The Bachofens had made their way into the Basel elite at a relatively late date. The Burckhardts, citizens since the early 1500s, were already, by the year 1600, among the richest and most influential families in the state. They had come to Basel in the second major wave of immigration, at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, just as the city was settling into its new role as an independent, commercial city-state in the Swiss Confederation. More recent arrivals than the oldest families—the Iselins, the Falkners, the Faesch—they preceded the great influx of religious refugees—the Saracins, the Socins, the Bernoullis. Having started out in a modest way as haberdashers, the Burckhardts were soon trading in silk cloth in every part of Europe and had become members not only of the Krämerzunft or tradesmen's guild but of the powerful merchants' guild "zum Schlüssel." Simultaneously, they advanced to political prominence. From 1655 to 1798 there was not a year when one of the two Bürgermeisters of Basel was not a Burckhardt or the husband of a Burckhardt. Many established themselves in various foreign capitals and ports and some attained high rank in the service of foreign princes. By the mid-eighteenth century one of the most distinguished of the Iselins confided to his diary the wish that "Heaven would deliver us from these Medicis!"

The large and expanding Burckhardt clan was not only active in business and in government, it also provided the University of Basel with an impressive contingent of professors. Ten times, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Burckhardts occupied chairs of law, theology, eloquence, rhetoric, logic, ethics, and mathematics. Before 1700, on the other hand, they seem not to have played much of a role in the ministry, perhaps because they were too preoccupied with amassing wealth and influence, or because they shared the coolness of some other city families like the Amerbachs and the Iselins to the Reformed church. By the time of Jacob Burckhardt's birth in 1818 they had made up for this. The historian's grandfather, Johann Rudolf (1738–1820), had been chief minister of St. Peter's Church, one of the principal churches of the
city, and had been active in both Christian and Enlightenment philanthropic causes. He had helped to found the Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft and the Christentumsmission, from which the celebrated Basel Mission was to emerge in 1815. His son Jacob, the historian’s father, rose to become the chief minister or Antistes of the state church after studying at Heidelberg, where he was close to men as varied in their outlook as Jung-Stilling, the leader of the Pietist movement, Daub, a professor of theology who tried to reconcile Kantian philosophy and orthodox theology, and Creuzer, the great scholar of classical mythology, whose teaching made such an impression on the elder Jacob Burckhardt that he almost abandoned theology for classical history and philology. According to the testimony of one of his nephews, Antistes Burckhardt was “neither a Rationalist nor a Pietist, but a simple, solid Bible Christian, knowledgeable in history and in art, and in general broadly cultivated.” Around 1780, the author of Athenae Rauricæ, a history of the University of Basel, could quite properly describe the Burckharts as “gens amplissima et virorum de Republica, Ecclesia et Academia nostra praecile meritorum feraeissima.” As Werner Kaege noted in his rich biography of Jacob Burckhardt, “To write the history of the family in the seventeenth and eighteenth century would be equivalent to writing the history of the city of Basel.”

On his mother’s side, the historian belonged to a well-to-do and respected family that still had close links with the ordinary guildsmen of Basel. The Schorndorffs had settled in Basel before the Burckharts. They had been tailors, cooper, furriers, and then innkeepers. In the mid-seventeenth century Hans Schorndorf, innkeeper at the “Stork,” was elected a Ratsherr, married the daughter of Bürgermeister Johann Rudolf Wettstein, who was to play an important role at the Peace of Westphalia, and acquired the inn known as “zum Wilden Mann” on the Freie Strasse, in the heart of the city, where he was host to numerous captains and dignitaries during the Thirty Years’ War. Between the two of them, Antistes Jacob Burckhardt and his wife Susanna Schorndorff were connected with almost all the families in the Basel elite, including even the legendary Amerbachs and Frobeniuses. At the same time, like so many Basel families, they were descended from artisans and small traders in Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands. These people, in sum, were at once thoroughgoing Baselers, products of the peculiar social, political, religious, and commercial culture of their native city, and in their way, more cosmopolitan and European than many citizens of much larger nations.

Though his father did not belong to the wealthiest branch of the Burckhardt family and, as a minister, did not himself possess great wealth, there was nothing narrow about the circumstances of Jacob Burckhardt’s upbringing. He was familiar with the milieu of business and international trade from his earliest years and there was virtually no time when he was not fully aware of the larger world beyond the frontiers of the city-state and the precincts of the Cathedral
and the University. As a child he regularly spent part of the summer at Mayenfels, in the Basel countryside, where his uncle Johann Lucas Burckhardt had acquired a fine eighteenth-century country house. This older brother of his father's had developed trade connections with Russia, settled there, and been appointed Swiss consul in Moscow. At the time of Napoleon's continental blockade, he had amassed a fortune—like other Basel merchants—by smuggling goods to and from England. His wife, the so-called Moskowiterin, had adopted two Russian children saved from the burning of Moscow and it was the generosity she hired to take care of these children, a young woman from Königsberg in East Prussia, who had herself been orphaned at the time of the Napoleonic occupation of that city, that pastor and Antistes-to-be Burckhardt chose as his second wife after the premature death of Susanna Schorndorff in 1830.

Both the Russian and the business connections were kept up, moreover, by Jacob Burckhardt's younger brother Lucas Gottlieb, whom the Antistes and his wife had considered the brightest of their children and whom, in the Basel tradition, they had therefore groomed for a business career. Gottlieb's career followed the typical path of the Basel merchant patrician. He learned French in French-speaking Switzerland, was apprenticed to the firm of Vischer and Co. in Basel, and was then attached to companies in northern Italy and England that had business links with Basel in order to round out his training. At the age of twenty-two he left for Moscow to help run his uncle's business there. A few years later he returned to Basel to marry Laura Alioth, whose parents owned a large silk spinning mill (Florettspinnerei) in the adjacent village of Arlesheim. Gottlieb immediately entered his father-in-law's well-established firm as a partner and served as its technical director. At the age of fifty, after twenty-eight years in business, he was elected to the Senate and made a member of the Cabinet, where he specialized in educational matters. In 1874 he became president of the Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft. An educated and cultivated man, Gottlieb Burckhardt remained close to his brother Jacob all his life. When Burckhardt later wrote about the humanist education and interests of the Florentine merchants, Basel and his own brother were assuredly not far from his mind. His "aestheticism" was always moderated by familiarity with practical affairs and knowledge of the way these affected the lives of his relatives and friends in the small world of the Basel elite. In 1883, for instance, that world was shaken by the "Riesenbankrott" ("colossal bankruptcy") of the firm of Leonard Paravicini. Burckhardt wrote at length to another member of the elite who was out of town, describing how the calamitous consequences of the event had spread outwards from the three principals involved—"Manni" (Emanuel) Burckhardt-Burckhardt, Bürgermeister Carl Felix Burckhardt-Sarasin, and "Manni" Paravicini—to many of their close relatives. Bürgermeister Burckhardt-Sarasin was on the point of declaring insolvency; his wife, a Sarasin, had lost a million; Frau Heusler-Wegner had lost everything except her
house, as had Manni Burckhardt-Burckhardt’s mother-in-law, old Frau Burckhardt on the St. Albanvorstadt. The losses of many creditors, both companies and individuals, were measured in the hundreds. A member of the Vischer family whose daughter had just married Burckhardt-Sarasin’s son had felt obliged to resign from his position and had agreed to be reinstated only at the insistence of the board of his company. Burckhardt himself had had to go through the sumptuous home of one of the firm’s directors in order to put a value on the works of art in it.7

Jacob Burckhardt was born on May 25, 1818. His education was almost identical to Bachofen’s: Herr Munzinger’s elementary school (1821–1824), the Basel Gymnasium (1826–1833), and the Pädagogium (1833–1836).8 His teachers were essentially the same as Bachofen’s: Vinet in French, Gerlach in Latin, Vischer in Greek, Wackernagel in German, Brommel in history, J. R. Merian in mathematics. To these should be added the sometime carbonaro Luigi Picchioni, the teacher of Italian, to whom the historian dedicated the second edition of The Civilization of the Renaissance. Because of his participation in various plots to free Lombardy from Austrian rule in the years following the Congress of Vienna, Picchioni had found himself under sentence of death and in 1821 had fled to Switzerland. Five years later he succeeded in obtaining a lectureship in Italian language and literature at Basel, where he settled down peacefully, respecting a commitment to steer clear of further subversive activity and taking no part in the 1830 revolutions, as a report of the University Governing Board noted with satisfaction in 1834.9 But in 1848 his old revolutionary enthusiasm flared up, and while Burckhardt took over his classes, he left to take part in the liberation movement in Lombardy. On the collapse of the uprising against the Austrians, he returned to Basel and devoted himself from then on to his teaching and to a series of studies of Dante on which he may have received some help from his former pupil. Jacob Burckhardt loved Picchioni. Even after he himself had veered away from the liberal convictions of his student days, he continued to admire the warmth and nobility of his old teacher’s dedication to liberty. Above all, he loved him for his human qualities, his lack of bitterness, and his ability to stay “young and full of mischief” after sixty years of exile and disappointment. “A German, whose youthful illusions have collapsed, easily becomes morose and hard to bear; but it is precisely in such circumstances that the Latin becomes truly engaging,” Burckhardt observed of Picchioni to a friend.10

The remark highlights an aspect of Burckhardt’s personality that distinguishes him from Bachofen. Both men shared, to a surprising degree, the same judgment of their own time, both had the legendary wicked tongue of the Baselers, but Burckhardt was determined never to allow himself to become gloomy or embittered, always to retain the inner freedom and serenity, the sociability and the capacity for artistic and intellectual enjoyment that he admired in Picchioni. The early death of the exact date (17 March) and produced in him an iner- tency of everything earthly. He inherited from his mother in contrast, might have been contrasted with the Latin. It is increasingly cranky and remained faithfully attached to the lare e carissimo amico of how to turn even the bitter Burckhardt was to have himself.

After the Pädagogium, Switzerland, in Burckhardt’s case, better-off Basel families, a French. Burckhardt appeared to be all the necessary family in Basel. “I realize very well,” he told a Freiburg friend that at that point he may act as a theology graduate and pastoral position in Basel.

In Neuchâtel, Burckhardt was a distinguished citizen of the town. He had started out as a classics student. He had traveled in Sweden and France, just before the July Revolution of 1830 by Cousin, de Garth, Count Pourtales, the legal scholar, and had immigrated from Basle (then Nantes), and in this milieu was a key figure: Cousin, de Garth, who had written Flore du Jura, published in 1837, and was a member and variety of insects. But it had been driven to its Clouds with his work on the insect in England, seems to have been.

During his stay in Neuchâtel, he turned to classical texts and collected castrenses” (no doubt an allusion to the 17th-century Roman scholar) and an idea of his interests at the
mother-in-law, old Frau Burckhardt for many creditors, both companies of thousands. A member of Burckhardt-Sarasin's five had agreed to be reinstated only Burckhardt himself had to firm's directors in order to put a

his education was almost identical—school (1821–1824), the Basel (1833–1836). His teachers were Schinz, Gerlach in Latin, Vischer in history, J. R. Merian in mathematics. Luigi Picchioni, the edited the second edition of The participation in various plots to following the Congress of Vienna was the face of death and in 1821 had settled down peacefully, subversive activity and taking the University Governing Board old revolutionary enthusiasm passions, he left to take part in the cause of the uprising against the himself from then on to his teach his he may have received some moved Picchioni. Even after he attentions of his student days, he his old teacher’s dedication to equalities, his lack of bitterness, after sixty years of exile and attentions have collapsed, easily believe in such circumstances that the loved of Picchioni to a friend. Burckhardt’s personality that distinguish a surprising degree, the same avaricious wicked tongue of the Bas know himself to become gloomy and serenity, the sociability statement that he admired in Pic

chioni. The early death of his mother, he said of himself much later, recalling the exact date (17 March 1830), “caused him his first experience of deep pain and produced in him, very early in life, a keen sense of the fragility and uncertainty of everything earthly, but at the same time his temperament (doubtless inherited from his mother) was naturally disposed to joynessness.” Bachofen, in contrast, might have been the model of the German whom Burckhardt contrasted with the Latin. It seems appropriate that of all his teachers it was to the increasingly cranky and disenchanted German idealist Gerlach that Bachofen remained faithfully attached, while Burckhardt was until the end the “particolar e carissimo amico” of the lively and amiable Italian ex-carbonaro who knew how to turn even the bitterness of exile to sweetness. It was an art for which Burckhardt was to have a special appreciation, since he had to acquire it himself.

After the Pedagogy, there followed the stint in French-speaking Switzerland, in Burckhardt’s case at Neuchâtel, that was normal for the children of better-off Basel families, who were expected to have a good command of French. Burckhardt appears to have thought that knowledge of French would be all the more necessary for him as he was unlikely to be able to make a career in Basel. “I realize very well that there are not many prospects for me in Basel,” he told a Freiburg friend and mentor in 1836—an indication, incidentally, that at that point he may already have had doubts about entering the ministry, since as a theology graduate he would probably have had no trouble finding a pastoral position in Basel.

In Neuchâtel, Burckhardt lodged with Charles-Henri Godet, a distinguished citizen of the town and a man of learning and worldly experience. Godet had started out as a classical scholar and tutor to various foreign dignitaries. He had traveled in Sweden, Poland, Russia, the Crimea, and the Caucasus. In France, just before the July Revolution, he had been tutor to the family of Count Poirtalès, the legal scholar (a relative of the prominent Neuchâtel family that had immigrated from France at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes), and in this milieu he had met some of the leading lights of Paris at the time: Cousin, de Gérando, Guizot, Villemain, Alexander von Humboldt. An ardent botanist, Godet had collected over twelve thousand specimens (his Flore du Jura, published in 1852, remains a classic), as well as an unusual number and variety of insects. He still retained enough Greek to go through Aristophanes’ Clouds with his young charge. Godet’s sister, who had been a governess in England, seems to have taught Burckhardt some English.

During his stay in Neuchâtel, Burckhardt compiled a collection of excerpts from classical texts and commentaries to which he gave the title “Notae Novocastrenses” (no doubt an allusion to the Notae Atticae of Aulus Gellius, a second-century Roman studying in Athens). From this collection it is possible to glean an idea of his interests at the time. These turn out to have been remarkably
similar to those of his fellow student at the Pädagogium, Bachofen. Many of the excerpts concern the world of ancient myth, ritual, festivals, and sacrifices. For instance, there were transcriptions of many of the eighty or so Hellenistic poems known as the Orphic hymns—hymns to Dionysus, Kronos, Aphrodite, Pan, and so on—which had been made popular by the romantic interpretation of myth and the theories of comparative religion Burckhardt had already encountered or was about to encounter in Basel in the lectures of Gerlach, De Wette, and Johann Georg Müller. Excerpts from and commentaries on the 
Phaedo and on Sophocles' 
Oedipus at Colonus focus on the theme of death and the immortality of the soul and show Burckhardt struggling with traditional Christian dogma on these topics and rejecting the claim that there is no eternal life except through Christ.15 Later, in 1851, The Age of Constantine the Great was to bear traces of this preoccupation with ancient myth and religious symbolism.

Burckhardt up to this point had shown himself to be a gifted youngster, with a broad range of interests. He knew Latin and Greek well and was soon to add some knowledge of Hebrew, spoke French and Italian fluently, and also had some English. Like many people of his class in Basel, and in the German-speaking countries as a whole, he had a fair musical education and had learned to draw competently. He found it as natural to compose music as to play or sing it, to write poems as to read them, and to sketch scenes and buildings as to look at them. By the age of fifteen he had bound together a number of his musical compositions into a sort of musical sketchbook, on the cover of which he inscribed with naive pride "Composizioni di Giacomo Burcardo." They included a choral, "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden" and a "Dies Irae" for voices and piano-forte. Right into the 1840s Burckhardt continued to add to this little collection, the compositions becoming gradually more secular in tone and inspiration. A "Salve Regina" of 1834 and a "Stabat Mater" of 1835 were followed by settings of choruses from Schiller's Die Braut von Messina in 1836–1837, of Goethe's "Trost in Tränen," of "Des Magdleins Klage" from Schiller's Wallenstein, for voice and piano-forte in 1837–1838, and of the concluding stanza of Goethe's famous poem "Die Braut von Corinth," with its striking final line, "Eilen wir den alten Göttern zu" ("Let us hasten back to the old Gods")—the last named having been composed some time between the young Baseler's first foray into Italy in 1837 and his first real journey through the peninsula in 1838.

Along with these musical compositions, Burckhardt had compiled a collection of sketches of antiquities, ranging from the gargoyles of Basel's Cathedral to items in the Cathedral treasure and plans of Greek and Roman theaters and private homes; these were placed in a volume to which he gave the title Altarbücher. In addition, he took his sketchbook with him on his travels through Switzerland and Italy and brought back drawings of landscapes, buildings, and city views—a practice he continued for decades to come in his travels in Germany and Italy and on which he was to rely when he was working on The

Cicerone: An Introduction he never imagined he imagined for a while that his eye to see and encourage.

Naturally, Burckhardt's father had done before the volume on which he wrote the transitoriness of every immortality of art (poetry) theme. Some of them in "After Judgment Day" he had written in the black abyss like strewn with corpses. It was stated "express" original though Burckhardt's literary reading partly exercises through works of admired masters. The testimony of inner experience shaped largely by literature, the concerns of the young not only in his explicit statement of the seventeen-years experience from what he had written at the time of his sketches, particular experience the heights above Pisa, 22 work of history for the last object of which is to praise self-awareness of the individual spirit of the past for eternity. He took some time to be convinced he regarded history as "the historical novella form of the time by no means unusual.

Shortly before his departure he was initiated into the world of the Freiburg theologian and the very popular in Protestant office of the Curia, of eternal volean gaged him to do some copy
Cicerone: An Introduction to the Enjoyment of the Art Works of Italy. No doubt he never imagined he might contribute anything original as an artist—as he imagined for a while that he might be a poet—but drawing lessons had taught his eye to see and encouraged his interest in art and art history.

Naturally, Burckhardt had also tried his hand at poetic composition, as his father had done before him—and once again gathering the pieces together in a volume on which he wrote the title "Gedichte." The themes are romantic: death, the transitoriness of everything earthly, providence and the meaning of life, the immortality of art (poems on Tasso and Dante), occasionally the "carpe diem" theme. Some of them have a surprising power, like "Nach dem Weltgericht" ("After Judgment Day") of 1835, in which the poet evokes the planets crashing into nothingness: Sirius itself, its light extinguished, rolling through the darkness of space until it strikes and crushes the sun; the earth plunging headlong into the black abyss like a burned out Aetna or a horrifying, deserted field strewn with corpses. It would be hazardous to assume that these juvenile works express original thoughts and feelings that were formed independently of Burckhardt's literary reading. In addition, like all such compositions, they were partly exercises through which the writer hoped to appropriate the techniques of admired masters. The young student's poetic productions can be taken as testimony of inner experience only in the sense that that inner experience was itself shaped largely by literature. There seems little doubt, however, that some of the concerns of the young poet remained alive in the mature historian, and not only in his explicit statements. Just as the work of poetry itself was an attempt by the seventeen-year-old to salvage what is essential in a feeling or an experience from what he described as the "dark abyss"—subsequent poems, written at the time of his journey to Italy in 1838, aimed to capture, like sketches, particular experiences of time and place ("To the poet Platen, from the heights above Pisa, 22nd July 1838," "Palazzo Doria," "Fiesole")—so the work of history for the later historian was not simply a scholarly investigation, the object of which is to produce knowledge, or even a means of enhancing the self-awareness of the individual in history, but an instrument for saving the spirit of the past for eternal life. We should not be surprised that Burckhardt took some time to be convinced that poetry was not his true vocation or that he regarded history as "the highest form of poetry." Several experiments with the historical novella form ("Der schwarze Tod," "Nero") point to an early but at the time by no means unusual interest in combining history and literary art.

Shortly before his departure for Neuchâtel, Burckhardt had already become initiated into the world of historical research. An acquaintance of his father's, the Freiburg theologian and historian Heinrich Schreiber—a dissident Catholic very popular in Protestant circles because of his questioning of the authority of the Curia, of eternal vows, and of the celibacy of the priesthood—had engaged him to do some copying and bibliographical and archival research in the
Basel libraries, in connection with a projected biography of Glarean. With some assistance from Gerlach and his father, the young Burckhardt supplied the Freiburg scholar with careful and critical summaries of the material he was interested in, winning both an acknowledgment (the first public mention of Burckhardt's name) in the final published work and his enduring friendship. On his side, in gratitude to Schreiber for his guidance and encouragement, Burckhardt later dedicated to him the first edition of *The Age of Constantine the Great*.

If Bachofen wavered for several years between law and classical philology, unable to decide between two disciplines that were closely related in his mind, Burckhardt hesitated between theology and history. In those early decades of the nineteenth century, when theologians like De Wette and Hagenbach tried to do justice both to the demands of modern historical method and to those of faith, while historians like Ranke believed that the nations of the earth are "ideas of God," the two disciplines were in practice not so far apart. Out of deference to his father, Burckhardt first committed himself to theology when he matriculated at the University of Basel in 1837. But that did not yet mean giving up history and literature. In addition to the lectures of the theology professors—Hagenbach, De Wette, and Johann Georg Müller—Burckhardt attended those of Wilhelm Vischer, the professor of Greek, and Wilhelm Wackernagel, the professor of German, at whose home he and several of his friends had gathered every week when they were students at the *Pädagogium*, to read poetry and discuss their own compositions.

From his copious notes on these lectures, it is possible to reconstruct what he got out of them. The notes on Wackernagel's course on "Poetics, Rhetoric, Stylistics" (1837–1838) underline the idea of an epic age, prior to the age of prose, novels, and discursive reason, and of an oral culture in which the transmission of heroic legends consolidating group identity fell to the poet, with memory and song playing a far more significant role than in later literate cultures. This romantic notion of a historical development from belief to criticism, from poetry to prose, from myth to history, from epic to romance, was to be an essential ingredient in Burckhardt's later view of history. As for Vischer's course on the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus (1839), the "basic idea," in Burckhardt's own words, was a religious one: "the insufficiency of human capacity with respect to divine Providence; every attempt of man to break out of his limits meets with rejection. The [representation of] the vain struggle of the free individual against blind fate is moral, not fatalistic. It arouses fear and compassion in the spectator but at the same time points to a reconciliation in a higher order. Only with Euripides does the accident of individual passion take the place of divine Providence." The themes addressed in the lectures Burckhardt attended on German and Greek history and literature were thus by no means unconnected with those he was to encounter in his theology classes.
the biography of Glarean. With the young Burckhardt supplied summaries of the material he was about (the first public mention of the subject) and his enduring friendship. Through guidance and encouragement, he completed the publication of The Age of Constantine

Although law and classical philology were closely related in his mind, they were not in his career. In those early decades of his life, when De Wette and Hagenbach tried to force historical method and to those of the ancient historians, the nations of the earth are close in practice not so far apart. Out of two poems he submitted himself to theology when he was 37. But that did not yet mean he attended the lectures of the theology professors. In 1837, Georg Müller—Burckhardt's professor of Greek, and Wilhelm Schlegel came to his home he and several of his friends were students at the Pädagogium, a grammar school.

It is possible to reconstruct what Burckhardt did in his course on "Poetics, Rhetoric, and History" in his epic age, prior to the age of modern culture in which the transition from the epic to the lyric fell to the poet, with a more determinate role than in later literate cultures. From belief to criticism, from the epic to romance, was to be an essential part of history. As for Vischer's "basic idea," in Burckhardt's view, the history of human capacity with regard to the individual to break out of his limits and fulfill the sense of the free spirit, it involves fear and compassion leading to reconciliation in a higher order. Individual passion take the place of religion in the lectures Burckhardt attended. Literature were thus by no means in the theology classes.
Here Hagenbach's career history offered a richly informative counterpoint to the struggle between the rationalists and the empiricists. In his account Hagenbach apparently perceived an empirical orientation of modern thought, both grammatically and historically. Hagenbach lectured largely on hard-and-cold problems—and this lesson from Vischer—that the intellectual world of the 18th century was no place for theology to the principle.

That same problem—how the philosophical reflection—was raised in Basel, as original, as well as the home of the university of Basel. In his youth Wette at Heidelberg. "He had written back to Basel, 'I do not claims that the Pentateuch, not by the Law, but which everything that was in the world was retrospectively attributed to the world, is an ironic reserve. He had said, 'The world is better suited to the mouth, stop up your ears.'" But the new theo-

The outcome of Bucke's argument is that, I may call them that), I do not consider the ministry as a means of livelihood, I want at least to be

Here Hagenbach's carefully prepared and well-honed lectures on church history offered a richly detailed introduction to the Italian Middle Ages, the struggle between the popes and the emperors, and the work of the Italian humanists. In his account of recent church history, the moderate and conciliatory Hagenbach apparently stressed the need to accept the historical and critical orientation of modern theological thought. "Scripture must be interpreted grammatically and historically," Burckhardt noted. At the same time, when Hagenbach lectured later on the early church, it became obvious to Burckhardt—and this lesson coincided with the teaching of Wackernagel and Vischer—that belief itself had paid a high price for the commitment of modern theology to the principles of historical criticism.25

That same problem—the impoverishment of religion through modern critical reflection—was raised by the lectures of De Wette, the most complex and original, as well as the best known, of Burckhardt's teachers at the University of Basel. In his youth, Antistes Burckhardt had attended some lectures by De Wette at Heidelberg. "He is giving an introduction to the Old Testament," he had written back to Basel. "But he follows a curious path. For example, he claims that the Pentateuch is not by Moses, that the writings of Solomon are not by Solomon, that Moses, David, and Solomon are collective names to which everything that was thought to be written in the spirit of one or the other was retrospectively attributed; that they are, however, authentic. The Book of Jonah, he says, is an instructive tale."26 The Antistes' son did not have his father's ironic reserve. He had no sympathy with strict orthodoxy. "Nothing in the world is better suited to laziness than orthodoxy," he declared. "If you gag your mouth, stop up your ears and put a blinder over your eyes, you can sleep peacefully." But the new theology could not restore what it had undermined. "De Wette's system grows daily more colossal before my very eyes. One has to follow him; nothing else is possible. But every day another bit of the familiar teachings of the church comes away in his hands. Today I have finally reached the conclusion that he considers the birth of Christ a myth—and so now do I. A shudder came over me when I thought of a whole series of reasons why this virtually must be so. . . . Prayer is still a possibility for me, but there is no Revelation, I now know that."27

The outcome of Burckhardt's theological studies was that he could not envisage ever serving as a minister of the church. "Given my present convictions (if I may call them that), I could never in good conscience accept a position as a minister, not at least as long as the current view of Revelation prevails, and it does not seem about to change any time soon. . . . If I have to assume responsibility, I want at least to be free to assume it for myself alone, and not for others." This did not mean that he would abandon theology, but that he could no longer consider the ministry as a career. Perhaps there was a way of avoiding classes on the doctrines of faith and Revelation and concentrating exclusively on his-
tory and language studies, for which he had both talent and inclination, he wrote his friend Johannes Riggenbach, a future professor of theology. A career as a teacher at the Gymnasium was something he might aim at. At any rate, he was not inclined to stifle his doubts: "Let us remain honest heretics."28

The fact that his father was elected Antistes precisely at this point of crisis in his religious faith obviously did not make matters simpler for Burckhardt. He decided to put off a decision concerning his theological studies. But there was no doubt that his relation to theology had become extremely problematical. Characteristically, he remained unresponsive to the efforts of his friend Alois Biedermann—a young Zurich whose father had sent him to college in Basel in order to protect him from the influence of the Zurich radicals, but who fell despite these precautions under the spell of Hegelian philosophy and evolved in later years into the leader of the liberal and reforming theological party in Switzerland—to restore his faith by philosophical argument. "I would not want to burden anybody with my doubts," Burckhardt noted, "for, as I was evidently not born to be a thinker but have a very unclear head, I would only bore every one. In any case," he added, with characteristic irony, "I see that things are not any better with those who have clear heads."29

In his own way, however, Burckhardt now distinguished between two things that he described as "Religion" and "the Bible" and that seemed irreconcilable to him. The former designated a general religiosity or sense of the mystery of life, the latter Protestant orthodoxy.30 He could no longer subscribe to orthodoxy, but he could not give up religion altogether, despite heroic attempts to achieve a kind of stoic renunciation.31 A passage from a letter to Riggenbach, in which he recalls his emotions one evening during a journey to Italy a few months earlier, gives some idea of what "Religion" meant to Burckhardt. If one disregards the fervent sentimentality to which romantic young men in the first half of the nineteenth century seem to have been especially prone, this letter affords an insight into thoughts and feelings that may not have vanished with youth but on the contrary may well have defined and continued to define Burckhardt's historical vocation.

The pain I felt that heavenly evening in Pisa will never vanish from my memory. In the beautiful green meadow in the midst of which stand the Cathedral, the Campanile, the Baptistery, and the Camposanto, I was leaning against the wall of the Seminary, sketching. As I gazed on the Byzantine arches I was led by a natural association of ideas to think of all of you [Burckhardt had made a brief but memorable foray into Italy the previous year with Riggenbach and two other close friends from Basel, his cousin Jacob Oeri and Alois Biedermann], and was soon hardly in a state to draw any more... I followed the old city wall and found my way through gardens and vineyards to the furthest downriver of the bridges over the Arno. The sky was now very dark blue, the Apennines stood out violet-hued in the evening light; the Arno was flowing by beneath my feet, and the sunset on the dome of the Duomo melted away... And Faust, full of overtones and art, as though this

The idea that the beard takes the place here, for it was understood in the end of his life. Years later, the final great chorus of Aeneid, Athene, was comparable to the Jerusalem to come. In particular offered intimations to Italy in 1838, Burckhardt's Swiss governed themselves as the Spaniards, the Empire mighty Austria; and the Queen, it all, and moss grew on a constant political turmoil and smile down from the blue.

In the spring of 1839, he gave up theology, and went to Berlin to study history. A period at the University of Berlin returned to Basel in 1843, and brought his thinking about it.

At Berlin, Burckhardt attended a couple of years of philology, Ranke's on geography. In addition, he arrived and covered "Seven" who had stood up to brilliant younger men at Gustav Droysen and Frank older than Burckhardt, already on Alexander the Great and a young student from Basel, personal.30 In contrast, Burckhardt was one of the most humane and liberal of ideas, kindness, and personal.30 In contrast, Burckhardt was personal.
beneath my feet, and I could have wept like a child. All my heroic resolve melted away... And so it happened again three days later as we watched the sunset on the dome of the Cathedral in Florence. At times I felt as if I were Faust, full of overflowing longing... Before me lay all the treasures of nature and art, as though the divinity had passed over this land like a sower."

The idea that the beauty of art and nature is a manifestation of the divine takes the place here, for Burckhardt, of his lost belief in Revelation, at least as it was understood in traditional Protestantism. And so it was to be until the end of his life. Years later, in his Cultural History of Greece, he observed that the final great chorus of Aeschylus’s Eumenides, with the interspersed speeches of Athene, was comparable in the sublimity of its inspiration to Isaiah’s vision of the Jerusalem to come. In contrast with the vanity of political events, art in particular offered intimations of eternity. In an account he wrote of his journey to Italy in 1838, Burckhardt described the Cathedral of Milan: “Here the Milanese governed themselves as a commune, then obeyed first the Sforzas, later the Spaniards, the Emperor, the French Republic and Napoleon, and finally mighty Austria; and the Cathedral looked down upon all this and lived through it all, and moss grew on it and was scraped off again, and it had to learn of the constant political turmoil from all the chattering magpies, and it continued to smile down from the blue sky as in days gone by.”

In the spring of 1839, after a candid discussion with his father, Burckhardt gave up theology, and in the fall of that year left Basel for the University of Berlin to study history. He spent four years in Berlin, interrupted only by a period at the University of Bonn in the summer of 1841. By the time he returned to Basel in 1843, he had come to terms with his loss of faith and had brought his thinking about history into sharper focus.

At Berlin, Burckhardt enrolled in several of the courses that Bachofen had attended a couple of years before him—Böckh’s course on Greek history and philology, Ranke’s on German history and on modern European history, Ritter’s on geography. In addition, he read Tacitus’s Germania with Jacob Grimm, newly arrived and covered with glory as one of the suspended “Göttingen Seven” who had stood up against “tyranny” (see chapter 6, p. 125). Among the brilliant younger men at Berlin with whom Burckhardt studied were Johann Gustav Droysen and Franz Kugler. Droysen, who at thirty-one was not much older than Burckhardt, already was celebrated as the author of important works on Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic world. He took an interest in the young student from Basel, but their relationship was entirely academic and impersonal. In contrast, Burckhardt found in Kugler, the art historian and one of the most humane and liberal minds in Prussia at the time, “a dear friend, full of ideas, kindness, and patience”; he remained close to him for the rest of Kugler’s life, as assistant, collaborator, and friend. At Bonn, Burckhardt took
Friedrich Welcker’s course on the history of ancient art and he also appears to have attended for a time a course on the history of the Rhineland by von Sybel, who was only a few years older than he and who was just starting out.

In addition, he made many friends. A bachelor all his life, Burckhardt had a genuine vocation for friendship. In adolescence, his friendships were often intense and romantic, clouded by jealousies and disappointments; in later years the private circle of his friends and regular correspondents, to whom he maintained an unswerving loyalty, seem to have constituted a surrogate community and public for the community he could no longer find in the rapidly changing world of mid-nineteenth-century Europe. The young student in Berlin and Bonn, it appears, was especially drawn to restless or rebellious and idealistic spirits, like the two Schauenburgs, Eduard and Hermann, Willibald Betsyglag, Ernst Ackermann, and above all Gottfried Kinkel, the future socialist revolutionary, then a young Privatdozent in theology at Bonn with strong interests in poetry, music, and art and the center of a merry romantic circle of young poets and radicals known as the Maikäfer. The high-spirited Baseler even managed to get himself listed in the Prussian police files as a “revolutionary” for having participated in a serenade honoring the liberal ruler of Baden. Through Kinkel’s future wife, Johanna Matthieu, the “Liebe Directrix” of Burckhardt’s correspondence, he gained entry to the salon of the fabled Bettina von Arnim in Berlin, where he sang lieder, was admired by the hostess for his “fine bass voice,” and may have met his fellow student Karl Marx.

Throughout these years, filled with ardent discussions of religion, history, politics, and philosophy, Burckhardt also continued to write poetry, to make music, to visit galleries and buildings, and to make sketches of what he saw. Kinkel—who did not have a low opinion of himself—was fascinated by the many-sided talents and accomplishments of the young man from Basel. “To visit galleries or buildings with Burckhardt was the highest form of delight,” he wrote some years later, in the early 1870s, after his somewhat theatrical engagement in revolutionary politics had caused a considerable cooling of the friendship on Burckhardt’s side. “He had a perfect understanding both of the subtlest nuances of meaning and of the sensuous appeal of art and could relate every work to the ideas and tendencies of the age in which it had been produced. Regrettably, he himself had too low an opinion of his poetic talent to get the best out of it; for as he was capable of doing and succeeding at anything he wanted, he practiced all the genres of poetic composition with unimaginable facility and taste. . . . I have never known a more gifted person. . . .”

For a while, under the influence of Droysen in particular, Burckhardt accepted the need to choose a field of scholarly specialization. “In view of the enormous expansion of the field of scholarship, one must now concentrate on one area and pursue it thoroughly,” he wrote. “Otherwise one’s efforts are completely dissipated.” But, in the end, the many-sidedness of talents and interests that had struck Kirkel an independent path as eruditissimi—as he was in his opinion, ha the Prussian state.

By the time Burckhardt But his influence at the famous. Above all, the art reconciliation of reason weight of historical reality over the foundation of many who did not accept Droysen or Böckh. “I Ranke noted later, the new line of descent by relation and a Prussian state European world.” Ranke served, was a constantly between the revolutionaries.

Such an endeavor can not been fortuitous the city’s education system too wanted to reconcile promise solutions, more tical reasons suggested Andreas Heusler—or was shortly to become editor laus of the justus milde.

In Ranke’s lectures, a nce between conserva evolutionary vision of nat evolutionary awareness of finely maintained. On the of God.” Each one is and has its specific contribu before not evil in itself, bu spirit, by its contributio provided it is “organic” from the ground”—car rian, Burckhardt noted above the mêlée, abov trained on the grand d
est that had struck Kinkel was one of the factors that led Burckhardt to follow an independent path as a historian and that distinguished him from the *vir eruditissimi*—as he was to call the German professional historians—who, in his opinion, had betrayed the freedom of history and sold it into bondage to the Prussian state.

By the time Burckhardt reached Berlin, Hegel had been dead eight years. But his influence at the University that he had helped to launch remained enormous. Above all, the ambition underlying Hegel's philosophical program—the reconciliation of reason and existence, the demands of Enlightenment and the weight of historical reality, Revolution and historical continuity—had presided over the foundation of the University of Berlin (in 1807) and was shared by many who did not accept all of Hegel's solutions, by Ranke as well as by Droysen or Böckh. "I was born in the year the Peace of Basel was signed," Ranke noted later, "that is to say in the year of the first attempt to produce a new line of descent by bringing together a France transformed by the Revolution and a Prussian state that represented the conservative principle of the European world." Ranke's intellectual enterprise, as Werner Kaegi shrewdly observed, was a constantly renewed endeavor "to establish such a Peace of Basel between the revolutionary and the conservative powers of his age." Such an endeavor could hardly have failed to appeal to Burckhardt. It had not been fortuitous that when the Basel authorities undertook to reform the city's education system they looked to Prussia for ideas and inspiration. They too wanted to reconcile change with respect for the values of tradition. Compromise solutions, moreover, had always been preferred in Basel—for the practical reasons suggested earlier—to dramatic conflicts. Even conservatives like Andreas Heusler—of whose newspaper, the *Basler Zeitung*, Burckhardt was shortly to become editor—recognized the need for concessions and were partisans of the *juste milieu* rather than dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries.

In Ranke's lectures, as Burckhardt reported them in his class notes, the balance between conservatism and acceptance of change, between Herder's prerevolutionary vision of nations as primarily cultural communities and the postrevolutionary awareness of the importance of political and state organization, was finely maintained. On the one hand, history is destiny. "The nations are ideas of God." Each one is an organic growth with its proper telos or end and each has its specific contribution to make to the totality of the divine plan. The state is therefore not evil in itself, but is justified, as the historical embodiment of a national spirit, by its contribution to the realization of the divine plan. Even revolution, provided it is "organic"—provided it "erupts unconsciously and unsanctified from the ground"—can be considered "lawful." Ranke's viewpoint as a historian, Burckhardt noted, was that of historical fate itself: the historian stands above the mêlée, above the individual tragedies and catastrophes, his eyes trained on the grand design. From Ranke's own writings it is clear that he...
dreamed of a “book of history” that would be a kind of narrative of the divine mind, a new book of revelations.” He wrote, “[W]e can know how nations achieve greatness and how they fall into ruin. The examples of the more distant past and those of recent history come together before our eyes.”

On the other hand, Ranke himself realized the dangers of such a lofty vision of the total grand design. “You look upon the bloody handiwork of war as a competition between moral energies,” he has “Karl” object to “Friedrich” in the dialogue Politisches Gespräch, dating from the early 1830s. “Beware that you do not become too sublime.” And in his lectures to Maximilian II of Bavaria in the mid-1850s he rejected, in the spirit of Herder, the progressivist idea that “each generation surpasses the preceding one, so that the latest is always the most favored and the preceding generations are only the bearers of those that follow.” Burckhardt’s notes from the lectures on “History of the Middle Ages” (1840–1841) contain a similar admonition: “No generation may take itself to be the goal of universal development.” Moreover, if Ranke’s eye was constantly trained on the grand design of universal history, he also emphasized the value of the individual phenomena in and through which we receive intimations of the universal. Ranke’s history is in that sense in line with the contemporary romantic emphasis on symbol, as opposed to neoclassical allegory. In allegory, the romantics often argued, the individual phenomenon vanishes in the general truth it signifies; the symbol, in contrast, being both a particular instantiation of an essence or universal and the sign of that essence or universal, is the locus of reconciliation of the particular and the general.

The point of departure of Droysen’s lectures was also, as Burckhardt reported it in his class notes, a fairly familiar romantic view of universal history as providential design: “History: humanity’s re-membering of itself. The daily task of humanity, to approach fulfillment of its destiny... That destiny is: to work toward freedom and full consciousness of freedom. Spirit wills to dominate the existent and turn it to its own ends. History is the remembering of that work.” Droysen presented a much stricter version of the idea of history as providential development than Ranke’s. In all historical conflicts, Droysen saw one party as the bearer of fate, the elect of Providence, and this party “subsumes” everything that preceded it. In Droysen’s lectures on Greek history, for instance, everything points toward the triumph of the Macedonians. The evils and weaknesses of Greek democracy, the internecine struggles and civil wars, and the corruption of political mores are described in great detail. Philip of Macedon thereby acquires the prestige of a hero whose imperial state constitutes the direly needed salvation of Greece. “Philip maligned by Theopompos and Demosthenes,” Burckhardt wrote in his lecture notes. “A man of fine culture, but adapted to Macedonian simplicity. He is deceptive in that he is honorable and nobody believes it. His goal is the highest and his political strategy the most grandi-

ose.” The view of history as a justification of the divine providence. As G. P. G. Prussian historical school.

Burckhardt had already prepared, in his awareness of the divine providence that idea in him. In the essay “The concept of history as a whole, the renaissance of the free play of the imagination, so “which reveals this deeper, indeed identical with the totality,” to the idea of history as colorful ideas found himself in agreement with Renan: “Our good Lord is the great one is in history.” A year after his death, committing to his historical work, it is very clearly in line with the romantic spirit to freedom. By the end of the 19th century, the concept of freedom had borne some resemblance to the progressivist ideas of moral justice and progress. “The true historical concept is the ethical concept and support of the play of historical and the idea of history as a whole, where it must first be seen right.” History, in other words, is revealed by historical science, in the sense in which the players are engaged in an ethical guise only to the extent it ensues from the fact that history is a time in ethical dress, we
The view of history as providential design in Droysen's course thus lent itself easily to a justification of conquest and tyranny, and made it possible to view Machiavellian Realpolitik as an instrument for promoting the ends of providence. As G. P. Gooch later observed in a lecture on Machiavelli, the Prussian historical school transformed Machiavelli's raison d'état into a moral law.53

Burchhardt had already been tempted by the idea that history is nothing less than the handwriting of God and the study of history the interpretation and appreciation of the divine text. The lectures of Ranke and Droysen reinforced that idea in him. In the spring of 1840, he wrote that whereas he had once considered the free play of the imagination the highest goal of poetry, he now placed "the development of spiritual or inner conditions even higher" than that of the imagination, so that he now found the greatest satisfaction in history, "which reveals this development to us in two parallel but constantly intersecting, indeed identical waves—i.e. the development of the individual and of the totality." To the degree that he regarded "the visible brilliance of external history as colorful clothing on the real course of the world," he added, he now found himself in agreement with "the old saying, not often understood, that 'our good Lord is the greatest of poets.'"54 "The highest poetry," in other words, "is in history." A year or two later, in the summer of 1842, he professed his commitment to his teachers' philosophy of history: "When I see the present lying quite clearly in the past, I feel moved by a shudder of profound respect. The highest conception of the history of mankind: the development of the spirit to freedom, has become my leading conviction."55

By the end of the same year, Burchhardt's idea of universal history had acquired something of the awesome "sublimity" of Ranke's and Droysen's. Responding to the manuscript of a historical drama by Kinkel, which appears to have borne some resemblance to the contemporary dramatic works of Hebbel, he congratulated his friend on having emancipated himself from old poetic ideas of moral justice and written a play motivated by the "real" and the necessary "in the true historical sense." In that genuine historical perspective, he declared, "ethical conflicts are accidental and determine the external decoration and support of the play rather than its essential core. The real topic is made up of historical and therefore unresolvable conflicts between rival world forces, where it must first be shown which proved victorious for us to know which was right."56 History, in other words, is a play of forces whose real ethical value is revealed by historical success. It is beyond ordinary good and evil, a spectacle in which the players are marionettes of the world spirit, and which appears in ethical guise only to those caught up in it. "For the spectator, or the reader, an immeasurable fascination—which you have exploited with great boldness—ensues from the fact that the oppositions appear to the participants and their time in ethical dress, whereas the spectator, with his modern consciousness,
knows very well that that is not their true nature and that the conflict can be resolved only by time and historical development. Only in this way can history, which in general knows no Good or Evil, but only Thus or Otherwise, be made into drama."

The reader of the mature Burckhardt of the Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen (Reflections on History)—the Burckhardt who became an acerbic critic of nineteenth-century progressivism and optimism and had withdrawn to his native city-state in order to stand his ground against them—is likely to be taken aback by such utterances, even though it might be argued that they highlight the disjunction between ethical judgment and the "course of world history" as much as they argue for the identity of rightness and historical success. And the later Burckhardt—the Burckhardt who distinguished scrupulously between the moral quality of individual acts or the aesthetic value of individual works of art and the apparent direction of history—did of course repudiate them, explicitly in a public lecture delivered in Basel in his later years, for instance:

In saying that Philip of Macedon was the man of the hour and his policy that of the future, I am very far from casting the slightest aspersions on Demosthenes for having opposed him. Demosthenes remained an authentic citizen of the dying polis. But monarchy and the idea of the polis are as irreconcilable as fire and water. Each one must either triumph or die. Demosthenes was an Athenian yoke: body and soul to his native community and as a citizen he vigorously stood his ground. In antiquity there were citizens such as no longer exist today. Demosthenes was such a one. That is why Niebuhr and Jacobs steeped themselves in Demosthenes and translated him at the time of the Napoleonic Empire. . . . Droysen says: "History knows few figures more pathetic than the great Athenian orator. He misunderstood his time, his people, his opponents, and himself. With the obstinacy of impotence and habit, even after the complete victory of Macedonia and the beginning of a new era that had outlived their time, along with him." But here no one can cut a more pathetic figure than the vir eruditissimus Johann Gustav Droysen himself. Whether Demosthenes knew or did not know that his judgment of Philip was false is irrelevant. There are desperate moments in the lives of nations when it is a crime against patriotism to speak the [historical] truth. Had Demosthenes appeared before the people and said, "Andres Athinaioi [You men of Athens], behold, you have been judged politically and morally. Your Republic is a kóra [a trash can]; today it is the monarchical principle that is being born along by the Zeitgeist. Submit to it like reasonable men and bow deeply before the great king," he would stand branded in the eyes of posterity like Aeschines, Philocrates, and their entire condemned society. Whether it triumphs or dies, it is always the minority that makes world history. For what fills the hearts of men with enthusiasm and pride is to see a noble personality, a great character stand firm like the Titans against the unalterable decree of historical development and go under rather than give up what it believes in.37

Explicit repudiation of teleological fatalism is again found in the Reflections on History, where the author seems to be responding to Droysen as well as to Hegel. To Droysen, "the forward march of the historical study divines the end of ends." To Burckhardt, eternal wisdom: they are two. Hegel's plan leads to fallacies he expressed his position in the essay "Lehrmeinungen" after the Franco-Prussian War: "I never taught history; I am the name of Universal History." That that was truly the approach initially followed by Droysen, who came to Basel, then succeeded him in the chair, complained of the general term Burckhardt's course in 1848, "die Wissenschaft" in it. Conducted in this way, it is not philosophy, but with absolutely not philosophy, it is a show, at best, of the Whole only acquired philosophies. Universal history guidance [Die Weltgeschichte] W. von Humboldt. That is the moment.60

Probably Burckhardt contributed to the Restoration of historiography and the historical development of Biedermann had tried to lead him to the smugness of certain philosophies of the time, perhaps too much the memory of Biedermann cautious and skeptical. As a Basel, he was said to have been a French historiography inspired by the liberal French Michelet—at the so-called inspired lectures on the history of the Sorbonne in 1827. "It is because Godecessary laws, which
Hegel. To Droysen, “the secret of all movement is in its end. . . . In discerning the forward march of the moral world. . . . In observing end after end fulfilled, historical study divines that the movement will close with the fulfillment of the end of ends.” To Burckhardt, in contrast, “we are not privy to the purposes of eternal wisdom: they are beyond our ken. This bold assumption of a world plan leads to fallacies because it starts out from false premises.” Burckhardt expressed his position succinctly in a letter to Nietzsche in 1874, a few years after the Franco-Prussian war—not the greatest of times for the World Spirit: “I never taught history for the sake of the thing that goes by the highfalutin name of Universal History.”

That that was truly the case is demonstrated by the distress Burckhardt’s approach initially provoked in one of his most gifted students, Heinrich Wolfflin, who came to Basel to study with him in the early 1880s and subsequently succeeded him in the chair of art history at the University of Basel. Wolfflin complained of the general lack of a philosophical orientation at Basel, and in Burckhardt’s course in particular: “Is there a man here who represents science [‘die Wissenschaft’] in its highest sense? I cannot devote my life to study that is conducted in this way. Take J.B.: a course in universal history, prettily narrated, but with absolutely no metaphysical underpinning. . . . This history is totally aimless. It is a show, a theater, in which everything is colorfully mingled. But the Whole only acquires a soul when one observes according to certain principles. Universal history is unintelligible without the idea of providential guidance [‘Die Weltgeschichte ist ohne Weltregierung nicht verständlich’]. So says W. von Humboldt. The scientific point of view is: the laws of human development.”

Probably Burckhardt never wholeheartedly embraced the optimistic faith of the Restoration and of some of his Berlin teachers in the providential course of historical development. There seem always to have been reservations or reversals. Distaste for the self-confident Hegelianism with which his friend Alois Biedermann had tried to answer his religious uncertainties had no doubt alerted him to the smugness as well as the seductions of “pantheism,” as the holistic philosophies of the time were referred to by those unsympathetic to them. Perhaps too the memory of the Basler Wirren of 1830–1833, which remained very much alive in Basel until late in the nineteenth century, had made him more cautious and skeptical than some of his German friends.

As a Baseler, he was also more attentive than many German historians to French historiography and had almost certainly read some of the criticisms leveled by the liberal French historians of the Restoration—Barante, Thierry, and Michelet—at the so-called doctrinaires of the 1820s and at the popular Hegel-inspired lectures on the philosophy of history that Victor Cousin had delivered at the Sorbonne in 1828. (These had been available in a printed version since 1827.) “It is because God or Providence is in nature that nature is governed by necessary laws, which the vulgar sees as fate,” Cousin had asserted. “It is be-
cause Providence is in history that humanity has its necessary laws and history its necessary course. History is the demonstration of God's providential design for humanity; history's judgments are God's own judgments. . . . If history is God's government made visible, everything in history has its place and everything is as it should be in it, for everything is leading toward the goal marked out by a benign power. Whence the high optimism that I am proud to proclaim and profess." In Cousin's philosophy of history, "war is only a bloody exchange of ideas, involving the thrusting of swords and the firing of cannon balls; a battle is nothing else than the combat of truth and error. . . . Victory and conquest are nothing else than the victory of today's truth over yesterday's truth, which has become tomorrow's error. There is no injustice in the great battles." This extreme optimism, which vindicated the victors of Hastings and of Waterloo, was too much both for the historian of the Norman conquest (Augustin Thierry) and for the future historian of France and of the Revolution (Jules Michelet), however much they might themselves wish to justify the political results of the Revolution by appealing to history and Providence. After reading Cousin's lectures, Michelet's cousin Célestine Lefebvre wrote the historian that she could not accept a "fatalist system . . . from which it follows that circumstances are always right, that one should submit to force because, in the end, it is always on the side of the right, that Brutus was wrong to oppose Caesar, that courage and virtue are an error." Even the moderate Barante was moved to complain in the Preface to his immensely popular Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne de la Maison de Valois (1824) that "[s]ome men hold it to be a matter of unquestionable doctrine that power is not only permitted but determined by Providence. . . . They ask only that success be lasting for it to be recognized as a divine mission. They reject the idea that God put a law of justice in our consciousness so that we might correctly judge human acts. Force, according to them, is the Holy Spirit; since it has triumphed, men have only to obey and adore! It is pride to believe one has rights and rebellion to claim them. Disorder and corruption are always the result of resistance by the weak. . . ." 61

In addition, there were elements in the teaching of Welcker, Ranke, and even of Böckh that were capable of challenging easy confidence in "universal history." Welcker, for instance, questioned the view that different ages constitute organic totalities. "The periods into which art history falls do not usually coincide with those of literary history or political history," Burckhardt wrote in his notes on Welcker's class at Bonn. 62 Likewise, whereas Droysen subordinated every manifestation of life to the political, Böckh recognized a plurality of spheres—private life, religion, the arts—alongside the sphere of politics and the state. Ranke noted that different activities—such as art, religion, and technology—may flourish at different times and that an age remarkable for the achievements of one of these may see the decline of others. 63

It is noteworthy that at the very time he was echoing his teachers' philosophy of history in the 1842 edition of the Grundzüge der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft, Ranke's view, now based on science, was seen as anathema by his contemporaries. "What a few months earlier, has been dug away for the dance and the church, art, and science, and particularly animation for its own sake . . . that a recent art has lost its natural period, that interest people one to a selective, self-chosen group and however much the fact that the nineteenth century has not yet shown the old one to be previously one." 64

There is still some optimism and there is a degree of enthusiasm in the work of contemporary historians of the period:

Burckhardt returned to Speyer in the fall of 1842 and continued his work on the biography of the Swiss Federal Confederation and the constitution of the Confederation. He submitted his manuscript to the Kantonsakademie, where it was examined by the committee and was accepted for publication. Burckhardt was a member of the Akademie, and was named a member of the committee. He was a member of the Basler Zeitung, where he wrote conservative columns and was a member of the committee. His work on the constitution of the Confederation was completed in 1844, and was published in the same year. His work on the constitution of the Confederation was completed in 1844, and was published in the same year.
of history in the 1842 letter to Kinkel, Burckhardt was also questioning Germany's special character as a fully "organic," traditional nation—the foundation stone of Ranke's historical optimism. The continuity of European culture, in Ranke's view, was based on the mutually enriching and correcting contributions of the Romance and Germanic peoples. To Burckhardt, however, the entire European world had been shaken to the core by the Revolution, and something new had emerged that it would not be possible to reconcile with the old and with tradition. "What we might call the historical ground," he wrote to Kinkel a few months earlier,

has been dug away from under the feet of nearly all the peoples of Europe, including the Prussians. The spirit of radical negation that entered the state, the church, art, and life toward the end of the last century has filled every moderately animated mind with such a mountainous mass of objective awareness... that a reestablishment of the old immaturity seems unthinkable. As art has lost its naivete and it has become possible to observe the styles of all the ages laid out objectively alongside each other, so it is with the state. The special interest people once took in the particularity of their own state has had to yield to a selective, self-conscious idealism. No Restoration, however well intended and however much it may have seemed to be the only solution, can disguise the fact that the nineteenth century began by making tabula rasa of all previous existing relations. I neither praise nor blame. I simply note a fact. Princes would do well to consider clearly wherein their present situation is different from their previous one."

There is still some optimism here, but rather less serenity than with Ranke; and there is a degree of apprehension of the future that could easily wing over into historical pessimism.

Burckhardt returned to Basel in 1843, after a trip to Paris, passed his Habilitation (the examination establishing the right to teach at the University), obtained an untensed post at the University, and began to offer classes in both history and art history. The latter were offered not only within the University of Basel but to the broad public of ladies and gentlemen of the town, colleagues, and Ratsberren that attended the open lecture series the University had instituted after the Kantonstrennung as part of its undertaking to serve as a "bürgerliche Akademie," or citizens' academy. He also took on the editorship of Heusler's Basler Zeitung, which defined him in the eyes of the local radicals as a conservative and a lackey of the Herren. In his own eyes, however, Burckhardt had been emancipated from Basel parochialism and prejudice by four years of absence and was at this point no champion of the local conservatives. The liberalism of the preceding few years in Switzerland, he assured a Berlin friend in 1844, had been "only the first sour bloom that encloses the fruit" and it would be followed by "a new liberalism and public opinion... stronger and... purer of every kind of extravagance." That liberalism, he promised, "grounded in the
If The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy is the best known of Burckhardt's works in English and is still widely read after almost a century and a half, The Cultural History of Greece is virtually unknown and unread in Britain and the United States. This may be partly due to the fact that, until quite recently, the only English translation, published in 1963, was even more 'incomplete' than the abridged German edition on which it was based and also contains many errors.\(^1\) It did not include either the important programmatic Introduction or the founding initial section on myth; the sections on religion and the diachronic account of the different moments of Greek culture, which makes up Section 9, were also dropped.\(^2\) Moreover, Burckhardt shared many ideas about the ancient world with Nietzsche and it was through The Birth of Tragedy that these reached the English-speaking public and with Nietzsche that they are now chiefly associated. As a result, Burckhardt's Cultural History of Greece is rarely commented on or referred to—or perhaps read—even by English and French classical scholars.\(^3\) For that reason this powerful and provocative work of scholarship will be presented here in rather greater detail than Burckhardt's more familiar writings.

About the time he completed the manuscript of The Civilization of the Renaissance Burckhardt paid a visit to London, partly to see the Elgin Marbles at the British Museum. A year later, some time in 1861–1862, he and a colleague in classics at Basel, Otto Ribbeck, talked of working together on a history of Greek culture. But after little more than a year at the University of Basel, Ribbeck left for Kiel and the plan hatched by the two men over a beer or a glass of wine at a pub opposite the Baden Train Station in Basel came to nothing. Burckhardt himself dismissed it humorously—"an idea inter poca," he remarked.\(^4\) Nevertheless, the thought of a course or even a book on the history of Greek culture did not go away. Burckhardt had had something of the kind in mind for many years. In the outline of a projected series of inexpensive books on cultural history drawn up in the late 1840s, one volume, it will be recalled, was to have
been devoted to the Age of Pericles, and in 1847 he wrote to "herzliebster Ete" (Eduard Schauenburg) from Berlin that he was going back to the Greeks, Homer, and the tragedians: "Now for the first time the road leads con amore to antiquity." 

The idea of a course or a book on Greek cultural history seems to have been resurrected after the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, that is to say, around the time that Burckhardt began to develop the reflections on history, and on the history of Europe in particular, that culminated in the celebrated lecture course published posthumously as *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* (1905; *Reflections on History*, 1943). To get some perspective on the tumultuous course of recent events, he told his nephew Jacob Oeri in 1867, he had plunged into ancient history: "At my age," he explained with his usual humor, "you have to swing into a new saddle from time to time, if you are not to stand stock still." 

Reflections on History and *The Cultural History of Greece*, Burckhardt's learned biographer Werner Kaegi has argued, are equally products of the five years from 1867 to 1872, when the two wars were fought that Burckhardt saw as harbingers of catastrophes to come—the Austro-Prussian War and the Franco-Prussian War. Burckhardt himself declared in a manuscript note that the first plan for *The Cultural History of Greece* was drawn up on the first day of the year 1870. The central themes of the work, as we shall see, are in fact those that deeply concerned the historian at this time: the relative merits of confederations of small states and of larger, centralized states; the relation between individual freedom and state power and, in particular, between liberty and democracy; the effect on culture of unrestrained power struggles among rival states and of democratic resentment of elites within them; and democracy as a breeding-ground of demagogy, chauvinism, and war. At the same time, the Introduction contains Burckhardt's most programmatic statement about the nature and aims of cultural history.

Comparisons of the Swiss cantons with the Greek poleis had for some time been a topos both of the historiography of Switzerland (in the work of Johannes von Müller, for instance) and of the historiography of ancient Greece, which until the mid-nineteenth century was largely a British affair, according to Arnaldo Momigliano. In late 1847, in the immediate aftermath of the Sonderbund War, the latest British historian of ancient Greece, George Grove, published *Seven Letters on the Recent Politics of Switzerland*. As the twenty-two cantons present "a miniature of all Europe," he declared in the Preface, being extremely various with respect to "race, language, religion, civilization, wealth, habits, etc." and "exhibiting the fifteenth century in immediate juxtaposition with the nineteenth," they are "interesting, on every ground, to the general intelligent public of Europe." To him in particular, however, they presented "an additional ground of interest, from a certain political analogy (nowhere else to be found in Europe) with those who preeminently occupy my thoughts, and on the history of whom I draw parallels among cantons or republics through several centuries, but who was not aware of the

Several decades later, thinking seriously about another eminent Englishman, one volume of his *History of the United States*. Though only two, Freeman's work did not receive a detailed review in the *Monthly Review* or *Gebhard's collegium*, but was praised by the teacher. Vischer noted that the book was an example of how people's ideas about the United States had changed over time. Freeman's work was generally seen as a valuable contribution to the understanding of American history. 

Vischer, who had been a supporter of Droysen, was not as enthusiastic about his *History of Hellenism*, the history of Prussia, so the comparison is established himself as the main influence on the drift of Droysen's work. Vischer, who was enormously successful in his time, was to be found only in the Prussian, Greek, and German study in the last days of his life.

The context of Droysen's study was Prussia and Macedonia, small states and large states, in particular, in the wake of the great decade of the nineteenth century. The German *Kulturvölker* as definition. When Francis II was
the history of whom I am still engaged—the ancient Greeks."10 Grote thus
drew parallels among three situations: the Greek poleis of antiquity, the Swiss
cantons or republics, and the modern European states. His Letters went
through several editions and were known in Basel. It is unlikely that Burckhardt
was not aware of them.

Several decades later, and only a few years before Burckhardt got down to
thinking seriously about a course or book on the cultural history of Greece,
another eminent English historian, Edward Freeman, brought out the first vol-
ume of his History of Federal Government (1863), which was to have spanned
the entire period from the Achaean League to the Civil War in the United
States. Though only the first volume, on ancient Greece, was ever published,
Freeman's work did not pass unnoticed in Basel. It received a sympathetic
and detailed review in the Schweizerisches Museum from Wilhelm Vischer-Blifinger,
Burckhardt's colleague in the chair of Greek at the University and former
teacher. Vischer noted that Freeman had recently visited Switzerland to study
those cantons where direct democracy was still practiced and that his next vol-
ume was expected to cover the Swiss Confederation and the various German
Leagues of the late Middle Ages. The first volume of Freeman's work, Vischer
wrote, "takes a decidedly contradictory stand in relation to a number of recent
German publications, in which the unification movement of the German
peoples has too often clouded clear and unprejudiced historical vision by mak-
ing the unique goal of the state appear to be the development of its external
power and by overlooking the infinitely rich cultural life that small states,
and in the first instance the small city-states of Greece, have been able to
promote."11 Vischer made no secret of the German scholars he had in mind: he
named specifically Theodor Mommsen with his "idolatry of pure power" and
Gustav Droysen with his excessive partiality for Macedonia—the Prussia of
antiquity, according to Droysen himself. Immediately after the publication of
his History of Hellenism in 1843 Droysen had in fact turned his attention to the
history of Prussia, so that by the time Vischer wrote his review he had already
established himself as the highest authority on the subject.12 No one mistook
the drift of Droysen's historical argument. It had already been obvious in his
enormously successful biography of Alexander the Great (1833), which, we are
told, was to be found on every German middle-class bookshelf: "Macedonia
was Prussia, Greece Germany, Asia Europe."13

The context of Droysen's historical work, of the historical analogy between
Prussia and Macedonia, and of the entire discussion of the relative merits of
small states and large states was an ongoing reflection among German scholars
in particular, in the wake of Napoleon's defeat of Prussia and Austria in the first
decade of the nineteenth century, on the relation between the enduring Ger-
man Kulturvolk as defined by the romantics and its shifting political organi-

assume the title of Emperor Francis I of Austria, even the shadowy form of the old Empire ceased to provide a minimal unifying political form for the German Kulturvolk. "I feel as I do, when an old friend is very sick, the doctors have given up on him, we know he is going to die and yet we are shattered when the letter finally comes announcing his death," Goethe's mother wrote to her son on hearing the news in the old imperial city of Frankfurt in August 1806. "Die Deutschen sind kein Völck keine Nation mehr und damit punctum" ("The Germans have ceased to be a people, a nation, and that's the end of it"), she had noted matter-of-factly as early as 1798.\footnote{Not everybody had taken matters so lightly, however. More and more it was argued, even by those who started out from Herder's vision of the nation as a cultural entity rather than a political one, that in order to protect itself against conquerors like Napoleon and to be free to develop all its potential, the German Kulturvolk needed a strong political state—a "center," as Jules Michelet said, when he contrasted France, which had one in his view, with Germany and Italy which did not.\footnote{The political state was thus the fulfillment, from that perspective, of the cultural nation. It marked the transformation of a natural community into a moral one according to Bache- ofen who, like Burckhardt, had been a student of Ranke's in Berlin. Burckhardt himself had not been hostile in his youth to the search for a new political form for Germany. But by the 1840s he had become convinced that nationalism was a revolutionary force more likely to destroy the varied yet closely interrelated cultures of "old Europe" than to preserve them. Wilhelm von Humboldt's warnings about state power and in particular about the creation of a new German national state have already been referred to in chapter 11.} The political state was thus the fulfillment, from that perspective, of the cultural nation. It marked the transformation of a natural community into a moral one according to Bache- ofen who, like Burckhardt, had been a student of Ranke's in Berlin. Burckhardt himself had not been hostile in his youth to the search for a new political form for Germany. But by the 1840s he had become convinced that nationalism was a revolutionary force more likely to destroy the varied yet closely interrelated cultures of "old Europe" than to preserve them. Wilhelm von Humboldt's warnings about state power and in particular about the creation of a new German national state have already been referred to in chapter 11.

Freeman's book thus addressed questions that were of great concern both to German-speaking Swiss as members of the German Kulturvolk and to Baselers as citizens of an old city-republic within an increasingly centralized Swiss federal state. It is by no means surprising that it was reviewed attentively by Vischer. The professor of Greek had been meditating on its central topic for years. As early as 1849, when it fell to him to give the public lecture to the students and their parents that was a regular feature of the opening exercises at the Pädagogium, he had chosen as his topic the question of centralization and federation in the construction of the ancient polis—a topic that was obviously of more than antiquarian interest to a Swiss audience only two years after the Sonderbund War.\footnote{Equally, the relation between Stadt and Land in the state or polis—the core of the lecture concerned the relations of the German city-state to the simpler communities or demoi out of which it had been forged—must have struck a chord in an audience of Basel parents, many of whom could well have participated in the painful events of 1830–1833.} Vischer distinguished between two models of the ancient polis: on the one hand, a centralized model, characterized in the case of Athens by the complete identification of the polis and the erstwhile inhabitants of the communities or demoi, and in the case of a core group (in Sparta or communities; and, on the other hand, a loose association of autono-As even-handedly as possible the various political states which all citizens as- tended toward aristocracy together of autonomous, Greeks never succeeded in confederate state and the uniting to form a single lecture that "if, on the other hand, a sorry picture, we ought to consider the spirit grew the entlements of art and thought, finally make up for the great man certainly knew this but has been published immedia- ignorable of Vischer's is as a colleague's mind with the The Cultural Herti- ence as a citizen of Bas- estions of politics, pow- Kleinstaat. That is not to say that he con- t bundle {contrary, his work seems ultimately, even a rejection of Burck- hart's aim seems to have had it of the polis than those of the polis. He did not dispute its argument, in a strikingly universalization of that cultural heritage of man, the ruin of the polis and the destruction of the men of culture—but he was never to be a fellow Swiss Benjamin with whom between ancient Italian influence as a schoolboy—neohumanists—Wolf.}
demoi, and in the case of Sparta by the dominion of a conquering and invading core group (in Sparta’s case, the Dorians) over the erstwhile indigenous communities; and, on the other hand, a confederate model, characterized by a fairly loose association of the communities, as in the Aetolian and Achaean Leagues.

As evenhandedly as possible he evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the various political structures he had described—a centralized city-state in which all citizens were equal and which tended toward democracy; a centralized city state with a hierarchy of full citizens, periokoi, and helots, which tended toward aristocracy; and a confederation constituted by the free banding together of autonomous communities. While acknowledging that the ancient Greeks never succeeded in developing a viable and lasting constitution for a confederate state and that the centralized states had also proved incapable of uniting to form a single national state, Vischer emphasized at the close of his lecture that “if, on the one hand, the particularism of the Greek people presents a sorry picture, we ought not to forget, on the other, that out of that very particularist spirit grew the infinitely varied life which flowered in glorious achievements of art and thought that will be objects of admiration for all ages and that fully make up for the political shortcomings of the state.”

Burckhardt almost certainly knew of this lecture by his colleague and former teacher, since it had been published immediately in Basel, and in any case he could not have been ignorant of Vischer’s ideas about the ancient polis or of their connection in his colleague’s mind with the politics of Basel, Switzerland, and Germany.

The Cultural History of Greece is in fact deeply marked by Burckhardt’s experience as a citizen of Basel and by the characteristic Basel reflection on the relations of politics, power, and culture, the Grossstaat or Machtstaat and the Kleinstaat. That is not to say, however, that Burckhardt accepted without qualification the analogy between the Greek poleis and the Swiss cantons. On the contrary, his work seems to have been intended in part as an examination and, ultimately, even a rejection of that analogy in any strict sense. In general, Burckhardt’s aim seems to have been to provide a more sober and realistic evaluation of the polis than those who had represented it as a model of liberty or culture. He did not dispute its great cultural achievements, as we shall see—though he argued, in a strikingly Hegelian move for a professed anti-Hegelian, that the universalization of those achievements and their integration into the general cultural heritage of mankind could occur only as a consequence of the political ruin of the polis and the transformation of its citizens into Bildungsmenschen or men of culture—but he persistently emphasized the price in terms of individual happiness that had had to be paid for those achievements. Similarly, like his fellow Swiss Benjamin Constant a generation earlier, he drew a sharp distinction between ancient liberty and modern liberty. He had himself been deeply influenced as a schoolboy in Basel by the idealistic philhellenism of the German neohumanists—Wolf, Winckelmann, Schiller, and Goethe—but some time

Yet we are shatteringly aware of the shadowy form of the political entity that would not be called a polis for another hundred years, a form that we could call a polis or not; and yet we are shatteringly aware of the shadowy form of the political entity that would not be called a polis for another hundred years, a form that we could call a polis or not.
before he embarked on *The Cultural History of Greece*, he had already questioned both their vision of ancient Greece and the enthusiasm it had inspired in him as a young man. In 1859, for instance, when he delivered the memorial address on the centenary of Schiller's birth in the great hall of the new Basel Museum in the Augustinerergasse, he pronounced a surprising judgment on the celebrated *Hymn to Joy (An die Freude)*. Schiller’s poem was “an intoxication... unable to stand up to logical examination,” he declared, maliciously reminding his listeners that with all his enthusiasm for the Gods of Greece, in the well-known poem of that title, Schiller had remained primly monotheistic. The enthrallo ng neohumanist picture of ancient Greece as a uniquely happy age of mankind, an age of beauty, harmony, and joy, he went on to argue in *The Cultural History of Greece*, was “one of the greatest historical frauds ever perpetrated.” In Burckhardt’s mature view, there are no perfect ages in history. Since the human condition does not change, all historical situations inevitably mix good and evil, suffering and fulfillment. The historian can only point to the relative advantages and disadvantages of different situations and to the complex ways in which good and evil are interwoven.

In revising the neohumanist image of antiquity, Burckhardt was reaping the harvest of ideas already sown by some of the neohumanists themselves. For instance, in the Introduction to *The Cultural History of Greece* he quoted from a classic work of 1817 by his former teacher at Berlin, August Böckh, on the *Staatshaltung der Athener*: “The Ancients were unhappier than most people believe.” In fact, in the very first chapter of his work Böckh had articulated a position with which Burckhardt could not but have sympathized. “I took the Truth as my goal,” Böckh declared, “and if we must moderate our unconditional admiration of the Ancients because it turns out that where they touched gold, their hands also got dirty, I will not regret that. Or should our accounts of the past be written only to inspire and edify the young? Should the classical scholar conceal that then, as now, everything under the sun was not perfect?” Burckhardt could also have read in F. W. Riemer’s *Mitteilungen* a remark of Goethe’s dating to the year 1813: “The Greeks were lovers of freedom, to be sure! But each one of them only of his own. For that reason there was within every Greek a tyrant for whose development only the opportunity was wanting.” That comment, which may have been inspired, in part at least, by the turn the original enthusiasm for liberty of the French revolutionaries had taken, would echo throughout Burckhardt’s work, in one place almost word for word.

Finally, local conditions at the University of Basel also impelled Burckhardt to offer a course on Greek cultural history. The colleagues in Latin and Greek who might have undertaken a major synthetic view of antiquity had for one reason or another failed to do so. The form in which most of them published their work was that of *Kleine Schriften*, or short articles, even though several of them (Gerlach and Vischer, for instance) were critical of the increasingly professional and scholarly, rather than the elements of the early generation of Hegel, had been aware is still at its beginning:

Large masses of material, few topics, a particular topic the old scholar and contemporaries thrown together in the present age; for the scholar, are more and more, scholarship which, intended toward the small, but rather of syllable breadth.

Such an “outline of breadth of vision,” is what curriculum at Basel and with Nietzsche, to who arrived in Basel as a new had attended the publications in which the new logical and scholarly effort comprehensive work on overlap between the views of the Greeks in Nietzsche Burckhardt. But Nietzsche or so he himself believe *Birth of Tragedy*, that holding position in a university von Wilamowitz-Moell two-twenty years old, as student who wrote to him in Bonn instead of coming, tended, and that he that Nietzsche was a teacher two students had signed.
professional and scholarly orientation of classical studies and the narrowly philo-
logical, rather than broadly humanistic and historical, turn they had taken.
Burckhardt himself later gave as one of his reasons for not publishing The Cul-
tural History of Greece the destructive, nitpicking reviews he was certain it would
receive from the viri eruditissimi. Böckh, who still sympathized with the goals
of the early generation of neohumanists and was himself of the generation of
Hegel, had been aware of a growing problem. “The study of Greek antiquity
is still at its beginnings,” he wrote in the foreword to Die Staatsbaushaltung
der Athener:

Large masses of material abound; most people do not know how to make use
of them. Few topics are adequately treated because whoever wishes to treat a
particular topic thoroughly must know the whole. An outline of the whole by
a scholar and connoisseur, not a mere compiler, executed in a scholarly spirit,
with breadth of vision and conceptual rigor, and not, as heretofore, simply
thrown together in a welter of raw, unorganized data, is especially necessary in
the present age; for the mass of classical scholars, the younger ones in particu-
lar, are more and more inclined to pursue complacently a form of philological
scholarship which, in itself not unworthy of respect, is nevertheless chiefly orien-
ted toward the smallest details and is scarcely any longer a study of words,
but rather of syllables and letters. 22

Such an “outline of the whole, executed in a scholarly spirit,” but “with
breadth of vision,” is what Burckhardt believed was direly needed as part of the
curriculum at Basel and what he set out to provide. He certainly discussed it
with Nietzsche, to whom he was extremely close in these years. (Nietzsche had
arrived in Basel as a new, very young professor of Greek in 1870 and Burckhardt
had attended the public lectures on “The Future of our Educational Institu-
tions” in which the newcomer had bravely taken on the entire German philo-
logical and scholarly establishment.) In fact, Nietzsche himself had plans for a
comprehensive work on Greek cultural history, 23 and there is a great deal of
overlap between the views expressed on the philosophy, philology, and rhetoric
of the Greeks in Nietzsche’s early lectures and courses at Basel and those of
Burckhardt. But Nietzsche’s effectiveness had been temporarily undermined—
or so he himself believed—by the accusation, following the publication of The
Birth of Tragedy, that he was philologially ignorant and unsuitable for a teach-
ing position in a university. 24 Word of the famous negative review by Ulrich
von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, himself then a recent doctoral graduate barely
twenty-two years old, had apparently reached Basel—Nietzsche tells of one
student who wrote to his relatives in Basel that he had decided to stay on at
Bonn instead of coming to study philology at Basel, as he had originally in-
tended, and that he thanked God he had not enrolled in a university where
Nietzsche was a teacher 25—for in the fall of 1872 Nietzsche found that only
two students had signed up for the course he had announced on “Greek and
Roman Rhetoric" and that of those one was a law student, the other a Germanist. "Our Winter term has begun and I have no students!" he told Richard Wagner. "Our classical philologists have stayed away. It is truly a pudendum [a matter of deep shame] that must be withheld from every one." 

Within a couple of years the affair would blow over, and enrollments in Nietzsche's courses would again be respectable. But in 1872, with Vischer ailing (he died two years later), the damage to Nietzsche's reputation affected the entire program in classical philology. Until 1872, according to Nietzsche, there had been a steady increase in the number of students in classical philology at the University, but all those gains had "been blown away" because of him, and his colleagues, including Rastherr Vischer, to whom he owed his appointment, were having to experience a falling off such as they had never experienced in their entire careers. It was clear in those conditions that the broad review of Greek cultural history, which Burckhardt believed was an essential element in the curriculum, could be taught only by him. Perhaps the University authorities also had the idea that only he, with his great reputation, was capable of reviving the study of classical antiquity at Basel. When he offered his course for the first time in the winter term of 1872, the weekly four hours of class drew almost sixty students—fifty-four matriculated students (almost half the total student body at the time) together with several gentlemen from the town. For some it meant standing room only, Burckhardt noted with satisfaction.

Burckhardt taught the course at fairly regular two-year intervals for fourteen years thereafter—for the last time in the winter term of 1885–1886. He abandoned it only because he had made the decision, as of 1886, to confine his teaching to the history of art. During this entire period, he constantly revised his notes. Firsthand observations of the Parthenon Frieze in the British Museum, of the Winged Victory of Samothrace in the Louvre, and of the Pergamon altar in Berlin during visits to London, Paris, and Berlin in 1879 and 1882 are reflected in the manuscript. But even after that date, Burckhardt continued to make changes and additions—the latest in 1892, according to Felix Staehelin, an authority on Burckhardt's manuscripts.

So far, we have spoken of The Cultural History of Greece as a lecture course. Burckhardt's plans for publication of a book on the topic were, and to some degree still are, a matter of speculation. It was suggested earlier that not long after the appearance of The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy he essentially withdrew from the world of professional conferences and career-building, of books and publishing, in order to concentrate on what for him were the authentic goals of the scholarly life: the education or Bildung of his fellow citizens, his personal Bildung, and the well-being of the University of Basel. From the outset he was as coy and confusing as possible about whether he had a book in mind. "First of all, every moment of available leisure in the next two years must be devoted to my course," he wrote in the spring of 1872. "Then the thing must be offered again in the fall. Only thereafter can I consider working. By that time, the course..."

The course... 1878. In the fall of that year, Nuremberg, 1878. In the fall of that year, Greece but by the beginning of 1879, all travel plans and begun to be done without drudgery. He made a clean copy of the manuscript in the format he used for manuscripts. However, he continued to work on the course, which was given to Ludwig Ebner in 1880 as a sequel to the history of Greek culture that he had written in 1879 and 1880. It dealt with the book itself, which contained 1,000 pages in the form of a manuscript. The final version has yet to be completed. It has been noted that Burckhardt was noted for his intellectual honesty. The first draft of his book was completed in 1880. It was published by the University of Basel in 1898. A new edition was published in 1919.

A few months later we return to the story of which Burckhardt is the main character. He was making a visit to Germany, during a visit to the University of Berlin, he wrote a long letter to his friend, the historian E. A. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, in which he discussed his plans for the book. He wrote that he would not be able to take advantage of leisure time over two years in which to work on it. He ended the letter with the promise that the book would be published under the title Die griechische Kultur, or The Cultural History of Greece, ready for publication in 1900. In the meantime, the writings of the untroubled Burckhardt, who was a quiet, unassuming man, resident in a psychiatric clinic, have been collected and published, with publishers, Burckhardt went on to become a well-known figure in German intellectual life. He was a prolific writer and editor, and his works continued to be influential until his death in 1905.
be offered again in the summer semester of 1874, if I am still alive and well by then. Only thereafter might it finally be ripe for definitive filling out and reworking. By that time, as Luther would say, the world will no longer be standing."

The course was offered in 1874, then again in 1876, and once more in 1878. In the fall of that year, Burckhardt began to toy with the idea of a trip to Greece but the beginning of 1880 he told von Preen that he had "given up all travel plans and begun to envisage instead a major work—but one that can be done without drudgery." It was around this time that he started to make a clean copy of the material for a history of Greek culture on folio sheets—the format he used for manuscripts intended for publication. At the same time, however, he continued to revise his lecture notes (on quarto sheets) for the course, which was given again in the spring of 1880. A letter to the publisher Ludwig Eber in 1880 reveals the same equivocation as in 1872: "As far as 'the history of Greek culture' is concerned, nothing is settled yet, and for reasons to do with the book itself, it would be such a risky venture for a publisher (over 1,000 pages in the format of your edition of Sybel) that I have already contemplated having it printed at my own expense. In any case not a single line of the final version has yet been written, and who knows what times are now approaching."

A few months later von Preen was told that "the great literary undertaking" of which Burckhardt had spoken to him in the railway station at Karlsruhe during a visit in the previous spring, "has been begun but, after completion of 100 pages, wisely set aside, because I saw myself being led into a vast ocean." Another publisher, E. A. Seemann in Leipzig, was told a similar story. "Large new ventures at my age have their questionable side. In the last few months I did begin work on something of the sort and then abandoned it when I realized that I would not be able to hold up if I were obliged to sacrifice every minute of leisure time over two full years." Rumors of a new book by the author of the Civilization of the Renaissance and The Cicerone must have begun circulating among German publishers, however; for late in the summer of 1880, Burckhardt wrote the famous publishing house of Cotta that he could not respond to their expression of interest and very much regretted that they had been misled by an idea that he had abandoned almost as soon as it had emerged. Eight years later, pressed again by Seemann, he denied flatly that there was a book manuscript: "The erroneous idea that I have a completed Cultural History of Greece ready for publication," he wrote disingenuously, "comes from a passage in the writings of the unfortunate Herr Professor Dr. Nietzsche, who is presently resident in a psychiatric institution. He took a lecture course on that topic, which I taught several times, to be a book." Evasive and even mendacious with publishers, Burckhardt confided his real ambivalence to his old friend from Berlin days, Eduard Schauenburg (still addressed in a warmly affectionate letter as "liebster bester Ede"): "Despite what I have said about my age, which is
no protection from folly, I still live with literary projects, but I have experienced
something that I had not experienced before, namely that one begins now this,
now that, and then, after a time, puts it aside. One becomes careful and cau-
tious."

The facts behind all this equivocation are that Burckhardt had indeed pre-
pared a manuscript of The Cultural History of Greece in the format he generally
adopted for works that he intended to publish, that this manuscript runs to
rather less than one-half of the manuscript of the entire course he taught be-
tween 1872 and 1886, and that physical evidence indicates he continued to
work on both the projected book manuscript and on the course manuscript after
he stopped teaching the course.38 Further, neither the "book" manuscript of The
Cultural History of Greece nor the manuscript of the lectures was included
among the sets of lectures that he expressly instructed the executors of his will
to destroy. (These included "Swiss history," "History of the Middle Ages,""History of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," "History of the Seven-
teenth and Eighteenth Centuries," and "The Age of Revolution.")39 On the
contrary, Burckhardt stipulated in his will that both the lectures for the entire
course and the reworking (in folio sheets), which was up to half completed,
were to become the property of his nephew Jacob Oeri, a modest and conscien-
tious classical scholar who taught at the Gymnasium in Basel and enjoyed the
old man's confidence. He also stipulated, however, that nothing of either was
to be published. Just before his death, Oeri claimed, Burckhardt relented and
redefined his wishes orally as meaning only that his nephew was not to consider
himself in any way obliged to publish the manuscripts. The work we have
today was put together by Oeri from the folio manuscript already prepared by
Burckhardt, the quarto lecture notes, and the letters of students in the course.

Burckhardt's hesitations and equivocations can be explained in large measure
by his aversion to the world of scholarship and the literary marketplace as these
had developed in the course of the nineteenth century. He knew that a book
would not, in the first instance, reach or be judged by the audience for which
he intended it—the lay audience made up of educated men and women, chiefly
of the better classes (those referred to in Basel as the Nichtstudierende), for which
he always claimed to write. Its first audience would inevitably be the Fachleute,
the scholars and professionals, the men of Wissenschaft. He would become em-
broiled in controversies and polemics. There would be cutting reviews by schol-
ars eager to score points and enhance their reputations by destroying someone
else's reputation. And he would be expected to respond. He would thus, despite
himself, contribute to the business of scholarship from which he had sought
refuge decades earlier by returning to the University of Basel and concentrating
on his role as a teacher.

Burckhardt had a clear insight into a dilemma that scholars as well as politi-
cians at the end of the twentieth century can hardly fail to recognize. According
to him, this dilemma fairly evenly divided Europe on the Con-
to him, this dilemma was encountered as early as the fifth century B.C. In a fairly evenhanded discussion of the Sophists in the section of *The Cultural History of Greece* on the Greeks of the fifth century, he noted that in highly cultivated times a technique for creating effects and influencing opinions may be introduced that comes to constitute a power in itself and places an extremely efficient weapon in the hands of people of mediocre talent and standing, “like the press of the present day, an instrument that has produced very little good and is responsible for three quarters of what is bad.” Soon, even the highly talented and those most qualified to speak are obliged to go along with the new technique or give up all expectation of getting a hearing.” Those too diffident to engage in the use of the technique must resign themselves to silence and exclusion. Silence and exclusion had in fact been Burckhardt’s choice when he virtually ceased publishing new works or attending scholarly meetings and left the task of revising and promoting works already published to whoever cared to take it on. His refusal ever to review the work of other scholars was another consequence of his determined avoidance of noisy public debate. There should therefore be nothing unexpected about his constant equivocation concerning *The Cultural History of Greece*. “No, my dear Sir,” he protested to Heinrich Gelzer when the latter—a former student, subsequently a colleague and friend—urged him to publish. “A poor stranger who stands outside the circle of the guildsmen dare not undertake such a thing; I am a heretic and an ignoramus and with my questionable views I would receive a cruel thrashing from the viri eruditissimi. Oh yes, yes, I would. Believe me. Je connais les gens! In my old age I need peace and quiet.”

The reception accorded Burckhardt’s work when it appeared in four volumes in 1898–1902 confirms in some measure the soundness of his instincts. As he predicted, the philologists were the most fierce, for in Jacob Oeri’s words, Burckhardt “had permitted himself to soveigntely ignore the work of the classical philologists of our time” and to “build his knowledge of the Greeks on what they had written and not on what German professors in the last forty years had written about them.” Wilamowitz’s harsh condemnation—“This book is of no account for scholarship” (“Dies Buch existiert nicht für die Wissenschäft”)—is notorious. Even though it was pronounced before Wilamowitz, or any one else, had been able to read the entire work and appeared not in a formal scholarly review but as a gratuitous observation in the preface to the second volume of a translation of Greek tragedies that appeared in Berlin in 1899, word of it spread like wildfire through the German universities and seemed to encourage others to add their mite. A student of Wilamowitz’s, who was teaching at Zurich, picked up serious philological errors in Burckhardt’s history (for instance, the use of a Byzantine source that recent scholarship had shown to date in fact from the sixteenth century), hauled Oeri over the coals for failing to correct them, and concluded that it would have been better if Burckhardt’s wish that the
manuscript not be published had been respected. This particular attack ended in a lawsuit.49

There were also some favorable reviews. Robert Pöhlmann, professor of Greek at Munich, took issue with his Berlin colleagues. Burckhardt's *Cultural History of Greece*, he declared, was "an important testimony to the deep-rooted transformation of historical judgment of the Greeks in the second half of the nineteenth century." Among historians, in particular, the reputation of the Basel scholar who had twice been called to Berlin remained high. In the leading journal of the historical profession, the *Historische Zeitschrift*, Carl Neumann acknowledged the importance of Burckhardt's revision of the "canonical" view of the Greeks held by the neohumanists and consecrated in Ernst Curtius's history, and praised the unique combination in Burckhardt of "the purest enthusiasm for the beautiful, an extraordinary capacity to become inspired by his subject matter, and the most sober powers of observation." Similar favorable judgments were pronounced by an eminent disciple of Ranke, Alfred Dove, and by the classical philologist Gustav Billetter. On the whole, however, it was not until the 1920s—in the chastened atmosphere of the collapse of German imperial ambitions—that Burckhardt's *History of Greek Culture* won widespread acceptance as a major and enduring historical and literary text.

If *The Cultural History of Greece* was at first rejected by the "philologists," that was understandable. Burckhardt did not disguise his disdain for much contemporary philological and historical scholarship and openly chose to write, as Nietzsche did, in a different mode. "Wir sind 'unwissenschaftlich' und haben gar keine Methode, wenigstens nicht die der anderen," he announced provocatively in the Introduction (8:5/7). ("We are 'unscholarly' and have no method; at least we do not follow that of others.") That Introduction, which Oeri took from the lecture notes, might well be Burckhardt's most programmatic statement about cultural history, as opposed to political history, and about *Bildung*, rather than *Wissenschaft*, as the proper goal of historical study. It reveals clearly both the deep seriousness of Burckhardt's ideal of the humanistically educated citizen and the idealist philosophical assumptions underlying it. There is no question that *Geist*, or spirit, is the ultimate reality for Burckhardt, even though he sees it as always connected to a material foundation; or that the essential function of cultural history is to put the spirit of the living in touch with the spirit of the dead, to attend to "those traits through which the . . . Greek spirit speaks to us" (8:6/8), and thus ensure, at least among an aristocracy of the spirit, the continuity and universality of human culture. It is not for nothing that Burckhardt's aesthetic views, broad and open as they are, are fundamentally classical. There is never any question for him that the particular, the material, the ephemeral are contained, explained, and redeemed—without ever being obliterated—by the general, the typical, the spiritual. Burckhardt's idea of cul-

tural history is poles apart from Ernst Gombrich was able to see; there is, when all is said and done, a worldviews ("Lebenswelt"). [habits of thought and action] to Burckhardt, from before the meantime, the separate histories of states) and accounts of the various institutions is external to his history of the ancient Greek culture is not home to a system of history, to a "philology. The history of forms of which particular historical interpretation and is cumulative, the latter approach must be rediscovered and expanded when a single investigator takes up an entire octavine to singular events—requires that the texts be read and interpreted in a manner from which the events of ancient Greece is to be understood ("der Gehalt") in not much more than a way of cultural history. Greek ways of thinking and understanding of the form the ancients were active in Greek life, the ideas of the human spirit, the virtue of Greek culture are not separate and express themselves in, unlike others (such as the "the emotive, the outer husk of culture," which is "unintelligibility" (8:7/9), it is culture in its most universal.

Cultural history, to
Robert Pöhlmann, professor of colleagues. Burckhardt’s Cultural plant testimony to the deep-rooted Greeks in the second half of the particular, the reputation of the Berlin remained high. In the leading *Bursche Zeitschrift*, Carl Neumann’s revision of the “canonical” view and consecrated in Ernst Curtius’s in Burckhardt of “the purest en-
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tural history is poles apart from present-day notions of cultural studies and Ernst Gombrich was not altogether wide of the mark when he insisted that there is, when all is said and done, a “Hegelian” side to Burckhardt.45

Cultural history—the history of states of mind, ways of thinking, or worldviews (“Lebensaussagen” [views of life], “Denkweisen und Anschauungen” [habits of thought and mental attitudes] (8:2 [4])—is quite distinct, according to Burckhardt, from both political history (narratives of discrete events in the histories of states) and the history of institutions or “Altertümere” (encyclopedic accounts of the various aspects of historical life). The history of events and institutions is external and factual, the product of positivist scholarship or philology. The history of culture, in contrast, aims to recover the inner spiritual forces of which particular events or institutions are scattered crystallizations; it relies on interpretation and hermeneutic. The former is of interest to specialists and is cumulative, the latter concerns all educated people (“jeder Gebildete”) and must be rediscovered anew by every age and by each individual. “In a period when a single investigation into the authenticity of a few external facts may take up an entire octavo volume” (8:2 [4]), narrative history—the sequence of singular events—requires an investment of time and effort disproportionate to the gain to be had from it, and in any case the results can be conveniently communicated in a manual. “We, for our part, wish to determine points of view from which the events can be considered. If what is truly worth knowing about ancient Greece is to be communicated to nonspecialist students (“Nichtphilologen”) in not much more than sixty hours, we cannot proceed otherwise than by way of cultural history. Our task, as we understand it, is to give the history of Greek ways of thinking and Greek views of life and to strive to achieve an understanding of the living energies, both constructive and destructive, that were active in Greek life.” (8:2 [4]). While all cultures, presumably, are expressions of the human spirit and therefore of interest to the “Gebildete,” the special virtue of Greek culture, according to Burckhardt, is that it is virtually transparent and expresses the inner spirit directly and in immediately accessible form—unlike others (such as the Egyptian or the Indian) in which “the form is rebar-
itive, the outer husk impenetrable, the expression symbolic to the point of unintelligibility” (8:7 [8]). In other words, the human spirit appears in Greek culture in its most universal form.

Cultural history, to sum up,

has as its object the inner life of past humanity and it describes how that hu-
manity existed, desired, and thought, how it looked upon the world and how it was able to act on it. In so far as it thus engages with what remains constant ["das Konstante"], that constant element appears, in the end, greater and more significant than anything momentary, a character trait appears greater and more instructive than an action; for actions are only particular expressions of the corresponding inner power, which can produce any number of new expres-
sions. Desires and assumptions are thus as important as anything that actually happens, ways of looking at things as important as any actual undertaking. ... Even when a reported act never in fact happened as reported or never happened at all, the way of looking at the world that underlies the representation of it as having happened retains its value for us through the *typical* character of the representation (8:3–4 [5]).

The materials of the cultural historian, in other words, are primarily those in which “spirit” or ways of thinking and views of the world are expressed most directly and most unselfconsciously, namely, works of art and literature. “What is living and important will be found not in the event that is narrated, but in the manner in which it is narrated and in the ethical and intellectual [*geistig*] assumptions from which the manner of narration springs” (8:7 [8]). As even fictions and forgeries can be a better source for learning about underlying assumptions and beliefs than the best authenticated facts, the data of the cultural historian turn out to be less vulnerable to historical criticism in fact than those of the historian of events or institutions (8:3 [5]). Cultural history should also be distinguished from the internal history of particular cultural activities, such as art or literature or philosophy (8:7 [9]). The historian of a particular activity is interested in the intrinsic conditions and traditions of that activity; the cultural historian draws on a wide variety of sources (8:8 [10]) in order to reach the “spirit” behind them all. (This distinction will be important when we consider Burckhardt’s work as an art historian in the following chapter.)

The approach to be adopted in *The Cultural History of Greece* will thus “not be narrative, but it will be historical” (“nicht erzählend, wohl aber geschichtlich”) (8:2 [4]). Such an approach creates problems of exposition and representation or *Darstellung* for the cultural historian, for it is difficult to present what is “a simultaneous, powerful One,” rather than a succession of discrete events, in language that is itself composed of successive discrete signs (8:5 [7]). Particulars—events, personalities, institutions—will be retained only in so far as they illuminate the general way of thinking, the spiritual outlook of which they are manifestations. “The singular, and in the first instance, the so-called event, will receive mention here only as it bears witness to the general, not for its own sake” (8:2 [4]). Thus individuals will appear, but there will be no complete biographies of them; they will be invoked “only as illustrations and the highest possible testimony to the things of the spirit” (8:4 [6]). They will suffer no dishonor by being treated in this way, however, since they will be introduced because they are the highest expression and realization of some phenomenon, “prime witnesses in the great hearing” (8:4 [6]). *All* the facts of a life or career, in other words, do not have the same value. The historian selects those that are especially revealing of worldviews and mentalities.

As understanding, rather than positive knowledge, is the goal—insight rather than accumulation of information—cultural history does not aim to gather up all that can be and placing emphasis again thus “does not!” in antiquarian studies significantly, it “highlights connection with our own spirit result of affinity or as a side” (8:4 [6]). Burckhardtian modesty is the in *The Civilization of the West* the last word of the introduction ("Nichtphilologe")—is it taken that “this course has the ship off to be anything else, and the scholar and fellow student of truth, but a constant return of reappropriation. The teach a few philological slips his teacher, moreover, to inspiration on their own, which reading the ancient sources and day historical and antiquarian means of cultivation and art.

In the year 1872, as Prussia and then the French with G. B. de la Croix, Burckhardt’s emphasis on “the culture for the history of events, mediatization of the Prussian nation of the inanity of patriotic creative reminder of the insign in the eyes of contemporariness. (In *The Cultural History of the Peloponnesian War and* and for the future destiny of a looked, Burckhardt devoted
gather up all that can be known about a topic. “It proceeds by grouping items and placing emphasis according to the proportional significance of the facts.” It thus “does not have to stamp out all sense of proportion as is so often the case in antiquarian studies and in critical-historical research” (8:4 [6]). Most significantly, it “highlights those facts which can establish a genuine inner connection with our own spirit, and to which we can relate in a real way either as a result of affinity or as a result of contrast and opposition. The rubbish is left aside” (8:4 [6]). Burkhardt insisted that works of cultural history have a continuous formative and educational function rather than the one-time function of adding to the store of scientific knowledge or of laying the groundwork for specialized studies. They can, indeed must, for that reason be constantly re-read, like works of literature. He likewise disclaimed any intention of saying the last word or providing the final “truth” about the Greeks. The characteristic Burkhardtian modesty motif that we found in both The Age of Constantine and the The Civilization of the Renaissance—the insistence on the essayistic character of his work and the representation of the ideal reader as a cultivated layman (“Nichtphilologe”)—is taken up once more. The very first sentence proclaims that “this course has the character of an experiment ("Probestück") and will never be anything else, and that the teacher here is and will always remain also a learner and fellow student” (8:1 [3]). In other words, there is no closure, no truth, but a constant rethinking and revising of views, an uninterrupted work of reappraisal. The teacher is a “Nichtphilologe, who may well have made a few philological slips here and there” (8:1 [3]), and the intended reader is likewise a Nichtphilologe, “any humanistically educated layperson” (“jeder humanistisch Gebildete”) (8:6 [8]). It is one of the most important aims of the teacher, moreover, to inspire students with the desire to continue the investigation on their own, which all are capable of doing by simply reading and re-reading the ancient sources. “Scholarship is well taken care of by our present-day historical and antiquarian literature; we, in contrast, advocate study as a means of cultivation and a source of joy for a lifetime” (8:8 [9]).

In the year 1872, as Prussia marked its military victories over the Austrians and then the French with the founding of the Second German Empire, Burkhardt’s emphasis on “the constant” element in history, his undisguised disdain for the history of events, must have been understood by his audience as a repudiation of the Prussian national historians’ emphasis on state power, a judgment of the inanity of patriotic celebrations of momentary triumphs, and a provocative reminder of the insignificance, over the long term, of individual events that in the eyes of contemporaries enjoy the semblance of world-shattering importance. (In The Cultural History of Greece itself, although the significance of both the Peloponnesian War and Alexander’s conquests for the culture of the polis and for the future destiny of Hellenic culture as a whole is by no means overlooked, Burkhardt devoted not a line to narrating either.) Unlike political his-
tory, with its focus on acts and events, cultural history, as Burckhardt understood it, raises the reader (or listener) above the immediate and the momentary, opens up a wider and longer perspective, and effectively distinguishes the reflective man or woman of culture ("der Bewusstes") from the unreflective, un-self-conscious barbarian ("der Barbar als ein Unbewusster") (8:11 [12]), imprisoned in his immediate world of beliefs, passions, and material needs. The implication that the historical awareness cultural history provides is an essential attribute of the educated and civilized citizen corresponds closely to the view prevalent in the Basel patriciate, that government cannot be entrusted to the mass of the people but must be the affair of those whom a broad humanistic education has taught to rise above the immediate and gain a larger and more general vision of the whole—those, Burckhardt would say, whom the striving to obtain "as full a vision as possible of the continuity of world history" ("das Bild von der Kontinuität der Weltentwicklung in sich so vollständig zu ergänzen als möglich") (8:11 [12]) has released from the blinkers of preoccupation with the here and now. The kind of reading of the sources that cultural history requires, Burckhardt insisted, is beyond the power of anyone who does not have a sense of identity with them as well as of estrangement from them, who has allowed himself to be spoiled by newspapers and titillated by modern literature ("which speaks so much more directly to our nerves" (8:7 [9])), and who can no longer "see with the eyes of the Greeks and speak with their expressions." For "everything that is of the present moment engages with the material in us, with our interests, whereas the past has at least the potential to engage with the spiritual in us, with our higher interest" (8:7 [9]).

Toward the end of his Introduction, having emphasized his own view that the study of antiquity means first and foremost reading and constantly re-reading the ancient texts and drawing from them ever new understandings, Burckhardt turned a critical eye on the place occupied by the ancient Greeks in the contemporary world and, in particular, in contemporary German education:

After Winckelmann, Lessing and the Voss translation of Homer the feeling arose that the German spirit and the Greek spirit are united by a bieros gamos (sacred marriage) in a special relationship and in a mutual understanding unknown to any other people of the modern West. Goethe and Schiller were classical in their being.

As a result of this, in part, there was a renewal and deepening of philological study in schools and universities and also a conviction that classical antiquity is the indispensable foundation of any study whatsoever. This conviction was held differently and more deeply than had been the case since the Renaissance.

Along with it, however, there occurred the enormous expansion of research and scholarship devoted to the ancient world with which we are now familiar. The monuments of Egypt and Assyria, the prehistoric remains of Europe, the constitution of a new science of ethnography, research into the origins of the human species and of these things commence in the comer of the larger field. In addition, this deeply work, e. t. -... cate their lives to it a search institutions and the like.

In our Gymnasium boys from the cultivation of primary instruments of study and the like.

After graduation follows. Apart from this it is necessary to say what part they will play within about three months, to which they learned when they learned and at the vocabulary. Study and the like.

From all this a distinction and the subsequent development and this could end one.

Let our entire effort to learn of ancient Greek culture.

In sum, students—and of Greece will provide the teacher's purpose is diametrically opposed to that of the universities in Germany. The accumulation of data and the creation of critical methods of study and cultivated human beings is part of what we presently.

If we wish to learn from them as they truly we, then adapted to our own current modernity. Greece propagated in school.

Burckhardt's view, by firmness and we intend to deal (8:10 [11]). Burckhardt ran his course in the "General Education," four major sections ("Theology, Religion and Ritual ")

Ever since the great dev...
human species and of language, the rise of comparative language studies—all these things commanded attention; classical Greece found itself relegated to a corner of the larger field occupied by all those other interests.

In addition, this development was accompanied by a specialization of scholarly work, each ancillary branch of which required that many researchers dedicate their lives to it and that the state provide unconditional support for research institutions and collections.

In our Gymnasiums “higher education—so it is has been said—educates boys from the cultivated classes to be professors of philology.”* One of the primary instruments of this education was and still is the Greek language.

After graduation from the Gymnasium, however, a familiar process regularly follows. Apart from the professional philologists, the others—we will not venture to say what percentage of them—abandon the ancient authors. First, within about three months, they forget the artful metrics of the tragic choruses, which they learned with so much effort, then one after another, the verb forms, and finally the vocabulary. Many are glad to get it all out of their minds and do so deliberately. Study and life make other demands on them.

From all this a distorted relationship has developed between the Gymnasium and the subsequent development of young people’s minds as it actually occurs, and this could end one day in a catastrophe.

Let our entire effort aim, as far as our feeble means allow, at keeping the love of ancient Greek culture alive (8:9–10 [11]).

In sum, students—and readers—should not expect that the cultural history of Greece will provide them with a professional training or expertise, for the teacher’s purpose is diametrically opposed to that of the majority of his colleagues in Germany. The aim of the course, and of the book, is not Wissenschaft, the accumulation of data about every aspect of the ancient world or the communication of critical methods of verifying and evaluating such data, it is not the creation of professors of philology, but Bildung, the formation of thoughtful and cultivated human beings and citizens through reconnection with a past that is part of who we presently are.

If we wish to learn from our study of the Greeks, however, we must strive to see them as they truly were, and not as we have imagined them. Honesty, as well as genuine piety, requires that we not construct an idealized antiquity adapted to our own current needs and desires. For that reason, the image of Greece propagated in schools since the end of the eighteenth century must, in Burckhardt’s view, be firmly rejected. “There will be no transfiguring of antiquity and we intend to deal mercilessly with the prettifications of its devotees” (8:10 [11]). Burckhardt reiterated the position laid out in the Introduction to his course in the “General Evaluation of Greek Life,” which sums up its first four major sections (“The Greeks and their World of Myth,” “State and Nation,” “Religion and Ritual,” and “Telling the Future”):

Ever since the great development of German humanism in the previous century, people thought they knew all about the Greeks. In the bright glow of their
warlike heroes and citizens, of their art and poetry, of their beautiful country and climate; they were held to have been happy. Schiller's poem “The Gods of Greece” gathered the whole supposed situation up in a single image, which has still not lost its magical power. At the very least, people were convinced that the Athenians of the Age of Pericles must have lived a life of pure delight, year in, year out. This is one of the greatest frauds ever perpetrated by the historical judgment and it was the more difficult to resist as it was put forward with innocent conviction. People simply did not hear the screaming protest of the entire literary tradition (9:343 [86]).50

In The Cultural History of Greece Burckhardt comes to terms both with the dreams and enthusiasms of his own education and youth, and with an idealized vision of the city-republic that was part of the ideology not only of his compatriots but of many of his contemporaries throughout Europe. All the issues that concerned him as a Baseler and a citizen of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century are taken up and examined through the lens of antiquity. Getting Greece “straight” meant at the same time getting history straight and doing away with the idea that it consists of a long journey from paradise lost to paradise regained; it meant casting a sober look on the repressive potential of the state as manifested in the ancient polis; it meant measuring the effects of democracy on the state, the individual, and culture. Above all, it meant reaffirming Herder’s vision of the nation as “a distinctive civilization, which is the product of its unique history, culture, and geographical profile,”51 and to which the state is, in some measure, incidental, even dangerous, against both the liberal-democratic understanding of the state as a civil polity based on consent and law and the prevailing Prussian view of the nation as finding its highest realization in the state.

Whatever his reservations about the views of his contemporary Fustel de Coulanges on the origins of the polis, Burckhardt was in basic agreement with his politically conservative French colleague on the role of religion and myth as the cement that binds the members of a political community together.52 Though Fustel’s now classic study of La Cité antique appeared in 1864, it came to Burckhardt’s attention fairly late. Nevertheless, it was read attentively by him,53 and it must have been read with sympathy. Hostile as he was to the radical Grote, Burckhardt can only have welcomed a history that not only did entirely without stories of battles, wars, and the actions of individual heroes—and that also virtually ignored contemporary academic scholarship in favor of the ancient texts54—but quite clearly rooted the state in a shared system of beliefs, rather than in a constitution, and linked the long process of its decline to the rise of democracy, rationalism, and critical philosophy. One of the leitmotifs of The Cultural History of Greece is identified in a remark the historian made in 1883 to Max Allois: “With age I become more and more ‘one-sided’ in certain views, among them that in Greece the day of decline dawned with the arrival of democracy” and that it is a few decades longer than the product of democracy.

To Burckhardt, as to many others, it is what destroys the polis—myth, according to Burckhardt, and the core of the political community. In any case, and his book, Of Oceanus of that world” (1868), “the great and high-dread Jakob Heinrich Overbeck—after it lost its reality even claimed to be dead—quiet commerce with the Greek gods were widely

Because it remains possible for works of visual and verbal commentary, into belief—according to the profane, the sacred, and the worldly.

So, for instance—the gods—and whether or not it is the product of democracy.
Poetry, of their beautiful country.

Schiller's poem "The Gods of the Greeks as a single image, which has the highest, people were convinced that lived a life of pure delight, yearning perpetuated by the historical chasm as it was put forward with inno-

mocracy" and that it is only because the great accumulated energy survived for a few decades longer that it became possible to create the illusion of its being the product of democracy.55

To Burckhardt, as to Fustel, demythologizing is not the beginning of culture but the beginning of the end of culture, or at least of a certain kind of culture; it is what destroys the unity of a culture and a political community. For it is myth, according to Burckhardt, that was the core of Greek life, the core of the polis, and the core of the culture. With the decline of myth came the decline of the polis and the decline of a culture that was sustained by and rooted in a political community. It was certainly by design that Burckhardt began his course, and his book, with an account of Greek myth—"the true spiritual Oceanus of that world" ("der wahre geistige Okeanos dieser Welt") (Introduction, 8:5 [7]), "the great spiritual foundation of national life" ("der grosse geistige Lebensgrund der Nation") (8:27 [22]), the "general precondition of Greek existence" ("eine allgemeine Voraussetzung des griechischen Daseins") (8:32 [25])

For Burckhardt—who is faithful in this respect to the romantic tradition established by Herder and continued by Ranke—Greek myth is popular, profoundly anchored through "its 'voice,' the ancient epic" (8:26–27 [21]), in the minds and hearts of the people. It is not something prescribed for the people from the outside or imposed as a set of sacred statutes, it is not an ideology or a constitution or a religious dogma but "a product of the people's own creative power. The Greek gods arise out of the vision of the entire people and are, for that reason, an idealized mirror-image of the nation" (9:15, 22). The Greeks did not think of them as remote from worldly life and experience. Some families even claimed to be descended from gods or epic heroes (8:41–42 [32]) and a quiet commerce with the gods never completely ceased (8:50 [35]). Certain nature gods were widely thought to be still active in the world. Theocritus's shepherds were afraid of Pan as of a power that was always close by and might manifest itself at any moment (a possibility vividly evoked in a number of paintings by Burckhardt's fellow citizen, contemporary, and—until they quarreled in 1869—friend and protégé, the artist Arnold Böcklin). There was great interest in identifying the geographical sites of episodes from myth and epic. The world of myth, in sum, is whole, and there is no division in it between the sacred and the profane, the transcendent and the immanent, the otherworldly and the worldly.

Because it remains popular and whole, myth is expressed only concretely, in works of visual and verbal art, and is innocent of the division into story and commentary, into belief and systematic theology, that occurred in Christianity, for instance—according to Burckhardt's colleague in theology at Basel, Franz Overbeck—after it lost its initial popular momentum (8:28–29 [21–23]). Correspondingly, myth has no priesthood to explain and interpret it (9:115, 140).
On the contrary, it is resistant to history, which it tends to absorb and reshape according to its own laws and traditions (8:34–36 [26–28], 10:398–400), as well as to all attempts at interpretation. “At the peak of their powers, the Greeks did not want to interpret their myths but to preserve and glorify them” (9:59). The shaping power of mythical construction was far more important to them than any factual, positive origin; the story or representation was what counted, not a particular reality or referent. It was only in the eyes of people who did not share in the world of myth that the story appeared as a covering or garment to be removed as quickly as possible so that the “facts” might be laid bare. Not

till much later did allegorical readings of myth’s decline (9:64) like those of modern scholarship feel “not called upon to explore, in as much as we purposely wanted to forget the rationalism which turned them into mere stories and symbols” (9:30). Between myth and modern, rationalist or romantic, different worlds and discourses can only take the place of one another.

Philosophy and scholarship on myth, to the Greeks, “offered to the world philosophy” and took a different form of knowledge and view of nature, geography, history, and his world of gods” (“8:34–36 [26–28]”). “competitors and deadly enemies of myth and its myth and provide it with an introduction. A major aim is to be remembered, was that verification or criticism of subject matter is the “core of the values and ways of life of Greek institutions, not those mythical and historical ones”. Greek culture corresponded to the introduction between culture and institutions. The greatest of

until much later did interpretation creep into Greek culture, in the form of allegorical readings or of historicizing rationalizations, and that was a clear sign of myth's decline (9:60–61). For that reason, the efforts of Georg Friedrich Creuzer and Carl Otfried Müller to interpret the Greek myths with the help of modern scholarship defined, for Burckhardt, a domain of learning that he felt “not called upon to penetrate” and that he claimed would always be difficult to explore, in as much as ancient myth is the product of a people “which obviously wanted to forget the original meanings of its mythological figures, and whose symbolism thus became, or always was, a naive and unselfconscious one” (9:30). Between myth and its scientific interpretation, whether ancient or modern, rationalist or romantic, there is an unbridgeable gap. They belong to different worlds and different ways of thinking. In the world of myth, interpretation can only take the form of another myth.

Philosophy and scholarship are in fact “the enemies and rivals” of myth, for myth, to the Greeks, “offered a powerfully expressed vision of the world in place of philosophy” and took the place of knowledge in that it was itself the original form of knowledge and “contained in itself, in wonderfully symbolical garb, nature, geography, history, even religion and a cosmogony” (10:282). Already in Heraclitus, according to Burckhardt, “we find a definite hatred of Homer and his world of gods” (10:297, 10:301). It is the artists and the poets—the “competitors and deadly enemies of exact knowledge”—who are the friends and allies of myth and it is “art and poetry that consistently give expression to myth and provide it with ever new offspring” (10:283).

Though history, along with philosophy, is here apparently opposed to myth, it is a certain kind of history, a kind of history with which Burckhardt himself has a quarrel. The sympathy with which myth is treated throughout The Cultural History of Greece and the author’s relative coolness to philosophy (despite the engaging portraits of certain philosophers) call to mind Burckhardt’s own frequently repeated protestations that he has no head for philosophy and that his bent is toward the concrete, the historical, the telling of stories. In fact, the discussion of myth and its relation to history, philosophy, and scholarship is closely related to the argument concerning cultural history developed in the Introduction. A major advantage Burckhardt claimed for cultural history, it will be remembered, was that its validity is not directly dependent on the kind of verification or criticism to which individual facts must be subjected, since its subject matter is the “constant,” not the singular; the typical, not the particular; the values and ways of looking at the world that lie behind specific incidents or institutions, not those incidents and institutions themselves. The opposition of mythical and historical ways of thought and composition in the discussion of Greek culture corresponds closely to the opposition in the methodological Introduction between cultural history and the history of events and particular institutions. The greatest obstacle to exact historical science among the Greeks,
we are told, was "their incorrigible imprecision and indifference to exactness." They are wonderfully objective; however, "their objectivity concerns not the materially exact establishing of individual facts but the inner significance of these, their general human or national content" (10:398–99). Thus their oral historical tradition was constantly being revised in the manner and direction of myth, that is to say, toward the "charakteristisch-typisch" rather than the "exact." That is the basis, Burckhardt observes, of the much discussed difference between Herodotus and Thucydides (a classic topos of historiographical reflection to which Creuzer had contributed an important essay at the beginning of the century). Whereas Herodotus creates out of oral stories that are sometimes quite far removed from the source they purportedly refer to, Thucydides works either from documentary evidence or from immediate eyewitness accounts (10:399).

Burckhardt goes on to offer a justification of the "mythicizing" historiography of Herodotus in terms that unmistakably recall the justification of his own practice of cultural history in the Introduction:

Whoever has once come to know this typical-mythical form of narrative often gives up every attempt to recount what literally happened. . . . But the contempt with which contemporary critical erudition regards the anecdotal—which it declares completely without value and unworthy of scholarly attention in comparison with the communication of actual information—seems to us not very appropriate. For one is obliged, whether one wants to or not, to sift and sort through that very anecdotal material, and perhaps in the end it is the facts that are mere debris. Are all those histories, which are often all we have from a particular time, no longer to be viewed as history? History in the usual sense, they assuredly are not, since we cannot learn from them what happened at a particular time, in a particular place, as a result of the action of a particular person. But they do indeed constitute in some measure a historia altera, an imagined history that tells us what human beings were thought to be capable of and what was characteristic of them. We may well be directed by our education to value the exact and see no salvation outside of it; the Greeks, on the other hand, seek the typical and the expression of the typical is the anecdote, which is always true in general and yet never was true on any particular occasion. In that sense the first book of Herodotus, for instance, remains eternally true, even though not much of it would be left if one took away the typical from it (10:399–400).

To be sure, Burckhardt was well aware of the differences between the mythicizing history of the Greeks and modern cultural history, not least the fact that the ancient myths became the possession of an entire people, whereas modern cultural history remains the product of an individual vision of the past. Nevertheless, in important respects mythicizing history and cultural history sustain a common front against positive, scientific, or scholarly history. Both are closer, not only in their methods but in their goals, to poetry and art than to philosophy and science. Strikingly, the study of ancient myth as practiced by Burck-
vision and indifference to exactness.”

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of ancient myth as practiced by Burck-
hardt’s fellow Base ler, Johann Jacob Bachofen, had also given rise, as we saw in
chapter 8, not so much to “scientific” understanding of myth as to something
like another version, or reenactment, of myth.

The power and unity of myth are inseparably related to the power and unity
of the community whose members share that myth: the polis. As long as the
polis is thriving, state, religion, and culture are virtually inseparable in it; only
in its decline do they drift apart. The design of The Cultural History of Greece
reveals Burckhardt’s double intention of providing a systematic account of the
polis (sections 1–4), culminating in the long eighty-page section 5 entitled “To-
ward a General Judgment of Greek Life” (“Zur Gesamtbilanz des griechischen
Lebens”), and a diachronic account of its “grandeur et décadence” as we pass from
the heroic age that preceded the polis to the Alexandrian and Hellenistic age
by which it was overtaken.59

An epigraph from the inscription on the portal of Hell at the beginning of
Book III of Dante’s Inferno—“per me si va nella città dolente”—stands as a warn-
ing at the entrance to the section of volume I of Burckhardt’s book entitled
“The Polis,” giving clear notice of the author’s intention to avoid “Schönfärberei,”
the whitewashing or prettying up of historical reality and the idealization of
the ancient polis characteristic, in his view, in their different ways, of German
humanists and English radicals, of Goethe and Grote. This will not, the
reader is advised, be a celebratory account of the ancient polis. It will tell of
the violence by which it came into existence as an organized state, of the violence
it consistently—and increasingly—exercised both on its citizens and on its
neighbors, and of the enormous sacrifice of human happiness and freedom it
exacted, even in its heyday, as the price of its greatness and its achievements in
art and literature. From the total picture will emerge a Schopenhauerian view
of life as rarely happy, redeemed only by the seemingly inexhaustible creative
energies of human beings and their realizations in art, and a dark, deeply un-
Rankean view of history itself as a vale of tears, in which every achievement of
culture is paid for by untold suffering and in which the conflicting values and
claims of individual development and community cohesion, reflection and be-
lief, personal freedom and state power, cosmopolitan humanism or universalism
and intense national identification or patriotism are rarely, if ever, reconciled.40
Implicitly, Burckhardt’s account of the Greek poleis challenged Ranke’s optimis-
tic belief that the development of strong, unified national states as the re-
positories and champions of popular cultures ensured the enrichment and con-
solidation of all of them. War to the death, not the balance of power, was the
norm for the poleis in Burckhardt’s account of them. (See plate 4: Arnold
Böcklin, Kennturenkampf.)

The founding of the state, Burckhardt related, is always represented as in-
stantaneous, not the result of an evolution (8:62 [43]). It is, in effect, a tra-
umatic birth, “the decisive experience in the entire existence of a population”
(8:69 [49]). The radical and painful transformation of traditional tillers of the
soil into citizens marks the passage from a kind of prehistory to history. By an act of will, loose, “natural” or “organic” communities are shaped into a single state which recreates its members as free and equal citizens, requires the identification of each individual will with that of the whole, and tolerates no deviation, no difference, no independence, within or without. It is at least arguable that the ancient polis, as described in The Cultural History of Greece, represents in many respects, for Burckhardt, the very essence of the state, the state in its perfect state, so to speak, and the focus, therefore, of his meditations on the state—just as, shockingly no doubt from the standpoint of modern idealizers of the polis (but not from that of the Ancients themselves, Burckhardt claims), Sparta, where “the people is an army and the state an armed camp” (8:109), is represented as the essence or perfect model (“die vollendetste Darstellung”) of the polis (8:94).

It was not unusual in Burckhardt’s day, as we saw, to compare the Greek polis and the Swiss cantons or the city-states of modern Europe. Burckhardt insisted, in contrast, that those seemingly similar political formations are fundamentally different. If anything, Burckhardt’s poleis resemble the new nationalist states of Europe rather than the late medieval city-states or the Swiss cantons. Both in their origins and in their fundamental ideology the ancient poleis should be sharply distinguished, Burckhardt declared, from the city-republics of the Middle Ages, to which they bear only a superficial resemblance. The latter are “essentially something different—namely particular, more or less emancipated parts of previously existing empires” (8:76 [55]). They are individuated pieces broken off from larger wholes, whereas the polis is the culmination of a process of absorption, integration, and, where it encounters resistance, destruction of smaller units. Moreover, the Church, which hovered over all the European city-republics and empires, drawing them together like a cloak spread over them, has no equivalent in antiquity (8:76 [55]). On the contrary, religion is not an autonomous force in the polis; it is an integral part of it. In fact, the only religion in each polis is the religion of the polis. “The polis was basically the Greek’s religion” (8:80 [58]). Similarly, there is no conception of a natural law claiming universal validity. “There are no human rights in antiquity, not even in Aristotle” (8:74 [53]). Law, like religion, is an integral part of each polis but it affects only the members of that polis, no one else—not members of other poleis and not those within the polis (such as slaves or residents) who are not citizens. “Nomos, which embraces both the laws and the constitution,” is seen as “a higher objective instance that is not satisfied—as in the modern world—merely to protect and tax the individual and sustain military service, but instead claims to govern all individual existence and will, and to be the very soul of the whole. In the most elevated statements, law and constitution are praised as the invention and gift of the gods, the very character of the city and the preserver of its virtue” (8:82 [59]).

The laws of each poleis, and each one looks to and threat to itself. With law, the Greek poleis are not each other more than the means for them to cooperate or to defend themselves against. Finally, among the influences which precedes the state. It can republics (such as Basel), the exercise of every virtue of culture stand in the standards of productions by far from the things that belong not to the domain (8:77 [55]). Only of the reservation that “he who is happiest and to which he feels gratitude and loyal to go about all his life.” In contrast, from the whole is held to precede or clan (8:77 [55]).

In modern times, if we is essentially the individual as he needs it to be, he develops his individual to achieve this goal, he feels gratitude and loyalty to go about all his life. In contrast, from the whole is held to precede or clan (8:77 [55]).

The most terrible birth is to be the Eins und Alle, the lives of all its citizens, the moment he no longer inheres in the various constraints the various constraints the various constraints of political man like a tail.

The time when people in small districts [Gegen- cent; it had been not
The laws of each polis, in sum, are viewed as part of the very being of that polis, and each one looks on others as an absolutely alien existence, a challenge and threat to itself. With neither a common religion, nor a notion of universal law, the Greek poleis are lined up more starkly and uncompromisingly against each other than the medieval city-republics ever were. It is virtually impossible for them to cooperate or confederate. “Since the polis is the highest power and the true religion of the Hellenes, the struggles of the poleis to promote or defend themselves have all the frightful horror of religious wars” (8:85 [61]). 64 Finally, among the inhabitants of the European city-republics the individual precedes the state. It cannot be said of the citizen of one of the modern city-republics (such as Basel) that he “realizes all his talents and finds occasion for the exercise of every virtue in and through the state” or that “all spirit and all culture stand in the strongest possible relation to the polis, so that the highest productions by far of the poetry and art of the age of greatest cultural flowering belong not to the domain of private enjoyment but to the sphere of public life” (8:77 [55]). Only of the citizen of the ancient polis could it be said without any reservation that “his ‘Vaterstadt’ (patris) is not simply the home-town where he is happiest and to which he is drawn by homesickness, not simply the city to which, despite its faults, he feels proud to belong, but a higher, divinely powerful being” (8:77 [56]). Burckhardt subscribed explicitly to the radical distinction drawn by Benjamin Constant and, before him, by Montesquieu between the ancient and the modern worlds:

In modern times, if we discount philosophical and other kinds of blueprints, it is especially the individual who defines the state, and who demands that it be as he needs it to be. What he asks of it in fact is only security, so that he can develop his individual energies and capacities to the maximum. In order to achieve this goal, he is prepared to make well calculated sacrifices in return, but feels gratitude and loyalty to the state to the very degree that it leaves him alone to go about all his other business without interference. The Greek polis, in contrast, starts from the whole that is held to precede the part; that is, the whole is held to precede the individual human being and the individual family or clan (8:77 [55]). 65

The most terrible birth pangs accompany the construction of this state that is to be the “Eins und Alles” (8:60 [42], 9:314 [64], the alpha and omega, of the lives of all its citizens, and that becomes “a fearful threat to any citizen the moment he no longer identifies totally with it,” since it wields without any constraint the various instruments of coercion at its disposal (dishonor and public stigmatization [Atimie”), exile, and death) (8:80). Burckhardt describes the rise of political man like a fall from innocence.

The time when people lived according to country ways [kómedon], sometimes in small districts [Gaunen] of seven or eight villages, had been . . . more innocent; it had been necessary to defend oneself by arms against brigands and