶⁴ Broch, *Entsühnung*, 104-105.

nowhere. The only witness capable of linking the action to an actor is Hügli, who can see the workers from his broken window. Even after seeing the workers' violence, the act remains incomprehensible for Hügli:

HÜGLI *zum Fenster hinausschauend* Es ist schon Ruhe...die Straße ist schon leer...unerhört...für diese Leute...²⁶⁵

The actions of the crowd are disconnected from the expected actions of its constituent individuals. Though disguised in the crowd, these are people that Hügli knows. Yet the language used to identify them indicates their ambiguous position. "Diese Leute" indicates a cohesive group (these people as distinct from those people), but they remain generic "people," thus obscuring any direct relationship between them and Hügli.

It is unclear whether the ambiguous representation of the crowd is due to essential difficulties such as those identified by Graczyk, or whether it is a mechanism Broch uses to emphasize the capacity of mass action to be divorced from individual accountability. As in earlier examples, the viewer or reader remains outside of the crowd, with his or her access to the crowd challenged by strategies of obfuscation. In Broch's second novel, *Die Unbekannte Größe* (1933), though, the perspective moves closer to the center of the crowd.

Die Unbekannte Größe

Die Unbekannte Größe follows mathematician Richard Hieck as he struggles to incorporate the irrational desires of sex and love into his ordered, scientific understanding of the world. As in *Die Schlafwandler*, Broch attempts in *Die Unbekannte Größe* to unite

²⁶⁵ Broch, *Entsöhnung*, 106.

the competing halves of human experience, the logically explicable realm of science and the mysterious and irrational realm of metaphysics and emotion. As a mathematician, Hieck's worldview is built upon an understanding of the world as being ordered, predictable, and calculable. Set in the 1920s, though, Hieck is confronted by the unsettling results of contemporary scientific inquiry and experimentation, namely Einstein's theory of relativity, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, and the development of quantum mechanics. These discoveries fundamentally challenge a notion of the world as predictable, discernible, and stable, thus destabilizing Hieck's understanding of the world and his place in it. This sense of the world is further challenged when Hieck begins to feel sexually attracted to a female research assistant in his department, a feeling for which Hieck can find no rational explanation. The bulk of the novel traces Hieck's sexual awakening as an attempt to understand and incorporate the unknown value (love) into a larger conception of the universe and human experience.

Amid this conflict between scientific reason on the one hand and emotional unreason on the other, Broch introduces a brief scene in which the mass demonstrates an outbreak of the latter. While Richard Hieck dedicated his life to the pursuit of knowledge and reason as a mathematician, his younger brother Otto is the exact opposite: Otto is a moody, brooding teenager interested in art, sports, and women. In short, Otto is driven by the irrational, not only in the erratic and capricious behavior that leads to his death, but also in his creative expression and passion for physical experience, both sexual and athletic. While the previous depictions of the mass concerned politically motivated crowds, the mass is shown in *Die Unbekannte Größe* experiencing the popular entertainment of a soccer match. In the middle of the novel, Otto takes his mother to

watch his friend and teammate Karl, who had been accepted to the second team of the local soccer club. Otto's mother, Katharine, is an outsider in this setting. Unfamiliar with the game, she neither understands the rules of play or how to properly respond to the proceedings. As a result, she does not take for granted the violence inherent in the game, which is both accepted and even expected by the crowd of spectators. When Katharine witnesses her son's friend Karl fouled by the opposite team, she reacts with a shock contrasted by the coolness of her son's own response: "Karl in gelb-blauer Bluse lief vorüber. Er wurde von einem violetten Sturmfitzich hart angegangen, fiel hin, blieb liegen. Frau Hieck schrie auf. 'Das gehört dazu', erklärte Otto ruhig."²⁶⁶ Katharine, however, is the only one surprised by what she sees on the field. From her outside perspective, the game appears barbarous, and those who look on become suddenly consumed by the ecstasy of witnessing violence and victory:

Frau Hieck war entsetzt: "Das gehört dazu? das ist dir ach schon passiert?" Aber Otto hörte nicht mehr. Zu ihrer erschreckten Verwunderung mußte sie sehen, daß er zu tanzen begonnen hatte, wozu er unausgesetzt "Huschinski" schrie. Aber nicht nur er gebärdete sich so wahnsinnig, sondern der größere Teil des Publikums war von dem gleichen Paroxysmus ergriffen, und auf dem Felde schienen sie es währenddessen ebenfalls hübsch eilig zu haben. Immer mehr steigerte sich der Paroxysmus und endigte in einem Geheul, aus dem das unverständliche Wort "Goal, Goal" herauszuhören war. Dann beruhigte sich die ganze Aufregung überraschend schnell.²⁶⁷

In this scene, Broch portrays a crowd that remains passive insofar as it remains contained in a single, defined place and commits no destructive acts. In contrast to the earlier scenes, though, the crowd's energies are not prematurely dissipated as in the strike scene in *Die Schlafwandler*, but rather they erupt in an uncontrollable, almost orgasmic release, a paroxysm. Katharine Hieck remains apart from the crowd, but she watches as Otto's

²⁶⁶ Hermann Broch, *Die Unbekannte Größe*, KW 2, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977) 87-88.

²⁶⁷ Broch, *Unbekannte Größe*, 88.

consciousness apparently recedes as he merges with the crowd. Having lost the ability to hear, Otto is cut off from outside input, making it both unnecessary and impossible for him to respond as an individual. Otto then begins to dance and chant, which would seem to point to the kind of regression to a primitive state that Freud identified in “Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse.” After this brief period of what appears to Katharine to be insane behavior, the crowd’s energies are discharged, followed by an immediate return to its former placid state.

Here again as in *Die Schlafwandler*, Broch demonstrates how quickly the mood of the crowd can change. But while this scene provides a more detailed depiction of how the crowd acts, Broch’s description remains one from an outside perspective. Though Broch insinuates a large crowd inside the soccer arena, it remains as nondescript as the crowd at Geyring’s strike meeting, represented only by the noise it produces, an undefined “Geheul.” What the reader experiences is also experienced through the eyes of one who is set apart and unaffected by the hysteria surrounding her. The reader sees how Otto’s behavior changes, how he becomes detached from himself and melds with the crowd, but this is a view through sober eyes. In *Die Unbekannte Größe*, Graczyk’s problem of representing a crowd from within remains unaddressed. Broch’s third novel, *Der Tod des Vergil* (1945), however, brings the reader into the midst of the crowd itself.

Der Tod des Vergil

In the four scenes examined thus far, Broch’s representations of the mass have been largely implicit, insinuating a crowd without directly describing one. The crowd of

spectators in *Die Unbekannte Größe* is the first exception, as the reader is presented with the image of Otto Hieck's transformation from an individual to a member of the mass. But as in the earlier scenes of mass action in *Die Schlafwandler* and "Die Straße", the crowd remains obscure and undefined in number and spatial distribution. Even in *Die Entsöhnung*, where a crowd is physically present on stage, Broch explicitly limits its size and perceptibility. In *Der Tod des Vergil*, though, the mass is presented in the full scope of its sprawling form, dominating the first of the novel's four chapters.

Der Tod des Vergil chronicles the last hours of the Roman poet Vergil's life from his arrival in Brundisium aboard Augustus Caesar's imperial fleet to his death the next day. Before Vergil's ship even enters port, the reader is confronted by two separate instances of the mass. On deck, the ailing poet is surrounded by the numerous consorts, acquaintances, and hangers-on of his friend and emperor, Augustus. These people all belong to the upper echelons of society and are engaged in gluttonous, ceaseless consumption. So great is the hunger of these individuals that the entire back half of the deck is devoted to the enormous buffet placed at their disposal. Vergil notes that, having sated their appetites, the court members mill about, conversing, playing board games, or sleeping, until their hunger returns. The voracious socialites are stripped of all humanity, reduced to slobbering mouths whose sole function is to feed:

Überall gab es einen, der etwas in den Mund steckte, überall schwelte Begehrlichkeit, schwelte Habsucht, wurzellos, schlingbereit, allesverschlingend, ihr Brodem flackerte über das Deck hin, wurde im Rucktakte der Ruder mitbefördert, unentrinnbar, unabstellbar: das ganze Schiff war von Gier umflackert.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ Broch, *Vergil*, 15.

Defined only by their desire to possess and consume, the socialites become a faceless mass, yet another “Aggregat von Mündern.” Broch further emphasizes this perception of the court members by referring to them as a “lärmende Menschenhorde.”²⁶⁹

Below deck, there is another mass to be found, but this time from the opposite end of the social stratum. Augustus’s royal fleet is powered by thousands of rowers, slaves moving their oars in time to the beat of the foreman’s drum: “Unten, in der Dämmerhaftigkeit des Unten, da arbeitete Schub um Schub, großartig, wild, viehisch, untermenschlich die gebändigte Rudermasse.”²⁷⁰ The slaves in the ship’s belly take on a subhuman character, more animal than man. Their power must be chained, harnessed to drive the imperial elite to its destination. But Broch’s depiction shows neither those above nor those below deck in a positive light. Rather, Augustus’s courtly followers are as wild and animalistic as the slaves forced to row beneath them, enjoying an excess proportionate to the deprivation of their counterparts. Thus both the highest and the lowest in society are revealed to be members of a larger mass, one that, depending on perspective, either conceals the individual’s humanity, or reveals his inhumanity.

Aboard the ship, Vergil is an individual surrounded on all sides by the mass, caught between the “Menschenhorde” of the imperial court and the “Rudermasse” of the slaves beneath his feet. However, Vergil is confronted with an even greater threat to his individuality as the imperial fleet approaches the port of Brundisium. As Vergil’s ship glides into the harbor, he witnesses a city full to bursting, waiting impatiently for the arrival of the emperor. Here Broch’s representation exceeds the scope of the inn, the stage, and the soccer arena, taking on a panoramic breadth:

²⁶⁹ Broch, *Vergil*, 16.

²⁷⁰ Broch, *Vergil*, 15-16.

es war ein funkelnder Riesenraum, vollgestopft mit Menschenleibern, ein funkelnder Riesenbehälter für ein ebenso gewaltiges wie gewalttätiges Warten, erfüllt von einem Rauschen, das Hunderttausende von Füßen schleifend, schlurfend, tretend, scharrend auf dem Steinpflaster erzeugten, eine brodelnde Riesenarena, erfüllt von einem auf- und abschwellenden schwarzen Summen, von einem Tosen der Ungeduld [...].²⁷¹

In Brundisium, the mass expands to enormous proportions. As such, Broch's technique of depicting the mass as a featureless group seems even more justified than in previous scenes. In such great numbers, even minute movements produce sounds amplified to deafening levels. Again as in earlier works, the mass is characterized not by physical appearance or individual composition, but by the larger, more nebulous experience of sound.

The crowd Vergil encounters in the harbor of Brundisium is the passive crowd of Geyring's meeting, pure potential energy embodied in the act of waiting. But whereas the strike crowd was dispersed before its energies could be released, the crowd in Brundisium waits only for the sight of Augustus before erupting into jubilant, euphoric shouting that far surpasses that of Otto Hieck's fellow soccer spectators:

da freilich war der Augenblick gekommen, den das dumpf brütende Massentier erwartet hatte, um sein Jubelgeheul ausstoßen zu können, und da brach es los, ohne Pause und ohne Ende, sieghaft, erschütternd, ungezügelt, furchteinflößend, großartig, geduckt, sich selbst anbetend in der Person des Einen.²⁷²

This scene provides the reader with a much more visceral and nuanced experience of the mass than was the case in the previous scenes we have examined.

The language Broch uses in his description of the Brundisium crowd recalls his initial reaction in "Die Straße" as well as Katharine Hieck's response to her son's sport-induced ecstasy. Here Broch emphasizes the terror and threat that hides behind the facade

²⁷¹ Broch, *Vergil*, 21.

²⁷² Broch, *Vergil*, 21.

of a cheering crowd. Though the crowd expresses joy and jubilation, the sight and sound of so many voices shouting as one reveals a glimpse of what such power could achieve if channeled in another direction or if moved by a more negative emotion. Indeed, the crowd as a crowd is no collection of human individuals, but rather a “Massentier,” an animal howling that is unleashed (*ungezügelt*). Vergil’s reflections on the surrounding crowd echo the fear and apprehension surrounding democracy that was voiced in Broch’s “Konstitutionelle Diktatur” essay. This grotesque assembly of stinking bodies, Vergil realizes, is at the heart of the political process. It was for the mass that Augustus conquered countless lands, and even the emperor must rely on the people’s support to rule:

Dies also war die Masse, für die der Cäsar lebte, für die das Imperium geschaffen worden war, für die Gallien hatte erobert werden müssen, für die das Partherreich besiegt, Germanien bekämpft wurde, dies war die Masse, für die des Augustus großer Frieden geschaffen wurde und die für solches Friedenswerk wieder zu staatlicher Zucht und Ordnung gebracht werden sollte, zum Glauben an die Götter und zur göttlich-menschlichen Sittlichkeit. Und dies war die Masse, ohne die keine Politik betrieben werden konnte und auf die auch der Augustus sich stützen mußte, soferne er sich zu behaupten wünschte; und natürlich hatte der Augustus keinen andern Wunsch.²⁷³

Here Vergil dismisses the mass as unworthy of Augustus’s conquests and sacrifices.

Vergil sees in the crowd not the glorious Roman people, for whom his *Aeneid* was written, but rather an infernal source of impending doom. This insight, however, seems to be Vergil’s alone. Before his eyes the crowd reveals itself as a hellish gathering, emitting evil in the cacophonous din of a hundred thousand voices:

Unheil, ein Schwall von Unheil, ein ungeheurer Schwall unsäglichen, unaussprechbaren, unerfaßlichen Unheils brodelte in dem Behälter des Platzes, fünfzigtausend, hunderttausend Mäuler brüllten das Unheil aus sich heraus, brüllten es einander zu, ohne es zu hören, ohne um das Unheil zu wissen, dennoch gewillt, es in höllischem Gebrüll, in Lärm und Geschrei zu ersticken und zu

²⁷³ Broch, *Vergil*, 21-22.

übertäuben; welch ein Geburtstagsgruß! wußte bloß er allein darum? Steinschwer die Erde, bleischwer die Flut, und hier war der Dämonenkrater des Unheils, aufgerissen von Vulcanus selber, ein Lärmkrater am Rande des poseidonischen Bereiches. Wußte der Augustus nicht, daß dies keine Geburtstagsbegrüßung war, sondern etwas ganz anderes?²⁷⁴

The mass, Vergil claims, is not actually aware of the threat it poses to the world. It does not understand the reasons behind its actions, shouting for Augustus with no knowledge of the sinister obverse of its exultation. The demonic vision Vergil experiences remains mysterious, just beyond his understanding. He cannot quite determine how he feels, or should feel toward the mass in light of this revelatory insight:

nicht Haß war es, was er gegen die Masse empfand, nicht einmal Verachtung, nicht einmal Abneigung, so wenig wie eh und je wollte er sich vom Volke absondern oder gar sich über das Volk erheben, aber es war etwas Neues in Erscheinung getreten, etwas, das er bei all seiner Berührung mit dem Volke niemals hatte zur Kenntnis nehmen wollen, [...] nämlich des Volkes Unheilsabgründigkeit in ihrem ganzen Umfang, des Menschen Absinken zum Großstadtpöbel und damit die Verkehrung des Menschen ins Gegenmenschliche, bewirkt durch die Aushöhlung des Seins, durch des Seins Verwandlung zum bloßen Gierleben der Oberfläche, verlustig seines Wurzelursprunges und von diesem abgeschnitten, so daß nichts anderes mehr als das gefährlich abgelöste Eigenleben eines trüben schieren Außen vorhanden bleibt, unheilschwanger, todesschwanger, oh, schwanger eines geheimnisvoll höllischen Endes. [...] niemals hatte er das Massenunheil in solcher Unmittelbarkeit erfahren [...].²⁷⁵

The confrontation with the mass in its magnitude provides Vergil with an immediate understanding of the mass's capacity for inhumanity. In the overflowing harbor of Brundisium, Vergil perceives the degradation of the assembled individuals from a people to an urban mob. The individual in the mass is reduced to a hollow shell motivated only by base desires and animal instincts. Thus Broch's crowds are reduced to external, undifferentiated parts— mouths, noses, and feet—and to inarticulate voices and smells,

²⁷⁴ Broch, *Vergil*, 22.

²⁷⁵ Broch, *Vergil*, 23.

even to breath alone. Such a *Massenmensch* exists on the most basic level, limited to biological functions and as such inhuman.

But the mass's inhumanity is not only to be interpreted as a lack of higher mental functioning, but also as the capacity for violence, destruction, and evil which is at the heart of Vergil's and Broch's fears of the mass. As more spectators pour into the densely-packed square, the interactions between individuals become increasingly aggressive and violent, even violent for the sake of violence: "mit dem steigenden Lärm stieg desgleichen die Gewaltsamkeit und Rücksichtslosigkeit des Schiebens und Drängens, das schier zum Selbstzweck und zur Eigenbelustigung wurde [...]." ²⁷⁶ The actions of the mass are marked by purposelessness: people in the crowd do not jostle and shove one another in order to move from one place to another, but for the sheer sake of exerting physical force. Up to this point in the narrative, Vergil viewed the mass from the deck of his ship, seeing the full assembly in the choked harbor. As Augustus's entourage makes its way to the palace, Vergil is loaded onto an ornate sedan chair and carried by servants over the seething crowd. The perspective remains outside of the crowd, but now it is also above the crowd, transforming the mass into a teeming human sea: "Über ein Meer von Köpfen schaute er, über einem Meere von Köpfen schwebte er, umgeben von Menschenbrandung [...]." ²⁷⁷ In addition to animal metaphors, the mass is referred to in natural terms, namely as water, but water composed of disembodied heads rather than of droplets. In Vergil's eyes, the humanity of the individuals in the Brundisium harbor dissolves, melding with the botanical, the animal, and the natural to compose a primordial ether:

Von den Häuserfronten und aus den Gassen strömte brütende Schwüle entgegen,
sie kam in breiten queren Wogen angeflutet, immer wieder von dem nicht

²⁷⁶ Broch, *Vergil*, 32.

²⁷⁷ Broch, *Vergil*, 29.

endenwollenden Geschrei und Gerufe, vom Summen und Brausen des atmenden Massentieres zerspellt, dennoch unbewegt; Wasseratem, Pflanzenatem, Stadtatem: ein einziger schwerer Brodem des in Steinquadern eingezwängten Lebens und seiner verfaulenden Scheinlebendigkeit, Humus des Seins, verwesungsnah und unermeßlich aufsteigend aus den überhitzten Steinschächten, aufsteigend zu den kühlsteinernen Sternen [...].²⁷⁸

In this passage, there are no humans, only biological entities and processes. The most human actions mentioned—screaming and yelling—are inarticulate and could easily be applied to an animal, namely a “Massentier.” Then the sounds descend into the insect world, before becoming pure breath, composed of the emanations of all the living organisms present.

As Vergil passes above and through the crowd, the people he encounters regain a measure of human form and agency which is sometimes articulated in speech:

Freilich, es gab Verknäulungen [...] und bei diesen Stockungen nützte auch nichts das unheimliche Aussehen des kranken Mannes, im Gegenteil, jedesmal steigerte sich dann das anfänglich bloß abwehrend gleichgültige Wegschauen zu einem offenen Widerwillen gegen den unheimlichen Anblick, zu einem halb scheuen, halb angriffslustigen Geraune, es wurde zu einer nahezu bedrohlichen Stimmung, für die ein Spaßvogel, ebenso wohlgelaunt wie übelwollend, in dem Rufe: “Ein Zauberer, der Zauberer vom Cäsar!”, den richtigen Ausdruck fand.²⁷⁹

While the undifferentiated mass murmurs threateningly at Vergil’s passing sedan, only an individual actually speaks intelligibly. Even the individual, though, shares the hostility of the surrounding crowd. His mockery is meant to wound and is soon echoed by two other individuals, a prostitute and a sailor, each of whom is identified by profession. Only individuals are capable of making articulate statements, but as members of the crowd, they are governed by the moods of their nameless counterparts. In a lengthy passage at the end of the scene, as he passes out of the crowd into the dark alleyways of Brundisium,

²⁷⁸ Broch, *Vergil*, 30.

²⁷⁹ Broch, *Vergil*, 33.

Vergil reflects on the division between humanity and animality, of which the mass is such a striking representation:

Um ihn herum waren die Freßmäuler, die Brüllmäuler, die Gesangmäuler, die Staunmäuler, die geöffneten Mäuler in den verschlossenen Gesichtern, sie alle waren geöffnet, waren aufgerissen, zahnbesetzt hinter roten und braunen und blassen Lippen, mit Zunge bewehrt, er sah hinab auf die moosig-wolligen Rundköpfe der Tragsklaven, sah von seitwärts ihre Kiefer und die finnigen Wangenhaut, er wußte von dem Blute, das in ihnen schlug, von dem Speichel, den sie zu schlucken hatten, und er wußte manches von den Gedanken, die in diesen ungefügigen, ungelenken, ungezügelter Freß- und Muskelmaschinen zwar verloren, dennoch ewiglich unverlierbar, zart und dumpf, durchsichtig und dunkel, sickernd Tropfen um Tropfen, fallen und vergehen, die Tropfen der Seele; er wußte um die Sehnsucht, die selbst in der schmerzlich wütesten Brunst und Fleischlichkeit nicht zur Ruhe kommt, ihnen allen eingeboren, dem Gänserich ebensosehr wie seiner Hure, unaustilgbare Sehnsucht des Menschen, die sich niemals vernichten, höchstens ins Bösartige und Feindliche abbiegen läßt, dennoch Sehnsucht bleibend. Entrückt, dennoch unaussprechlich nahe, schwebend vor Wachheit, dennoch allem Dumpfen vermengt, sah er die Stumpfheit der samenspritzenden und samentrinkenden, gesichtslosen Leiber, ihre Schwellungen und ihre Gliedhärten, er sah und hörte die Verborgenenheiten in dem Auf und Ab ihrer Zufallsbrunst, den wilden, stumpf-kriegerischen Jubel ihrer Vereinigungen und das blöd-weise Verwelken ihres Alterns, und fast war es, als würde ihm dies alles, dieses ganze Wissen durch die Nase zugemittelt werden, eingeatmet mit dem betäubenden Dunst, in dem das Sichtbare und Hörbare eingebettet war, eingeatmet mit dem vielfältigen Dunst der Menschentiere [...].²⁸⁰

In image after image, Broch emphasizes the physical nature of man, or at least the way in which that physicality is radically visible in the mass. As before, the mass is depicted as innumerable mouths, constantly open to feed, to scream, or to sing, but not to speak.

Though their mouths are open, the faces of the mass are closed: they scream, but do not hear, see, or understand. They are machines relentlessly pursuing satisfaction, whether that comes in the form of the consumption of food or of copulation. And yet this dedication of the flesh is not all of which humanity is capable. There exists, Vergil posits, a fragment of higher functioning, however slight, in every human being. The soul, expressed as a longing for understanding of the world and connection to others, can never

²⁸⁰ Broch, *Vergil*, 33-34.

be completely eradicated. Even in the lowest mass man, there is the potential for this soul to be discovered and lead that individual out of a life of unreflecting consumption. Vergil realizes this from a position that is necessarily apart from the crowd. As an individual, it is Vergil's duty—and the duty of all self-aware human individuals—to seek knowledge as a means to completely understanding the universe. Throughout the remainder of the novel, Vergil struggles to come to terms with his life's work, the *Aeneid*, which he feels fails to aid humanity to a greater understanding of the world.

In *Der Tod des Vergil*, Broch provides a depiction of the mass that is simultaneously broader in scope and closer in perspective than in previous works. For the first time in Broch's literary writing, the reader is shown the mass in its full extent, as the kind of overwhelming presence that so alarmed him in the streets of Vienna in 1918. Looking back over the four scenes discussed in this chapter, one can trace a clear development in the representation of the mass. The strike scene in *Die Schlafwandler* depicts first a room full of an unknown number of people and the near encounter between those people and the local police. The presence of the crowd is perceived only as sound, a vague loudness that turns to grumbling when the meeting is dispersed, and briefly to whistles before the crowd is dispersed by police. *Die Entsöhnung*, the only drama in this study, makes the mass visible on stage. And yet, Broch's stage directions are designed to shroud the characters, thus limiting their perceptibility. Broch again uses sound to characterize the mass, but where the mass was previously marked by loudness, here it is made strange by speaking in rasping whispers. Additionally, Broch explicitly restricts the number of actors allowed to appear on stage as part of the crowd, thus preventing the crowd from appearing in overwhelming numbers. Finally, when the mass is allowed to

act, it does so from offstage as an invisible force. In *Die Unbekannte Größe*, the mass is made more active and more visible than in the previous two works. Here the reader actually sees for the first time what happens when the mass transforms potential energy into action, in this case an ecstatic outburst of joy in response to a soccer goal.

Der Tod des Vergil, though, presents a deeper, more unshattering insight into the mass than in any of Broch's previously discussed works. In "Die Straße" and *Die Unbekannte Größe*, the mass elicits a sense of foreboding and, for Katharine Hieck, even a degree of horror. But where Katharine is concerned more for the emotional welfare of her son, Vergil sees the potential destruction of humanity at the core of the mass. There, the mass is a degradation of the human individual to his or her constituent parts, more animal or vegetable than human. The harbor in Brundisium transforms into a yawning hellscape, in which the breath of evil emanates from countless mouths. Vergil qualifies this nightmare vision as less a product of hate toward the mass, and more a clear insight into the underlying dangers posed by the inhumanity the mass creates. The images Vergil describes are terrifying, but they provide the necessary impetus for Vergil's (and Broch's) program of social education and enlightenment. Just as Vergil wished he had used the Aeneid to lead humanity to a greater understanding of the world and humanity's place in it, so too Broch hoped to use his polyhistoric novels to make the deep knowledge of the universe readily accessible to a general public. In all of the works analyzed above, though, the mass remains only a threat, not yet spilling over into cataclysmic destruction. In his final, unfinished novel, *Die Verzauberung*, Broch demonstrates what can happen when otherwise rational individuals are captivated by a charismatic leader into committing despicable acts.

CHAPTER V

THE INDIVIDUAL, THE MASS, AND *DIE VERZAUBERUNG*

In the previous chapter, we examined several instances of mass events depicted in Broch's novels and one drama. Despite the increasing prominence and detail of the mass in Broch's successive works, it remains a figure represented (or viewed, in *Die Entsöhnung*) from without, from the perspective of an external narrator (*Die Schlafwandler*) or of characters who remain detached from the mass event (*Die Unbekannte Größe, Der Tod des Vergil*). Thus far, Broch's literary representations have not solved the problem, identified by Graczyk, of depicting the mass from within, through the eyes of a figure who is also a part of, and a participant in the actions of the mass. In Broch's literary works, this problem is most directly addressed in *Die Verzauberung*. In fact, in a 1940 commentary to *Die Verzauberung*, Broch explicitly states the importance of viewing the mass through the eyes of an individual character within it:

Zweifelsohne kann man ein massenpsychisches Geschehen durch "objektive Darstellungen" lebendig machen: man kann einen Flagellantenzug darstellen, oder das Gebrüll bei einem Fußballmatch, oder die Volksmengen vor dem Reichskanzlerpalais, von dessen Balkon aus Hitlers merkwürdige Stimme ertönt, und man kann auch alle Pogromschrecken sehr anschaulich schildern; aber alle diese Schilderungen sind – auch wenn sie einen historischen Hintergrund haben – gewissermaßen leere Behauptungen, sie sagen bloß aus, daß es massenpsychische Bewegungen gibt, verschweigen jedoch alles über deren eigentliche Funktion und Wirksamkeit. Will man hierüber Bescheid haben, so muß man die Einzelseele befragen, man muß sie fragen, warum und auf welche Weise sie jenem an sich unverständlichen Geschehen verfällt, welches wir massenpsychisches Verhalten nennen [...].²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Hermann Broch, *Die Verzauberung*, KW 3, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979) 383.

When a mass occurrence is described from the outside, it maintains the character of a report. Such a description states only that mass occurrences or movements exist, but it is not capable of conveying insight into the effects that a mass experience can or does have on an individual. To get to the root of mass psychosis, then, Broch must look to an individual to describe the experience. It is precisely this endeavor that is at the center of *Die Verzauberung*. This chapter will examine how, in the character of the narrator, Broch presents a portrait of one individual's ultimately unsuccessful struggle against mass psychosis. To achieve this, I will focus on the way in which Broch uses the doctor's own language, both in dialog and in his written reflections, to reveal the progressive effects of the demagogue Marius Ratti on his individual will. This will culminate in an analysis of Broch's most elaborate depiction of mass hysteria, the climactic scene of the ritual murder of Irmgard Miland, a local village girl. To begin, though, it is necessary to reflect on the nature of the novel itself before an exploration of its content can be undertaken.

Die Verzauberung is a problematic novel, not least of all because of its complicated production and publication history. Although Broch completed a first version of the novel (referred to varyingly as "Bergroman," "Bauernroman," "Alpenroman," and "Gebirgsroman") between July 1935 and January 1936, the book was never completed to Broch's satisfaction during his lifetime. Over the course of 1936, Broch created a second version of the novel – intended as the first volume of a trilogy – this time under the title *Demeter oder die Verzauberung*. From 1937 to his emigration in July 1938, Broch was drawn away from his "Bergroman" by the demands of competing projects, notably the "Völkerbund-Resolution" and *Der Tod des Vergil*. Broch continued to revise *Die Verzauberung* after his arrival in the United States while repeatedly

attempting to negotiate publication with numerous publishers. Throughout the 1940s, Broch established connections with several interested publishers, including Benno W. Huebsch (Viking Press), Hermann Ullstein, Robert Neumann (Hutchinson's International Authors), and Alfred A. Knopf. However, negotiations with all of these publishers fell apart as Broch was never able to deliver a finished manuscript. In fact, Broch continued to work on the *Bergroman* project until his death in 1951, when he was in the middle of creating the third version of the novel.

Looking at the various versions of what has come to be referred to as *Die Verzauberung*, Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler notes: "Es liegt das Ergebnis einer fast zwanzig Jahre währenden Arbeit vor, der man nicht den Charakter des Definitiven, sondern den des Vorschlags wird zuerkennen müssen."²⁸² Despite the unfinished character of Broch's novel project, it has been published in several distinct editions, each drawing on a different version of the text and given a different title. The result is a confusing breadth of varying material and titles, none of which can be said to be the definitive version according to Broch's authorial intentions:

Sowohl in bezug auf die Rezeption als auch in bezug auf die Produktion erscheint dieses Buch nie statisch: dem Autor war ein erlösendes Finale an der Arbeit nicht vergönnt; die Leser bekamen des Autors Leistung in je verschiedener Gestalt zu Gesicht: als der *Versucher* (1953) in einer Fassung, die sich – zu diesem Zeitpunkt durchaus legitim – nicht um die sonst erforderlichen philologischen Vorkehrungen bemühte; als *Demeter* (1967) als Fragment der dritten Fassung; als *Bergroman* (1969) in der historisch-kritischen Ausgabe von Frank Kress und Hans Albert Maier und zuletzt als *Die Verzauberung* (1976) in der von Paul Michael Lützel besorgten neuen Werkausgabe, welche die erste Fassung von 1935 bietet und welcher nun denn auch die meisten Interpretationen verpflichtet sind.²⁸³

²⁸² Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, "Hermann Brochs Roman *Die Verzauberung*," *Hermann Broch*, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986) 151.

²⁸³ Schmidt-Dengler 152-53.

As such, any analysis of *Die Verzauberung* must be undertaken in the full knowledge that the text was a work in progress, never completely revised according to Broch's exacting standards. This analysis will use the first edition of *Die Verzauberung* as contained in Paul Michael Lützeler's *Kommentierte Werkausgabe*, as this has become accepted by most²⁸⁴ as the standard version of the text.

The plot of *Die Verzauberung* can be sketched quickly. A mysterious stranger arrives suddenly in the mountain villages of Ober- and Unter-Kuppron. Though at first mistrusted as a wanderer and outsider, the stranger, Marius Ratti, quickly becomes an integral member of the community, enrapturing the villagers with his mythical, anti-technological earth worship. Under Ratti's influence, the village youth are organized into a paramilitary group, the mining company agent Wetchy is persecuted for his reliance on technology, and Irmgard Miland, a village girl, is sacrificed to usher in a new era of prosperity for the villages.

The novel is narrated by the local country doctor in the form of written recollections resembling a diary in their extensive description of everyday events. This

²⁸⁴ Robert G. Weigel is one exception, preferring the version assembled, edited, and amended by Felix Stössinger in 1953 under the title *Der Versucher* because of its "höherer künstlerischer Rang" coupled with an increased emphasis on mass psychological aspects and the mystical descriptions of nature associated with Mutter Gisson. (Robert G. Weigel, *Zur geistigen Einheit von Hermann Brochs Werk* (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 1994) 169). In making this decision, Weigel follows the lead of James Hardin in his article "Hermann Broch's Theories on Mass Psychology and *Der Versucher*" (*The German Quarterly* 47.1 (1974): 24-33). Hardin's article was written before the publication of Lützeler's *Kommentierte Werkausgabe*, but he chose the Stössinger version because, "in spite of its shortcomings" (24), it emphasized the political aspect of the novel, fleshed out previously weak scenes, and was more accessible than Broch's first or second versions. Lützeler and other scholars favor the first edition because it was completed, and completely written by Broch. Stössinger's *Der Versucher* is, by contrast, a compilation of the three extant versions of Broch's novel with occasional additions made by Stössinger. Its release prompted a decidedly negative response from Thomas Mann in a letter to Erich von Kahler in 1954: "Aus Stössingers, eines smarten Literaten, vorzüglich hingelegtem Nachwort geht hervor, daß das Werk aus drei verschiedenen Fassungen, mit leichten Ergänzungen von Stössinger, zusammengebraut ist. Das zu lesen widersteht mir höchlichst – wo man nicht immer weiß, ob man Broch liest oder Stössinger, – und ob Broch damit einverstanden wäre, daß man es so läse. Wenn schon der Titel willkürlich und irreführend ist, – woher das Vertrauen zu der Lektüre?" (Thomas Mann, *Briefe 1948-1955 und Nachlese* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1965) 319).

narrative strategy allows Broch to demonstrate through the reflections of a single individual how mass psychosis finds its way into that individual's thought patterns and clouds his or her judgment, even when the individual is conscious that it is happening. In his commentary to the novel, Broch explains his choice of the diary form and the particular figure of the doctor:

das Tagebuch ist die einfachste und ehrlichste Form, um ein psychisches Geschehen abzuspiegeln, und da Bauern keine Tagebücher führen, mußte ich dieses Amt einem Intellektuellen überantworten, dies umso mehr, als einem solchen all die Kritik und Selbstkritik zuzutrauen ist, deren schließliche Überwältigung durch das Massenpsychische so erstaunlich ist.²⁸⁵

One could argue against Broch that, while the diary does indeed present a simple and effective way of presenting an individual's reflections on his or her own experiences, it may not be as well-suited as the internal monologue for presenting a "psychisches Geschehen" in its immediate progression. Since a diary is composed after the fact, its writer has ample opportunity to analyze, reflect upon, and construct a particular version of events, which may well differ from the immediate mental response or chain of thoughts the writer experienced in the moment. Additionally, the form of recollections enables the narrator to construct a version of events that is dictated by his perspective and prerogatives. As Schmidt-Dengler points out, "jede Analyse [wird] davon ausgehen müssen, daß es der Landarzt ist, der [...] den Gesamtkontext überhaupt erst herstellt."²⁸⁶ Nevertheless, I argue that Broch's choice of personal reflection over inner monologue or stream of consciousness narration is justified given his actual intention in *Die Verzauberung*. Were Broch to present only the doctor's altered consciousness, then the critical voice of the intellectual would be absent. Retrospective commentary allows the

²⁸⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 384.

²⁸⁶ Schmidt-Dengler 153.

doctor to reflect on his own actions and mental status during the experience of mass hysteria. This authorial gesture leads back to “Die Straße” and Broch’s concern over his own susceptibility and the susceptibility of other intellectual, critical minds to mass hysteria. Broch seems in the end most interested in portraying the perspective of a reflective and unwilling participant in mass events, rather than the unconscious experiences of an uncritical mass man.

Triad of Influence. Doctor – Marius – Mutter Gisson

In his commentary, Broch presents the country doctor as an outside figure that is necessary to effectively present the metamorphosis that occurs among the villagers of Ober- and Unter-Kuppron. The doctor is an outsider in two ways. First, he is an intellectual, the only one in a village of farmers. Second, and relatedly, he comes from the city rather than the country. Yet the doctor is an essential fixture in the village, trusted and accepted by the farmers as belonging among them. While his formal education and analytical profession make him an obvious candidate for resisting superstition, myth, and irrational ecstasy, his presence in the village is already a strike against him. In the foreword, the doctor explains that he fled the city to escape the world of science, to remove himself from a profession that aimed at the unending attainment of knowledge:

Jahr um Jahr habe ich dahin gebracht, als einer, dem das große Glück beschieden war, an dem unendlichen Bau der Wissenschaft mitzuarbeiten, an einem Wissen, das kaum mehr das meine war, sondern der Menschheit als solcher gehört, ich, ein bescheidenes Glied in der Kette der Werkenden, gleich ihnen allen, einen kleinen Stein nach dem anderen hinzutragend, immer nur das nächste Resultat sehend, dennoch gleich allen anderen die Unendlichkeit des Baues ahnend, beglückt und erleuchtet von diesem unendlichen Ziel, ich habe es im Stich gelassen, als wäre es der Turmbau von Babel, an dem ich beteiligt gewesen war, ich habe den Blick

von solcher Unendlichkeit weggewendet, die nicht mir, sondern [der] Menschheit gehört, von einer Unendlichkeit, die das Gestern auslöscht und bloß das Morgen gelten läßt, und ich habe mich in eine kleine Arbeit zurückgezogen, die kein Erkennen mehr ist, sondern Leben und Mitleben und hie und da vielleicht Hilfe, als könnte ich dadurch mein Gestern retten, da das Morgen für mich immer kürzer wird.²⁸⁷

This is the scientific establishment so frequently criticized by Broch, an establishment interested in understanding the totality of the universe, but by strictly rational means. It is impossible for an individual to attain complete knowledge of the world, and though the cumulative achievements of science represent a body of knowledge greater than any one individual could discover or possess, the search for knowledge is always a never-ending pursuit. Having recognized this, the doctor yearns for a life that does not reject the experience of the present in favor of the future. By removing himself from the city and the scientific establishment, the doctor is able to devote himself to living life in the present, a life that is concerned with experiencing earthly, finite experiences:

Ich habe das Erkennen verlassen, um ein Wissen zu suchen, das stärker sein soll als die Erkenntnis, stark genug, um die Zeitspanne, die dem Menschen beschieden ist, sich mit seinen Füßen dahin und dorthin zu bewegen, seine Augen da und dort ruhen zu lassen, um diese Zeitspanne eines kurzen Erdendaseins mit einem fast fröhlichen Warten auszufüllen, ein Wissen, enthoben dem Vergessen, erfüllt von dem Gestern und dem Morgen, erfüllt von dem Sinn des Gewesenen und des Künftigen [...].²⁸⁸

So, though the doctor is chosen as a character specifically for his intellectual capacity and reliance on rational thought, his choice to abandon the city for a country practice is bound up with his desire to seek knowledge of the world that is greater than the rational knowledge offered by science. From the outset, the doctor reveals that he occupies a liminal position between the pure reason of science and the unreason of rural superstition. It is clear that, though he is a character capable of critically reflecting on the nature and

²⁸⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 9-10.

²⁸⁸ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 11.

spread of mass psychosis in the village, he is also potentially susceptible to it.

Throughout the course of the novel, the doctor's middle position opens him up to attraction from two poles represented by the opposing characters of Marius Ratti and Mutter Gisson.

Marius Ratti is a mysterious stranger, a wanderer who arrives in the village one day looking for work. He quickly begins to spread a gospel of chastity and luddism, espousing the triumph of masculinity over femininity and a return to handwork. As the novel progresses, Marius comes to be the focal point of the villagers' spiritual and material desires, promising redemption from the hardships of their daily lives. Mutter Gisson, the sage-like village matriarch, is Marius's counterpoint and archenemy. Prior to Marius's arrival, Mutter Gisson was the spiritual center of Kuppron. As the village's wise woman, Mutter Gisson functions as a repository of ancient and contemporary knowledge of the area. She is characterized by a deep connection to nature and to the specific place of Kuppron, revealed in her supposed ability to know the will of the mountain. In fact, knowledge—specifically the knowledge of nature, life, and especially death—is Mutter Gisson's defining characteristic. Schmidt-Dengler even asserts that “Mutter Gisson ist Allegorie für Wissen oder Erkenntnis, und wer dies nicht begriffen hat, dem winkt das Anagramm Gisson/Gnosis mit dem Zaunpfahl.”²⁸⁹ Mutter Gisson's particular knowledge, though, can only be gained through first-hand experience.²⁹⁰ It cannot be taught or disseminated, as Marius learns when Mutter Gisson refuses to take him on as an apprentice. By turning Marius away, Mutter Gisson invites his hatred, which culminates

²⁸⁹ Schmidt-Dengler 161.

²⁹⁰ Enrestine Schlant, *Hermann Broch* (Boston: Twayne, 1978) 79-80.

in the ritual murder of Mutter Gisson's granddaughter Irmgard and the supplantation of an intuitive matriarchal system with a violent patriarchy.

In Marius and Mutter Gisson, Broch creates characters that are like two sides of the same coin. Each is sought out for his or her deeper understanding – perceived or genuine – of the world. Where Mutter Gisson is seen as genuinely wise, an adviser and leader for the entire community, Marius is like a young prophet who promises change and new insight into life, death, and human nature. Both characters are shamanic: Marius is thought by many in Kuppron to be capable of understanding the desires of the earth and the mountains around him; Mutter Gisson is also considered to be an authority on the will of the mountain in addition to being a natural healer. While each character claims to possess intimate, arcane knowledge of nature, the novel presents Mutter Gisson's knowledge as more genuine and legitimate than Marius's. It has been noted in scholarship, however, that the differences between the two are not substantial enough as to clearly distinguish why Mutter Gisson's views should be accepted more readily than Marius's. According to Schmidt-Dengler: “zu nahe scheint die Sprache Mutter Gissons bei der Rattis zu liegen, obwohl der Autor stets angestrengt deren fundamentale Differenz herausstreichen möchte.”²⁹¹ Thomas Koebner also addresses the ambiguity of these two supposedly opposing systems: “Die Differenzen der Positionen werden in Brochs Darstellung, die oft nur qualifizierende Adjektive und Attribute in abstrakten Formelkombinationen austauscht, allerdings verschliffen – so daß man oft im Moment nicht genau weiß, was gut, was böse ist, was gut und böse voneinander trennt.”²⁹² In the

²⁹¹ Schmidt-Dengler 160.

²⁹² Thomas Koebner, “Mythos und ‘Zeitgeist’ in Hermann Brochs Roman *Die Verzauberung*,” *Brochs ‘Verzauberung’*, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983) 173.

end, the difference seems to turn on the central conflict of mass psychology, the conflict between the mass and the individual.

Marius Ratti is a *Massenführer*. His strategies focus on enchanting and ensnaring as many people as possible to affirm and submit to his power. The wood-cutter Suck recognizes this early on, as he explains to the doctor:

“So ein schlauer Bursche”, sagte er.
“Der Marius? ja. Aber was will er eigentlich?”
Suck machte ein listiges Gesicht: “Die einfangen”, und er wies mit dem Daumen auf das Dorf zurück, “und er wird sie einfangen.”²⁹³

To captivate the villagers, Marius appeals to the essential loneliness felt by every human individual. He promises them a new community (*Gemeinsamkeit*) to replace the fear of their own isolation, which will arise once the proper sacrifice has been made. The possibility of release from the constant fear of loneliness proves highly attractive to the residents of Kuppron, especially to the farmer Miland, who describes his feelings to the doctor:

“[...] so sehr allein sind wir geworden, daß wir nicht mehr wissen, was wir mit unsern Händen anfangen sollen [...] Und wohin ich auch schaue, es ist überall das Nämliche...die Leute machen ihre Arbeit, ja, das tun sie, aber sie tun's aus bloßer Einsamkeit, und sie hassen einander ob ihrer Einsamkeit...sie können nicht einmal mehr zueinander wollen, sie können nur mehr hassen wollen...” [...] “Und was Ihr da sagt, das klingt sehr nach christlicher Nächstenliebe.” “Es ist mehr als Liebe, es ist Gemeinsamkeit.” [...] “Und da soll der Marius das Heil bringen? [...]” “Der Marius ist ein Mensch wie wir, Herr Doctor, ebenso einsam und mit genau dem gleichen Haß in sich, er ist genau wie wir, er spricht nur aus, was wir denken, den verstehen wir [...]”²⁹⁴

In a way, Miland is correct in his assessment of Marius: Marius is indeed like the villagers in that he, too, suffers from crippling existential fear. In his article, “Hermann Broch’s Theories on Mass Psychology and *Der Versucher*”, James Hardin sees this

²⁹³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 60.

²⁹⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 225-26.

hidden fear revealed in Marius's aggression towards outside threats and a striking obsession with death:

But Ratti himself, even more than the villagers, is prey to ethical and spiritual insecurity; his anguish is paradoxically evidenced in his 'will to power.' Behind a projected façade of self-confidence he conceals a pathological fear of death [...]. In his essays, Broch theorizes that man reacts in one of two ways to the feeling of anguish: he surrenders abjectly to his fear, or he feigns courage, counteracting his anxiety by extreme self-assertion, striking out at even minor threats to himself. This last obviously applies to Ratti.²⁹⁵

Marius presents an image of complete self-assurance in the veracity of his claims and the necessity of the measures he proposes to bring about the renewal of society in Kuppron. And yet, as Hardin notes, he lashes out at his spiritual competitor Mutter Gisson as well as at Wetchy, an insignificant and pitiful insurance agent in the village. At the heart of Marius's machinations is the desire to overcome fear by creating community among individuals, but as positive as this may seem, Broch indicates that Marius actually aims to create a false community by eliminating all individuality. As Helmut Koopmann summarized: "Die Verzauberung ist wesentlich eine Verführung zur Masse und damit zur Auslöschung des einzelnen [...]."²⁹⁶ As a mass, the villagers relinquish their individual will in favor of the comfort and perceived security that comes with submitting to the guidance of another.

Conversely, Mutter Gisson stands as the bulwark of self-affirming individuality in the face of Marius's false community. According to Koopmann:

Die allein mögliche Gegenposition zu Marius Ratti nimmt Mutter Gisson ein; sie ist die Verkörperung jener teilweise fast hymnischen Ich-Philosophie, von der bei Broch so viel zu lesen ist. Dieses von Broch positiv verstandene Ich ist nicht zu

²⁹⁵ James Hardin, "Hermann Broch's Theories on Mass Psychology and *Der Versucher*," *The German Quarterly* 47.1 (1974): 27.

²⁹⁶ Helmut Koopmann, "'Verrückte Erlösung'. Der Wahn von der neuen Gemeinschaft und der Glaube an die Unzerstörbarkeit des Ich in Brochs *Verzauberung*," *Brochs Verzauberung*, ed. Paul Michael Lützelner (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983) 202.

verwechseln mit moderner Individualität, mit Solipsismus oder modernen egoistischen Ichproklamationen. Mutter Gisson verkörpert das Gegenteil der Massenpsyche, ihr Ich ist immun gegen die Verführung des närrischen Wandernden.²⁹⁷

The key to a functional life, in Broch's conception, is accepting one's own individuality as an essential fact and facet of human existence while also accepting, without fear, the inevitability of death. Mutter Gisson demonstrates her serene acceptance of death as she approaches her own at the end of the novel. Having already experienced the death of her husband at the hands of the poacher Mittis, Mutter Gisson internalized the knowledge of death, which is necessary for a true understanding of life, as Broch's Vergil was keenly aware. Yet though Mutter Gisson presents an alternative to Marius's mythical anti-individualism, she remains passive in the face of Marius's takeover of the village. This lack of action has been criticized by many, who claim that it calls into question Mutter Gisson's otherwise positive portrayal. Schmidt-Dengler expresses the concern that Mutter Gisson's failure to intervene at Irmgard's murder serves to justify a senseless act:

Am bedenklichsten wird unserem Empfinden nach ihr Verhalten nach der Ermordung der Enkelin Irmgard: kein Eingriff in das Ritual erfolgt, nicht Empörung oder Schmerz erschüttern sie, sondern ein abgeklärtes Wissen um die Umstände dieses Todes und seine "tiefere" Notwendigkeit zeichnen sie aus: Ihr Verhalten scheint den Mord, diesen sinnlosen Rückfall in eine vorgeschichtliche Epoche, mittelbar zu rechtfertigen.²⁹⁸

Similarly, Thomas Koebner is unnerved by Mutter Gisson's dispassionate response to the lunacy spreading in Marius's wake and finally to the death of her granddaughter:

"Erstaunlich ist ihre Zurückgezogenheit und Passivität angesichts der sich abspielenden Vorgänge. Fast widerstandslos überläßt sie Marius den Platz, läßt sie den Opfermord

²⁹⁷ Koopmann 204.

²⁹⁸ Schmidt-Dengler 156.

geschehen.²⁹⁹ In response to such criticisms, Ernestine Schlant sees Mutter Gisson's passivity as resulting precisely from her monumental individuality: "Mutter Gisson's noninterference at the ritual murder of her granddaughter brings this out very clearly: redemption can only be self-redemption, never mass redemption as Marius proclaims."³⁰⁰ Just as knowledge of death can only be attained through individual experience, redemption is also a personal achievement. We are all responsible for our own selves, for gaining our own understanding of life and the world and coming to terms with our own fears. The villagers all look outside themselves for someone to lead them, rather than finding their own way. This, too, is the position in which the doctor finds himself in *Die Verzauberung*. His recollections over the course of a nine month period reveal oscillations between the self-assured individuality of Mutter Gisson and the mental and physical surrender of mass hysteria under the influence of Marius Ratti. By following the doctor's own version of events, we can see how even a critical mind can be swayed by the promises of a charismatic presence.

Marius Ratti, the "Massenführer"

The doctor begins his recollections with a statement about the nature of memory that is programmatic for the diaristic form of the entire novel:

ich will des Märztages gedenken, der nun schon Monate, ja, beinahe ein ganzes Jahr zurückliegt, so ferne wie der gestrige Tag, so nahe wie die Kindheit, denn so und nicht anders ist unsere Erinnerung: sie hebt das eine oder das andere heraus, und sie trifft damit das Leben und das Sterben zugleich, sie erfaßt einen einzigen Augenblick, der vielleicht an sich gar nicht bedeutsam ist; aber da sie ihm den Sinn seiner Gewesenheit und seiner Dauer verleiht und das menschliche Sein in

²⁹⁹ Koebner 172.

³⁰⁰ Schlant, *Hermann Broch*, 80.

die Natur zurückführt, jenseits von Tod und Leben, ins Unabänderliche, so will ich jenes Märztales gedenken, obwohl er sich gewiß nicht wesentlich von anderen Tagen unterschied und trotzdem voll innerer Bedeutsamkeit gewesen ist.³⁰¹

The human memory is capable of documenting and retaining information about personal experience in such a way that it can manipulate and even transcend the perception of time: an experience from one's childhood may seem more vividly present than the occurrences of the previous day. Memory is also highly subjective. As the chronicle of a single individual's thoughts and experiences, certain events and pieces of information may be remembered more strongly than others according to the significance they hold for the individual remembering them. On the other hand, an individual may remember something that seems completely trivial. Often it is only after the fact, in the act of recollecting, that certain experiences take on new meaning in relation to what an individual has since experienced. For example, the doctor recognizes that, on the face of it, the particular day in March he plans to describe was not in any way extraordinary. Yet, viewed with the knowledge of what came to pass during the following nine months, the memory of that day reveals an inner significance.

In a simple sentence pregnant with meaning, the doctor identifies what the focus of his recollections will be: "In der Dorfstraße traf ich den Fremden."³⁰² The use of the definite article emphasizes the stranger's importance and singularity within the narrative. The doctor seems to have been struck enough by the experience of seeing this stranger that he made a detailed catalog of his appearance and bearing. Or these impressions were at least reassembled later, after this stranger had proven so central to the course of events in the villages of Kuppron:

³⁰¹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 13.

³⁰² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 14.

Zwischen einer geschwungenen scharfen Nase und einem schon lange nicht rasierten Stoppelkinn hing ihm ein dunkler Gallierschnurrbart über die Mundwinkel und machte ihn älter aussehend als er es wahrscheinlich war; ich schätzte ihn auf dreißig oder etwas darüber. Er beachtete mich nicht, doch als er vorüber war, bildete ich mir trotzdem ein, seinen Blick erhascht zu haben und daß dies ein träumerisch starrer und dennoch kühner Blick gewesen sei. Vermutlich habe ich dies bloß aus seinem Gang erraten, denn dieser Gang war trotz offenkundiger Müdigkeit, trotz miserablen Schuhwerks beschwingt und streng zugleich, wahrlich, man konnte es nicht anders ausdrücken, es war ein beschwingtes und strenges Latschen, und es war, als würde, als müßte solches Gehen geleitet sein von einem scharfen, in die Ferne gerichteten Blick. Es war nicht der Gang eines Bauern, eher der eines fahrenden Gesellen, und dieser Eindruck war durch eine gewisse ungelüftete Kleinbürgerlichkeit, die hinter dem Manne herwehte, verstärkt, einer kleinbürgerlichen Selbstgerechtigkeit, deren Eindruck vielleicht von dem dunklen Anzug, vielleicht von dem schäbig im Kreuz baumelnden und beinahe leeren Rucksack bedingt war. Ein gallischer Kleinbürger.³⁰³

The stranger is immediately exposed as an outsider by his peculiar walk, which, according to the doctor, is more indicative of a wandering petit bourgeois than of a farmer. Other than his loping gait, shabby clothing, bold but dreamy gaze, and Gallic mustache, the reader receives little information about the stranger's physical appearance. He remains strange by virtue of his ambiguous description. It is apparently less important to describe how he looks than it is to emphasize that which distinguishes him from his surrounding environment. The reference to the stranger's Gallic features is also interesting in that it evokes a feeling of foreignness without creating a readily accessible image. As Michael Winkler notes, neither the reader nor other characters in the narrative are able to understand the doctor's reference: "Zunächst freilich herrscht Verblüffung vor, weil der angesprochene Chauffeur 'sich unter einem Gallier nichts vorstellen konnte', und der Leser kann es auch nicht."³⁰⁴

³⁰³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 14.

³⁰⁴ Michael Winkler, "Die Struktur von Hermann Brochs *Verzauberung*: Anmerkungen zu den erzähltechnischen Problemen des Romans," *Brochs "Verzauberung"*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983) 124.

After his first encounter with the stranger, the figure remains fixed in the doctor's mind as he enters an inn and becomes involved in conversation with a chauffeur and his passengers:

“Der hat ein Maul”, sagte gerade der Chauffeur. [...] “Ja, das hat er”, sagte ich, der Eintretende, zum Gaudium der Anwesenden. Aber obwohl ich es zu diesem Zwecke gesagt hatte, hatte ich doch den Fremden dabei im Sinn, ja, ich wußte beinahe mit Sicherheit, daß der Chauffeur ihn gemeint hatte.³⁰⁵

The doctor's certainty seems unwarranted, as all he knows of the stranger has been extrapolated from first impressions made after briefly glimpsing the man. Given the stranger's fixed position in the doctor's early narrative, the reader begins to recognize the character's importance for the novel as a whole: “Wenn auch die Gestalt des Fremden zunächst sofort wieder aus dem Blickfeld des Erzählers verschwindet, so bleibt sie doch im Bewußtsein des Lesers haften [...]: der Leser merkt immer stärker, daß um seinetwillen die Geschichte überhaupt erst geschrieben wurde.”³⁰⁶ The conversation with the chauffeur and his passengers provides a glimpse into the esoteric religious conceptions that the stranger later spreads throughout the community. Before the reader is fully aware of this character's nature, the chauffeur describes his ideas as nonsense, but neither the chauffeur nor his passengers seems to think the stranger's notions warrant a complete rejection. Instead, the men display a disinterested ambivalence:

Auf einmal wurde der Chauffeur redselig: “Haben Sie je so einen Unsinn gehört, Herr Doctor? wir sollen keusch leben, damit es auf der Welt besser wird...?” “So? das hat er verzapft?” “Ja”, der Chauffeur trank sein Bier aus, “so ein Schwein.” “Du hast ihm aber zugestimmt”, behauptete jetzt der ältere Mitfahrer. “Ich? ich habe mich nicht darum gekümmert, ich habe auf die Straße geschaut...wenn einer Ja gesagt hat, dann warst du es.”

³⁰⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 15-16.

³⁰⁶ Koopmann 187.

“Warum soll ich nicht Ja sagen? ich pfeif’ ohnehin auf die Weiber...ob nun davon die Welt besser wird oder nicht.”³⁰⁷

At this early stage in the novel, the characters shrug off the stranger’s ideas as peculiar, but nonthreatening. However, the doctor employs language (albeit jokingly) that foreshadows the prophetic role the stranger will come to play in the village:

“Na”, sagte ich, “vielleicht bekehrt er Sie noch. Setzen Sie sich jetzt doch zu ihm.”

“Nein”, sagte der Chauffeur, und obwohl er doch mutig aussah [...] bekam er dabei eine etwas scheue Stimme, “nein, er mag ruhig auf seinen Säcken bleiben, denn wir nehmen jetzt den Kerl nicht weiter mit, ich kann ihn mit seinem Gerede nicht brauchen [...]”.³⁰⁸

The mention of conversion appears to concern the otherwise courageous chauffeur. For the first time in the novel, the reader perceives a vague threat in the stranger’s presence, whose ideas, though quickly dismissed, still represent a potential challenge to prevailing beliefs. After the chauffeur and his passengers depart, the doctor’s reflections again indicate the degree to which he has been affected by the stranger as he speaks to the innkeeper’s son, Peter:

Und wer der Landstreicher gewesen sei, von dem wir gesprochen hatten? Aber da konnte ich ihm keine Auskunft geben. Vielleicht hatte der Chauffeur den Menschen nun doch wieder mitgenommen, und er saß nun neben ihm [...]. Aber vielleicht auch hatten die drei Männer den Landstreicher jetzt auch schon wieder vergessen, hatten sich mit jedem Ruck der Kupplung ein Stück der Erinnerung aus den Köpfen beuteln lassen und dösten nur mehr noch vor sich hin. Ich zumindest hatte alle Lust, zu vergessen.³⁰⁹

There is nothing in the account of the doctor’s first encounter with the stranger that would support such a strong desire to forget the entire experience. This is especially striking given the doctor’s stated intention in the foreword to remember everything, which necessitated the recollections in the first place. The strength of the doctor’s wish to

³⁰⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 18.

³⁰⁸ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 18-19.

³⁰⁹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 19.

forget only emphasizes once more the central position of the stranger in the events to follow.

The doctor's second encounter with the stranger occurs an unspecified amount of time after the first, but during the same month. The chapter begins with the fulfillment of the doctor's earlier wishes: "Alles war vergessen."³¹⁰ Despite the definitiveness of the pronouncement, the doctor quickly realizes that this was at least partially untrue. The stranger, supposedly forgotten, arises suddenly, yet the doctor is in no way surprised by his appearance. In fact, he seems to have been expecting it:

Aber wir waren nur wenige Schritte in der Kirchengasse gegangen, als ich sagte: "Da ist er." Eigentlich hatte ich es gesagt, bevor ich ihn noch recht erblickt, geschweige in der beginnenden Dunkelheit ihn erkannt hatte, so selbstverständlich war es, daß die Gestalt, die dort vor dem Haus des Lorenz Miland lehnte, die des Gesuchten sein müsse. Des Gesuchten? Ja, des Gesuchten. Denn ich hatte ihn zwar vergessen, so sehr vergessen, daß ich keinerlei Veranlassung hatte, zu fragen, ob er im Dorf noch gesehen worden wäre, und hatte doch gewußt, daß er sich hier noch aufhielt. Solche Dinge kommen vor.³¹¹

The stranger is an unavoidable presence for the doctor, sought out even though he has been forgotten, perceived unconsciously but constantly. The doctor does not even need to see the stranger clearly, a man he had seen only once, to know that it is him. Despite his best effort, and contrary to his own conviction, the doctor was unable to completely forget the mysterious stranger. In this second encounter, it is revealed that the stranger is named Ratti, a foreign surname that reinforces his position as an outsider: "Ratti, das klang italienisch; dazu paßte es, daß der Mann einen Lockenkopf hatte, was in dieser Gegend recht selten ist."³¹² Ratti is an anomaly in the village, distinguished by a strange name, curly hair, and a bourgeois air that separates him from the farmers of the area.

³¹⁰ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 22.

³¹¹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 25-26.

³¹² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 26.

Though the doctor is little surprised to find Ratti still present in the village, he is nevertheless taken aback on learning that the stranger has been taken in by Miland, one of the local farmers. Most everything about this fact seems curious to the doctor:

Aufgenommen? als Gast? als Wanderer, der für ein paar Nächte bleibt? als Knecht? Wenn es als Knecht sein sollte, so wunderte es mich, daß der Mann noch immer da war, denn der Miland verlangt harte Arbeit, [...] und dazu schien mir dieser Mensch durchaus ungeeignet. Im übrigen war es verwunderlich, daß Miland jetzt, schon zum Frühjahrsanbau, einen Knecht einstellen sollte.³¹³

Regardless of these apparent incongruities, Ratti has become at least a temporary fixture of the village. In the course of introductions, Ratti indicates that he was equally aware of the doctor's appearance during their first meeting. He does so by correcting the doctor's version of events, a gesture that reveals an underlying hostility, which the doctor immediately recognizes. The doctor begins:

“Wir haben uns ja schon gesehen. Sie sind mit dem Zementauto gekommen.”
“Das haben Sie nicht gesehen”, stellte er richtig, “da war ich schon abgestiegen.”
Bei aller Freundlichkeit, mit der dies gesagt war, war es eine kleinliche Rechthaberei, aber es war mehr, es war wie eine Aufforderung zum Haß, in seinem freundlichen Ton, in seiner gleißnerischen Gebärde lag etwas, das hieß: Hasse mich, hasse mich, damit du mich liebst.³¹⁴

As can be seen throughout the doctor's recollections, it is unclear how much of the doctor's insight into Ratti's character was perceived immediately, rather than reassembled after the fact. The particular form of diaristic notation and first person narrative utilized in the novel necessarily makes this distinction ambiguous, as the narrative occurs somewhere between present experience and recollection. If the doctor's assessment might be flawed, he is nonetheless supported by the intuition of his dog, whose impeccable sense for personal character never errs: “Es ist möglich, daß ich mich irre. Aber Trapp, der an dem Fremden herumgeschnuppert hatte und sich niemals irrt,

³¹³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 26.

³¹⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 26-27.

stellte das perpetuum mobile seines Freundschaftswedelns ein und hielt den Schweif böse und kerzengerade.”³¹⁵ Having glimpsed a hatefulness beneath Ratti’s friendly exterior, which is then confirmed by a creature privy to more basic insight, the doctor begins to speak of the stranger with caution and disconcertion.

In discussion with Miland, the head of the household, the doctor hints at his desire to keep Ratti and Peter, the innkeeper’s son, apart:

“Also Marius heißt er”, sagte ich.

“Ja, Marius Ratti...Sie kennen ihn also schon, Herr Doctor.”

“Er steht ja mit dem Peter draußen vor dem Haus.”

“Das tut er gerne”, sagte der Knecht Andreas und kicherte.

“Na, vielleicht ist der Peter doch lieber zur Agathe gegangen...mir wäre es auch lieber.”

“Nein”, beharrte Andreas, “sie stehen draußen.”

War der Peter etwa deshalb betreten gewesen, weil ich ihn bei seiner Zusammenkunft mit einem dahergelaufenen Menschen ertappt hatte?³¹⁶

While the doctor sees potential danger in a close relationship between Peter and Marius Ratti, Peter’s reaction to the revelation of that relationship may indicate embarrassment, or perhaps shame resulting from a realization that there is indeed something illicit in his connection to Marius. Again though, these may be projections applied by the doctor after the fact. The Milands go on to explain how Marius came to be taken into the household. After his arrival in the village, he sought a cheap place to stay and was taken in by the family and fed out of a sense of charity and hospitality. But for Miland’s wife, the demands of charity extend only to providing sustenance, not to housing; after all, there is no way of knowing whether a wanderer might not also be a criminal. But Miland refuses to throw a person out in the street, regardless of his background: “Ich hab’ noch keinen

³¹⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 27.

³¹⁶ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 29.

fortgejagt, und es hat mir nicht geschadet bisher.”³¹⁷ This stubborn refusal to dismiss even a potentially dangerous individual will later prove catastrophic.

As the Milands and the doctor sit down to tea, Marius returns in a scene that reveals dictatorial tendencies. While the others sit idly around the table, the Milands’ youngest daughter Zäzilie runs to the radio and turns it on: “Und so vollzog sich der Eintritt des Marius unter den Klängen eines Jazzs, dessen müder Rhythmus aus dem Kasten kroch und auf der dunkelverräucherten Stubendecke herumhüpfte.”³¹⁸ In a theatrical moment, Marius is played into the room, his entrance both announced and seemingly caused by the jazz from the radio. Simultaneously, Zäzilie begins dancing to the music with a purity of expression that the doctor describes as angelic:

Sie sprang von einem Bein auf das andere, stieß einmal das eine, einmal das andere Ärmchen in die Luft, in ihrem Gesicht lag ein heiliges und ernstes Erwachen, lautlos war ihr Tanz, ein Huschen auf grauen dickgestrickten Strümpfen, und auch als der Jazz in einen Tango umschlug, ließ sie nicht ab von ihrem Engelstanz.³¹⁹

The innocence of Zäzilie’s dance is transcendent, a moment of awakening from the slumber of real life. Yet while the doctor is struck by the beauty of the scene, Marius reacts unexpectedly and asserts an unknown authority over the household:

Marius hatte sich an den Türpfosten gelehnt, und mit der freundlichen Neigung des Kopfes, die ihm zu eigen war, betrachtete er das liebliche Bild, hatte nicht acht auf Irmgard, die ohne den Blick von ihm zu wenden, das Teegefäß für ihn auf den Tisch stellte, ja, beinahe geflissentlich übersah er die Gebärde, mit der sie ihn zum Tische lud. Doch plötzlich, schon meinte ich, er wolle am Tanze teilnehmen, war er mit ein paar großen beschwingten Schritten in der Ecke und stellte den Apparat ab.³²⁰

³¹⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 30.

³¹⁸ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 30.

³¹⁹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 30.

³²⁰ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 30-31.

Marius's actions are so unexpected that everyone in the room freezes, unable to comprehend or respond to what they have just witnessed:

Mitten in der Bewegung erstarrte Zäzilie. Sie war so verblüfft, daß ihr Entzücken gleichsam des Entsetzens nicht gewahr wurde, das sich doch schon eingestellt hatte [...]. Doch schließlich löste es sich, ihrem zum Weinen gekrümmten Mund entrang ein "Böh", und sie flüchtete zurück in die Arme des Vaters. Siehe, auch wir waren erstarrt, [...] sowohl Irmgard, deren Hand immer noch den Marius zum Tische lud, wie ihr Vater, der Zäzilie an sich preßte, ja selbst der Knecht Andreas war es, denn er rieb das Streichholz, das er schon gezückt hatte, nicht an seinem Hinterschenkel, sondern hielt es still in der Luft.³²¹

This arrested scene lasts a few seconds, before Miland's wife revives and demands that Marius turn the radio back on. Behind a mask of politeness, Marius suggests that the Milands should get rid of the radio, that the music it plays could endanger their children:

"Gebt die Musik wieder her."
"Bäuerin", sagte er höflich, "gebt den Kasten wieder zurück."
"Possen und nochmals Possen", ereiferte sich die Frau, "seid Ihr bei Trost! und all das schöne Geld, das er gekostet...sofort gebt die Musik wieder her."
"Wenn's die Bäuerin befiehlt, so habe ich zu gehorchen", fügte er mit schauspielerischer Willfährigkeit, "doch Eltern sind schwach, sie tun vieles den Kindern zuliebe, sie geben nach, ohne Rücksicht darauf, daß es dem Kinde schaden könne..." und nach einer kleinen Kunstpause, setzte er mit gewinnendem Lächeln hinzu: "...ich meine halt, daß es für Kinder jetzt Schlafenszeit wäre."³²²

Though Marius has been living with the Milands for a short time, and his specific role in the household is ambiguous, he attempts here to assert himself as the highest authority, capable of making decisions that affect the entire family, even criticizing the Milands' parenting. When Frau Miland challenges his actions, Marius responds with obsequious deference to her authority within the household. And yet he does not comply with her wishes, but rather, "Marius hatte die Hand am Apparat und wartete."³²³ By feigning subservience, Marius manages to still resolve the situation to his liking:

³²¹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 31.

³²² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 31.

³²³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 32.

Da sagte Miland: “Das ist eine städtische Musik.” [...] “Städtisch oder nicht städtisch”, antwortete Marius, “es ist eine kostspielige Musik, und die Bäuerin will sie haben.” [...] “Trinkt Euren Tee und gebt Ruh”, befahl die Bäuerin mit einem kurzen harten Lachen. [...] Da sagte Irmgard, die Ihr Auge von dem des Marius abließ: “Wirklich, es ist Schlafenszeit”, und sie führte die kleine Schwester an der Hand hinaus, ohne Marius dabei weiter anzusehen. Marius aber setzte sich zu uns an den Tisch, rührte langsam in seinem Topf und begann schluckweise zu trinken, wie einer, der seine Arbeit getan und dem eine Labe gebührt.³²⁴

In the end, Frau Miland yields, dismissing the situation with a laugh that nonetheless expresses a certain bitterness. As Marius joins the others and drinks his tea, the doctor’s describes his drinking as like the drinking of a man who thirsts after a day of hard work. And perhaps “seine Arbeit” not only refers to physical labor, but to the successful assertion of his will within the Miland household. Although he presents an outward appearance of deference and politeness, Marius can drink his tea in the satisfaction of having gotten his way. In fact, this strategy of hiding behind a passive, yielding facade will resurface later in the novel.

Shortly after installing himself in the Miland household, Marius Ratti becomes a regular fixture in Kuppron. However, his presence is not immediately welcomed by the entire community. The first conflict arises between Marius and Mutter Gisson. In the first meeting between the two described by the doctor, Mutter Gisson recognizes that she and Marius represent two competing philosophies and that, in the end, Marius will supplant her. “Vielleicht ist es jetzt an der Zeit,” she suggests to the doctor, “Daß es anders wird.”³²⁵ In fact, Mutter Gisson already senses the course of events that will come to surround Marius Ratti, even her own impending death. She sees what the doctor cannot or will not:

³²⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 32.

³²⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 38.

“Das eine sag’ ich dir...wenn’s jetzt bei mir so weit ist, wirst du an mir nicht viel herumdoctoren, sondern läßt es gehen, wie’s eben geht, auch wenn ich dir dann nicht mehr das Handwerk werde legen können.”

“Zum Kuckuck, Mutter Gisson, wovon redet Ihr.”

“Von dem, was kommen wird und was du nicht sehen willst.” [...]

“Jetzt sehe ich wirklich bloß, daß Ihr in Eurem Kurpfuscherehrgeiz mir nicht einmal gönnen wollt, Euch zurechtzuflikken...aber darüber reden wir noch, glücklicherweise haben wir noch lange Zeit dahin...”

“Wart’s ab”, lachte sie, und es klang hintergründiger, als ich mir zugeben wollte.³²⁶

From the first time the doctor sees him, Marius comes increasingly to occupy the doctor’s thoughts. Despite having recognized that there was something of special importance about this stranger, the doctor does not – or will not – yet see the impact Marius’s arrival will have on Kuppron. If Mutter Gisson’s intuition is to be trusted, the doctor is already fully aware of the threat Marius poses, but he refuses to acknowledge it. This early denial is one aspect of the growing ambiguity in the doctor’s relationship to Marius.

In their first recorded meeting, Mutter Gisson and Marius square off over whose knowledge is superior, or at least more valid. After examining the mountainous area above the upper village, Marius reveals a flint knife he found, despite its being hidden under snow and slush. The doctor notes that finding such a knife is in and of itself nothing extraordinary, since the rocky outcropping known to locals as the “Kalter Stein” was originally a Celtic sacrificial altar. But the fact that Marius discovered such a small object without being able to see it seems to reinforce Marius’s claims to supernatural abilities. When Marius tries to use the sacrificial knife to cut himself a piece of bread, Mutter Gisson accuses him of violating the sanctity of the bread, representative of the body of Christ: “Beinahe zornig nahm ihm Mutter Gisson das Brot aus der Hand, kehrte es um und wies auf die drei Kreuze: ‘Das ist heilig’, sagte sie, ‘und das Messer ist auch

³²⁶ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 40.

heilig, aber das eine gehört nicht zum andern.“³²⁷ In an effort to show his understanding, Marius then puts the knife to his throat, indicating its intended use for human sacrifice. But Marius laughs as he does so, showing a lack of reverence for the ancient ways, leading Mutter Gisson to chastise him for his flippancy:

“Nehmt Euch in acht”, sagte Mutter Gisson, “zwar wißt Ihr noch manches, doch Ihr wißt auch schon zu wenig. Das ist eine schlechte Mischung.”
“Ich weiß mehr als die anderen”, entgegnete Marius mit einiger Selbstgefälligkeit. Es mag sein, daß dies auch auf mich gemünzt war. Denn ich hatte von allem Anfang an den Eindruck, daß es ihm nicht recht war, mich getroffen zu haben.
“Eben deshalb sollt Ihr Euch in acht nehmen, denn wenn Ihr Gold suchen wollt, so seid Ihr den anderen gleich, ja, noch ärger als sie, denn Ihr besitzet, ich sagte es, noch Wissen.“³²⁸

Mutter Gisson recognizes Marius’s knowledge and potential, but she makes clear that that knowledge is incomplete, making his actions all the more dangerous. The doctor’s commentary also points to a perceived enmity between himself and Marius. On the one hand, this could be applied by the doctor in retrospect, while on the other it seems to underscore the doctor’s fascination with Marius by solipsistically assuming that Marius’s every word pertains to the doctor. The latter reading is supported by the doctor’s final statement of the chapter. After receiving Mutter Gisson’s rebuke, Marius attempts to convince her and her son, Mathias, of his genuine supernatural abilities, specifically the ability to find gold with a divining rod. Despite Marius’s proud claims on this point, Mathias dismisses them, stating firmly that, “wir wissen auch ohne Rute, was der Berg will.“³²⁹ The Gissons make it clear that Marius is merely a pretender and conjurer, whose limited knowledge is of no use to them. This dismissal creates a bitterness in Marius that will continue to drive him throughout the novel. When Marius leaves, the doctor again

³²⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 42.

³²⁸ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 42.

³²⁹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 45.

interprets the witnessed events in such a way that he becomes a central figure in them:

“Daß ich Zeuge seiner Niederlage gewesen war, wird er mir nachtragen, dachte ich.”³³⁰

For the doctor, the central conflict exists between himself and Marius. Even in a situation where he is only a passive observer, the doctor sees all actions as constitutive of his adversarial relationship with Marius.

As the narrative progresses, the doctor continues to fixate on Marius. He begins to see Marius's hand in almost every occurrence in the villages, a recognition to which he responds alternately with dismissal, foreboding, and occasionally, admiration. When Frau Sabest claims that her son Peter has been bewitched by Marius, the doctor lightly mocks her before admitting to secretly being impressed by Marius's ability to spread his beliefs to others: “Aber im geheimen imponiert mir die Energie, mit der der Marius seine Ideen durchsetzen will.”³³¹ At the same time that the doctor admires Marius's energy and dedication to his own causes, he repeatedly refers to him as a fool (*Narr*). Underlying the doctor's ambivalent feelings toward Marius is a chronic underestimation and a refusal to recognize him as a legitimate threat. In order to reassure Frau Sabest that her son has not been bewitched by Marius, the doctor attributes the boy's absence to normal teenage behavior: “Kinder werden älter, Frau Sabest, und so viel ich weiß, ist er Ihnen auch ohne den Marius schon vielfach entwischt.”³³² On the one hand, the doctor appears to recognize that Marius is capable of entrancing the villagers, seeming even to treat it as inevitable. When Waldemar, the cobbler, claims that Marius will redeem the villagers, the doctor admits that he had expected something similar: “‘Er wird uns erlösen’, sagt er. Daß etwas Ähnliches kommen würde, hatte ich eigentlich schon längst erwartet; trotzdem

³³⁰ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 46.

³³¹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 62.

³³² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 62.

war ich überrascht.”³³³ Later, when the village smith mentions that the villagers fear Marius because they believe he can practice witchcraft, the doctor asserts that Marius is indeed capable of enchantment: “Du siehst ja, daß er’s tut, er behext die Leute.”³³⁴ On the other hand, the doctor repeatedly claims that Marius is just a temporary figure in Kuppron, and that, soon enough, the villagers will lose interest in him: “die Geschichte mit dem Marius wird auch vorbei gehen [...]”.³³⁵ Even after the village youth have organized into a paramilitary group, the doctor still believes that Marius could not possibly succeed in his efforts to take over the village, as he tells the widower Suck: “Aber, Suck, schließlich wird diese Komödie doch versanden...”.³³⁶ The doctor’s failure to recognize Marius as a serious threat to the villagers proves to be a fatal mistake when Mutter Gisson’s granddaughter Irmgard falls victim to Marius’s sacrificial delusions.

The ambivalence of the doctor’s feelings toward and responses to Marius is indicative of the process of entrancement that the doctor undergoes throughout the course of the novel. Reading the doctor’s reflections, the reader finds numerous contradictory and incompatible statements about Marius and the doctor’s relationship to him. More striking and insidious, though, is the doctor’s unwillingness or inability to actively counteract Marius’s effects on the villagers, or even his superstitious ideology. When Marius is absent, the doctor is fairly adept at making reasoned arguments in an attempt to reveal the ludicrousness of Marius’s claims to individual villagers. However, when the doctor confronts Marius face to face, he repeatedly neglects to utilize his scientific knowledge and logic to refute Marius. In one exchange, Marius declares that all sickness

³³³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 117.

³³⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 125.

³³⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 119.

³³⁶ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 178.

is caused by promiscuity. When pressed to disprove this assertion, the doctor dodges the question, ostensibly to avoid becoming entangled in a debate:

“Sie glauben, daß ich ein Narr bin...ja, weiß denn Ihre Medizin woher die Krankheiten kommen?”

Ich könnte ihm antworten, daß man dies zum Beispiel bei Infektionskrankheiten wüßte. Aber weil es auf alles eine Gegenfrage gibt, verzichte ich und sage bloß: “Hören Sie mal, Herr Ratti, Sie scheinen schon einige Erfahrungen mit der Medizin gemacht zu haben.”³³⁷

The doctor responds in typical fashion, opting to further mock Marius rather than provide a serious scientific response. Since the doctor still considers Marius a fool, he does not see the necessity in refuting his assertions. However, it is just such a response that is needed in Kuppron in order to push against the tide of superstition and pseudospirituality that Marius brings with him. Later, the doctor finds himself not unwilling to respond to Marius’s theories, but rather unable to do so. After a long tirade about the nature of justice, the doctor feels lamed and incapable of stopping or contradicting Marius:

Hätte sich ein Lüftchen geregt, ich hätte ihn wahrscheinlich nicht weiter sprechen lassen; eine böse und närrische Mystik war in diesem Gerede, das spürte ich, so gut wie bei unserem ersten Zusammentreffen, aber ich war seltsam gelähmt, gelähmt war der Abend, in den dieser Tag mündete, und auch die Rede des Mannes kam wie aus einem gelähmten Mund [...].³³⁸

Here the reader is reminded of *Schlafwandeln*, Broch’s proposed state of being between dreaming and waking, between the rational and irrational. As the doctor reflects a few pages later, “unser Leben ist Träumen und Wachen zugleich.”³³⁹ Both Marius and the doctor are entranced, limiting their access to reason. Thus the doctor is incapable of confronting or even understanding Marius’s theories: “Ich hörte nur mehr Worte, die ich

³³⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 81-82.

³³⁸ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 143.

³³⁹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 217.

behielt und doch nicht verstand.“³⁴⁰ In a similar scene, the doctor becomes an unwilling participant in a trancelike exchange between Marius and Irmgard. When the doctor discovers the two speaking with one another, they are unaware of his presence, as they discuss Irmgard’s coming sacrifice. When the doctor is unable to rouse Irmgard by calling her name, the trance extends to him as well: “So blieb die Szene erstarrt. Vielleicht hätte auch ich mich nicht so bald aus der Erstarrung, die auf mir gleichfalls lastete, befreien können, wenn nicht jetzt mit einem Schläge der Regen eingesetzt hätte [...]“³⁴¹ Only the visceral experience of rain on skin is capable of reviving the doctor from his shared trance. Here as earlier, the doctor appears frozen within his own mind, capable of seeing and hearing, but not responding, understanding, or moving. Like one suffering paralysis, the doctor loses control of his own body until the trance is broken by the rain. This kind of entrancement, in which the individual will is paralyzed and unable to act, is the greatest threat posed by mass hysteria, a fact tragically displayed in the climax of *Die Verzauberung*, the sacrificial murder of Irmgard Miland.

Absorption in the Mass. The Murder of Irmgard Miland

For the majority of the novel, the effects of Marius’s charisma are largely visible in the statements and actions of the individuals that the doctor encounters around the village. The unanimity of the villagers’ support for Marius, whether for his plans to find gold in the abandoned mines of Kuppron or his larger claims of saving society from urban and technological influences, indicates the spread of a variety of mass hysteria

³⁴⁰ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 144.

³⁴¹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 214.

throughout the village. Yet this hysteria has yet to express itself in a mass event such as the novels previously discussed. In the climax of *Die Verzauberung*, though, Broch creates his most shocking representation of mass hysteria, in its most actively violent and passively acquiescent forms.

The setting is the local mountain church festival in September. The doctor's commentary foreshadows the catastrophe to come, suggesting how things might have gone differently: "Wenn die eigentümliche Spannung, die über dem Dorfe lag, sich bei der Kirchweih entladen hätte, so hätte ich mich nicht gewundert. Und vielleicht hätte eine richtige Kirchweihrauferei die Luft gereinigt. Aber angesagte Revolutionen finden nicht statt, und bei schlechtem Wetter schon gar nicht."³⁴² The mass is potential energy, a group that, when not present, is pregnant with possibility. The doctor recognizes that tensions between the devotees of Marius and Wenzel and those of Mutter Gisson have reached such a level that they must be released somehow. But rather than erupting in a physical confrontation between both sides, the tension is vented later in a bizarre ritual.

The regular church festival passes without incident. A week later, under the new moon, the villagers celebrate a second festival at the mountain chapel. Like the earlier "Steinsegen," the "Bergkirchweih" is a combination of Christian and pagan elements. As such, the festival is held at the "Kalter Stein," an ancient Celtic sacrificial altar. The entire community makes its way to the "Kalter Stein" to dance and celebrate, but the weather is an ill omen that enables Broch to foreshadow a looming calamity. As the doctor accompanies Mutter Gisson to the festival grounds, he comments on the clouds in the distance: "'Da kommt noch heute was', sagte ich, 'da wird es mit dem Tanz vielleicht

³⁴² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 242.

schlecht bestellt sein.’ ‘Getanzt wird noch werden’, antwortete sie.”³⁴³ While the doctor’s comment refers to the weather, it creates anticipation in the reader, and Mutter Gisson’s response emphasizes the central role that dancing will play in the coming outbreak of mass hysteria. The exchange that follows between the doctor and Mutter Gisson reveals premonitory insight into the transformations taking place in Kuppron:

Und da sagte ich: “Wie kann ich helfen, da ich selbst nach der Hilfe suche und nicht zu ihr gelange, Mutter?”
Und sie antwortete: “Laß dich nicht verzaubern, dann wirst du helfen können.”
Ich aber sagte: “Wissen wir denn, wann die Verzauberung über uns kommt? wir können uns ihrer ja nicht erwehren.”
“Dann mußt du auch da noch hindurchgehen”, antwortete sie.
Und dann sagte sie: “Wenn die Bäume tanzen, dann darfst auch du es tun.”³⁴⁴

Here we see the doctor at his most vulnerable, an individual searching helplessly for assistance amid the loneliness of his existence. The advice Mutter Gisson provides him is a warning against succumbing to the influence of charismatic individuals like Marius Ratti. In order to resist the temptation of blindly following such a person, one has to first endure his or her enchanting influence, like a trial by fire. Mutter Gisson’s enigmatic final statement about the natural world reveals the first test the doctor must pass in order to overcome mass hysteria: the dance.

Dancing provides a form of ecstatic release for humans, enabling them to perceive and embrace a momentary sense of community, thus causing them to forget their essential loneliness and mortality.³⁴⁵ The anticipation of such an ecstatic experience is even enough to distract people from nonrelated stimuli in their environment, as the doctor and Mutter Gisson recognize upon their arrival at the festival site:

³⁴³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 251.

³⁴⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 252.

³⁴⁵ The concept of ecstasy—a central component of Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie*—will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI.

Mutter Gisson und ich hatten den Steg des Bächleins überschritten, und wir gerieten nun in das Gewühl; von manchen wurden wir begrüßt, die meisten sahen uns gar nicht, so sehr waren sie von der Lust, deren sie teilhaftig werden wollten, waren sie von dem Leben, das sie in sich fühlen wollten, gefangen genommen.³⁴⁶

Similar to the ecstatic crowd at the soccer match in *Die Unbekannte Größe*, the dancers take part in a life-affirming, sensual activity. The dance is vital and corporeal, and in Broch's portrayal, deindividualizing. The dancers, like the crowd awaiting Caesar Augustus's arrival in Brundisium, are reduced to a mass of sweltering breath and bodies: "um uns herum stampfte es wild, und die Köpfe und Körper, gleichsam von unsichtbarer, dennoch stürmischer Welle bewegt, gingen auf und nieder; ein brodelnder Kochtopf war dieser Tanzboden, brodelnd von Leibern, und heißen Brodems voll war der goldene Glask, der zitternde, der darüber hinschwebende, unendlich verzitternde [...]"³⁴⁷ Here Broch uses multiple metaphors, all of which evoke forms of primal physical force: invisible waves, seething water and steam, and almost electric vibrations. Broch underlines in this manner not only the impersonal, communal aspect of the crowd, but also the complete absence of the social controls imposed by generations of human civilization and culture. The crowd is raw energy, not simply a gathering of people. In this state, the members of the crowd are disconnected from the actions surrounding them. They also present an unpredictable force that could become unstable without warning.

In his commentary, the doctor asks fundamental questions about free will and human existence when operating on such a basic, visceral level as those in the crowd. Caught up in the dance, which is communal, the doctor recognizes a deeper state of individuality, but an individuality defined not by personal identity, but rather by singularity: "wir tanzten, freilich kaum mehr miteinander, sondern ein jedes von uns

³⁴⁶ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 254.

³⁴⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 254.

tanzte die eigene Unergründlichkeit seines Lebens, tanzte den Herzschlag seines eigenen Seins, [...] einveratmet in den großen tanzenden Herzschlag um uns.“³⁴⁸ This maintenance of individuality seems to run counter to Broch’s conception of mass hysteria. The notion that one loses oneself in the crowd, in the sense that one ceases to act according to the dictates of an individual personality, mind, or social code, does indeed hold. Yet in the crowd, the individual maintains two fundamental aspects of his or her individuality: a heartbeat, the most essential prerequisite for human life, and ignorance of the nature of his or her own existence. By reducing the individuality of all crowd members to a heartbeat and a total lack of understanding, all individuals achieve an equality that coalesces into the crowd as a faceless mass, a single pulse. This reduction to a simple heartbeat, the doctor reflects, calls into question those aspects of higher lifeforms that we take as constitutive of humanity: “Wählt noch einer den, mit dem er tanzt, wenn er dem Hämmern des eigenen Blutes unterworfen ist? gilt bei solcher Wahl, die Wahllosigkeit ist, noch Zuneigung? gilt noch Freundschaft? gilt Liebe?”³⁴⁹ In the throes of mass hysteria, then, an individual is capable only of acting on base instincts, rather than higher order functions like rational choice, or any choice at all. He or she is disconnected from all relationships, one heartbeat among many. The doctor describes this transformation as it begins to affect him, first in the form of visual ambiguity caused by the rapid pace of the dancers moving around him:

ein paarmal drehte ich mich mit Irmgard im Kreise, und sie war schön und ernst in ihrem Brautschmuck; dann wurde sie mir wieder entrissen, und später sah ich sie sogar mit Lax, auf dessen Gesicht das Lächeln des fleischlich Entrückten saß. In sich versunken sprang das braunbärtige Gesicht des Schmiedes auf und ab, und für einen Augenblick war das listige Mauslächeln des Schelmes Wenzel aufgetaucht, geschmiegt an den Busen einer großen dicken Dirn, doch immer

³⁴⁸ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 254.

³⁴⁹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 254.

mehr verschwamm alles Gewoge, verschwamm mein Bewußtsein, weder merkte ich, daß Mutter Gisson den Tanzplatz schon längst verlassen hatte, noch merkte ich meine eigene Erschöpfung, und ich hörte zwar, daß ich gerufen wurde, doch es dauerte lange, bis ich den Ruf verstand: “Herr Doctor, jetzt kommst aber endlich heraus!”³⁵⁰

Twirling around the dance floor, the doctor is passed by face after face of individuals lost in the ecstasy of the dance, and as they pass before him, he, too, begins to lose conscious understanding of his surroundings. As his vision blurs, his hearing also dulls, like a body shutting down all but the most vital biological systems to increase the chances of survival. The voice that calls the doctor out of the crowd is Mutter Gisson, who has passed through the crowd and resisted becoming a part of it. As she predicted, the doctor is being tested to determine if he can resist the pull of mass hysteria and subsequently help others to do the same. And yet this is a more difficult task than perhaps the doctor had anticipated:

Es war Mutter Gisson. Sie stand außerhalb der Stricke, die den Tanzboden abgrenzten, inmitten der Zuschauer, und ihre Stimme war nicht lustig, sondern eher eine Warnung. Und trotzdem konnte ich mich nicht losreißen, und als ich es endlich tat, da stand ich noch eine gute Weile unter den Zuschauern und starrte auf das Geschehen der Leiber: pausenlos waren sie auf den Beinen, ohne Ermüdung, mit der erbitterten Hartnäckigkeit von Besessenen rangen sie um ihre Lust, mit einer verbissenen Leidenschaft, die mit den üblichen Faschingsvergünungen schon nichts mehr gemein hatte, getrieben von einer magischen Woge, die unwiderstehlich hochging und mitriß, Woge, herkommend aus der Dämmerung des Menschen, emporsteigend zur Dämmerung der Sterne, begleitet von einer Ziehharmonika.³⁵¹

The spectacle described by the doctor is no longer a celebration. It is instead almost mechanical, like an engine pushed too hard. The people are bodies only, restless and inexhaustible as they are driven like ones possessed to pursue their desires. Now the dancers move very much against their will, pushed on by a magical wave that they do not

³⁵⁰ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 254-55.

³⁵¹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 255.

and cannot comprehend. This magical force emanates from the twilight state of humanity, a key concept in Broch's metaphysics that describes the irrational aspects of life and human experience.

Even after removing himself from the crowd of dancers, the doctor remains clouded and shut off from the world around him. In fact he only barely resists the urge to rejoin the dance and surrender his remaining consciousness:

Vielleicht hätte ich mich neuerdings in das Gewimmel gestürzt, wenn mich nicht die Agathe angeredet und nach Mutter Gisson gefragt hätte. Ich erkannte sie, aber ich war nicht imstande, ihr Antwort zu geben; behext vom Tanze, behext von meinem Blute, in dem ich Geburt und Tod fühlte, so nahe aneinandergerückt, als wären sie nur eines [...].³⁵²

Throughout the dance scene, images of bewitchment, entrancement, possession, and twilight (similar to Broch's notion of *schlafwandeln*) dominate. The dance appears simultaneously to have an invigorating and a lulling effect on the villagers of Kuppron. While their physical selves are increasingly energized, their mental selves are increasingly sedated and disengaged. When the doctor again encounters Mutter Gisson, she underscores the doctor's responsibility to resist the entrancing effects of the irrational dance: "Hast mit dem Tanzen aufgehört? Gut. Bleib' vernünftig."³⁵³ Shortly after this admonishment, the trajectory of the evening changes.

While talking to Miland, the doctor notices a figure in the distance as it sits down on the "Kalter Stein." Both the doctor and Miland recognize the figure to be Marius Ratti. A few moments later, something more figures become visible on the edge of the forest:

Da kam der Schmied vorbei und lachte: "Jetzt lodert's, Herr Doctor, und du kannst es auch nimmer einhalten."
Ich deutete zum Waldrand hin: "Was geht dort vor, Schmied?"

³⁵² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 255.

³⁵³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 256.

Er machte eine Bewegung in der Runde, als hätte er seinen Hammer in Händen: “Jetzt geht’s überall los.”

Ja, irgend etwas ging los, irgend etwas war im Gange, etwas Gefährliches und Lockendes, und den Schmied machte es lustig, mich aber beklommen: ich mußte mir Gewißheit verschaffen, und ich stand auf, um kurzerhand zum Kalten Stein hinauf zu gehen, doch nach ein paar Schritten hielt mich eine sonderbare Scheu zurück, und ich spähte nach Wenzel aus, damit er mir Auskunft gebe; allein der Zwerg war verschwunden.³⁵⁴

In this pregnant moment Mutter Gisson’s repeated prophecies begin to come true. Yet despite the doctor’s oft spoken mistrust and fear of Marius’s influence in the villages, his resistance to what is coming begins to crumble. First the doctor recognizes the danger of what is about to happen, but he admits to a certain amount of attraction to it all the same. Then, to better understand events, he intends to seek out Wenzel, whom he knows to be Marius’s cat’s-paw and whom he should indeed mistrust. Having finally found Mutter Gisson, the doctor is warned that something important is about to occur, something unavoidable:

Ich trat zu ihr hin: “Mutter”, fragte ich beinahe angstvoll, “was wird jetzt geschehen?”

“Frag’ nicht”, antwortete sie, “wenn es ruft, so muß man folgen, sonst geht es über einen hinweg.”

“Wer ruft, Mutter?”

“Alles!”³⁵⁵

As with her earlier admonishment, Mutter Gisson reminds the doctor that the coming situation is something that he must face and overcome in order to be of help to anyone.

Through the darkness, shadowy figures dressed in elaborate and grotesque costumes approach and surround the throng of dancers. Initially the dancers are too engrossed in their activity to notice the disturbing intruders. Indeed, “erst als ein paar Mädeln schrill aufkreischten, schwieg die Musik und erstarrt stand die Masse der

³⁵⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 258.

³⁵⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 259.

Menschen [...].”³⁵⁶ Shortly the music resumes and the hideous figures begin to circle the stunned crowd. Despite the elaborate costumes, the doctor is able to recognize Wenzel among the witches, monsters, and demons by his voice. The doctor rightly recognizes Wenzel’s costume as a reflection of his true nefarious nature: “Na, Wenzel[,] jetzt zeigen Sie sich wenigstens in Ihrer wahren Gestalt.”³⁵⁷ The dance continues unabated with “unverändert unermüdlicher Instensität,” which again threatens to take control of the doctor: “ich mußte mich zurückhalten, mich nicht wieder in das stampfende, dampfende Gewühl zu stürzen.”³⁵⁸

The anticipation of a redemptive experience is palpable in the air, and though the doctor ostensibly does not believe in the possibility of such a redemption – at least not from Marius – he, too, finds himself expecting something similar:

Wie lange konnte dieses Treiben noch weitergehen? Bei aller Ausdauer, die Bauern bei Lustbarkeiten – doch war es noch eine? – aufbringen, es mußte doch ein Ende gefunden werden, es mußte eine Lösung kommen, das fühlte nicht nur ich, sondern alle, die hier standen, warteten sicherlich ebenso darauf, ja, sogar die Tanzenden mußten es wohl tun. Saß der Marius noch dort oben auf dem Stein? müßte er nicht schon längst hier sein, auf daß die Erlösung werde, die Erlösung aus einem Sein, das sich selbst übersteigert hat und zu einem unerträglichen Über-Sein erstarrt ist?!³⁵⁹

At this the point everything begins to spiral out of control, at least out of the control of reason. As Wenzel and his costumed youth guard encircle Irmgard, the doctor makes a single shout of protest before being carried away, both physically by masked men and emotionally by the scene unfolding around him:

“Aufhören!”, schrie ich und wollte zuspringen, denn wie leicht konnte einer der Strohmäntel von der Flamme erfaßt werden, aber da war ich auch schon von den Masken umringt, war an Händen und Armen gepackt worden und wurde

³⁵⁶ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 259.

³⁵⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 260.

³⁵⁸ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 260-261.

³⁵⁹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 261-62.

mitgezerrt, während nun auch die anderen Lampen in Bewegung gerieten und den Wirbel mitmachten.³⁶⁰

It is telling that despite the doctor's prior knowledge of Marius and Irmgard's mysterious sacrificial plans, he claims that his moment of protest occurs out of concern that someone might catch himself on fire with one of the acetylene lamps being carried around. The reader would expect his concern to center on Irmgard, now surrounded by the masked men with what the doctor must assume are menacing intentions. Yet the doctor has lost his capacity to resist in any way, even as he recognizes that what he is witnessing is clearly insanity:

War ein allgemeiner Wahnsinn ausgebrochen? hatte er auch mich ergriffen? gewiß, ich konnte kaum mehr anders, ich wurde mitgezerrt, ich mußte mit, aber ich tat mehr, ich ließ mich nicht nur mitschleifen, sondern meine Beine sprangen gewissermaßen freiwillig mit, ich war in voller Tanzbewegung, die Flüche, die ich ausstoßen wollte, erstarrten mir im Munde, Gesicht und Zunge waren gelähmt, und selbst wenn ich einen bösen Puff in den Rücken versetzt erhielt – ich vermutete, daß es Wenzel war, der dies immer wieder tat –, brachte ich keinen Laut hervor.³⁶¹

Pulled willingly along, the doctor has been reduced to a visual witness: he sees and even understands the dangerous actions playing out around him, but he has been lamed. This paralysis, though, does not seem to derive from fear, either for his own safety or for Irmgard's. Rather, the doctor has joined the rest of the villagers in their expectation of salvation through Marius's actions. In this way, Marius promises to remove all fear from the villagers' lives. The expectant mass is led to Marius like an obedient animal, following the music played by the masked figures: "einem vielfüßigen Tiere gleich, so eng aneinandergedrängt, schob sich unter den Klängen der Ziehharmonika und der

³⁶⁰ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 262.

³⁶¹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 262.

Geigen die tanzende Herde vorwärts [...].”³⁶² Here the reader sees an obvious allusion to the “Rattenfänger” (already evident in the name Marius *Ratti*) of Hameln, having lulled his prey into a trancelike state with music that perpetuates the ceaseless dance. Drawn along among the crowd, the doctor has become an active participant in the mass event: “Meine Teufel blieben an mich angeklammert; doch hätten sie mich losgelassen, ich wäre nicht mehr ausgebrochen, ich wäre mitgesprungen.”³⁶³

Once the villagers arrive at the Kalten Stein, the doctor provides an important insight into the nature of this mass event. Despite the sense of foreboding and occasion that dominates the doctor’s account, the situation, when viewed in and of itself, is actually very normal. Dancing, costumes, and the “Bergbraut” are all expected as a part of the yearly “Bergkirchweih.” The doctor recognizes that there is the constant threat that the event will revert to an everyday occurrence, at which point Marius’s hold over the spectators would dissolve. To prevent this, the entire event is structured and presented like a play, with even the pauses carefully planned to keep the audience immersed:

Wenn es einen Leiter der Veranstaltung gab – vielleicht war es der Marius, vielleicht der Wenzel –, so verstand er sein Geschäft, denn die Kunstpause ward bis zur äußersten Grenze des Erträglichen gehalten, so lange, daß ich schier meinte, nun würde die Erschöpfung über uns kommen und alles, was bisher geschehen war, würde in den Alltag zurückfallen, ja, so nahe daran war es schon, doch knapp ehe solches eintrat, gab es ein Knacken im Gehölz, so daß sich aller Aufmerksamkeit dorthin richtete [...]. Nichtsdestoweniger geschieht nichts Absonderliches; der Rückfall in den Alltag ist zwar aufgehalten, doch das, was erfolgt, hält sich knapp oberhalb der Alltagsgrenze, denn die Unholde beginnen einfach Vierzeiler zu singen, wie sie bei jeder Kirchweih üblich sind, mochte ihr Inhalt auch diesmal von den sonstigen Texten abweichen [...].³⁶⁴

What follows is essentially an amateur costume play dramatizing local legend and establishing the importance of Irmgard’s sacrifice for the renewal of the world in

³⁶² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 262.

³⁶³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 262-63.

³⁶⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 263.

Kuppron. The play again represents an everyday occurrence that has been elevated to something unusual by the trance in which the villagers are captivated. The spectators become so involved in the play that the line between reality and fantasy begins to blur, to the point that is unclear whether the villagers are capable of distinguishing the two. First, the audience begins to insist that the actors actually are the characters they are playing. For example, in a scene that features the Kuppron witch (a veiled representation of Mutter Gisson) standing in judgment before a bishop (the embodiment of patriarchal religion):

Und der Bischof nickte bedeutsam und sagte: "Du also bist die Hexe."
"Der Alois ist's", schreit ein Spaßvogel.
"Nein", schreien andere, "die Hexe ist's, das Luder."
"Bist du der Alois oder die Hexe?"
"Die Hexe", antwortet zerknirscht die Hexe.
"Du hast viel verbrochen", sagt der Bischof.
"Die Bergbraut hat sie verkauft", ruft es in der Menge, "an den Drachen."
"Luder!"³⁶⁵

At first glance this might seem simply like the participation of an enthusiastic audience, but soon the emotion with which the audience responds to the play indicates a deeper involvement than mere heckling and jeering. After the bishop reads out the charges against the witch, accusing her of making Kuppron unfruitful and subjugating the men under her will, voices from the crowd begin calling for the witch to be beaten to death: "Erschlagt die Hexe, erschlagt sie!"³⁶⁶ In fact, when the play concludes with the witch walking intact from the field, the disappointed crowd again calls for her death:

War das Spiel damit zu Ende? ich hoffte es, aber noch mehr fürchtete ich es. Wo blieb die Lösung? wo die Erlösung? Auch das Volk war enttäuscht: "Die Hexe soll büßen!", schrien sie und schickten sich an, der flüchtenden Teufelsgruppe

³⁶⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 265.

³⁶⁶ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 267.

zum Waldrand nachzufolgen. “Erschlagt das Luder!” Und da hörte ich auch die Stimme des Lax: “Vorwärts, Burschen, erschlagt sie!”³⁶⁷

Before the villagers can pursue the retreating actors, their attention is diverted to Marius and Irmgard, whose theatrical performance finally dissolves the boundary between reality and fiction.

Jumping onto the “Kalten Stein,” Marius rejects the witch’s sacrifice, because the witch would not be an innocent offering. As the costumed demons sing a plaintive song, “wie eine primitive Totenklage und Beschwörung,” Marius invites Irmgard – a virgin – to be the worthy sacrifice.³⁶⁸ Marius presents himself and Irmgard as proxies, sent by the father (the sky) and the mother (the earth) to bring about, through sacrifice, the reunion of the two primal deities. Irmgard’s blood, Marius claims, will reconcile heaven and earth, replenishing the fields with divine rain. Irmgard’s father is brought forth to commit the murder seen by all as a necessary sacrifice. In anticipation of the bloodshed and the redemption it promises, the crowd begins to demand Irmgard’s sacrifice, shouting and devolving into a mad dance: “‘Das Opfer, das Opfer’, schrie die Menge. Es mag sein, daß auch ich mitgeschrien habe. Wie toll begannen jetzt die Geister wieder zu tanzen, schreiend warfen sie die Arme empor, bearbeiteten ihre Lärminstrumente, und das ganze Volk tat mit, vielleicht auch ich, ich weiß es nicht mehr.”³⁶⁹ The enthusiasm, emotion, even bloodlust of the crowd prove too much for the doctor, whose own entrancement was so complete that he has no memory of his own actions. Just as likely, though, is that the doctor does indeed remember his actions, but attempts to distance himself from complicity out of shame. This is supported by the way the doctor indicates his active

³⁶⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 267.

³⁶⁸ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 268.

³⁶⁹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 273.

emotional involvement in the situation, first by voicing disappointment upon seeing the knife chosen to kill Irmgard: “Eine närrische Enttäuschung erfüllte mich ob dieses Stäbchens mit dem Stein daran, das das Ziel und der Höhepunkt dieses ganzen Geschehens sein sollte [...]”³⁷⁰ More revealing is the internal voice the doctor describes that calls out for Irmgard’s death. Echoing the enthusiasm of the crowd around him, the doctor’s soul demands the sacrifice he claims not to believe in:

Von weit her, von der Straße unten tutet ein Auto, und in mir antwortet es: “Tu’s!”, in mir, der ich dastand in meinem auf Nähmaschinen genähten Anzug, in meinem auf mechanischen Webstühlen gewebten Stoff, geprägtes Metallgeld und ein Messer mit der Aufschrift ‘Solingen’ im Hosensack, ja, “Tu’s!” schrie es in meiner Seele, während die Eisenbahnen und Autos in der Welt herumfahren und der Äther voller Radiowellen ist, mein Kopf aber ein Sammelsurium ärztlicher Wissenschaft aus vielen Jahrhunderten beherbergt, in mir schrie es “Tu’s!”, aber doch dämmerte es in mir, daß nun der Widder im Gebüsch auftauchen müsse, das Opfer zu ersetzen.³⁷¹

In a moment of reflection, the doctor sees himself torn between modern, industrial, urban society and Marius’s proposed pastoral idyll. The doctor is a product of and exile from the city, but he has to a large extent embraced life in the country. It is interesting that even his knowledge of medicine is presented not (solely) as a product of modern science, but the accumulation of hundreds of years of knowledge of the human body and its ailments. This obviously includes the kind of natural medicine and faith healing that Mutter Gisson practices and that provides a connection between modern doctors and prehistoric shamans. Despite the initial rejection of all his urban, technological trappings, the doctor has a final moment of clarity when he realizes that the human offering should be replaced by a scapegoat. Society has enforced a taboo on human sacrifice at least since Abraham and Isaac, a taboo that civilization and religion demand. But Marius represents

³⁷⁰ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 273.

³⁷¹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 274.

a heathen spirituality that exists to beguile, to create a cult of personality around him. Mutter Gisson, by contrast, is presented as possessing a genuine understanding and connection to nature and to death, where Marius's knowledge is feigned and false.

As the doctor's soul and the surrounding crowd call for Irmgard's sacrifice, Mutter Gisson rises to challenge Marius's control of the villagers. Mutter Gisson addresses the crowd and Marius with the warning, "Hütet euch, hüte dich Marius!", indicating that their ritual will have serious consequences beyond their understanding. After Wenzel tries to stop her from speaking, Mutter Gisson repeats her warning: "Hütet euch, hüte dich Marius, noch ist überall die Mutter, und allnächtlich empfängt sie den Himmel, empfängt sie sein Wissen. Noch lauscht die Erde, und sie will das Blut nicht, mit dem ihr sie tränken wollt."³⁷² Marius counters with an attack on Mutter Gisson's legitimacy, charging that her time as representative of the Earth has passed, and that now the role falls to Irmgard. When Mutter Gisson then asks Irmgard's father why he is willing to murder his own child, his response reveals the central motivation behind the villagers' actions: "Dann wandte sie sich an Miland: 'Wem gehorchst du, da du dein Kind töten willst? gehorchst du deiner Angst?' 'Ja', erwiderte Miland, 'übergroß ist unsere Angst geworden, und die Welt ruft den Erlöser.'"³⁷³ Marius's tactics center on revealing and amplifying fear in others. He then promises to remove those fears in a variety of ways. Miland and the other villagers at the Bergkirchweih have become painfully aware of their existential fears of loneliness and death and they will reach out to anyone who promises to make them forget these fears. Mutter Gisson, in contrast to Marius, encourages others to embrace life and nature, to accept death as a means to

³⁷² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 274.

³⁷³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 275.

higher understanding. The difference between Marius and Mutter Gisson's relationship to others is made striking by their simultaneous commands to the crowd. As one of the villagers cries out in fear for "Mutter" – the term contains a multiplicity of referents including Mutter Gisson, the villager's own mother, and even the benevolent matriarchal spirit of the Earth – both address the crowd: "Fürchte dich nicht", antwortete ihm Mutter Gisson. 'Fürchtet euch', schrie Marius."³⁷⁴ As the fear grows stronger among the villagers, more and more begin to call out to mother. Out of an increasing desperation and desire for protection, the villagers begin to gravitate toward Mutter Gisson:

"Mutter, verlaß' uns nicht!" wiederholte es sich da und dort. Eine kaum merkliche und doch unaufhaltsame Bewegung war in die Masse gekommen, sie drängte vor, zu Mutter Gisson hin, als wollte sie sich ängstlich um sie scharen, als wäre nur noch eine letzte Scheu zu überwinden, um dies zu tun. Es war eine arge Hilflosigkeit darin, und doch schon Auflehnung, Auflehnung gegen den Marius, denn schon wurden Rufe laut: "Schick' ihn fort, Mutter...schick' ihn fort!"³⁷⁵

The crowd's movement toward Mutter Gisson begins to gain momentum, and it appears that she will indeed prevail over Marius and his masked guard. In fact, the movement toward Mutter Gisson is involuntary, more like magnetism than actual choice:

Aber der schattenhafte Rhythmus hatte auch die Menge in raschere Bewegung gebracht, ruckweise schob sie sich vorwärts, vielleicht zu Mutter Gisson hin, Schutz bei ihr zu suchen, vielleicht zum Marius, ihn zu vertreiben, und ich, fast ohne es zu wollen, dennoch es wollend und mit den Ellbogen nachhelfend, wurde vorgetragen bis zu der tanzenden Geisterkette, die der nachdrängenden Masse nicht standhielt, sondern sich in ihr verteilte und auflöste, wie eine schlurfende wetzende Wolke in einem größern Wolkenhauf. Dies alles war in wenigen Minuten geschehen, und da verlöschte auch die letzte Lampe.³⁷⁶

In the middle of the crowd, the doctor is not only swept forward by the surrounding press, he is moved at least partially by his own will, just as was the case when he was escorted by Marius's masked demons. As the light goes out and the music begins again at

³⁷⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 275.

³⁷⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 277.

³⁷⁶ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 277.

Wenzel's behest, the crowd is suddenly stopped on its way to Mutter Gisson, providing the necessary opportunity for the murderous blood offering to be made: "Die Masse hatte mit dem Eintritt der Finsternis unwillkürlich Halt gemacht, auch die Geister hatten ihr Tanzen eingestellt. Aber die Harmonika spielte weiter, und man hörte, wie der Wenzel dazu sprang und den Takt schlug."³⁷⁷ In this scene, the crowd is acted upon by two opposing stimuli: light and rhythm. Light, traditionally associated with the illumination of reason and knowledge is set against music and sound, a primal dynamism that drives the crowd by appealing to visceral emotion and motion, rather than reasoned understanding. To be clear, the crowd remains entranced whether by Marius or Mutter Gisson, but Mutter Gisson represents Broch's concept of "Irrationalbereicherung," a positive addition of irrational experience to an otherwise reasoned existence, while Marius represents "Rationalverarmung," the negative loss of rational capacity in favor of irrational experience.³⁷⁸ In this way the villagers can sooner attain wholeness and a degree of salvation from their fear by following the light to Mutter Gisson rather than responding to Marius's siren song.

In the absence of a guiding light, the crowd remains frozen in breathless anticipation. The doctor speculates that if he had been able to find his flashlight, the catastrophe might have been averted, but he admits to being incapable to think in rational terms of causation: "ich wußte in jenen Augenblicken nichts von einer Taschenlampe, durfte davon nichts wissen, wollte wohl auch nichts davon wissen, lauschend nur, hinhorchend nach dem Schrei [...]"³⁷⁹ Instead, he stood paralyzed among the villagers, waiting for Irmgard to meet her now inevitable demise, which comes at the hands of the

³⁷⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 277.

³⁷⁸ These terms will also be discussed in the following chapter on the *Massenwahntheorie*.

³⁷⁹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 278.

maddened butcher Sabest. In the aftermath of Irmgard's last gasp, the doctor slowly begins to regain his rational capacities:

Ob es Sekunden, ob es Minuten waren, die noch in vollkommenem Schweigen und in Finsternis verstrichen, hätte ich nicht zu sagen vermocht, vermag ich nicht zu sagen, langsam nur kehrte mein Wissen zurück, wissend, daß die Starre zuerst von Mutter Gisson unterbrochen wurde, deren Stimme, von tiefer Trauer umflort, aus der Nacht, nächtlicher noch als die Nacht, in die Dunkelheit hinein tönte, dunkler noch als die Dunkelheit:

“Nun ist es doch geschehen.”

Da schrie ich; und ich schrie: “Aufhören...Licht!”³⁸⁰

Obviously the doctor's trance is tied to Irmgard's sacrifice such that he is apparently incapable of acting until she is already dead. The reason for this is that, despite his initial protests and a stated belief that Marius is nothing but a fool and a charlatan, there is indeed some part of the doctor that was truly convinced in the promised salvation that would necessitate Irmgard's murder. In fact, the doctor says as much upon viewing Irmgard's corpse:

einen Herzschlag lang war ich mit Irmgard in einem Jenseits, in dem das Opfer sinnvoll schien, ein Ernteopfer und eine Krone, um derentwillen getanzt wird, und einen Herzschlag lang an diesem Jenseits teilhabend, in dem Irmgard sich nun befand und das ihr gehörte, war ich ohne Haß gegen den Marius, einen Herzschlag einer verrückten Erlösung teilhaftig, die nun über die Welt gekommen sein sollte. Einen Herzschlag lang. Aber da trat Mutter Gisson an den Stein heran, kniete nieder, nahm eine der ausgebreiteten Hände der Enkelin in ihre Hand, und unter der aufsteigenden Trauer sagte ich zum Marius hinauf: “Machen Sie Licht.”³⁸¹

The doctor's experience in the promised salvation may only last a heartbeat, but his participation (voluntary or involuntary) in the proceedings that led to Irmgard's murder lasted much longer.

Throughout the entire novel, the commentary traces a development in the doctor's feelings toward Marius that moves from an instant, almost obsessive suspicion to an

³⁸⁰ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 278.

³⁸¹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 279.

insidious passivity bridging on tacit support of Marius and his actions. Though this actual acceptance may last only a moment, the doctor's commentary reveals that he never opposed Marius with the necessary fervor and insistence. By branding Marius a fool, the doctor tragically underestimates the serious danger he poses to the community. Only Mutter Gisson clearly recognizes Marius Ratti's potential, and that from the very beginning. From this point on, Marius's spell over the doctor is broken, but the damage has already been done:

Die Ernte war dem Narrischen zugefallen, einem Narren waren wir nachgetanzt, wir hatten ihn umtanzt, getrieben von der tiefsten Dunkelheit unseres Lebens, wir, das vielkopfige Tier, das mutterlose , von dem ich ein Teil war, von dem ich ein Teil bin, von dem wir alle, die wir leben und tanzen, Teile sind, Mann oder Frau, Fuhrer oder Gefuhrte, Weise oder Narren, Teile des Nachttieres.³⁸²

The villagers were motivated and driven by the dark recesses of humanity, which in Broch's conception refers not necessarily to moral evil, but rather to the irrational substratum of each individual consciousness. Every individual is capable of experiencing "Rationalverarmung"; Intelligence and wisdom are not sufficient protection from the threat of irrational impulses, as Broch foresaw in 1918 in "Die Strae." Even Marius, though he served as the leader of this farcical sacrifice, is operating according to irrational and destructive impulses.

With Irmgard proven dead, Wenzel lights a lantern for the doctor to survey the corpse. The return of light brings with it a return to consciousness, and the villagers, waking from their trance begin to register confusion as to what they have just witnessed:

Und als er das Wasser nachgegossen hatte und die erste Laterne wieder zischend sich in die Nacht entzundete, loste sich endlich auch die Erstarrung des Menschenhaufens um uns. Die Leute begannen zu reden, sie umdrangten und umschlichen die Leiche und rannten sinnlos hin und her. Ein paar der Geister warfen ihre Masken ab, andere vergaen einfach, da sie noch in ihren

³⁸² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 281.

Vermummungen steckten, und aus den falschen Bärten, die ihnen wirr und halbabgerissen um die Wangen hingen, kam wirres Gefrage hervor.³⁸³

The similarity to sleepwalkers is readily apparent, especially given Broch's frequent use of the concept. Waking from a dreamlike state, the villagers have only a vague recollection of what has just transpired and what role they played in the event. Lax, the head of the local council, reveals this ambiguous understanding of events when he addresses the doctor: "Hm, Herr Doctor, eigentlich ist das ein Mord...oder nicht?"³⁸⁴ It is evidence of the extent to which Marius's enchantments have affected the villagers that such a question could even be posed. Clearly Irmgard was murdered; belief in the necessity of a human sacrifice is not a mitigating factor. Wenzel, however, is quick to claim that a crime committed while not of sound mind is exempt from punishment: "Sinnesverwirrung im Augenblick der Tat ist ein Strafausschließungsgrund [...]"³⁸⁵ This logic is highly attractive, considering no one present for Irmgard's murder was in full possession of his or her mental faculties, with the exception of Mutter Gisson. For a moment, though, the villagers seem to sense, if not fully recognize, their guilt in the face of Mutter Gisson:

Mutter Gisson hatte sich erhoben, sie machte einen Schritt nach vorwärts, und ihre Düsterteit war furchtbar. Die Leute starrten sie an und wichen langsam vor ihrem Blick zurück, sogar der Marius konnte dem Blick, der ihn getroffen hatte, konnte dieser Schwere nicht standhalten [...]. Eine der Masken – es war der Schmiedegeselle Ludwig – trat vor, löste den Strohmantel von seinen Schultern und legte ihn über die Tote. Dann tauchte auch er wieder in der zurückweichenden Menschenwohle unter. Achteten sie den Tod, da sie sich zurückzogen? achteten sie den Schmerz? die Trauer? oder fürchteten sie bloß das Entrückte, jenes nicht mehr Zu-ihnen-Gehörige, das von der alten Frau ausstrahlte? Es war beinahe wie ein trotziger Widerstand, der aus dieser Menschenmasse herüberwehte, und beinahe war er mir begreiflich: hatten sie, hatten wir nicht getanzt, mit Raserei das Opfer zu beschwören, auf daß der

³⁸³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 281.

³⁸⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 281.

³⁸⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 281.

Himmel sich zur Erde herabsenke, auf daß die Erde zum Himmel emporschwebe? hätte Irmgard nun nicht einziehen müssen in den geöffneten Berg, empfangen von der aufgetanen Halle des Goldes? War nicht alles zunichte geworden, da Mutter Gisson mit ruhiger Hand die selige Tote, das strahlende Opferkind zu sich nahm und in die Obhut einer Landschaft führte, zu der es keinen Zugang mehr gab? Wurden sie nicht alle, die da gewartet hatten, in den Alltag zurückgeschickt, in jenen Alltag, aus dem der Marius sie entführt hatte! Groß war ihre Angst gewesen, ins schier Unerträgliche war sie gesteigert worden, und jetzt, da der Angst Erlösung hätte kommen müssen, wurden sie darum betrogen, wurden sie zurückgestoßen in das Vorherige, dorthin, wo die Angst wieder aufkeimte, die Angst der schweigenden Nacht! Sie murrten nicht, aber schweigend zogen sie sich zurück; nur ein Kinderweinen war hörbar, es kam von Zäzilie her, die inmitten der Menge herumirrte.³⁸⁶

In the cold light of awakening, the villagers are forced to recognize that though Irmgard is dead, Marius's promise of salvation remains unfulfilled. Though Marius claimed to have given them the knowledge of death, it was – as with all of Marius's knowledge – a false knowledge of death. Death remains looming in the darkness of night, a constant threat and source of existential terror for every individual. With Mutter Gisson's exit, a pathway to a true understanding of life and death, as well as a means of surmounting existential fear is shut off for good. The doctor recognizes that his (in)actions and those of the surrounding villagers were fully responsible for eliminating the possibility of Mutter Gisson's alternative salvation. In the wake of Irmgard's needless death, each villager must return disillusioned to the everyday, fearful existence from which he or she was led by Marius and his false promises. Death and fear remain constant and unmoved. In the face of their fear, though, the villagers almost immediately attempt to suppress it through drink, laughter, and ignorance: "Man hätte meinen können, der Tanz wäre bloß durch eine Musikpause unterbrochen worden."³⁸⁷

³⁸⁶ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 282-83.

³⁸⁷ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 284.

Despite the violence and senselessness of Irmgard's murder, the incident is almost instantly absorbed and forgotten by the entire village: "Noch schwang das Elend jener Schreckensnacht in schweren Wellen nach, und doch schwang es beriets aus. [...] welch ein Elend!, und doch ordnete es sich schon ein, wurde durchsichtig und unsichtbar, wurde zu kleinen Kräuseln im Meer der Erinnerung und des Vergessens [...]"³⁸⁸ The villagers continue to go about their business as before, "so unbefangen, als hätte das grause Geschehen nicht stattgefunden [...]"³⁸⁹ Even the doctor is guilty of downplaying the gravity of Irmgard's death, suggesting that it is of less importance than Agathe, a local village girl, bearing a child out of wedlock: "Was der Sabest getan hat, das ist gesühnt, und die Leute werden es bald vergessen...aber das ledige Kind vom Peter Sabest werden sie weniger leicht vergessen, das bleibt da..."³⁹⁰ The doctor is right that the villagers will forget Irmgard's murder without constant reminders – either out of self-absorption or in an attempt to suppress feelings of guilt and responsibility – but to suggest that the act has been atoned for is willful denial of the crime committed and the role the villagers and the doctor himself played in its perpetration. For Helmut Koopmann, the return to normalcy by all characters after such a grotesque tragedy represents the true victory of mass hysteria over the individual: "Nirgendwo freilich ist so deutlich gesagt, daß der Sieg des Massenwahns über den einzelnen so sehr in die 'Alltags-Normalität' zurückführte, wie in diesem Roman. So ist der Ausgang des Romans, die Rückkehr zur Normalität, tatsächlich der entscheidende Sieg des Marius Ratti."³⁹¹ Marius succeeds in the end in convincing an innocent girl to submit to her own murder while her family, friends, and neighbors watch

³⁸⁸ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 292.

³⁸⁹ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 292.

³⁹⁰ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 295.

³⁹¹ Koopmann 206.

as if it were a normal and necessary occurrence. In the aftermath, everyone continues on with their lives as if nothing especially tragic or noteworthy had happened. There is no one in Kuppron to lament the dead or chastise the villagers for their blindness. Even a second tragedy, young Leonhard's death in a mine collapse, passes without forcing the villagers to reflect on their actions. Though the mining scheme was planned by Wenzel and not Marius, Marius still manages to deflect attention from the senselessness of the deaths in Kuppron by appealing to a vague and inexplicable heroism:

Doch neben der Mutter, in leichter Grazie das eine Knie auf dem Boden, den Ellenbogen auf das geknickte zweite Bein gestützt, hatte sich der Marius niedergelassen, und als wir vorbeikamen und für einen Augenblick anhielten, dem Toten zu Ehren, hörte ich, wie der Narr zu der Mutter sprach: "Härmt Euch nicht, Mutter, denn Euer Sohn ist für eine große Sache gefallen, und nicht nur wir, die wir hier um Euch herum sind, auch unsere Kinder und Kindeskinde werden seines Heldentodes in Dankbarkeit gedenken."
Und die Mutter jagte den Schamlosen nicht fort, keiner tat es, vielmehr sagte sie, gierig des Trostes, den er ihr vorgaukelte: "Ja, Herr Ratti."³⁹²

As with Irmgard's death, no one is willing to contest Marius's obviously empty claims to some higher purpose behind the incidents he has helped to cause. Only the widower Suck has the sense and the courage finally to speak out against Marius's naive plans to find gold in the abandoned mines of Kuppron. For his effort, Suck receives angry shouts from the other villagers.

In the final chapters of the novel, Marius's control of Kuppron becomes complete. Marius is accepted as a member of the village council and the hate he sowed in the village against Wetchy, the urban insurance agent and his family, proves enough to run them out of the village. In a scene of ecstatic natural connection, Mutter Gisson accepts her death in the presence of the doctor, Agathe, and her son Matthias while communing with the soul of her deceased granddaughter, Irmgard. With Mutter Gisson's death,

³⁹² Broch, *Verzauberung*, 331-32.

Marius becomes the sole spiritual guide for the community until such time as, perhaps, Agathe takes up the mantle left her by the late matriarch. The doctor's afterword makes clear how little has actually changed in this small alpine community, despite the hate and violence that briefly blossomed there. Resigned but sorrowful, the doctor refuses at least to forget that which he was not able to prevent:

Doch soll ich aufschreiben, daß der Marius noch immer im Gemeinderat sitzt? für wen soll ich dies aufschreiben, da ich doch selber lieber gar nicht daran denken will? Und wenn auch trotz seines närrischen Geredes und Getues so ziemlich alles im alten Gleis geblieben ist, [...] wenn also auch der Gesamtaspekt der Welt sich kaum geändert hat und kaum ändern wird, [...] so kann ich doch weder Irmgard's Schicksal vergessen, noch das Unrecht, das dem armen Wetchy zugefügt worden ist. Ja, es will mir sogar scheinen, als ob dieses schwerwiegender sei als Irmgard's Tod, der ja wie ein natürliches Ende ihres Seins gewesen ist: aber Unrecht ist Vergewaltigung der Menschheit und des Göttlichen im Menschen, und in ihm ist die Quelle des Grauens, in dem auch Irmgard untergegangen ist. Welche Verzauberung! Welcher Irrweg, um zur Natur zurückzukehren!³⁹³

It seems problematic that the doctor should more easily accept the murder of an innocent girl as a natural end to her existence than the persecution of the Wetchy family. It is clear that what happens to Wetchy is injustice, that he should be ridiculed and even beaten for his differences from the local villagers. In fact, Wetchy has frequently been referred to in scholarship as representative of the Jews. While this is a striking example of the divisive and violent potential of mass hysteria, it remains unclear how murder, even if submitted to willingly, is less concerning than persecution based on blind hatred. It seems that even after all he is witnessed, the doctor shares, if only somewhat, the belief that Irmgard's death was a necessary sacrifice, and as such a form of martyrdom. This recalls Mutter Gisson's earlier statement that a false savior must first clear the way for the true savior to arrive and redeem the world: "Der richtige Erlöser schickt immer die falschen voraus, damit sie für ihn reinen Tisch machen...erst muß der Haß kommen mit seiner Angst, dann

³⁹³ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 369.

die Liebe.”³⁹⁴ Irmgard’s life was offered in love to free her father from existential fear, which does indeed occur when he reconciles with his estranged wife. Mutter Gisson claims that this was the true purpose of Irmgard’s death, though it might at first have seemed superfluous:

[Mutter Gisson:] “So war es doch nicht so ganz nutzlos gewesen...was?”
“Ja, aber es war Euer Verdienst,...nicht das des Herrn Marius...”
“Und doch hat er auch dafür kommen müssen.”³⁹⁵

However, the positive effects of Irmgard’s death and the return to nature it occasioned, according to the doctor, are limited to Irmgard’s parents and Mutter Gisson’s spiritual heir, Agathe. For the other villagers, life continues as before, and even Marius has settled down to his position as a village bureaucrat, no longer intent on preaching against promiscuity and the destruction of technology. Life appears to have changed little for the doctor as well, as he maintains his country practice and reflects on his memories. The final message of the novel is one of obscure hope in the salvation to come not from Marius, but from Agathe’s baby, much like the Christ child:

Mutter Gisson ist gestorben, und die Agathe hat ihr Kind. Und es will mir scheinen, als ob mit dem Kind der Agathe eher die neue Zeit kommen wird als mit den Reden des Marius, es will mir scheinen, als ob sich in Agathens Geist die neue Frömmigkeit vorbereitet, die die Welt braucht und die sie will, und daß Agathens Kind dies einst wird verwirklichen können. Und vielleicht bin ich bei dieser Geburt dabei gewesen.³⁹⁶

The doctor’s final optimistic expectations for the new age that Agathe’s child may usher in recall his relationship to Mutter Gisson. Despite his position as a critical minded intellectual, the doctor repeatedly makes concessions to spirituality, and occasionally superstition. While Mutter Gisson (and later Agathe) represents love, individuality, and

³⁹⁴ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 175.

³⁹⁵ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 311.

³⁹⁶ Broch, *Verzauberung*, 369-70.

closeness to nature, the case is never made for the validity of her spiritual program over Marius's or any other spiritual program. As such, the novel's ending disappoints by appealing to a new obscure spiritual solution to the dangers of mass hysteria rather than providing or suggesting concrete social and political solutions to the problem. And though some may find Broch's move from one spiritual approach to another to be dissatisfying, it is not the purpose of *Die Verzauberung* to present solutions to the problem. Rather, the novel is a case study of how an intelligent and self-aware individual can fall victim to the seductive (un)reasoning of a charismatic *Massenführer*.

In *Die Verzauberung* Broch presents a scenario in which a person similar to himself and his target audience can be taken in and rendered ineffective by mass hysteria. The mass popular enthusiasm Broch witnessed in Vienna in 1918 was already sufficient to reveal his own susceptibility to the euphoria of mass events. The country doctor, removed from the site of his intellectual pursuits becomes acclimated to, if not a believer in, the local customs and superstitions of Kuppron. In the figure of Mutter Gisson he sees more than a faith healer; he sees a woman with deep and genuine knowledge of life, death, and nature. When confronted by an outside, competing spiritual figure, the doctor initially maintains a skeptical attitude commensurate with his scientific profession. This strange foreigner, Marius Ratti, begins to take on a larger importance for the doctor, becoming the focus of his—and the villagers'—thoughts. As Marius establishes himself as an indispensable member of the community, gathering followers and converts about him, the doctor's attitude toward him is constantly shifting. In conversation with others, the doctor is initially flippant, treating Marius as a fool whose presence in Kuppron will be short-lived. The more the doctor comes to understand of Marius's theories, and the

more he witnesses their implementation in the village, the more he begins to mistrust Marius. Yet when forced to confront Marius directly, the doctor finds himself resorting to ridicule rather than science and logic when responding to Marius's ludicrous claims. More disturbing, the doctor is repeatedly unable to respond at all, curiously lulled into unresponsiveness. The danger posed by this trancelike inertia is revealed in the climactic scene of Irmgard's murder, where the doctor is not only unable to stop events, he even feels himself cooperating with his captors. I argue that this is the central fear that convinced Broch to write "Die Straße," the fear that in the grips of mass hysteria he would not only be unable to counteract violence and injustice, but that he would become a willing participant in such despicable acts. Even the doctor's recollections of Irmgard's murder are largely absent of the horror one would expect to find in an account of such an event. This lack of horror is indicative of the other fear represented by mass hysteria and identified above by Helmut Koopmann, that even the greatest atrocity committed in the grips of mass hysteria becomes relegated to the realm of the mundane and everyday, an example of Arendt's banality of evil. *Die Verzauberung* is a cautionary tale, not a handbook to combatting the roots and spread of mass hysteria. The latter project would consume Hermann Broch's scholarly energies for the rest of his life, resulting in the extensive but incomplete *Massenwahntheorie*.

CHAPTER VI

THE INDIVIDUAL ECLIPSES THE MASS.

THE *MASSENWAHNTHEORIE*

In the previous chapters, I have shown how Broch's responses to, and portrayals of the mass repeatedly focus on the individual, rather than on the mass itself. From the spectator position of Broch himself in "Die Straße" and Esch in *Die Schlafwandler*, Broch moves to individuals surrounded by, but not incorporated in the mass, including Katharina Hieck in *Die Unbekannte Größe* and the titular Vergil in *Der Tod des Vergil*. Finally, in *Die Verzauberung*, the initially sovereign doctor is overcome and subsumed in a murderous crowd. Across his oeuvre, Broch moves the individual deeper into the mass until it psychologically disintegrates, losing the ability to control its own actions against the whim of the mass. The culmination of Broch's philosophical and psychological contemplation on the concept of the mass, the sprawling, but unfinished *Massenwahntheorie*, deviates from this trajectory by virtually eliminating the mass from consideration. This chapter explores the disappearance of the mass as an entity within the *Massenwahntheorie* as a result of Broch's insistence on the centrality of the individual. The *Massenwahntheorie* looms large both in Broch's body of work as well as in the voluminous scholarship on Broch. As such, the theory has been analyzed, interpreted, and applied by numerous scholars³⁹⁷ since its partial publication in Wolfgang Rothe's

³⁹⁷ Noteworthy examinations include: Erich von Kahler, *Die Philosophie von Hermann Broch* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1962); Ernestine Schlant, *Die Philosophie Hermann Brochs* (München: Francke, 1971); Hubertus Venzlaff, *Hermann Broch. Ekstase und Masse* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1981); Robert Weigel, *Zur geistigen Einheit von Hermann Brochs Werk. Massenpsychologie. Politologie. Romane* (Tübingen:

Gesammelte Werke (1959) and subsequent full publication in Paul Michael Lützeler's *Kommentierte Werkausgabe* (1979).³⁹⁸ Rather than create another extensive analysis of Broch's complete theory, I will instead restrict my examination of the *Massenwahntheorie* to those aspects which best explain and illuminate the changing role of the mass in Broch's overall conception.

Context

A review of Broch's correspondence throughout the 1930s reveals a keen perception of the course of political events in Europe. Already in 1926, Broch expressed

Francke, 1994); Rolf Schuhmann, *Die Massenwahntheorie im Spiegel der Autorenkrise* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2000).

³⁹⁸ Rothe's volume *Massenpsychologie. Schriften aus dem Nachlass* (Zürich: Rhein Verlag, 1959) collects four texts from Broch's posthumous papers: "Autobiographie als Arbeitsprogramm," "Geschichtsgesetz und Willensfreiheit," "Gibt es noch Demokratie?," and "Zur politischen Situation unserer Zeit." Lützeler's *Massenwahntheorie* is much broader and organizes Broch's various essays according to the 1943 text "A Study on Mass Hysteria. Contributions to a Psychology of Politics (Preliminary Table of Contents)" (originally published in Hannah Arendt's *Erkennen und Handeln* essay volume of the *Gesammelte Werke* [Zürich: Rhein Verlag, 1955]). In Lützeler's volume, the *Massenwahntheorie* proper is preceded by three programmatic texts: the "Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes für politische Psychologie und zum Studium von Massenwahrscheinungen" (first published in: Hermann Broch, *Zur Universitätsreform*, ed. Götz Wienold [Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1969] 78-114); "Entwurf für eine Theorie massenwahnartiger Erscheinungen" (previously unpublished); and the aforementioned "Preliminary Table of Contents," in Lützeler's own German translation. The theory that follows is divided into three parts, "Der Dämmerungsbereich," "Der menschliche Dämmerzustand und die Masse," and "Der Kampf gegen den Massenwahn (Eine Psychologie der Politik)," which are each subdivided into five, four, and five chapters respectively. The first two essays of Rothe's *Massenpsychologie* are incorporated into Lützeler's *Massenwahntheorie*, while the second two are moved into the volume *Politische Schriften*. The "Autobiographie als Arbeitsprogramm," specifically the largest section "Massenwahntheorie 1939 und 1941," comprises the bulk of the second and third parts of the *Massenwahntheorie*, while Lützeler divides the essay "Geschichtsgesetz und Willensfreiheit" into the first two chapters of the first part. Lützeler also includes three essays that had been previously published in Hannah Arendt's *Erkennen und Handeln*: the "Preliminary Table of Contents," "Das System als Weltbewältigung" (incorporated into Part 2, Chapter 3: "Der Erkenntnisvorstoß und das Neue in der Geschichte," section 4: "Über Problemtypen und Systeme"), and "Politik. Ein Kondensat" (as Part 3, Chapter 4: "Menschenrecht und Irdisch-Absolutes"). The remaining chapters of the *Massenwahntheorie* are composed of previously unpublished material from the Broch Archive at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. By virtue of his adherence to Broch's own structure in the "Preliminary Table of Contents," Lützeler's *Massenwahntheorie* comes closest to presenting Broch's theory in the form it was originally conceived, with far less editorial correction to source texts than Lützeler claims were made by Rothe (Paul Michael Lützeler, "Textkritische Hinweise" in: Hermann Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler [Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979] 569).

fears of an impending European catastrophe in a letter to his son Hermann Friedrich

Broch de Rothermann:

Die Sorgen werden immer größer, die Zeit immer krisenhafter, und ich sehe eigentlich bloß Katastrophen im Anzug. Nicht nur was uns in Wien anlangt, sondern eigentlich für ganz Europa. [...] Wie schwer es ist und eigentlich recht hoffnungslos, spüre ich ja selbst am besten: seit Jahren erwarte ich ruhigere Zeiten, um endlich meine Arbeiten und mein Buch abschließen zu können. Statt dessen wird es immer ärger; meine Zeit ist bis zum Rand mit Sorge und Arbeit gefüllt [...].³⁹⁹

In the same letter, Broch communicates a desire to send his son to America, far from the coming crisis. By 1932, Broch was already contemplating his own emigration to England.⁴⁰⁰ After Hitler's rise to power in Germany, Broch's warnings of the next war increase in frequency and vehemence. In February 1933, the situation in Germany exposed a prevailing "Weltsinnlosigkeit," which thoroughly frustrated Broch's authorial pursuits.⁴⁰¹ Broch's letter to Willa Muir from October 20, 1934, presents an especially dire vision of Europe's fate, and by extension the fate of Western society and culture:

Wir aber hier [Österreich] spüren bereits, [...] daß der große Umbruch, den ich seit zwanzig Jahren in allen Gliedern spüre, nun tatsächlich in vollem Gange ist, und daß der Durchmarsch durch das Nichts beginnt. Als Symptom: der gefürchtete kommende Krieg, von dem wir alle sprechen [...]. Gewiß, das ist "nur" Politik, aber wir sind hier in ein Stadium getreten, in dem man auf die Politik nicht mehr 'nur' sagen darf, und weil von ihr aus der tödliche Hauch ausgeht, der jeden anderen Wert zu einem Häufchen kalter Asche verwandelt.⁴⁰²

Twenty years after the start of the First World War and sixteen years after "Die Straße," the outbreak of mass hysteria that Broch had predicted appeared imminent. Faced with a collapse of values that would render his literary and scholarly efforts superfluous, Broch was forced to rethink his role in the changing intellectual and political landscape. Broch

³⁹⁹ Broch, "Brief an H.F. Broch de Rothermann vom 13.2.1926," *Briefe 1913-1938*, 72.

⁴⁰⁰ Broch, "Brief an Willa und Edwin Muir vom 18.7.1932," *Briefe 1913-1938*, 200.

⁴⁰¹ Broch, "Brief an Willa und Edwin Muir vom 7.2.1933," *Briefe 1918-1938*, 231.

⁴⁰² Broch, "Brief an Willa Muir vom 20.10.1934," *Briefe 1918-1938*, 304.

describes his initial depression and feelings of helplessness when confronted by the changing spirit of the times,⁴⁰³ feelings that caused him to recede into himself: “Wer sich in einem üblen Zustand befindet, möge in eine dunkle Ecke gehen und seine Mitmenschen nicht mit Klagen belästigen. Demgemäß schwieg ich.”⁴⁰⁴

By the second half of 1935, Broch began to see a life of intellectual or artistic isolation as untenable in a time of such political turmoil. In a letter to Egon Vietta, Broch rejects the ivory tower for a preliminary, as yet undefined form of political engagement:

wenn die Welt auf den Philosophen und Dichter nicht mehr hört, weil sie ihn nicht mehr hören kann, weil sie seine Sprache nicht mehr, sondern nur mehr die politische versteht, erscheint es mir beinahe unmoralisch, in einer solchen Welt ein denkerisches und dichterisches Leben führen zu wollen, denn es läuft auf eine Isolierung im Elfenbeinturm hinaus.⁴⁰⁵

In an attempt to escape the ivory tower and counteract the advance of fascism, Broch turned his attention to practical political measures. In 1936, Broch began planning a resolution for the prevention of future wars and the protection of human rights. By early 1937, Broch had completed a draft of the resolution, which he intended to send to the League of Nations after gathering signatures from prominent European intellectuals and international humanitarian organizations. Among those individuals solicited by Broch to participate were Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Aldous Huxley, and Albert Einstein. Despite initial enthusiasm, Broch’s resolution was never published.

The “Völkerbund-Resolution,” though it had no concrete political effect, established a point of departure for Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie*.⁴⁰⁶ Most importantly, the “Völkerbund-Resolution” focused on the inherent worth of the human individual,

⁴⁰³ Broch, “Brief an Willa Muir vom 18.3.1935,” *Briefe 1918-1938*, 336-37.

⁴⁰⁴ Broch, “Brief an Willa Muir vom 20.10.1934,” *Briefe 1918-1938*, 303.

⁴⁰⁵ Broch, “Brief an Egon Vietta vom 21.9.1935,” *Briefe 1918-1938*, 361.

⁴⁰⁶ Lützel, *Biographie*, 212-13.

appealing to the League of Nations to enshrine the protection of human rights in an internationally binding legal and organizational structure. The similarity between Broch's resolution and the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights is striking, and has posthumously established Broch as a champion of human rights.⁴⁰⁷ Broch's resolution is explicit in establishing the centrality of the human individual, rather than nation states or political organizations. The final principle of the resolution states:

[der Völkerbund] deklariert ferner, daß alle von ihm getroffenen und zu treffenden Maßnahmen unmittelbar dem Wohle des realen einzelpersönlichen Menschen zu dienen haben, weil in der menschlichen Persönlichkeit und in der Gewährtheit ihrer physischen und psychischen Integrität, die ihre Würde einschließt, der absolute Quell eines allgemeinverbindlichen friedensstiftenden Ethos und damit jeder kulturfördernden Herrschaftsaufgabe erkannt werden muß [...].⁴⁰⁸

According to Broch, the human individual is the source of ethical and cultural will. As such, hope for peace and the maintenance of constructive culture can only be found in the individual: “[der einzelpersönliche Mensch] ist der initiale Träger des ethischen Willens sowie des Wunsches nach kulturbringendem Frieden: an den Menschen schlechthin und an seine Seele hat jede Friedens- und Herrschaftsinstanz, hat der Völkerbund zu appellieren.”⁴⁰⁹ In the Desiderata to the resolution, Broch presented several practical projects that the League of Nations could undertake to secure human rights against violation by governments or other individuals. As in “Die Straße,” Broch cites mass hysteria as a significant threat to the human individual, especially to minorities constantly

⁴⁰⁷ Michael Kessler, “Hermann Broch: Menschenrecht, Demokratie und Toleranz,” ed. Thomas Eicher, Paul Michael Lützel, and Hartmut Steinecke, *Hermann Broch. Politik, Menschenrechte – und Literatur?* (Oberhausen: ATHENA, 2005) 15-16, 43; Paul Michael Lützel, “Broch lesen – wozu?,” ed. Österreichische Liga für Menschenrechte, *Hermann Broch, ein Engagierter zwischen Literatur und Politik* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2004) 162.

⁴⁰⁸ Broch, “Völkerbund-Resolution,” *Politische Schriften*, 204.

⁴⁰⁹ Broch, “Völkerbund,” 205.

exposed to “massenpsychische Verhetzung.”⁴¹⁰ In order to combat such harassment and violence, Broch suggested that the League of Nations establish institutions to research the various social problems and phenomena threatening human rights.⁴¹¹ Broch’s impulse to uncover the underlying causes and structures of social problems through institutionalized research would later form the central element of his theoretical approach to mass hysteria. Throughout 1937 and the beginning of 1938, Broch revised the resolution, still hoping to secure influential support for the endeavor. He was still working on the “Völkerbund-Resolution” when world events suddenly accelerated toward the cataclysm Broch had foreseen.

On March 12, 1938, Adolf Hitler’s troops marched into Austria and successfully annexed the country into the German Reich without bloodshed. The next morning, Hermann Broch was arrested in the mountain town of Alt Aussee. Apparently Broch had been identified to local National Socialists not as a Jew, but as a communist, by the regional letter carrier. The postman had delivered copies of the left-wing newspaper *Das Wort* to Broch’s vacation address. After eighteen days of confinement in neighboring Bad Aussee, Broch was deemed politically harmless⁴¹² and released on the condition that he travel immediately to Vienna and report to the police. In Vienna, Broch was deeply repulsed by the open hostility he witnessed against Jews and other non-Aryans, so much so that he vomited frequently.⁴¹³ Fearing a second arrest, Broch was constantly on the move, spending entire days on trams⁴¹⁴ and sleeping in a different place each night.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ Broch, “Völkerbund,” 208.

⁴¹¹ Broch, “Völkerbund,” 208.

⁴¹² Lützeler, *Biographie*, 221.

⁴¹³ Lützeler, *Biographie*, 222.

⁴¹⁴ Lützeler, *Biographie*, 224.

⁴¹⁵ Broch, “Brief an AnneMarie Meier-Graefe vom 15.8.1938” and “Brief an Ruth Norden vom 21.8.1938,” *Briefe 1938-1945*, 15, 22.

Broch worked frantically for four months, contacting various friends and acquaintances across Europe⁴¹⁶ in the hopes of acquiring a visa to escape Austria and thus avoid being sent to Dachau.⁴¹⁷ After weeks of waiting and numerous setbacks, Broch received a British visa on July 20, 1938. Four days later he flew to London.

Unbeknownst to Broch, this flight would be the beginning of a lifelong exile, first in England and Scotland, and shortly thereafter in the United States. Broch's correspondence from the early period of his exile reveals the painful recognition that he had escaped while others were left behind. "Und wenn ich an die in Wien Zurückgebliebenen denke," he wrote to Emmy Ferand, "so erscheint mir die Gunst des Schicksals mehr als unverdient; dies habe ich schon in dem Augenblick empfunden, als das Flugzeug aufgestiegen ist, und ich empfinde es mit jedem Tage mehr."⁴¹⁸ Broch believed that his escape was the result of good fortune, which could just as easily have favored another: "Sie war kein Einzelschicksal, nur habe ich mehr Glück als andere gehabt [...] und dieses Glück ist mir in dem etwas sinistren Katz-und-Maus-Spiel treu geblieben."⁴¹⁹ The cruelty and depravity he had witnessed in Vienna, coupled with the random chance responsible for his own escape, reinforced Broch's earlier skepticism about the justification of his own creative existence. Writing from the Scottish home of

⁴¹⁶ Lützeler notes in the footnotes to Broch's letter of July 9, 1938, to AnneMarie Meier-Graefe, that Broch was simultaneously applying for Danish, Swiss, British, French, and American visas. Those that took up his cause included: author Karin Michaëlis (Denmark); Carl Seelig (Switzerland); Anja Herzog, Paul Schrecker, and James Joyce (France); Broch's translators Edwin and Willa Muir, Aldous Huxley, Herbert Read, Robert Neumann, and Franz Werfel (Great Britain); Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann (USA). In: Broch, "Brief an AnneMarie Meier-Graefe vom 9.7.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 506-07.

⁴¹⁷ "[...] ich kann sagen, daß ich messerscharf und nur infolge eines besonderen Glückes einige Male einer neuerlichen Verhaftung entgangen bin, und damit aber auch Dachau, das mir diesmal sicher gewesen wäre." Broch, "Brief an Emmy Ferand vom 17.8.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 17.

⁴¹⁸ Broch, "Brief an Emmy Ferand vom 17.8.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 18.

⁴¹⁹ Broch, "Brief an Ruth Norden vom 21.8.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 21.

his English translators, Edwin and Willa Muir, Broch informed AnneMarie Meier-Graefe of the formative nature of this experience for his future existence:

Im Grunde genommen will ich ja überhaupt nicht mehr arbeiten, d.h. nicht mehr dichten (so sehr ich es jetzt für meinen Lebensunterhalt tun müßte): diese fünf Monate haben meine These von der Überflüssigkeit ästhetischer und sogar geisteswissenschaftlicher Produktion so gründlich bewiesen, wie ich es eben immer erwartet, wenn auch nicht gewünscht hatte, und obwohl es eine unerwünschte Zeit war, möchte ich sie aus meinem Leben nicht mehr missen. Nicht nur, weil es mir durchaus recht war, an dem allgemeinen Schicksal des Eingesperrtseins teilgenommen zu haben [...], also nicht nur das Gefängnis als solches war mir durchaus wertvoll, sondern auch das Erlebnis der Massenpsychose und des Terrors, aus dem sodann die sogenannte Freiheit bestand, u.z. in einem Maße, daß das Gefängnis ein geradezu paradiesischer Zustand dagegen gewesen ist.⁴²⁰

Broch's first experience with the dangers of the mass came in 1918, but at that time the danger was still theoretical, part of Broch's intuition. Twenty years later, the streets of Vienna were full not of jubilant workers and socialists, but rather of Gestapo officers who apprehended non-Aryans without provocation.⁴²¹ In his last months in Austria, Broch experienced incarceration and manifestations of "mass psychosis" far more sinister than those depicted in "Die Straße." In a letter to Albert Einstein—who along with Thomas Mann was responsible for Broch receiving a visa to the United States—Broch describes, with palpable desperation, a perceived duty to work against mass psychosis by committing all his energies to protecting his fellow man:

Doch war es mir schon vor der Katastrophe klar gewesen, daß die psychische Epidemie, an deren Ausbruch und Wachsen wir teilgenommen haben und teilnehmen, unaufhaltsam weitergreifen wird, wenn gegen sie – fast ist es schon zu spät – nicht wirksame Schutzdämme errichtet werden, so haben mich diese letzten Monate gelehrt, wie sehr gerade für denjenigen, dem es, wenigstens vorderhand, vergönnt worden ist, zu entrinnen und nicht Opfer zu werden, die oberste Pflicht erwachsen ist, rückhaltlos mitzuhelfen, daß einerseits die unbeschreibliche Not gelindert, andererseits die psychische Ansteckung

⁴²⁰ Broch, "Brief an AnneMarie Meier-Graefe vom 15.8.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 14-15.

⁴²¹ Broch, "Brief an AnneMarie Meier-Graefe vom 15.8.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 15; Lützelner, *Biographie*, 222-227.

abgewehrt werde. Ich weiß, wie schwach die Kräfte des Menschen und im besonderen die meinen sind, ich weiß auch, daß man mit Papier und Tinte weder Tanks noch eine Sturmflut aufzuhalten vermag, indes ich weiß auch, daß in der Seele des Menschen sowohl das Gute wie das Böse ruht, seltsam unvermittelt nebeneinander, und daß es zwar leichter ist, das Böse zu entfesseln, daß es aber trotzdem nicht ausgeschlossen ist, in gleicher Weise das Gute zu mobilisieren. Wäre dem nicht so, ich würde meine Rettung als vollkommen sinnlos betrachten.⁴²²

Broch's writings often contain contradictions, and this passage reveals Broch's remarkable capacity for both pessimism and hope. The threat of mass psychosis had become clear to Broch in 1918, and as the depths of human cruelty began to reveal themselves, Broch chose not to resign himself and the rest of the human race to destruction or enslavement, but rather to set the meager strength of a single individual against the coming catastrophe. Broch's sense of duty to the human race was fundamental and unshakeable. From 1938 until his death in 1951, Broch devoted his time and energy to mobilizing good against evil, working ceaselessly to aid European asylum seekers as well as to construct the necessary theoretical "Schutzdämme" to hold back the further spread of mass hysteria. For the better part of a decade, Broch worked on numerous essays and analyses surrounding the phenomenon of mass hysteria. Though never finished during Broch's lifetime, the collection of writings assembled by Paul Michael Lützeler as the *Massenwahntheorie* form the legacy of a passionate intellectual dedicated to the inviolability of the human individual and the protection of human rights.

⁴²² Broch, "Brief an Albert Einstein vom 4.9.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 26-27.

Establishing the Field of Inquiry

When examining the *Massenwahntheorie*, we must first look at its scope and intended purpose. In May and June, 1939, as the political situation in Europe deteriorated, Broch wrote a proposal for the creation of a research institute intended to identify the nature of mass hysteria and, on the basis of this deeper understanding, propose measures to prevent and counter its spread. The “Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes für politische Psychologie und zum Studium von Massenwahnerscheinungen” begins with Broch’s description of the state of world affairs in 1939. The threat to mankind is obvious to all, Broch claims, but no one knows exactly what can be done to neutralize it:

Jedermann weiß um den Wahnsinn, unter dem das Weltgeschehen dieser Zeit vor sich geht, jedermann weiß, daß er selber, sei es als aktives, sei es als passives Opfer, an solchem Wahnsinn mitbeteiligt ist, jedermann weiß also um die Übermacht der ihn umgebenden Gefährdung, doch niemand weiß dieselbe zu lokalisieren, niemand weiß, aus welcher Richtung sie kommt, ihn zu übermannen, niemand vermag ihr wirklich ins Angesicht zu schauen, niemand vermag der Gefährdung wirklich entgegenzutreten.⁴²³

Society is pervaded by insanity, specifically “massenmäßig orientierte Geistesverwirrung,” and regardless of individual awareness, all mankind is either actively or passively complicit in transmitting that insanity.⁴²⁴ Under constant threat from every side, the human individual is at a loss as to how to defend itself. Broch compares mass hysteria to cancer in its potential harm to the human social organism, arguing that it should be battled with equal vigor: “Die massenpsychische Gefährdung ist für die

⁴²³ Broch, “Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes für politische Psychologie und zum Studium von Massenwahnerscheinungen,” *Massenwahntheorie*, KW 12, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979) 11.

⁴²⁴ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 11.

Menschheit sicherlich nicht minder verderblich als jene, welche von den
Krebserkrankungen ausgeht, und sie müßte zumindest mit der gleichen Intensität wie
diese bekämpft werden.”⁴²⁵ With this mission in mind, the purpose of Broch’s proposed
research institute was to determine exactly how society could best combat this
psychological malady. Before a disease can be cured, it must first be understood, and so
the initial task of Broch’s institute was to identify the psychological and physical
structure of its subject, the mass.

Broch concedes that the vague nature of the mass necessarily problematizes any
attempt at understanding its actions:

die Diagnostizierung von neurotischen und psychotischen Haltungen ist schon
beim Einzelmenschen keineswegs leicht oder eindeutig, geschweige denn bei
einer Menschenmasse, die ein durchaus fluktuierendes vages Objekt ist, da sie
ihrerseits nur an den ihr angehörenden Einzelindividuen zu erkennen und zu
studieren wäre [...].⁴²⁶

As Broch notes, the mass is a fluctuating entity, making it difficult to delimit. This
depiction of the mass is in keeping with Gamper and Schnyder’s image of the mass as an
“unfaßbarer Körper.”⁴²⁷ What is striking is Broch’s emphasis on the individuals that
constitute the mass rather than on the mass itself. The distinction between individual and
mass is constitutive for Broch’s theory, and as such, Broch’s line of questioning focuses
primarily on the boundary between the two entities:

wann aber wird die Ganzheit einer Masse durch eine Anzahl von Individuen
konstituiert? Welche Kriterien sind a priori hierfür vorhanden? Welches Verhältnis
besteht zwischen Individuum und Masse? Wann sind Wahnphänomene, sofern sie
überhaupt erfaßbar sind, dem Individuum, wann der Masse zuzurechnen?⁴²⁸

⁴²⁵ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 11.

⁴²⁶ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 11.

⁴²⁷ Gamper and Schnyder, “Kollektive Gespenster,” 12.

⁴²⁸ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 11.

Structural questions like these could be expected to form the core mission of an institute founded to research and respond to mass phenomena, but according to Broch, they exceed the basic understanding of the mass that would be necessary to answer them. Before addressing practical questions about the relationship between individual and mass, Broch feels that researchers must first arrive at a more solid understanding of what the mass actually is:

Alle diese an sich erforderlichen definatorischen Voraussetzungen fehlen nahezu gänzlich, und fragt man noch überdies nach den Zielen einer praktischen Forschungsarbeit auf solch schwankendem Grunde, so ist die skeptische Antwort nicht ferne: der bloße Wunsch nach Bekämpfung von Massenwahnphänomenen genügt noch nicht, um diese aus dem Gestaltlosen zur Gestalt zu bringen, und ohne diese wohldefinierte Gestalt, ohne wohlabgegrenztes Arbeitsgebiet gibt es auch kein Arbeitsprogramm.⁴²⁹

For Broch, such an ephemeral entity as the mass cannot be effectively understood until it has been rigorously defined. In the absence of readily available and clearly defined concepts, Broch opts to create a theoretical model of the mass and mass hysteria to be amended and augmented as greater understanding is attained. The model Broch outlines in his “Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes für politische Psychologie und zum Studium von Massenwahnerscheinungen” establishes a program for the *Massenwantheorie* as a whole.

Broch’s theoretical model quickly establishes that questions directly involving any concept of the mass must be reframed to refer to the individual, since the mass cannot be defined as concretely as the individual:

Nur Konkretes kann beobachtet werden, also konkrete Dinge in ihren konkreten Verhaltensweisen. Das menschliche Einzelindividuum ist ein derartig konkretes Beobachtungs- und Untersuchungsobjekt. Eine Menschenmasse hingegen hat nicht die gleiche Konkretheitsdignität; sie ist zwar konkret als Ansammlung von Individuen vorhanden, sie ist auch in ihren Verhaltensweisen vielfach konkret zu

⁴²⁹ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 11-12.

beobachten, aber nicht nur, daß ihre Abgrenzung, die für das Individuum ziemlich scharf vorliegt, fluktuierend ist, es tritt dieses fluktual-unkonkrete Element noch viel mehr in psychologischer (also in der hier eben wichtigsten) Beziehung zu Tage [...].⁴³⁰

Broch concedes that the mass exists as a concrete grouping of human individuals, but whereas the human individual is a discrete entity, the boundaries of the mass are in flux. After confirming that the mass must be recognized as a physical phenomenon, Broch then shifts his focus to the psychological constitution of the mass. Broch's proposal makes clear that he is interested primarily in a psychological examination of mass hysteria, rather than a sociological or behavioristic study of mass uprisings and events.

After stating that the psychological element of the mass is more important for his purposes than the physical aspect, Broch promptly negates the existence of the mass as even a psychological quantity. In a departure from the mass psychology of Le Bon, Broch rejects the idea of a group or mass mind (*Massenseele*),⁴³¹ claiming instead that a mind can only be reliably found within the individual. In a rhetorical maneuver typical of the argumentation in the *Massenwahntheorie*, Broch asserts, without supporting evidence, that though no one has ever actually seen the mind, it must certainly be located within the individual: "wenn auch noch niemand die gesunde oder kranke Seele des Menschen je gesehen hat, so ist diese doch innerhalb des Individuums einwandfrei zu lokalisieren

⁴³⁰ Broch, "Vorschlag," 13.

⁴³¹ Broch appears to use the term "Seele" to refer to the distinct English terms "mind" and "soul." Within the context of a mass psychology, the object of investigation is clearly the mind. However, given Broch's frequent reference to the metaphysical nature of the individual, the superiority of religious community, and the establishment of human rights grounded in man's likeness to God, the understanding of "Seele" as soul accompanies the notion of the mind in Broch's usage. Additionally, Broch translates the term "Massenseele" as "mass soul" in his "A Study on Mass Hysteria: Contributions to a Psychology of Politics. Preliminary Table of Contents" (1943), which Lützelzer presents in his own German translation in the *Massenwahntheorie* volume. I have used "group mind" here to emphasize the connection to Le Bon and to reflect the psychological context in which it is being discussed in the following passage.

[...].⁴³² On the basis of this assertion, Broch extrapolates that the actions of the mass do not provide sufficient reason to believe that the mass possesses its own mind. Without a distinct mind, the mass is then shown to be an unfitting subject for psychological analysis: “Das Beobachtungsmaterial für massenpsychische Erscheinungen hat demnach vornehmlich der Einzelmensch zu bleiben; er ist das Konkretheitszentrum, und nur in seinem Reflex ist das Massenpsychische konkret zu erfassen.”⁴³³ With the move from physical mass to mass hysteria and then to individual psychology, Broch’s theory proves to have no room for, or at the very least no interest in analyzing the mass in its physical manifestations. Rather, Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie* explores mass hysteria from the perspective of the individual.

The Individual in the Context of Value

In the *Massenwahntheorie*, Broch attempts to create a single theory as a synthesis of his previously developed value theory, epistemology, and historical philosophy with a theory of mass psychology. As a result, the *Massenwahntheorie* operates using terms and concepts derived from each of Broch’s separate theories, which are then layered over one another. This layering leads to the description of mechanisms and processes operating simultaneously, but on different levels of understanding. In order to discuss the *Massenwahntheorie*, it will be necessary to take a brief look at the key concepts underlying Broch’s theoretical model before moving to the mass itself. To maintain clarity and direct applicability to the *Massenwahntheorie*, these concepts will be

⁴³² Broch, “Vorschlag,” 13.

⁴³³ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 13.

examined in their distilled and more coherent form as they are presented in Broch's initial attempt at establishing the program for his *Massenwahntheorie*, the "Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes für politische Psychologie und zum Studium von Massenwahnerscheinungen" (1939).

Broch's value theory, first developed in the "Zerfall der Werte" essays in the *Schlafwandler* trilogy, begins with the self (*das Ich*) in complete isolation. Viewed on its own, the self is a completely rational, logical entity, an ordering principle. The finite self is beset on all sides by the infinite irrational world, which it must constantly confront and reconcile with its own rational system. The interplay between rationality and irrationality is constitutive for human existence, according to Broch: "Zwei Hauptströme durchziehen das menschliche Sein und machen dieses zugleich aus: es sind dies die Ströme des cogito et sum, der Ratio und der Irratio, der Erkenntnis und des Lebens."⁴³⁴ In Broch's conception, rational cognition leads to truths (*Wahrheiten*), while the irrational experience of life leads to values (*Werte*).⁴³⁵ Over the course of time, the individual self is constantly motivated to expand itself, through the inclusion of new rational truths and irrational values. The self in its isolation must treat everything outside it as the other, which the self must constantly attempt to incorporate. Should the self prove unable to incorporate the outside world, it would suddenly recognize its own existential limits and be flooded with fear:

Immer jedoch geht es um das Verhältnis [des Ich] zur äußeren Welt; es bleibt dem Menschen keine andere Wahl, als durch "Einverleibung" in sein Ich diese Außenwelt zum "Wert" zu verwandeln, der die Ich-Erweiterung fortsetzt, und überall dort, wo das Ich in solchem Bestreben gehindert wird, überall, wo es an die Grenzen der "Fremd-Welt" stößt und sie nicht zu überschreiten vermag, überall dort entsteht des Wertes Gegen-Zustand, dort entsteht "Angst": das Ich

⁴³⁴ Broch, "Vorschlag," 16.

⁴³⁵ Broch, "Vorschlag," 16.

wird sich dann plötzlich seiner Verlassenheit und seiner a priori gegebenen Einsamkeit bewußt, es weiß um die metaphysische Einsamkeit seines Sterbens.⁴³⁶

Broch's basic model of the self is a rational system striving for absolution through the successful incorporation of all external, irrational content (whatever form that might take). Whenever the self is hindered in its attempted expansion, fear and panic set in. The life of every individual is a constant struggle to avoid or overcome fear by any means necessary, which forms an essential aspect of Broch's larger mass psychology.

“Irrationalbereicherung” and “Rationalverarmung”

Where the inability to incorporate external content causes existential fear in the individual, the successful incorporation of the outside world results in positive feelings of ecstasy, where the self momentarily forgets about its isolation and ultimate mortality. Broch proposes two ways in which the individual can transcend itself by incorporating the outside world, the paths of “Irrationalbereicherung” and “Rationalverarmung.” The former path is a positive inclusion of irrational content that enhances the rational system of the self. On the level of society, this manifests itself in the creation of culture. The latter path results in a diminished rational capacity within the self, making the self more susceptible to insane behavior. The path of “Irrationalbereicherung” creates values in which the individual identifies with the world (“Ich bin die Welt”), where the path of “Rationalverarmung” creates values based on possession and subjugation (“Ich habe die Welt”). Broch acknowledges that these two paths rarely occur in their pure forms. Rather, the average individual is more likely to follow a combination of the two. Regardless of the way in which the external world is incorporated, Broch sees the individual's main

⁴³⁶ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 16-17.

goal (within the confines of his value theory) in “die Bewältigung und Überwältigung der Ich-fremden Weltbestandteile.”⁴³⁷ This is ultimately an impossible exercise, since, were one to incorporate the entire world, one would overcome death and become God. Yet the individual is still driven to pursue absolution, even if he is doomed never to achieve it.

The concepts of “Irrationalbereicherung” and “Rationalverarmung” are essential to Broch’s attempted explanation for the descent of the normal individual (or collective) into mass hysteria. “Irrationalbereicherung” is the means by which the individual can harmoniously reconcile rationality and irrationality, which is Broch’s understanding of a fully-functioning self. “Rationalverarmung,” on the other hand, is an aberration leading to the destruction of culture, civilization, and the individual. According to Broch, there are numerous factors that determine which of these two paths a given individual is likely or able to take, including the individual’s mental structure, traditions, milieu, and the type and degree of fear perceived by the individual at a particular moment.⁴³⁸ Normally, Broch argues, the individual self is expanded through inclusion in a collective, specifically a social group, which reduces the individual’s existential fear. Inclusion in a group can provide momentary feelings of ecstasy (later identified by Broch as “Gemeinschaftsgefüle”), but these are only cheap substitutes for the ecstatic experience of personal expansion through cognition. Since humans are inclined to take the path of least resistance, Broch claims, the individual is always hesitant to pursue the higher, more demanding ecstasy of cognitive progress, preferring instead to find security in the collective. Should the individual prove incapable of taking the higher path of

⁴³⁷ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 17.

⁴³⁸ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 19.

“Irrationalbereicherung,” then, when faced with fear, he will take the only avenue open to him, namely the path of “Rationalverarmung”:

getroffen von dieser Aktualangst, getrieben von der durch diese mobilisierten metaphysischen Angst seiner Seele, ist er genötigt, sich aus seiner normalen seelischen Mittellage heraus zu bewegen, und da ihm der Weg der Irrationalbereicherung nicht mehr offen steht, wird er notgedrungen auf den zweiten, auf den der Rationalverarmung verwiesen: er muß den Weg der triebhaften Kollektivität (die ja auch für nahezu alle Formen des Rausches notwendig ist) immer weiter und weiter verfolgen, um im radikalsten Falle schließlich vom Massenwahn umfungen zu werden.⁴³⁹

The path of “Rationalverarmung,” is the path of base gratification and empty intoxication. When followed exclusively, it leads to the dissolution of the cognizant self and the creation of mass hysteria. The key catalyst in sending individuals along the path of “Rationalverarmung” is fear, and the attending feeling of panic.

“Ekstase” and “Panik”

Broch’s value theory proposes that every human individual is constantly engaged in a process of self-expansion through the incorporation of the outside world as “Wert.” When successful, the individual is rewarded by positive feelings of ecstasy (*Ekstase*); when unsuccessful, the individual is reminded of its metaphysical isolation and imminent death, which results in fear (*Angst*). In life, the individual will do anything to overcome, obscure, or forget his fear of death. If the individual cannot find a way to escape his fear, panic will set in: “Die Hoffnung des Menschen ist die Angstbefreiung, ist die Ekstase. Wird ihm diese Hoffnung genommen, so tritt hoffnungslose Angst ein, unentrinnbare Angst, m.a.W. die Panik. In diesem Sinne ist Panik stets der polare Gegenbegriff zur

⁴³⁹ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 19.

Ekstase.”⁴⁴⁰ For Broch, the metaphysical fear of ultimate isolation and mortality is especially powerful in producing panic, since it arises from the unconscious depths of the human soul. In this way, the individual’s metaphysical fear of isolation is a constant, inescapable reminder of death. Metaphysical fear can be actualized by actual fears in the external world. If these actual fears have a clear origin or cause, they can more easily be dealt with and resolved. However, if an actual fear has no visible or clearly discernible origin, it becomes a symbol of metaphysical fear and threatens to unleash panic within the individual.

Broch describes the modern era as a time in which humanity is surrounded by such unseen threats, specifically in the form of economic pressure. In the capitalist systems of Western society from the 19th to the early 20th centuries, the whims of the economy affected the life of the individual in ways he could neither see, nor fully comprehend:

Es entspricht dem Wesen unserer Epoche – und unter dem Aspekt der in ihr wirkenden Ideen auch der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung –, daß die Angstbedrohung, die den modernen Menschen umgibt, eine vornehmlich ökonomische ist, und zwar die einer ökonomischen Unerfaßlichkeit. Der Durchschnittsmensch dieser Zeit, insbesondere der Großstadtmensch, ist unsichtbar unerfaßlichen ökonomischen Gewalten unterworfen, sie heißen Konjunktur, Inflation, Arbeitslosigkeit, Unrentabilität, und sie können noch hundert andere Namen annehmen, immer aber sind sie in beinahe mythischer Weise übermächtig und so unentrinnbar, daß er sich als willenloser Spielball ihnen überantwortet fühlt.⁴⁴¹

At the mercy of economic forces, the individual is constantly confronted by the fear of unseen threats. Even those who are not directly affected by economic hardship, Broch claims, are aware of the ever-present danger of unemployment, poverty, and economic collapse. According to Broch, it is unimportant how great or small the number of

⁴⁴⁰ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 19.

⁴⁴¹ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 20.

unemployed may be; it constitutes a threat regardless, “denn die Seele rechnet nicht mit Ziffern, sondern mit Bedrohungsfakten, und das Feuer der Angstbedrohung läuft von jedem noch so kleinen Brandherd weiter; heute steht nahezu die gesamte Großstadtmasse unter dem Angstfluch der Arbeitslosigkeit.”⁴⁴² Broch’s unclarified use of the term “Masse” in this passage raises questions about the nature of the mass, its constitution, and its actions. Broch does not define the term “Großstadtmasse,” but given the all-inclusive threat of economic insecurity, it would seem that in this instance it encompasses the entire population of the metropolis. In any case, the exposure of individuals to constant unseen threats results in a highly unstable state of increased susceptibility to panic: “Dieser Zustand seelischer Labilität, ein Zustand tiefsten Unbehagens, ist wohl am richtigsten mit dem Worte ‘Vor-Panik’ zu benennen.”⁴⁴³ In a state of pre-panic, individuals are more easily manipulated and far more likely to take the path of “Rationalverarmung” over “Irrationalbereicherung”:

Der Zustand der “Vor-Panik” und der des Rationalverlustes sind enge miteinander verbunden; beinahe ließe sich behaupten, daß sie einander definieren. Ihre gemeinsame Konkretisierung im Seelenleben der Großstadtbevölkerung vollzieht sich unabänderlich an den wohlbekanntesten Symptomen der Intellektualverachtung, des Ratiohasses, des Hanges zur billigen Ekstase, kurzum der Massenwahnbereitschaft [...].⁴⁴⁴

Urban populations present, for Broch, a more concentrated expression of the mechanisms of rational loss and panic possible for all human individuals. In the city, one can see the effects of lost rationality manifested in anti-intellectualism and in the preference for the cheap ecstasy of film and sporting events.

⁴⁴² Broch, “Vorschlag,” 20.

⁴⁴³ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 20.

⁴⁴⁴ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 20-21.

If pre-panic gives way to actual panic, Broch claims, it is impossible to quell that panic by simply removing the initial catalyst. Attractive though the idea might be, there is no way to return to a time before the panic existed: “es genügt nicht, die Ursachen einer panikerregenden Aktualangst abzustellen, um die Panik als solche wieder zu besänftigen, es genügt keinerlei ‘Wiedergutmachung’ und keinerlei Rückkehr in einen früheren Zustand [...]”⁴⁴⁵ Panic is tied to a loss of rationality, and as such, it cannot be dispelled by appealing to the rational capacity of a panicked individual or group. Rather, panic can only be fought with its own weapons, that is, by irrational means in the form of a “Super-Befriedigung”:

[es genügt] z.B. auch nicht, ökonomische Schäden, so panikerregend sie auch sein mögen und [so] dringlich ihre Wiedergutmachung auch ist, einfach zu beheben, es genügt nicht, weil es rationale Maßnahmen sind und diese vom panikisierten Menschen infolge seines Rationalverlustes nicht mehr voll aufgenommen werden können, vor allem aber, weil er aus ihnen nicht den Ekstasegewinn ziehen kann, den er als einzig legitimes und daher unbedingt erforderliches Gegengewicht zur Hoffnungslosigkeit seiner Panik empfindet. Wiedergutmachung allein genügt nicht; der panikisierte Mensch braucht eine triebmäßige “Super-Befriedigung”, eine “Zusatz-Befriedigung”, m.a.W. eine zusätzliche Angst-Übertäubung [...].⁴⁴⁶

Since the “Super-Befriedigung” is a result of “Rationalverarmung,” the ecstatic experience it provides is not the pure, constructive form that comes from legitimate self-expansion through cognition and cultural production. Rather, the “Super-Befriedigung” is often destructive and hollow.

The fears of the individual are manifold and diffuse, not always originating from a clear source. In order to overcome panic, these diffuse fears must first be given a direction and a goal. This can be accomplished by identifying the actual root of the individual’s fears or by establishing a scapegoat, a symbolic representation of the

⁴⁴⁵ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 22.

⁴⁴⁶ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 22.

perceived danger to the individual. Broch argues that the “fremder Nachbar,” an other that is near at hand, presents a readily-available and easily-challenged scapegoat. Broch sees the practice of assigning inexplicable existential fears to a physical other as the source of xenophobia and the broader fear of the other. The other becomes a symbolic stand-in for the sum of all individual fears, elevated to a symbol for evil incarnate (“das Böse schlechthin”). It is then incumbent upon the individual to destroy the symbol of evil, manifested in the physical other. Consumed by fear, the individual regresses to a lower level of consciousness, lashing out at the symbolic representation of death with physical violence. In this way, the individual moves from the symbolic resolution and elimination of fear to the physical annihilation of the other, to mass hysteria:

Es ist der Weg des Rationalverlustes, der Weg der Kollektivberauschung, der Weg der Pseudoekstase, und die sadistische Triebausübung, die den physischen Sieg über den Nebenmenschen will, ist mit solch symbolischem “Sieg über das Böse” ebensowohl das Mittel wie das Ziel des ekstatischen Massenwahnes; Mord ist Ekstase, doch nicht Todesüberwindung, trotzdem Ziel.⁴⁴⁷

Within the field of human existence, Broch identifies several forces at work which affect human behavior. These include the various autogenous fears in every individual (“die diffusen Angstkräfte”) which are then channeled by additional, rational forces of direction (“richtunggebende Zusatzkräfte”).⁴⁴⁸ Fitting with the rest of Broch’s model, these directional forces can follow either the path of “Rationalverarmung,” as in the above example of symbolic destruction becoming physical murder, or the path of “Irrationalbereicherung”:

1. Das menschliche Individuum wird sich – zumeist wider seinen Willen – der Ur-Angst seiner Seele wahrhaft bewußt, und diese richtige Lokalisierung der Angst läßt ihn auch den richtigen Weg zur Angstbesänftigung gehen, also den kulturaufbauenden, kulturgebundenen Weg der Irrationalbereicherung, dessen

⁴⁴⁷ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 24.

⁴⁴⁸ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 24-25.

Ziel mit der erkenntnismäßig-religiösen Ekstase vom Typus “Ich bin die Welt, weil sie in mich eingegangen ist” gesetzt erscheint.

2. Das Individuum versucht, seine Angst von sich abzuschütteln und sie nach außen zu verlegen, um sie solcherart dort symbolisch in die Gewalt zu bekommen, zumeist sogar, um sie mit den Symbolträgern physisch zu vernichten, d.h. dies als ethische Erlaubnis zur Auslebung archaischer Aggressionstribe zu benützen, um den kulturzerstörerischen, kulturzersprengenden Weg der Rationalverarmung zu gehen, der zu einer triebmäßig-wahnhaften Ekstase vom Typus “Ich habe die Welt, weil sie mir unterjocht ist” hinzielt.⁴⁴⁹

Broch makes clear in his definition that, as throughout the *Massenwahntheorie*, there is only one “right” path, and that is the path of “Irrationalbereicherung.” By recognizing that the metaphysical fear of death emanates from within the self, the individual is able to identify with the world and contribute to the development of culture. The path of “Rationalverarmung” mistakenly seeks the root of metaphysical fear outside the self, where it identifies symbolic representations of the fear of death which must then be subjugated or violently destroyed. In the first instance, the directional force usually comes from within the individual itself, while in the second instance individual fears are more often directed by a force from without.

The Two Types of “Führer”

For the purposes of the *Massenwahntheorie*, Broch is more interested in these rational, directional forces than in the autogenous forces of individual fear. Broch maintains that these directional forces, as they formulate and direct the diffuse autogenous forces, result in historically recognizable and traceable actions. History is divided, according to Broch, into periods in which groups or masses seemingly act as unified psychic entities:

⁴⁴⁹ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 25.

Das Beobachtungsfeld für massenpsychische Erscheinungen grenzt sich zeitlich in bestimmte Abschnitte ein, in denen Menschengruppen oder Menschenmassen infolge einer anscheinend gemeinsamen Willensäußerung in psychische oder physische Bewegung geraten und damit sich als einheitliche psychische "Person" gebärden. M.a.W.: der Geschichtsablauf gliedert sich nach den "Ausrichtungs-Phänomenen". Überall, wo rationale Ausrichtung in das anonyme Geschehen der autogenen menschlichen Kräfte eingreift, entsteht Historie, wird Historie ablesbar, wird die Geschichte sich ihrer selbst "bewußt".⁴⁵⁰

Broch is quick to note that groups or masses only appear to act as one. Broch claims that the process of awareness and the conscious direction of autogenous forces are only possible within the individual soul. Further, Broch dismisses the notion of a mass soul out of hand, declaring that such a construction obviously does not conform to reality:

Dieser Bewußtwerdungs Vorgang, der Vorgang der formulierenden und formulierbaren Ausrichtung, kann innerhalb der einzelindividuellen Seele vor sich gehen, und er tut dies auch ausnahmslos in allen erkenntnismäßigen und erkenntnismäßig-religiösen Abläufen: hingegen darf eine Analogisierung dieses Vorganges durch seine Übertragung auf eine (nicht-existente) Massenseele oder auf ein (ebensowenig existentes) Massenbewußtsein nicht vorgenommen werden; man würde sich damit einer sehr billigen Mythisierung schuldig machen und sich gegen die Realität, die offen genug zu Tage liegt, blind stellen: die Ausrichtungsfunktion innerhalb einer Menschenmasse wird nicht von einem mythischen Massenbewußtsein, sondern von konkreten Personen besorgt, und zwar von jenen, in denen die Bewußtwerdung bereits vor sich gegangen ist, die sie formulieren und aussprechen, um sie den anderen einzelindividuellen Massenangehörigen zur Kenntnis zu bringen, kurzum, um diese zu "überzeugen" [...].⁴⁵¹

Broch's justification here for rejecting any concept of a mass soul or mass consciousness is that concrete individuals are responsible for the directional force within the mass, and thus determining the actions of the mass. Yet even if concrete individuals guide and steer the mass, does this alone negate the possibility of a mass consciousness? In any case, Broch provides no further evidence for the nonexistence of a mass consciousness or soul, moving instead to the concrete individuals who, Broch claims, can in fact direct the mass:

⁴⁵⁰ Broch, "Vorschlag," 26.

⁴⁵¹ Broch, "Vorschlag," 26.

die Ausrichtungsfunktion ist eine Mobilisierung und Lenkung des vorhandenen Triebvolumens vermittelt rationaler und pseudorationaler Gründe (unterstützt durch individuelle Triebähnlichkeiten), und sie wird innerhalb des Kollektivs, das eben hiedurch historisch wird, stets von einem "Führer" oder einer Führergruppe ausgeübt.⁴⁵²

Within a collective, certain individuals emerge who are capable of manipulating the irrational fears and desires of the collective through rational direction. The closer a collective comes to experiencing total panic, the more desperate the collective becomes for the arrival of a "Führer" to dispel their fears and deliver the desired feelings of ecstasy:

Je tiefer ein Kollektiv in das Stadium der Vor-Panik gerät, je seelisch labiler die Kollektivmasse hiedurch wird, m.a.W., je mehr ihre Angst und deren Hoffnungslosigkeit ansteigt, desto dringender verlangt sie nach dem Führer, der sie vor dem Ausbruch der Voll-Panik schützen soll, indem er auf dem Weg zur Ekstase voranschreitet.⁴⁵³

Following the dyadic structure of the directional forces, Broch identifies two distinct types of "Führer," each corresponding to one of the two paths. Leading humanity down the path of "Irrationalbereicherung" is the religious savior: "[der] echte religiöse Heilsbringer, letztlich [der] große Religionsstifter, der die Menschheit kraft seiner ethisch-rationalen Erkenntnis auf dem Weg der ständigen Irrationalbereicherung hält und zur ständigen Annäherung an die Erkenntnis-Ekstase im Geistigen bringt [...]"⁴⁵⁴ On the opposing side, the demonic demagogue leads the mass in pursuit of pseudo-ecstatic victories, or toward "Rationalverarmung":

[der] dämonische Demagoge, der [die] Masse (nicht die Menschheit) auf dem Wege des Rationalverlustes und der Triebauslebung zu archaisch infantilen Ekstase-Formen, also vor allem zu denen von realen "Siegen" führt,

⁴⁵² Broch, "Vorschlag," 26-27.

⁴⁵³ Broch, "Vorschlag," 27.

⁴⁵⁴ Broch, "Vorschlag," 27.

massenwahnmäßig lediglich auf diesen Augenblick des Sieges und der sieghaften Pseudo-Ekstase fixiert.⁴⁵⁵

In the latter figure, it is easy to see a description of Adolf Hitler, a connection that Broch later makes explicit.⁴⁵⁶ The existence of the former figure, though, demands religious belief, and seems best represented (given Broch's frequent reference to the centrality of Catholicism in European history) by Jesus Christ. In the absence of faith in a new messiah, it is difficult to see how Broch's model presents a viable alternative to the destructive cult of victory created by the demonic demagogue. Nevertheless, Broch presents only these two extreme possibilities for individual leaders of the mass. While Broch admits to the rarity of pure "Irrationalbereicherung" and "Rationalverarmung" earlier in his proposal,⁴⁵⁷ he provides no description of leaders falling between the two extremes. Instead, Broch illustrates the productive, ethical capacity of a religious system led by a legitimate savior in contrast to the violent symbolic victories of the demonic demagogue:

Innerhalb des Problemkreises, in den der Mensch durch das Vorhandensein seiner seelischen Angst und seiner Panikbedrohung gestellt ist, muß die religiöse Problemlösung als seine höchste ethische Leistung gelten: begründet auf dem Wissen um die Panikkräfte in der Menschenseele, konstituiert als regulierte, erkenntnismäßig orientierte und disziplinierte Vor-Panik, haben sich bisher allein die Religionen als befähigt gezeigt, die Masse zur wissenden Gemeinde zu verwandeln und dieser die Sicherheit ihrer rationalen Ebenbildhaftigkeit zu verschaffen. Die dämonische Magie hingegen steht trotz aller symbolischen Siege über das "Böse", mögen sie nun in Kriegen, in Schlachten, in Lynchakten, in Pogromen, in Hexenverbrennungen errungen werden, hoffnungslos unter der Bedrohung unbesiegbarer Panik, unbesiegbare und unentrinnbar bleibt ihr die Panik, und sie schlägt auch allsogleich in paniköse Flucht um, wenn die

⁴⁵⁵ Broch, "Vorschlag," 27.

⁴⁵⁶ Hermann Broch, "Eine Studie über Massenhysterie – Beiträge zu einer Psychologie der Politik – (Vorläufiges Inhaltsverzeichnis)," *Massenwahntheorie*, 67.

⁴⁵⁷ "Es gibt keine reinen Formen im Empirischen; die beiden obskizzierten Wege [die der Irrationalbereicherung und der Rationalverarmung] sind zwar in der Geschichte immer wieder zu verfolgen, fast niemals jedoch in ihrer grenzfallmäßigen schematischen Reinheit, hingegen sehr oft in gegenseitiger Verquickung." Broch, "Vorschlag," 15.

vermeintliche Übermacht der Masse mit ihren Aggressionen an eine noch stärkere physische Macht gerät und an derselben zerschellt.⁴⁵⁸

For Broch, religion is the only system capable of truly overcoming the fear of death by providing answers to metaphysical questions that could activate that fear and, further, by offering the individual the promise of eternal life. The demonic demagogue is incapable of actually conquering death, and as a result, the threat of panic is ever-present in the mass that follows him. Broch describes these potential “Führer” figures through the lens of his value theory, attributing positive irrational value to the “religiöser Heilbringer” and negative irrational value to the “dämonischer Demagoge.” Broch’s larger *Massenwahntheorie* combines the concepts of rationality and irrationality from the value theory with epistemology to present a model of human behavior in a historical context. The establishment of this model relies on a default setting of human existence, which Broch refers to as the “Dämmerzustand.”

The “Dämmerzustand”

From the outset, Broch defines the purpose of the *Massenwahntheorie* as the complete understanding of mass phenomena and the subsequent use of that understanding to prevent and defeat mass hysteria throughout human society. To that end, Broch attempts to create a theory that is universally applicable and capable of accurately predicting outbreaks of mass hysteria over time. Broch’s universal aspirations led him to search for absolute historical and psychological laws underlying mass phenomena rather than to create models of mass behavior based on empirical observation of mass events.

⁴⁵⁸ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 27-28.

The attempt to establish a historical model of human behavior that is absolutely predictive immediately comes into conflict with the concept of free will, which enables humans to act unpredictably. Any theory of history that claims the ability to accurately predict the course of human events must be able to account for or eliminate the concept of free will. Since experience indicates that humans possess free will and make frequent, often irrational use of that free will, Broch cannot create a theory that absolutely denies the existence of free will. Instead, Broch proposes a psychological state in which free will is largely neutralized. In this mental twilight state, which Broch refers to as the “Dämmerzustand,” the human individual acts according to certain guiding principles. The human psyche is bounded, in Broch’s conception, by the extremes of absolute rationality and absolute irrationality. The “Dämmerzustand” constitutes the middle ground, where a majority of human psychological activity occurs:

zwischen absoluter Vernunft und absoluter Nürrischkeit gibt es eine ungeheuer breite Zwischenschicht, und die kann als die spezifisch menschliche angesprochen werden: unbeschadet der mehr oder minder freien Willensentscheidungen am oberen und untern Rande dieser Zwischenschicht, in ihrer eigentlichen Mittellage – und eben darin spielt sich nahezu ununterbrochen alles menschliche Leben ab – gibt es sicherlich nichts dergleichen, gibt es sicherlich keinen freien Willen. Denn diese Mittellage ist die der “Traumhaftigkeit”, ist die des dämmerhaften Halbdunkels, das den Menschen umfängt, das ihn fast niemals entläßt und in dem sein Wollen schon längst kein Wollen mehr ist, nur noch ein Dahingetriebenwerden in dem Traumstrom.⁴⁵⁹

According to Broch’s psychological model, the individual is indeed capable of exercising free will, but the majority of human existence is spent in passive acceptance of one’s surroundings, being carried through life as though in a dream. In this state, the individual is comparable to an animal in its unreflective and nearly unconscious experience of reality: “Der gemeinlich als traumhaft bezeichnete Zustand des menschlichen Seins ist

⁴⁵⁹ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 110.

in Wahrheit der eines animalischen und oftmals geradezu vegetativen, dunkelverschatteten Dahindämmerns.”⁴⁶⁰

Animals act instinctually, according to innate drives to survive and procreate. Every action an animal undertakes is, according to Broch, motivated by fundamental principles, such as the survival instinct and the principle of least resistance. Since an animal will always behave in conformance with these principles, without deviation, Broch claims, animal behavior can be described as invariable (“invariante Haltung”). Further, animals lack the ability to reflect on their own existence or on the existence of the world around them. The conditions of an animal’s environment are accepted, without question, as given and inalterable; an animal’s environmental conditions constitute the parameters of its existence. Humans, conversely, are defined by a capacity for self-reflection and critical engagement with the external world. In the “Dämmerzustand,” the individual is incapable or disinclined to challenge his environmental conditions. Like an animal, the individual in the “Dämmerzustand” accepts the world as it is, implicitly, unaware of his capacity to change the course of events. The human individual also follows the principle of least resistance: passive acceptance is simple, whereas active participation is strenuous and difficult. An individual in this position is marked, like the animal, by invariable behavior:

Das Tier ist nicht bewußtseinsbegabt, der Mensch ist es, aber selbst für ihn, er ebenfalls animalischer Organismus, gehört das Bewußtsein (samt mancher anderen Erkenntnisfunktion) zur Klasse des vermeidbaren übermäßigen Kraftaufwandes, und er ist daher stets bereit, in seinem Dahindämmern eben dieser Vermeidbarkeit Rechnung zu tragen und sich in die tierische Haltungsinvarianz einzureihen, mehr noch, er ist bemüßigt, dies zu tun, da alles Dahindämmern – sonst wäre es keines – Unterwerfung unter das Prinzip des

⁴⁶⁰ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 112.

kleinsten Kraftaufwandes und damit bewußtseinsbefreite Akzeptierung von Umweltbedingungen bedeutet.⁴⁶¹

The first step human civilization took toward breaking through its invariable acceptance of environmental conditions was discovering play. In the act of play, a wholly extraneous exertion of energy that does not contribute directly to survival, humanity succeeded in altering its behavior, if only for a short time. Broch also addresses the phenomenon of play among animals, but he quickly relegates it to the realm of the “Dämmerzustand.” For animals, Broch claims, play is merely preparation for performing actions that will later prove necessary for survival, for example hunting and mating. When an animal performs a superfluous task, Broch claims, it is simply the organism expending excess energy, without significantly altering its basic behavior.⁴⁶² By virtue of the human capacity for cognition, the definition of what constitutes superfluous action is different for the human individual than it is for the animal:

Mag das menschliche Kind noch so sehr in seinem Erkenntnis- und Glücksverhalten dem spielenden Tier verwandt sein, es wächst sehr bald über dieses hinaus, und was dem Tiere versagt ist, die Überwindung der schieren Akzeptation, der Bruch mit dem Prinzip des kleinsten Kraftaufwandes, die Auflösung der Invarianzhaltungen in Entwicklungsprozesse, all dies ist in der Seele des Menschenkindes angebahnt, ist ihm kraft seiner Erkenntnisbegabung vorgezeichnet.⁴⁶³

The ability to reflect and learn opens up new avenues of action for the human individual that are inaccessible to animals. The human individual is capable of breaking from prescribed behaviors and defying the principle of least resistance, even if for inexplicable or superfluous reasons. In fact, Broch identifies the capacity for superfluity as a central component of human nature:

⁴⁶¹ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 117.

⁴⁶² Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 120.

⁴⁶³ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 123.

Dies ist das Wahrhafte im Überflüssigen, sein eigentlicher Wirklichkeitswert, und von hier aus wird der Mensch zum einzigen Wesen, das überflüssigkeitsbegabt, überflüssigkeitsgenötigt ist; das Überflüssige, das rebellisch Überflüssige der Nichtakzeptation bestimmt seinen prometheischen Charakter, ist Voraussetzung seines Ich-Bewußtseins, seines Weltbewußtseins und konstituiert seine Erkenntnis.⁴⁶⁴

The fact that humans can act in ways that are unmotivated by the desire to survive or reproduce sets them apart from all other forms of life on Earth. The refusal to follow predefined patterns of behavior, even (or especially) refusal for refusal's sake initiates the perception that the individual is distinct from the surrounding world, and from surrounding individuals.

This awakening self-consciousness provides the precondition necessary for escaping the "Dämmerzustand." Through cognition, through participation in, rather than acceptance of the course of events, the human individual rises above his twilight state and ceases to be pulled through life against his will. The active, cognizant individual becomes the driver of progress, creating civilization and morality out of base existence: "ihm allein gelingt es, die äußern Bedingungen bewußt abzuändern, die inneren aber zu disziplinieren, kurzum sich eine äußere Zivilisation und eine innere Moral zu schaffen."⁴⁶⁵ The cognitive faculties of the human individual provide opportunities for the creation of civilization, culture, technology, and morality, but they also reveal limitations of the human organism. Self-consciousness brings with it a sense of the progression of time, which entails more than recognition of the difference between night and day and between the seasons of the year. Humans are aware of the chronological progression of time, of the passage of years, of their own aging, and of their own

⁴⁶⁴ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 123-24.

⁴⁶⁵ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 124.

mortality. Animals do not possess knowledge of the passage of time, and so act in ignorance of their inevitable death.

An animal's existence is marked by vitality and the pursuit of life, whether in the form of survival or procreation. The self-aware individual, on the other hand, must face the frightening reality of mortality. This distinction between animals and self-aware humans leads Broch to identify competing drives in each mode of existence: "Fast ist es, als ob im Gegensatz zum bloßen Dahindämmern, das durchaus von den Lebenstrieben beherrscht wird, mit jedem Erkenntnisvorstoß auch ein Stück Todestrieb hochkomme, ein Stück Kontraanimalität [...]." ⁴⁶⁶ In the act of thinking, of reflecting, humans rise above their animal nature. This same act confronts the individual with the terrifying recognition of his own death. The temptation to revert to the "Dämmerzustand" and thus forget about one's own mortality is great, but Broch sees the duty of every individual in overcoming the fear of death to move civilization forward:

die Erkenntnisanstrengung, zu der einzig und allein er berufen und befähigt ist, dieser Auftrag zur Erhellung der Dunkelheit in ihm und um ihn, diese prometheische Pflicht zur Wachheit, zur Ich-Erkenntnis und Welt-Erkenntnis, die ihn über das Tier hinaushebt und ihm den Weg zur freigewählten Handlung, aber auch zur freien Todesbereitschaft eröffnet, kurzum diese Pflicht zur Pflicht, sie enthüllt sich ihm als das, was sie ist, als die prometheische Tragik, die allem Menschentum in tiefster Tiefe innewohnt [...]. ⁴⁶⁷

If ignorance is bliss, then knowledge is trial, according to Broch's conception. Carrying Prometheus's torch, humanity is charged with the vigilant pursuit of knowledge, no matter how arduous or frightening the task may be. Broch is forced to concede, though, that in spite of the strength of the human drive toward knowledge and understanding, individuals repeatedly regress to their former twilight state. On a larger scale, Broch

⁴⁶⁶ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 125.

⁴⁶⁷ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 125-26.

describes historical cycles of progress and stagnation within civilizations. After a prolonged burst of progress and development, when the needs and desires of society are met, a period of stabilization and “Triebgleichgewicht” is achieved. In this satisfied state, individuals revert to the twilight state, and civilizations conservatively resist the tumultuous disruption brought about by new changes. Eventually, though, the society in its present state will cease to address the desires of its constituent individuals, and progress will begin again in a process of revolution and forward development. Additionally, the individual relies heavily on instinct to deal with the concrete challenges of life, which follows Broch’s identification of the twilight state with the drive for life.

From “Durchschnittsmensch” to “Massenmensch”

The individual’s path through life is punctuated by moments of reflective cognition between periods of largely instinctual existence. Importantly, Broch notes that regardless of how infrequently a civilization or individual breaks out of its instinctual stagnation, the light of knowledge can always be stoked anew: “Doch wie immer dem auch sei, wie spärlich auch die prometheischen Augenblicke im Leben des Einzelnen und der Gesamtheit verteilt sein mögen, ihr schöpferisches Leuchten geht niemals ganz verloren, bleibt als ein Nachglanz in allem Dahindämmern erhalten [...]”⁴⁶⁸ The possibility of intellectual advancement is always present, even in the most stagnant civilization, but this advancement is always achieved by an individual, and never by the civilization as a whole, since “nur das Individuum als solches besitzt Erkenntnis.”⁴⁶⁹ In periods of stabilization, which Broch calls the “Epochenmitte,” those individuals

⁴⁶⁸ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 129.

⁴⁶⁹ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 129.

responsible for the advancement of human knowledge—termed “historische Persönlichkeiten” because of the historical impact of their knowledge—are vehemently opposed by “Durchschnittsmenschen,” the average individuals satisfied in their twilight state. The “Durchschnittsmenschen” are defined by their epoch and wholly devoid of individuality, making them an indistinguishable mass:

Der Widerstand des Durchschnittsmenschen gegen die historisch große Persönlichkeit ist eine spezifische Erscheinung der Epochenmitte [...], da die festen Lebensformen, von denen jede Kulturblüte begleitet wird, den günstigsten Boden für die bloße Akzeptation und damit eben auch für das Aufkommen des Durchschnittsmenschen bieten; kraft solcher Akzeptation [...] wird er zum physiognomielosen Geschöpf, wird sein Antlitz zur “Epochenphysiognomie”, bar jeglichen individuellen Zuges, ununterscheidbar in der amorphen, ebenso physiognomielosen Masse seiner Nebenmenschen, ununterscheidbar wie ein Herdenstück in der Masse seiner Nebentiere, gleich diesen ausschließlich mit der unmittelbaren Triebbefriedigung dämmerhaft beschäftigt, und solcherart im Gegensatz zur historisch distinkten großen Persönlichkeit (die er verdrängt), mit seiner Physiognomielosigkeit zum “historisch anonymen” Menschen geworden, leitet er den Niedergang der Epoche, den Niedergang ihrer Kultur ein.⁴⁷⁰

The “Durchschnittsmensch” is revealed as a “Massenmensch,” defined only as a man of his particular time, the product of social, political, and/or intellectual conditions, from which he refuses to deviate. The “Durchschnittsmensch” is a man without qualities, lacking even the isolated physiognomic markers of “Münder, Nasen, Bärte [und] Bäuche,” which Broch ascribed to the mass in “Die Straße.” He is the polar opposite of the self-aware “historische Persönlichkeit,” leading society to ruin rather than to greater heights. Whether for good or ill, the “Durchschnittsmensch” has regressed completely to the twilight state and its attendant reliance on instinct over cognition:

Der physiognomielose Durchschnittsmensch [...] ist ins nackte Hindämmern zurückgeraten, ins verdämmerte Herdenhafte, fern jedem Erkenntnisvorstoß, fern jeder Partizipation; seine vegetativ-animalische Natur hat die Oberhand in ihm gewonnen, und was immer er denkt, plant oder unternimmt, handelnd oder nur vorstellungsmäßig, umweltfreundlich oder umweltfeindlich, es ist restlos ins

⁴⁷⁰ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 131-32.

Instinkthafte zurückgeglitten, es dient nur noch den unmittelbaren Triebbefriedigungen [...].⁴⁷¹

Broch's "Durchschnittsmensch" is wholly unreflective, subsisting in a nearly vegetative state. This is not to say that he neither thinks nor acts, but rather that he thinks and acts only in the pursuit of base desires. The "Durchschnittsmensch," though presented in Broch's theory as a particular type of individual opposed to the "historische Persönlichkeit," appears to be a state of being that results from the twilight state, rather than an innate personality designation. The light of knowledge and cognition persists in all individuals, no matter how much it may dim, so even the "Durchschnittsmensch" could potentially be awakened to active participation. Broch makes clear, though, that the emergence of the mass is a direct result of the twilight state and can be expected to arise wherever the twilight state is dominant:

überall, wo der Mensch erkenntnisbar in schierer Triebbefriedigung unter Vollakzeptierung der jeweiligen Umweltbedingungen dahindämmert, dort verwandelt er sich zum physiognomielosen Durchschnittsindividuum [...], und überall, wo dies geschieht, dort ist zu erwarten, daß die lebendige Gemeinschaft zu einem toten Massenkonglomerat werde: die Verantwortung aber liegt einzig und allein im Phänomen des Dahindämmerns und seiner Mechanik.⁴⁷²

The twilight state entices individuals to accept their environmental conditions unquestioningly, pursuing the gratification of base desires while rejecting the human duty of cognition. This not only relegates the individual to the status of "Durchschnittsmensch," it also converts living communities to lifeless masses. Here it is necessary to ask what the difference is, in Broch's view, between a living community and a lifeless mass.

⁴⁷¹ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 133.

⁴⁷² Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 153-54.

What is the “Masse”?

At this point we have identified the main concepts and mechanisms at work in Broch's theory as they are first presented in his programmatic “Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes für politische Psychologie und zum Studium von Massenwahnerscheinungen.” The rational self, confronted with the irrational world, attempts to incorporate everything outside of it in the form of value (*Wert*). This can happen along the path of “Irrationalbereicherung” – positive, culture-building – or of “Rationalverarmung” – negative, destructive. In either case, the successful inclusion of external content causes an expansion of the self, which is accompanied by feelings of ecstasy (genuine in the former case, pseudo in the latter). If the self is incapable of incorporating external content, he is reminded of his metaphysical isolation and ultimate mortality, resulting in feelings of fear, which can escalate to panic if not addressed. The path of “Irrationalbereicherung” leads the individual toward wholeness through identification with the external world (“Ich bin die Welt”). This identification occurs through the faculty of cognition (*Erkenntnis*), which can also be described as the processing of irrational content by the rational instance of the self. The path of “Rationalverarmung” leads the individual to ever lower levels of cognitive faculty and a false sense of expansive ecstasy through possession and subjugation, rather than understanding of, or identification with, external content (“Ich habe die Welt”). According to Broch, “Irrationalbereicherung” is the primary mechanism involved in the creation of human culture, which gives personal knowledge and expression a lasting form, thus persisting after the individual's death. On the other hand,

“Rationalverarmung” causes the individual to undergo cognitive devolution; unable to process, understand, and identify with the external world, the individual becomes increasingly threatened by a range of fears emanating from the fundamental fear of isolation and death. The response is a heightened reliance on the direction of others (in the form of the two types of “Führer”) and the pursuit of base desires rather than higher order cognition. In short, the force of “Rationalverarmung” is the key to the appearance of mass hysteria in society, as viewed through Broch’s value theory. Similarly, Broch describes the “Dämmerzustand” as the mechanism responsible for massing from a historical and epistemological perspective. These two concepts, taken together, form the basis of Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie*.

Having explored this theoretical structure, the reader may well ask, “Where is the mass?” Presumably, the mass would be a central figure in any theory of mass hysteria. But as Broch explicitly states in his theory, “Das Beobachtungsmaterial für massenpsychische Erscheinungen hat [...] vornehmlich der Einzelmensch zu bleiben [...]”⁴⁷³ Broch repeatedly rejects the idea of a mass soul or group mind, but without providing convincing evidence for his strong conviction. Assuming that the reader accepts Broch’s assertion that “‘Massenwille,’ ‘Massenseele’ usw. sind nichts als Metaphern,”⁴⁷⁴ the question remains as to what the mass is, even in the absence of an overarching psychological or spiritual connection between constituent members. Occasionally, Broch makes statements that point to an established conception of the mass in his thinking. In the “Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes,” Broch grants the existence of a physical entity, in which others suppose the mass soul to reside:

⁴⁷³ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 13.

⁴⁷⁴ Broch, “Inhaltsverzeichnis,” 73.

Nichtsdestoweniger hat das Massengefäß, in dem die nichtexistente Massenseele lokalisiert wird, gewisse reale Bestandteile, und diese dürfen bei der definitiven Konstruktion des massenpsychischen Geschehens nicht übersehen werden: Gruppen von einheitlichem physiologischen Charakter, wie Familien, Völker, Nationen, oder aber Gruppen, welche durch einen äußeren Zwang zusammengehalten werden, wie dies z.B. durch die einheitliche Tradition innerhalb einer Gesellschaft geschieht, befördern den Übergang von individuellen zu kollektiven Seelenhaltungen. Sie bilden die sozusagen statischen Vorbedingungen für jegliches Massengeschehen: sie grenzen das massenpsychologische Arbeitsgebiet sozusagen im Raume ab.⁴⁷⁵

Broch lists several varieties of social grouping, from those united by physical similarity to the more abstract connection of human societies. Broch presents these groups as vessels that others might posit as the location of a mass soul. Broch's own conception denies this, but interestingly, after rejecting the mass soul, Broch refers to "den Übergang von individuellen zu kollektiven Seelenhaltungen." What precisely distinguishes "kollektive Seelenhaltungen" from a "Massenseele"? It would seem that an individual's inclusion within a group provides the possibility that that individual may cede control over his or her actions to a larger collective, in the twilight state, for example. What mechanism, then, unites individuals experiencing "kollektive Seelenhaltungen," if not some larger, overarching psychological entity like a mass soul? Regardless of any larger psychological connection between individuals, Broch does claim that physical groupings set the spatial parameters for any kind of mass event. In his "Entwurf für eine Theorie massenwahnartiger Erscheinungen" (1941), Broch suggests the existence of the mass as a sociological group:

Unter Massenpsychologie kann keine Psychologie der Masse als solcher verstanden werden. Die Masse ist keine mystische Einheit, welche eine eigene Seele, einen eigenen Willen oder dergleichen besitzt. Wissenschaftlich erfaßbar ist immer nur das Individuum und das Einzel-Ich. Unter Massenpsychologie ist also ein Teil des allgemeinpsychologischen Modells zu verstehen, und zwar jener, welcher sich auf das Verhalten des Ichs in der Masse bezieht. Genauer gesagt,

⁴⁷⁵ Broch, "Vorschlag," 15-16.

handelt es sich dabei um die Außenweltbedingungen, unter welche das Ich durch das Vorhandensein einer soziologischen Gruppe, wie es die Masse ist, gestellt erscheint.⁴⁷⁶

As in the “Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes,” the individual is the principal object of investigation, particularly in its relation to, and behavior within the mass. This description of the mass indicates that it is one type of sociological group among many, like the family, nation, and society above. But how is the mass to be distinguished from those other groups?

Throughout the *Massenwahntheorie*, Broch uses various terms to refer to supraindividual groupings, but without clear definitions to demarcate between each term. For example, within the space of a few paragraphs in the “Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes,” Broch refers to “Menschengruppe,” “Menschenmasse,” “Kollektiv,” “Kollektivmasse,” and “Masse.”⁴⁷⁷ An examination of Broch’s usage in the *Massenwahntheorie* indicates that “Kollektiv” is a general term for a social group, which can be positive or negative, productive or destructive depending on its structure and values. Broch suggests that there are normal collectives and (by extension) aberrant collectives: “Im allgemeinen befindet sich der Mensch im Normalkollektiv, d.h. in einem sozialen Verband, von dem er durch Freundschaft, durch Erfolg usw. stets eine Anzahl ekstatischer Werte zugeführt erhält [...].”⁴⁷⁸ The normal collective follows the path of “Irrationalbereicherung,” while the aberrant collective is reduced to “triebhaftes Kollektivität” as a result of “Rationalverarmung.”⁴⁷⁹ Fundamentally, the term “Kollektiv” is situated opposite the individual, and used to denote any social group the individual

⁴⁷⁶ Hermann Broch, “Entwurf für eine Theorie massenwahnartiger Erscheinungen,” *Massenwahntheorie*, 45.

⁴⁷⁷ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 26-27.

⁴⁷⁸ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 19.

⁴⁷⁹ Broch, “Vorschlag,” 19.

may join. From the more general concept of normal and aberrant collectives, Broch moves to the more specific terms “Gemeinschaft” and “Masse.” In “Eine Studie über Massenhysterie: Beiträge zu einer Psychologie der Politik (Vorläufiges Inhaltsverzeichnis)” (1943), which Paul Michael Lützeler used to assemble the volume *Massenwahntheorie*, Broch provides short descriptions of these two terms:

- a. Eine Gemeinschaft definiert sich durch ihr gemeinsames System; es enthält erstens rationale Werte (Normen) und zweitens irrationale Werte (Gefühle der Freundschaft, Gebräuche, Traditionen). Nur die rationalen Bestandteile garantieren die Aufrechterhaltung der Individualität innerhalb der Gruppe.
- b. Eine Masse definiert sich nur durch irrationale Werte. Offensichtlich enthalten diese irrationalen Werte auch rationale Elemente, mit denen sie sich mischen. Da aber beide Wertarten im Dämmerzustand aufgenommen werden, hat dieser Aufnahmeprozeß eine ausgesprochen irrationale Tendenz.⁴⁸⁰

A “Gemeinschaft” is defined by the presence of a value system, composed of both rational and irrational values, that is accepted by all of its constituent members.

“Gemeinschaft” describes an ecstatic experience of self-expansion (*Ich-Erweiterung*) as well as a positive social group. Corresponding to the path of “Irrationalbereicherung,” the “Gemeinschaft” is a rationally ordered and guided group, reflective of the intact and activated cognitive faculties of its members. By contrast, the “Masse” arises as a result of “Rationalverarmung” and the dissolution (or absence) of individual will among its members, who have regressed to the twilight state. It is telling that in this proposed definition, Broch states that the mass defines itself through irrational values, but never clarifies what the mass is. In Broch’s theory, the mass is always a result, a state that the individual can reach—or has already reached—through “Rationalverlust” and the “Dämmerzustand.” The mass is obviously a group possessing a physical form, but its

⁴⁸⁰ Broch, “Inhaltsverzeichnis,” 78.

actions and behavior are always described from the perspective of the individuals that populate it, leaving the group itself unexamined.

When the mass acts in Broch's theory, it acts in the abstract. Frequently, Broch refers to a nondescript "Massengeschehen" that should, he claims, be explored within the collective as well as in its relation to the individual.⁴⁸¹ The psychopathic Zeitgeist under Hitler reveals itself "im Massengeschehen,"⁴⁸² and the neurotic insanity of the individual is also visible "als Massengeschehen."⁴⁸³ Yet when one looks for specific examples of mass events in the *Massenwahntheorie*, they are largely limited to the expressions of mass hysteria "in Lynchakten, in Pogromen, in Hexenverbrennungen [...]."⁴⁸⁴ Like the mass itself, these acts are not analyzed specifically, but merely used as images of "Rationalverlust." Broch's theory "is not interested in the physics of the masses," as Wolfgang Müller-Funk notes.⁴⁸⁵ The vague concept of the mass is never firmly defined in the *Massenwahntheorie*, and as such, the mass appears not to exist for Broch as a physical entity. As Katja Schettler explains, "Broch spart aus, inwieweit die Masse als Objekt der Untersuchung in der Tat physisch existiert. Dem korrespondiert, daß er keine Beschreibungen der Masse Mensch liefert."⁴⁸⁶ In the absence of clear, concrete representations of the mass as an entity, the useful application of Broch's theory in the real world is severely limited.

One possible reason for the unyielding abstraction of the *Massenwahntheorie* seems to be Broch's desire to create a universally applicable theory of human behavior

⁴⁸¹ Broch, "Vorschlag," 33.

⁴⁸² Broch, "Inhaltsverzeichnis," 67.

⁴⁸³ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 286.

⁴⁸⁴ Broch, "Vorschlag," 28.

⁴⁸⁵ Wolfgang Müller-Funk, "Fear in Culture: Broch's *Massenwahntheorie*," *Hermann Broch, Visionary in Exile*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Rochester: Camden House, 2003) 96.

⁴⁸⁶ Katja Schettler, *Berlin, Wien... Wovon man spricht: das Thema Masse in deutschsprachigen Texten der zwanziger und Anfang der dreißiger Jahre* (Tönning: Der Andere Verlag, 2006) 199.

deductively, from set laws and principles rather than from observations of human behavior, both individually and as part of a mass. Müller-Funk describes Broch's universal aspirations as follows:

Obviously Broch's intention [...] is to establish a theory which has a more general and broader universal validity, a theory [...] which is able to explain the disastrous inclination of human beings to form themselves into masses which eliminate any response to moral behavior and make people able to treat outsiders in extraordinarily cruel ways.⁴⁸⁷

It was indeed Broch's stated intention to better understand the phenomenon of mass hysteria, so that society would be better armed to prevent the violence it engenders in ordinary people. However, by avoiding any analysis of the mass as an entity, or at least as a concept, Broch bypasses a great deal of that potential understanding. Dagmar Barnouw strongly criticizes this oversight in Broch's theory, stating that:

Die Massenpsychologie, zur Bekämpfung des Faschismus geschrieben, ist dafür [...] denkbar schlecht geeignet. Ohne auch nur einen Augenblick einzuhalten und darüber nachzudenken, daß Massen-Formen, Massen-Vorstellungen in der langen Geschichte der Menschen die verschiedenartigsten Rollen gespielt haben, daß man z.B. die außerordentlich geschickten Manipulationen Hitlers, der die Massen als seine Machtbasis verstand und danach behandelte nur mit Gewinn analysieren kann, wenn man den Komplex 'Masse' nicht von vornherein auf 'Massenwahn' festlegt, den man nun selbst manipulieren zu können glaubt.⁴⁸⁸

In the *Massenwahntheorie*, Broch's foremost concern is the creation of a theory of mass hysteria, not a theory of the mass. As Barnouw indicates, though, a lack of engagement with the concept of the mass leaves one far less capable of dealing with—or manipulating—the violent actions perceived to originate from it. Despite the absence of a clear description of the mass, Broch does indeed propose a solution to the spread of mass

⁴⁸⁷ Müller-Funk 93.

⁴⁸⁸ Dagmar Barnouw, "Massenpsychologie als Metaphysik: zu Brochs Begriff eines Irdisch-Absoluten," *Musil-Forum* 4 (1978): 71-72.

hysteria in the third and final part of the *Massenwahntheorie*, “Der Kampf gegen den Massenwahn. (Eine Psychologie der Politik).”

Conviction, Conversion, and Total Democracy

The first two parts of the *Massenwahntheorie*—“Der Dämmerungsbereich” and “Der menschliche Dämmerzustand und die Masse”—, diagnose the problem of mass hysteria and explore the forces and mechanisms at work therein. The final section is Broch’s attempt to move from theory to practice by detailing a process of conversion (*Bekehrung*), which can be used to dissolve the mass and restore the individuality of its constituent members in the form of a community (*Gemeinschaft*). The *Massenwahntheorie* is a product of the historical moment in which it was written, and as such, Broch conceived his theory as a means of combatting Hitler’s National Socialist state and the specific variety of mass hysteria associated with it; the “Vorläufiges Inhaltsverzeichnis” describes the theory’s intended purpose as a “Beitrag zur Besiegung des Hitlerismus und zum Aufbau einer besseren Nachkriegszeit [...]”.⁴⁸⁹ Though Broch acknowledges the presence of mass hysteria throughout history, for the purposes of the *Massenwahntheorie* (especially in the later sections), mass hysteria is synonymous with the ecstatic popular support of fascism across Europe. For Broch, democracy was the most appropriate and effective system for defeating mass hysteria; Broch’s was so convinced of this that he considered “Demokratie und Massenwahnbekämpfung geradezu identische Begriffe.”⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ Broch, “Inhaltsverzeichnis,” 68.

⁴⁹⁰ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 342.

Democracy's advantage over fascism and communism lies, according to Broch, in its status as an open as opposed to a closed system. Analogous to the human individual in Broch's value theory, larger value systems are constantly engaged in confronting and processing external information with the aim of achieving an all-encompassing, total mastery of the world ("Totalbewältigung der Welt"). The distinction between open and closed systems focuses on the response of the system to new, previously unknown information. Closed systems consider themselves complete as they are, and thus reject incompatible new information, while open systems operate with an understanding of the infinite, unencompassable nature of the world:

In jeder Werttheologie scheint das Phänomen einer Wertdogmatik auf, deren Grenzen nicht überschritten werden sollen. Ein System, welches unter der Herrschaft einer Wertdogmatik steht, darf als "geschlossenes System" bezeichnet werden. "Offene Systeme" hingegen zeichnen sich dadurch aus, daß sie nicht versuchen, in einem bestimmten materialen Wertdogmengebäude sämtliche Weltphänomene unterzubringen, sondern sich bemühen, die erwünschte absolute Geltung durch ständige Fortentwicklung des Systems zu erreichen. Das offene System ist sich der Unendlichkeit der Welt bewußt [...].⁴⁹¹

Fascism and communism exhibit the kind of value dogmatism associated with closed systems, Broch argues, to the extent that they adhere to aspects of their ideology which are not reflective of reality (e.g., the fascist belief in racial superiority).⁴⁹² Democracy, by contrast, is synonymous with freedom and humanity, and capable of evolving over time.⁴⁹³ Closed systems provide a high degree of emotional security for their members—especially important for addressing the mass's fears—but given enough time, they will eventually hypertrophy and shatter when they are no longer able to reject new information, giving way to a "Zerfall der Werte." Open systems—by virtue of their

⁴⁹¹ Broch, "Entwurf," 50.

⁴⁹² Broch, "Entwurf," 59.

⁴⁹³ Broch, "Vorschlag," 41; Broch, "Entwurf," 63; Schlant, *Philosophie*, 163.

ability to adapt to change and their acceptance of the ultimate inaccessibility of totality—are better suited to the reality of the world and the search for knowledge inextricably tied to humanity. For these reasons, Broch places his hopes for society in an open, democratic system.

Democracy's main opponent in the struggle for control of the mass is fascism, as horrifically illustrated by Hitler's Germany. In addition to the emotional security offered by the rigid ideology of a closed value system, fascist states in the 1930s and 40s demonstrated a masterful command of the "Superbefriedigung" in the form of a cult of victory. The promise of victory and success, Broch claims, are exceptionally effective at harnessing mass panic and base urges for political aims, while keeping the mass in a state of hysteria: "'Sieg' ist das Hauptziel der 'richtunggebenden Kräfte', und besonders dort, wo eine Panik durch Zusammenfassung aller Massentriebe, unbeschadet ihrer Wahnhaftigkeit, zu politischer Dynamik gebracht werden soll, ist er das einzige oder zumindest das wirkungsvollste Ziel."⁴⁹⁴ Fascism addresses the irrational fears and desires of the mass in ways that democracy does not, and cannot: "alles, was den Fascisten zugute kommt, Erfolg, Sieghaftigkeit, Superbefriedigung, kurzum all diese ekstasierenden Momente fehlen dem demokratischen Staat [...]."⁴⁹⁵ As a system built on abstract concepts of humanity, equality, and justice, democracy is primarily rational, and thus unable to address the mass by the same irrational means used by fascist systems. And yet, as Broch discusses in first section of the *Massenwahntheorie*, an outbreak of mass hysteria cannot be defused by rational means. Ernestine Schlant explains:

⁴⁹⁴ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 308.

⁴⁹⁵ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 310.

Wie dies bereits am Prinzip der Superbefriedigung erläutert wurde, kann die Masse nur oder hauptsächlich nur auf der Irrationalebene angesprochen und manipuliert werden. Will die Wahnbehandlung also Erfolg haben, muß sie sich an diesen massenpsychischen Gegebenheiten orientieren und die Vermassung mit ihren eigenen Waffen schlagen.⁴⁹⁶

It is not sufficient to demonstrate to the mass by rational means that their fears are irrational or unfounded, or to explain the virtues of a democratic system. Rather, democracies must make themselves more convincing than competing systems.

As mentioned above, closed systems reveal a disconnect between their own values and reality. Closed systems are interested in the preservation and propagation of their own particular value construct, not in uncovering or presenting that which is real or true. As a result, closed systems operate with half-truths, such that their lies are convincing enough to be believed and followed by adherents of the value system:

eine "Überzeugung" [hängt] gewöhnlich nicht von der Wahrheit ab, und andererseits braucht die Wahrheit an sich nicht durch eine Überzeugung bekräftigt zu werden. Mehr noch, eine Überzeugung ist sogar verbunden mit einer Halb-Wahrheit. Denn im allgemeinen gilt, daß die Überzeugung Funktion eines geschlossenen Systems ist; sie repräsentiert die generelle Einstellung im Rahmen eines geschlossenen [...] Wertsystems. Mit anderen Worten, sie bezeichnet die moralische Haltung eines Menschen im Dämmerzustand. So gesehen bedeutet Überzeugung: unabänderliche Bejahung nicht der Wahrheit, sondern der Normen eines Wertsystems (das natürlich eine Anzahl von Wahrheiten enthalten kann).⁴⁹⁷

Broch claims that democracies must play to this tactic of being first and foremost convincing rather than true if they hope to connect with the mass. The strength of the democratic system is located in its basic principles of humanity, which present its best protection against infection from mass hysteria. The key is then to make these principles more convincing than those espoused by fascism, and thus halt the process of "Rationalverlust" at work in mass hysteria: "erst an der Wiedererrichtung einer humanen

⁴⁹⁶ Schlant, *Philosophie*, 142.

⁴⁹⁷ Broch, "Inhaltsverzeichnis," 84-85.

Überzeugung wird die Menschheit den Rationalverlust, den sie durch die Fascismen erlitten hat [...], endlich gewahr werden, erst dann wird ihr der Massenwahn mit all seinen Grauensfolgen voll zu Bewußtsein kommen.”⁴⁹⁸ To achieve this, Broch proposes a four stage process of conversion, designed to supplant fascism and install democracy as the progressive, open value system of society.

Broch defines conversion as follows:

Bekehrung – im üblichen Sinne – findet statt, wenn durch den Wechsel der Überzeugung von einem geschlossenen System zu einem offenen oder offeneren System sich die Geisteshaltung des Menschen ändert (wenn z.B. der Heide sich zum Christen bekehrt). Genau dies, nämlich der Wechsel von einem geschlossenen zu einem offenen System, ist das Ziel des Kampfes gegen den Massenwahn.⁴⁹⁹

The reference to religion, specifically Christianity, is not accidental: Broch takes the Roman Catholic missionary tradition as a blueprint for secular, political conversion.⁵⁰⁰ Religious systems have historically been quite successful at mobilizing and guiding the mass, but the modern era has become so secularized that religions are no longer capable of confronting mass hysteria on their own; the problem has moved into the realm of politics: “Die weit fortgeschrittene Säkularisation unserer Zeit läßt es nicht zu, daß die Kirche die ganze Aufgabe übernimmt. Die Politik tritt hier an die Stelle der Kirche und muß die ganze Pflicht des Kampfes gegen den Massenwahn auf sich nehmen, ungeachtet der immanenten religiösen Elemente, die verbleiben.”⁵⁰¹ Just as religions are no longer fully capable of confronting mass hysteria in a secular world, any attempt at a secular challenge to mass hysteria cannot appeal to human spirituality: “die moderne

⁴⁹⁸ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 313-14.

⁴⁹⁹ Broch, “Inhaltsverzeichnis,” 85.

⁵⁰⁰ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 317.

⁵⁰¹ Broch, “Inhaltsverzeichnis,” 86-87.

Massenwahnbekämpfung [...] ist auf den weltlichen Bereich beschränkt.”⁵⁰² The mechanism of conversion can be used by both religious and political systems, but Broch distinguishes distinct methods of conversion appropriate to each system. According to Broch, every act of conversion involves a realization on the part of the convert, a realization that emanates from a higher value system than the convert’s present value system. Following Broch’s value theory, this realization may occur along the path of “Irrationalbereicherung” (as religious enlightenment through grace [“gnadenhafte Erleuchtung”]) or through prevention of “Rationalverlust.”⁵⁰³ Broch identifies the latter method as the appropriate means of conversion to democracy.

The conversion of individuals from a lower to a higher value system occurs in four phases, according to Broch’s model: 1) the phase of amalgamation (“Amalgamierung”), during which the higher value system appropriates the ritual language and forms of the lower value system; 2) the phase of competition (“Konkurrenz”), during which the higher value system demonstrates its superiority over the lower, especially by means of propaganda; 3) the phase of establishment and security (“Etablierung und Sicherung”), during which the higher system provides converts with greater security through the establishment of an organized social structure based on the higher value system; 4) the phase of taboo (“Tabu”), during which any remnants of the lower value system are forbidden under penalty of punishment.⁵⁰⁴ A successful conversion aims to remove the individual from hysterical captivity in the mass and incorporate it in the healthy community of the higher value system:

⁵⁰² Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 354.

⁵⁰³ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 315.

⁵⁰⁴ Broch, “Inhaltsverzeichnis,” 86-88.

Eine Erlösung aus dem Zustand des Massenwahns bringt gleichzeitig eine “Entmassung” mit sich. [...] Bekehrung arbeitet immer im Rahmen eines Wertsystems, zu dem die Masse bekehrt werden sollte, das heißt also, daß sie einen Zentralwert oder eine Werthierarchie besitzt, in die die Masse übergeführt werden sollte. Damit wird der Übergang von der Masse zu einer Gemeinschaft vollzogen.⁵⁰⁵

In order to extricate individuals from the mass of the fascist closed system and create a functioning community under the democratic open system, Broch argues a devaluation of the cult of victory is necessary, an “Entwertung des Sieges.”⁵⁰⁶

When Broch applies his four stage conversion process to the conflict between fascism and democracy, his suggestions for exactly how democracy can best convince its proposed converts of its superiority over fascism are often vague. The crux of the phase of amalgamation, Broch claims, is taking fascist rituals of success and victory and replacing their particular content with new content geared toward a paradoxical “Besiegung des Sieges.”⁵⁰⁷ Broch does not specify what content he has in mind, but he emphasizes the importance of framing victory over fascism as something not to be glorified in and of itself (which would only add to the cult of victory). Further, Broch suggests that a democratic counterpropaganda touting the advantages of its own successes (centered on international political security) could be effective against the fascist propaganda:

dieser Erfolgspropaganda der Fascisten darf die Demokratie entgegensetzen, daß der wahre Menschheitsfortschritt und damit das wahrhaft “Neue” auf ihrer Seite liegt, daß die “Erfolge”, welche sie anstrebt, die besseren und dauerhafteren seien, weil sie auf der Wiederinstallierung von Paktfähigkeit beruhen, und gerade in ihrem Bekehrungswerk, das die alten Erfolgsrituale (das militärische mit eingeschlossen) mit dem neuen Inhalt der “Besiegung des Sieges” ausstatten soll,

⁵⁰⁵ Schlant, *Philosophie*, 145.

⁵⁰⁶ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 324.

⁵⁰⁷ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 383-84.

darf sie sich auf eben dieses Faktum, das zugleich ihr Programm und ihre Propaganda ist, nachdrücklichst stützen.⁵⁰⁸

It is questionable to what extent a democratic claim to vaguely better, newer, or longer-lasting successes would be more convincing than the established successes of fascism. Broch's appeals to truth on the one hand, and the rational political concept of "Paktfähigkeit" seem poorly suited to convincing the mass. First, Broch claims that "Volksmassen akzeptieren jede Lüge, wenn sie konkret ist," so appealing to the truth seems ineffective, and second, Broch has already established that the mass cannot be addressed using rational argumentation.⁵⁰⁹ In seeming recognition of the hollowness of these suggestions, Broch admits that a specific democratic program cannot be designed in advance, "sondern muß der Praxis überlassen werden."⁵¹⁰

The competition phase is primarily concerned with developing an effective propaganda campaign against the fascist cult of victory. It is democracy's task to disempower the cult of victory by demonstrating that victory is in fact uninteresting:

Hier hat offenbar die demokratische Propaganda mit ihrem Bekehrungswerk anzusetzen: Sieg ist uninteressant, und selbst der glänzendste Sieg, ausgeführt mit der bewunderungswürdigsten Siegesmaschinerie, wie es etwa die deutsche ist, kann kein anderes und nicht mehr Interesse beanspruchen als ein scharfsinnig erdachter und mit den besten Werkzeugen vollführter Einbruch und Raubmord. [...] es handelt sich um die propagandistische Entwertung des Sieges und um seine Degradierung zu dem, was er ist, nämlich zum Verbrechen, das von der Polizei besiegt und ausgemerzt zu werden hat.⁵¹¹

The central term in Broch's conversion process is "Entwertung." The devaluation of a competing value system is not achieved by direct attacks or refutations, Broch argues, but

⁵⁰⁸ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 386.

⁵⁰⁹ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 352.

⁵¹⁰ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 386.

⁵¹¹ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 388.

rather by self-praise.⁵¹² Argumentation with one's competitor serves to focus attention on him: "wer mit seinem Gegner argumentiert, entwertet ihn nicht, sondern unterstreicht seine Bedeutung."⁵¹³ Despite claiming earlier in the *Massenwahntheorie* that a hysterical mass cannot be moved by referencing abstract democratic concepts such as freedom or human rights,⁵¹⁴ Broch identifies democracy's central principle of humanity as the key to a successful democratic propaganda campaign. Propaganda based around the concept humanity will, Broch claims, necessarily incorporate all related topics, including anti-racist propaganda. Further, the focus of such a complete propaganda program can be moved as the situation dictates:

M.a.W., das demokratische Bekehrungswerk als Humanitätspropaganda weitesten Ausmaßes zwecks Wiederentdämonisierung und Wiederentheidung der Welt enthält von vorneherein sämtliche Motive, die diesem Zwecke dienen, also auch jene, die sich gegen den Rassenhaß richten; es kann also prinzipiell einem solch umfassenden Programm kaum etwas hinzugefügt werden, wohl aber ist es möglich, seinen Schwerpunkt je nach Erfordernis zu verlegen [...].⁵¹⁵

The broad scope of the democratic system's propaganda of humanity includes both indirect and direct propaganda: the former focuses on self-promotion and demonstrates the banality of the competing value system by ignoring it, while the latter attacks the competition to reveal its faults. The inclusion of direct propaganda appears to contradict Broch's earlier contention that such engagement only serves to underscore the importance of one's competitor. Yet here, Broch seems to indicate that while indirect propaganda is useful for members of the mass, direct propaganda is appropriate for more self-aware individuals capable of understanding rational argumentation.⁵¹⁶ If this

⁵¹² Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 390.

⁵¹³ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 402.

⁵¹⁴ "Worte wie 'Freiheit' oder 'Menschenrechte' oder 'Menschenwürde' sind für eine panikisierte Masse durchaus bedeutungslos [...]." Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 352.

⁵¹⁵ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 405.

⁵¹⁶ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 407.

propaganda program succeeds in devaluing the fascist cult of victory, and by extension the fascist value system as a whole, then the democratic system can advance to the third phase.

Once the establishment and security phase begins, the conversion process is already mostly complete. The next step is for the democratic system to solidify its gains and protect against any backsliding among converts by providing additional security, which should result in identification between converts as a social group and the new value system:

die Bekehrten sollen zu jener “werttragenden” sozialen Gruppe gemacht werden, welche den Normungen des neuen Wertsystems sich nicht nur beugt, sondern in ihnen, sowohl äußerlich wie innerlich, so weit Lebenssicherheit gefunden hat, daß sie sich in zunehmendem Maße mit diesem Wertsystem identifiziert und sohin als seine vollgültige Konkretisierung angesehen werden kann [...].⁵¹⁷

The degree of security an individual feels in a particular value system has a direct effect on how convincing the value system is perceived to be, that is, how strongly the individual is convinced to be living in the best of all possible systems.⁵¹⁸ Through social organization, the value system increases its convincingness and consolidates itself. Broch compares this consolidation to the establishment of a church: “Das letzte Ziel einer jeden durchgeführten Bekehrung ist die Etablierung einer Kirche; das letzte Ziel ihrer säkularen Fortsetzung ist die organisierte Humanität, also kurz: die demokratische Organisation.”⁵¹⁹ Broch firmly believes that democracy is in a position to create such an organization, “die nicht weniger effektiv, psychologisch wirksam und überzeugend [als die fascistischen Systeme] arbeitet.”⁵²⁰ However, Broch’s exploration of a specifically democratic

⁵¹⁷ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 419.

⁵¹⁸ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 420.

⁵¹⁹ Broch, “Entwurf,” 64.

⁵²⁰ Broch, “Entwurf,” 64.

conversion process breaks off at this third phase, leaving the particulars of democratic organization undiscussed. The final two chapters of the *Massenwahntheorie* do describe to a greater extent what Broch envisioned for the end stage of democratic conversion: a “totale Demokratie.”

In the third chapter, I analyzed Broch’s early political essay “Konstitutionelle Diktatur als demokratisches Rätssystem” (1919). There Broch presented a concept of dictatorship that focused on the identification of states with a guiding idea and the full protection of that idea in law: “Jeder Staat ist Machtauswirkung seiner Idee. Auch der sozialistische Staat [...] muß zur Aufrechterhaltung seiner Organisation, in der sich seine Idee eben inkarniert, den Machtfaktor, das heißt das Gesetz einstellen.”⁵²¹ In the “Völkerbund-Resolution,” he takes this idea a step further by attempting to create a binding international law for the protection of human rights and dignity, thus using the (albeit limited) authority of the League of Nations to enshrine the guiding principle of democracy in a legislative framework. Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie* and the essay “Zur Diktatur der Humanität innerhalb einer totalen Demokratie” (1939) provide a proposal for the creation of a new democratic system better equipped to ward off the threats of mass hysteria and totalitarianism.

Broch describes a “Totalstaat” as a state, “dessen regulative Grundprinzipien in die geschriebene oder ungeschriebene Verfassung eingegangen und für jeden Bürger unter Strafsanktion verbindlich geworden sind.”⁵²² In a democratic state, Broch understands the basic principle to be that of humanity, the inviolability of the individual and his or her right not to be enslaved, not to be unduly hindered in the pursuit of his or

⁵²¹ Broch, “Konstitutionelle Diktatur,” 11.

⁵²² Hermann Broch, “Zur Diktatur der Humanität innerhalb einer totalen Demokratie,” *Politische Schriften*, 26. Also: Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 514-15.

her happiness, and not to be threatened with death or actually killed by the state. Broch's concept of human rights is extrapolated from the basic limiting factor of humanity: mortality. The inevitability of death is, in Broch's understanding, the only absolute certainty in human life, earning it the title "das Irdisch-Absolute."⁵²³ Within Broch's political theory, the understanding of death as the ultimate negative limit of human existence, the "Unwert an sich," leads Broch to declare the death penalty forbidden in a democratic society.⁵²⁴ From there, Broch enacts a prohibition on slavery. The experience of slavery reduces the individual to an object, thus robbing him of his humanity and leaving him as little more than a living corpse: "Eine äußerste Ver-sachung des Menschen findet statt; er wird mit jeder Faser seines Seins und Denkens zum 'Besitz' des Staates gemacht, wird tatsächlich zu jener 'am Leben gelassenen Leiche', die der Sklave am Ur-Anfang gewesen ist [...]."⁵²⁵ In Broch's time, the complete enslavement of human beings was carried out in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. In response to this, concentration camps and the "Voll-Versklavung" associated with them are forbidden as the ultimate moral wrong in human society: "Und hier scheint die absolute Grenze der menschlichen Moral gesetzt zu sein: die im Konzentrationslager so gräßlich paradigmatisch verkörperte Voll-Versklavung darf nicht stattfinden."⁵²⁶ The prohibition of murder and slavery, derived from the concept of the "Irdisch-Absolute" together constitute the core of Broch's concept of human rights.⁵²⁷

The purpose of Broch's "totale Demokratie" is to erect protections for these human rights, both in the relationships between individuals and between individuals and

⁵²³ For Broch, with the exception of death, absolutes only exist in the abstract.

⁵²⁴ Schlant, *Philosophie*, 155.

⁵²⁵ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 484.

⁵²⁶ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 468.

⁵²⁷ Schlant, *Philosophie*, 157.

the state, and to ground these protections firmly in the law. According to Broch, the basic principle of humanity must permeate all aspects of justice system governing state and citizens alike:

Die gewünschte Totalwirkung des Grundprinzipes der Humanität beschränkt sich nicht auf das Verhältnis des Staates zum Bürger und des Bürgers zum Staate, sondern muß sich in einer Durchtränkung des gesamten Rechts-Organes vollziehen, d.h. in einer organischen Gesetzesgewalt, welche das gesamte juristisch erfaßbare und faßbare Verhalten der Bürger untereinander in ihrer Eigenschaft als konkrete Personen regelt.⁵²⁸

The crux of Broch's total system is the protection of human rights at every level of society and government, but beyond that, his conception of "totale Demokratie" is light on specifics. As Patrick Eiden-Offe notes in his study *Das Reich der Demokratie*.

Hermann Brochs "Der Tod des Vergil", despite repeated revision and refinement, Broch never manages to establish a firm definition of the "totale Demokratie" that could be used in a practical political theory:

Broch [versucht] mit beträchtlichem Aufwand immer wieder [...], die Formel von der "totalen Demokratie" theoretisch zu präzisieren und in ihrer praktischen Ausrichtung zu bestimmen. Dem Gewicht, das Broch der "totalen Demokratie" beimisst, steht ein augenfälliger Mangel an konkreter Bestimmung gegenüber. [...] Es ist Broch in der Folge selbst nicht gelungen, den "Slogan" der "totalen Demokratie" in haltbare Begriffe einer politischen Theorie umzumünzen.⁵²⁹

Like the rest of the *Massenwahntheorie*, Broch's "totale Demokratie" remains abstract and theoretical, unable to adequately bridge the gap between conception and practical application. In his essay "Brochs demokratie- und völkerbundtheoretische Schriften," law professor Wolfgang Graf Vitzthum negatively describes Broch's political

⁵²⁸ Broch, "Diktatur der Humanität," 26-27.

⁵²⁹ Patrick Eiden-Offe, *Das Reich der Demokratie. Hermann Brochs Der Tod des Vergil* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2011) 20-21.

theory as a “Scheitern des Dichters im Staat.”⁵³⁰ Despite Broch’s inadequate solutions to the political problems of his time, Vitzthum nevertheless praises his tireless engagement for democracy and human rights as a “Modell für Verantwortungsbereitschaft und Würde des Intellektuellen in einer ‘zerfallenden Welt’.”⁵³¹ This same praise can be extended to the *Massenwahntheorie* project as well.

The *Massenwahntheorie*, as mentioned at the outset of this chapter, was never completed during Broch’s lifetime. The initial proposal for a research institute found little resonance among American or exile scholars, and as a result, no institute was ever founded according to Broch’s model. Broch received grants from the Rockefeller Foundation (May 1, 1942 – April 30, 1943, and May 1, 1943 – December 31, 1944) and the Bollingen Foundation (January 1, 1945 – June 30, 1947) to further his research on mass hysteria, but Broch was unable to complete and publish his theory according to the timeline of either foundation. This is unsurprising when one considers the scope of Broch’s undertaking. The *Massenwahntheorie* was planned as a “Gesamttheorie,” which strove toward a degree of totality far greater than a limited theory of mass psychology. As Joseph Strelka notes, in Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie* “geht es ihm [...] um eine Totalitäts-Schau, die den gesamten Menschen und das Gesamtmenschliche einbezieht von den animalischen Schichten bis hinauf zu den metaphysischen.”⁵³² Robert G. Weigel also comments on Broch’s all-encompassing theoretical model, stating that Broch’s goal in the *Massenwahntheorie* “ist ja stets die Gesamterfassung aller Aspekte und Seinspartikel

⁵³⁰ Wolfgang Graf Vitzthum, “Brochs demokratie- und völkerbundtheoretische Schriften,” *Hermann Broch*, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986) 290.

⁵³¹ Vitzthum 291.

⁵³² Joseph Strelka, “Hermann Brochs Modell einer umfassenden Massenpsychologie,” *Romanstruktur und Menschenrecht bei Hermann Broch*, ed. Hartmut Steinecke and Joseph Strelka (Bern: Peter Lang, 1990) 61.

des menschlichen Lebens.”⁵³³ Any theory that attempts to incorporate and model every aspect of human life will necessarily be confronted by the inherent complexity of life and the overwhelming amount of information that constitutes human knowledge of the world. Even an expert in a given field—as broad as his or her knowledge may be—is only able to oversee a small fraction of the totality of human knowledge, as Bernard Fetz explains: “Die Komplexität modernen Lebens macht es sogar für den Wissenschaftler, denjenigen, der an der Spitze des Fortschritts steht, unmöglich, alles zu überschauen [...]”⁵³⁴

Ultimately, despite his dedication to the project, Broch was unable to complete his theoretical model of mass psychology. During his American exile, Broch was constantly overworked,⁵³⁵ torn between literary work, social engagement aiding other European exiles, and his massive theoretical project. Even without these competing demands on Broch’s time and energy, it is difficult to see how he would have completed an undertaking that was so complex, even he thought it was likely unfeasible.⁵³⁶

The *Massenwahntheorie*, fragmentary though it is, stands as a monument to Broch’s dedication to humanity and the protection thereof. Following his own epistemology, Broch felt that increased knowledge of the world led to the understanding, “daß niemand sich völlig der menschlichen Gemeinschaft zu entlösen vermag und jeder dem Nebenmenschen verbunden und verpflichtet bleibt, ein demütig Dienender an der Menschheit, der er angehört.”⁵³⁷ Convinced of his ethical duty to serve his fellow man, Broch explored the depths of the human psyche in order to understand and confront mass

⁵³³ Robert G. Weigel, *Zur geistigen Einheit von Hermann Brochs Werk* (Tübingen: Francke, 1994) 103.

⁵³⁴ Bernhard Fetz, “Hermann Broch: *Die Verzauberung*. Zum Verhältnis von dichterischer Praxis und Massenwahntheorie,” *German Life and Letters* 40 (1987): 206.

⁵³⁵ Wolfgang Rothe cites Broch’s own claims that he generally worked 17 to 18 hours a day and only slept a meager five hours. Rothe, “Einleitung,” in: Hermann Broch, *Gesammelte Werke. Massenpsychologie*, ed. Wolfgang Rothe (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1959) 7.

⁵³⁶ Broch, “Brief an Trude Geiringer vom 4.5.1939,” *Briefe 1938-1945*, 77.

⁵³⁷ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 173.

hysteria, which threatened to destroy humanity and the culture it had built. Broch's intentions in creating the *Massenwahntheorie* were certainly laudable, and the entire enterprise is consistent with his conviction that the intellectual should become actively engaged in times of political turmoil. Ultimately, though, Broch's unwillingness or inability to engage with the mass as a physical entity in his theoretical model of mass hysteria leaves the phenomenon as vague and inscrutable after reading the *Massenwahntheorie* as when one began.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has followed the elusive trail of the concept of the mass through Broch's body of work, looking for clues to better understand what this phenomenon is or might be. From the first encounter with the mass in "Die Straße" to the *Massenwahntheorie* and Broch's final novel *Die Verzauberung*, the one constant in Broch's representation is that the mass is always opposed to the individual. In his fiction, the mass is never Broch's main concern; it exists to threaten the security (physical and psychological) of a single person. Channeling his initial fear and disgust from "Die Straße," Broch confronts individual characters with increasingly violent and ecstatic masses. In *Die Schlafwandler*, the protagonist Esch is first surrounded by the disembodied sound of the mass, and later witnesses a crowd dispersed before it erupts into violence against the police. Broch's play *Die Entsöhnung* presents the mass as an off-stage presence, unseen but capable of murdering Hügli's infant son. Katharine Hieck, the mother of the protagonist in *Die Unbekannte Größe*, encompassed by screaming spectators, watches in horror as her younger son Otto loses himself in the ecstatic experience of a soccer match. The titular Vergil passes over an infernal landscape of fuming bodies on his path to death. In each of these literary representations, Broch adheres to a strict distinction between the mass and the individual.

This clear distinction dissolves in the two works in Broch's oeuvre that are most concerned with the mass, namely *Die Verzauberung* and the *Massenwahntheorie*. In the former, Broch's country doctor—a learned and reasonable man—falls victim to the alluring machinations of Marius Ratti, a leader in the vein of the "dämonischer

Demagoge.” The climactic scene of the sacrifice/murder of Irmgard Milan provides the one glimpse of immersion in the mass in Broch’s work. And yet, even as the doctor slips into the twilight state of the mass, the reader remains within a singular mind. This fact is less surprising after examining Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie*, where the notion of a group mind is dismissed out of hand, and the individual mind is presented as the only legitimate object of psychological inquiry. Moving through Broch’s literary works, one has the impression that the mass is assuming an increasingly central position in the narrative, or at least in the depicted space. However, regardless of the size or centrality of the mass, the individual is always larger. The only character to actually become part of the mass, *Die Verzauberung*’s doctor, can only express the experience after the fact, with the added clarity of reflection.

The key to the persistent problem of mass representation in Broch’s work appears to be one of conception. The *Massenwahntheorie* makes clear that Broch is unable or unwilling to conceive the existence of the mass as a physical entity, and certainly not as a psychological entity. Beyond that, there is a problem of literary conception underlying the proposed representation of the mass. As mentioned above, Broch’s scenes of mass experience are always described from an individual perspective. What would it mean, then, to represent the mass from the perspective of an individual absorbed in the mass, essentially from a mass perspective? Would one employ a polyphony or cacophony of voices? Would those voices be physical, mental, or both? The problem is, as Annette Graczyk explains in *Die Masse als Erzählproblem*, the representation of simultaneity: “die literarische Vergegenwärtigung von Gleichzeitigkeit.”⁵³⁸ Looking past formal

⁵³⁸ Graczyk 53.

questions, the notion of mass representation is difficult to conceive, for the writer as well as the reader.

In an analysis of the *Massenwahntheorie*, after extensive engagement with Broch's numerous theoretical concepts, one is forced to ask the seemingly obvious question, "What is 'Masse'?" Every reader arrives at Broch's theory with some preconceived idea of what a mass is, likely some version of the definitions presented here in Chapter II. Broch's theory, though, which purports to dissect and explain an aberrant psychological state that is "massenmäßig orientiert,"⁵³⁹ cannot hope to understand its subject without first establishing the qualities and behaviors of the mass, as well as the preconditions that cause its formation.

The Search for the Mass as the Search for Totality

As I have demonstrated, Hermann Broch's life and work are marked by an ever-present drive toward totality. Over the course of his lifetime, this drive was channeled in many directions, from science to philosophy, and from literature to politics. The common denominator in all of Broch's undertakings was the pursuit of absolutes. Broch recognized, though, that this was a doomed exercise. There are always limits in the actual world, and human endeavors are asymptotic: they may approach absolution, but never reach it. And yet the pursuit of absolute knowledge and understanding, though it is impossible for mortal man to achieve, is the venerable duty of every individual, the "prometheische Pflicht."⁵⁴⁰ Broch took this duty quite seriously, and his body of work is a testament to his constant efforts to attain totality across a variety of fields.

⁵³⁹ Broch, "Vorschlag," 11.

⁵⁴⁰ Broch, *Massenwahntheorie*, 125.

This dissertation has followed Broch's paths through philosophy, literature, and politics as he attempted to identify, analyze, and confront what he perceived to be the great plague of his time: mass hysteria.⁵⁴¹ As the gravity of the European situation—and particularly the fate of Europe's Jewish population, to which Broch belonged—became apparent during the 1930s, Broch declared the creation of literature an illegitimate act, one incapable of combating the spread of mass hysteria and the violence it would bring. In a letter to Austrian author Friedrich Torberg from January 12, 1943, Broch expressed his dissatisfaction with writing (the newly completed *Tod des Vergil*) and his ardent conviction that a theory must be created and enacted to protect the world from mass hysteria:

nachdem ich den unlesbaren, unveröffentlichbaren und unübersetzbaren Vergil fertiggestellt habe [...], habe ich das Geschichtel-Erzählen aufgegeben, weil mir davor graust. Sie wissen, daß ich seit Hitler in zunehmendem Maße gegen diese Tätigkeit gewesen bin, überzeugt, daß es für unsere Generation, also die meine, die Ihre und wohl auch für die nächste keine andere Aufgabe als die der Pest-Bekämpfung gibt. [...] Und ich konnte mir sogar eine recht handfeste Theorie dazu konstruieren, die sogar stimmt, weil bekanntlich jede Theorie stimmen muß, denn die Historie besteht aus Umlügungen. Aber wenn es daran geht, eine Theorie an der Praxis zu erproben, also nicht an der Vergangenheit, sondern an der Zukunft, so gibt es keinen Schwindel: und hier heißt diese Praxis nichts anderes als Seuchenbekämpfung, also "Normal-Machung" des politischen Willens. Und an dieser Arbeit bin ich mit all meiner viel zu schwachen Kraft.⁵⁴²

Broch expended enormous effort working on the *Massenwahntheorie*, leaving a significant amount of material behind after his death, but never completing a workable theoretical model of mass hysteria or of mass behavior. Admittedly, Broch was working under great stress during his exile period, torn in different directions by the necessary production of marketable books, the demands of friends and asylum seekers, and the

⁵⁴¹ Broch repeatedly uses the terms "Pest," "psychische Seuche," and "Weltseuche" to refer to mass hysteria: "Brief an Stefan Zweig vom 11.9.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 28; "Brief an Willa Muir vom 3.12.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 38; "Brief an Stephen Hudson vom 9.12.1938," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 49.

⁵⁴² Broch, "Brief an Friedrich Torberg vom 12.1.1943," *Briefe 1938-1945*, 307.

deadlines imposed by publishers and research foundations. An analysis of the mass theory that Broch composed during his lifetime suggests, though, by virtue of its extreme abstraction, that even if Broch had managed to complete his theory, it would likely have proven ineffective as a practical tool against mass hysteria. As Barnouw notes, Broch's "Abstraktion des Menschen [hat] mit den realen Problemen der sozialen menschlichen Existenz nichts mehr zu tun."⁵⁴³ Broch's *Massenwahntheorie* is disconnected from physical reality, and as such it offers little that could be directly applied to concrete political or social situations.

Regardless of the theory's shortcomings, its creation was consistent with Broch's dedication to attaining total understanding of the world, and using that understanding to help his fellow man. Broch's *Massenwahntheorie* and his literary works constitute two distinct paths toward the same end: a deep and comprehensive understanding of the individual in its relationship to the mass. Given Broch's insistence on the centrality of the individual and the individual consciousness, the mass appears to be a psychological correlate to death in Broch's value theory and epistemology. There, death is the ultimate limiting factor, both the "Unwert an sich,"⁵⁴⁴—the polar opposite of man's lifelong effort to construct value—and the final piece of man's knowledge of the world. Death cannot be understood by the living, and thus any attempt at total understanding must remain incomplete while the individual still lives. Similarly, if cognition can only occur within the individual mind, then the mass would be a comparable limit, impassable without losing the capacity for conceiving and understanding the experience. This may serve to explain why the mass is a constant, but often impalpable figure in Broch's work. In the

⁵⁴³ Barnouw, "Massenpsychologie," 67.

⁵⁴⁴ Broch, "Das Böse im Wertsystem der Kunst," *Schriften zur Literatur*, KW 9/2, ed. Paul Michael Lützel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1975) 125.

end, Broch's efforts at combating mass hysteria faltered exactly where he recognized that such efforts might: in the formulation and representation of his subject, the mass. It seems appropriate to end with Broch's own warning to scholars of mass psychology, a warning that foreshadows the essential hurdle to his battle with the mass: "der bloße Wunsch nach Bekämpfung von Massenwahnphänomenen genügt noch nicht, um diese aus dem Gestaltlosen zur Gestalt zu bringen, und ohne diese wohldefinierte Gestalt, ohne wohlbegrenztes Arbeitsgebiet gibt es auch kein Arbeitsprogramm."⁵⁴⁵ The desire for action alone will never suffice; one needs a plan to give form to the formless.

⁵⁴⁵ Broch, "Vorschlag," 12.

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