

INTRODUCTION



Why do we need another biography on Gustav Stresemann? His positive image appears almost indestructible and already set in stone. He has long since arrived in the Valhalla of great Germans and nearly stands as an unassailable historical monument. What is left to say about such a familiar, well-researched and widely appreciated figure?

The debate over whether Stresemann remained an unrepentant monarchist or became a reformed republican has long been forgotten.¹ Today, neither scholars and politicians nor the public at large question his wholehearted commitment to the parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Republic.² There is general agreement that he carved out an impressive career from the Berlin “pub milieu” to become chancellor of the German Reich. In so doing, he constantly developed and matured as a human being after the highs and lows (in particular, during World War I and the revolution of 1918/19) of his life, according to widespread opinion. Thus, the incorrigible monarchist evolved into a republican in an exemplary fashion—first by reason, then by conviction, and, finally, as a matter of heart.

He became a key policymaker in the new democratic state in the realms of both domestic and foreign policy, and the ingenious mastermind of the German People’s Party (Deutsche Volkspartei, DVP), which he (almost) transformed into a pillar of the republic. As one of the most important members of the Reichstag, he shaped political culture and ensured the continued existence of the republic in 1923 in his capacity as the youngest Reich chancellor. Almost all scholarly and journalistic publications refer to the years between 1923 and 1929, when he was foreign minister, as the “Stresemann era.”

If that were not enough, he also initiated the rapprochement between Germany and France and integrated the Weimar state into the international community as an equal partner state by signing the Locarno Treaties and securing Germany’s entry to the League of Nations—despite substantial opposition inside and outside of Germany. His 1926 Nobel Peace Prize was thus well deserved. His untimely death in 1929 was a great loss not only for his family and friends, but

Notes from this chapter begin on page 11.

also for the republic and the whole of Europe. “Weimar’s greatest statesman,” who was also a great European, had died far too early.³

There is also little cause for further studies based on new source material.⁴ Documents that could contradict or add to Stresemann’s positive image have not been forthcoming. Arguably, there is little need for them, given the more than sixty thousand pages of Stresemann’s papers (and additional material provided by his son Wolfgang Stresemann for historical research), the vast files from his official positions, and considerable journalistic work.⁵ Even Stresemann’s deepest personality traits have seemingly been uncovered and every aspect of his private life already revealed. So why another biography? Are there any new findings, approaches or perspectives? The answer to this question is an emphatic yes.⁶

The abundance of knowledge, the seeming certainty of judgment, the almost unanimous research results, the unambiguously positive assessment of Stresemann both as a politician and a human being positively invites deconstruction and offers several (as yet unused) opportunities. A new, critical biography can build upon the existing scholarship without repeating the chronology of Stresemann’s seemingly straightforward (and successful) path from growing up the son of a beer merchant to becoming a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Instead, it can experiment on the basis of empirically sound facts and explore methodological approaches that have not yet been pursued. It can tap into the methods of cultural history to enrich, expand, and question the existing image of Stresemann. It can make greater use of constructivist approaches and ideas to penetrate and deconstruct the seemingly impregnable image of the “good” Stresemann. And it can specifically employ intensive interpretations and thick descriptions,⁷ investigate additional areas (such as economic and social politics, culture) in depth, and incorporate new types of source material to allow the thick descriptions to be even thicker and to facilitate deconstruction.⁸

A new biographical interpretation can also take into account different temporal perspectives to give the analysis a greater depth of focus. It can emphasize aspects across time to reveal forward and backward movements or even a permanent stalemate in Stresemann’s life without becoming mired in the traditional chronology. In so doing, it can construct an image of Stresemann that has hitherto largely remained unknown.

On an “Alternative” Biography

Most previous biographies have constructed a “purposeful” course in Stresemann’s life, a seemingly straightforward path that, despite several diversions, maintained a clear consistency and an intrinsically meaningful trajectory toward an end destination. This successful life reached its culmination in the middle of the Weimar period with Stresemann’s transformation into a democrat, his

successful politics of European rapprochement, and, finally, his last years until his death. This biography, however, will tread a new path. It pursues a different approach to describing Stresemann's life, predominantly building upon the thoughts of Pierre Bourdieu, Niklas Luhmann, and Henning Luther. In so doing, it aims to advance biographical construction to a new level.

Niklas Luhmann proposes regarding biography as "a chain of coincidences that organize themselves into something that gradually becomes less and less flexible."⁹ Consequently, a life has no one-dimensional, direct, and meaningful timeline shaped by the biographical subjects themselves that can be decoded or constructed in order to find its true meaning. The only possible continuity of a human being's life consists at best "in the sensitivity to coincidence"¹⁰—nothing more. To follow Luhmann's theory is to accept that there was no meaningful path in Stresemann's life and, as a consequence, that it is pointless to look for such a "common thread."

According to this approach, a biography would have to analyze life's numerous facets and aspects as single events with no possibility (but also no desire) to integrate them into a meaningful whole, precisely because neither the meaning nor the whole exist. According to Luhmann, and with him Pierre Bourdieu, this is the only way to avoid the "biographical trap"¹¹—the construction of a life of such seeming inherent consistency—that almost all previous biographies on Stresemann have fallen into.¹²

On the other hand, a life without meaning can hardly be a template for a biography. Not only would it be difficult to read, such an approach would also defy the narrative model that historiography in general and therefore every biography is bound to. What is more, it would not be compatible with common human experience of real life.¹³

A new biography must overcome this apparent contradiction. It should look for ways to avoid the "biographical trap" yet still provide a structured and readable biography, to give shape to Stresemann's life without (exclusively) drawing on traditional chronology and ignoring contrary aspects and especially the element of chance.

In what follows, three approaches will be briefly presented that, each in their own way, attempt to combine the desire to "construct" a life and find its "meaning" with a recognition of contingency—that is, the elements of "disorder," "coincidence," and "meaninglessness." These three concepts form the methodological foundation of this Stresemann biography.

The first approach is oriented toward biological and psychological considerations that assume something of "normal" human development from childhood to adulthood. Following this concept, what forms the reference point and structural feature of Stresemann's life is the extent to which his existence corresponded with the ideal type of a growing and finally grown-up human being. This constructed ideal type is not a constant across time but must be historicized appropriately.

The second approach is based on the concept of social acceptance and focuses on the social field in which every person lives and acts. It is guided by the question of the extent to which Stresemann was able to establish himself in his social field, to behave accordingly, and to be accepted by this environment. If both Stresemann and those surrounding him shared positive sentiments in this regard, we could speak of a certain internal and external harmony.

A third approach, closely connected to the second, emphasizes a desire Stresemann frequently stressed that dominated his entire life: his ambition to break free from his petit-bourgeois background and climb the social ladder, to get “to the top” and to become a respected middle-class citizen who was economically, socially, culturally, and politically accepted by bourgeois society. Stresemann’s desire for social advancement serves as a guideline and measure of this approach. Thus, his struggle toward and achievement of this objective (which, in Stresemann’s case, was mainly directed toward the society of Imperial Germany) are central to the construction of his life.

Some Remarks on the Category of an “Adult Person”

In general, it is possible and purposeful to base a biography on the constructed model development of a human life, usually from birth, through childhood, youth and adulthood to old age and death.¹⁴ In addition to biological factors that determine this life, we can more or less accurately ascribe mental and social developments and certain dispositions to it, which psychology and general social belief consider appropriate and specific to the respective stages of life.¹⁵

The categories used in this approach correspond to a concept of accepted and widely shared values. They are somewhat stable but can change over time. For instance, model adults in full possession of their physical and mental faculties are expected to shape their lives according to their own ideas and to have a relatively stable perception of the world and of the role they can play within it. These ideas may be dynamic, but they usually do not vary randomly, and they rarely change fundamentally. Adult human beings are therefore expected to reflect on their situation, address it adequately, come to terms with it, and either accept or fight their circumstances.¹⁶

Furthermore, the model assumes that with a certain degree of maturity, individuals no longer randomly change their acceptance of values and norms. Instead, they develop, acquire, and adopt these values and norms through a protracted process, after which they change them only in exceptional cases and under specific circumstances. The attributes of a model adult include, for instance, the sense of responsibility toward oneself and one’s family but also toward one’s job and society, as well as the ability to find and assert one’s own lifestyle inwardly and outwardly.¹⁷

Thus, we must ask how close Stresemann came to this model and how often or for how long he was able to do so. It is important to find out exactly when and in which area or field (political, economic, cultural, personal, etc.) this occurred. Were these periods mirrored by his outer life (his health, politics, economic situation, and family)?

Above all, we must identify Stresemann's guiding values and—once developed—virtually permanent dispositions. Can we trace fundamental deficits, perhaps temporary shifts, dissonances, backward steps, or even gaps?¹⁸ Is it possible to detect serious social (and personal) inconsistencies that Stresemann had to deal with that do not quite correspond to the continuity on which his image is based?

Some Remarks on the Category of Social Acceptance

Every human being is invariably part of, or tied to, certain standards and frameworks of the society he or she lives in. Thus, with regard to Stresemann and his life, we have to examine the extent to which he met the social, political, and economic norms and expectations of his time.¹⁹ Did his life correspond to the ideals of a bourgeois world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (and, if not, for what reasons)? Were there different norms that significantly changed over the course of history or during Stresemann's life? How did Stresemann deal with those changes? Was there any dissonance?

There were also social expectations: what did society—or rather the different societies—expect from him as a social climber, a father and husband, a citizen, a politician, an economic policy maker, and an entrepreneur? To what extent (and when) was Stresemann able to meet these expectations?²⁰ Did he find his way within the complex array of flexible roles required of him, or did he go far beyond them? What were the consequences in his social context and how did that impact him? Was he able to reconcile his own way of life with external expectations?

Stresemann's social and cultural placement—that is, his background—played a key role in this. This touches upon the third approach, which refers to his desire for social advancement, which was in many respects connected to the second and to which I will pay special attention in this biography.²¹

I will argue that Stresemann's life was characterized first and foremost by the fact that he refused the social, political, cultural, and economic status he was born into and wanted to leave it behind at a very early stage. This was not due to pride or arrogance. He valued work and laborers, as well as the lower middle class. Yet he wanted nothing more than to leave the petit-bourgeois milieu of his family. He began working toward that objective in his youth, and it would ultimately shape his life.²²

His desired change of milieu forced him to operate within a new, unfamiliar environment and to move within new circles; he had no experience of these from

the early phases of his socialization. Within these new circles he had to shape his life (perhaps) in a deeply unsettled state, in a personally and socially compatible way. The topos that best describes this situation is that of a “crossover artist”—in this case understood as one who crosses social barriers, boundaries, and limits.²³ All his life, Stresemann had to push himself beyond his limits, to work within the margins, and to overcome the constraints of this status.

After a relatively short time, he was able to live in a new, elevated milieu among successful politicians, businessmen, and *Bildungsbürger*—the German educated bourgeoisie, whose values and ideals were based on classical antiquity. He did not (yet) belong to this milieu and was astutely aware that he would probably never really be a part of it. Thus, he almost always felt insecure and uncomfortable, though throughout his life he tried to adapt and even to conform to it.²⁴ He always had to work on his self-advancement and could not feel “at home” anywhere. It was not easy for him to live a stable, quiet, and secure life. He was always apprehensive of being laughed at or excluded as an outsider. In addition, he felt highly dependent on other people’s judgment. This was certainly no model or “ideal-typical” life in Henning Luther’s sense.²⁵

The question, therefore, is how Stresemann dealt with this deep insecurity. In fact, there were other social climbers in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic struggling with similar problems. In this sense, Stresemann stood paradigmatically for an entire generation of young men.²⁶ Those social climbers from a working-class background who suddenly became ministers in the Weimar Republic, for instance, faced a similar situation. Unlike Stresemann, however, they were firmly embedded in the Social Democratic milieu, which gave them something to hold on to. This certainly gave them an advantage over Stresemann, who did not belong to any stable social/moral milieu.

The question is whether this existence, this constant sensitivity and continuous tendency to doubt himself and others, was a weakness, or whether it could also be a strength by giving Stresemann a keen eye and an outside perspective. Was it, maybe, always both: a weakness and a strength? Did the constant desire to leave his old existence behind or to overcome it, to “arrive” at a new existence, constitute a “common thread” (notwithstanding Luhmann’s and Bourdieu’s arguments), a point of reference for his biography?

In any case, his ambition to climb the social and economic ladder and to become a respected and happy *Bürger* (citizen/townsperson) in what he considered to be a bourgeois society impacted his life more than anything else.²⁷ He hoped to reach this goal in the private sphere, in the public realm, in his economic and political activities, and in his work. His entire life might be summed up by the phrase: “A man wants to move to the top and become a respected *Bürger*.”²⁸

Stresemann’s understanding of “the top” and *Bürgertum* and his concrete utopias related to this *Bürgertum* are as crucial within this framework as the question of whether he was referring to the bourgeoisie of Wilhelmine society or to a lib-

eral bourgeoisie as part of a parliamentary democracy, of whether the bourgeoisie was supposed to be open toward “the Left” or rather “the Right,” and finally of whether Stresemann’s views on this changed over time.²⁹

In this context, Pierre Bourdieu’s theories revolving around the concepts of “habitus,” “social field,” “capital,” and “class” can provide further insights. Bourdieu understands capital as one’s power over specific resources. Economic capital refers to one’s power over money and other economic means. It is, furthermore, an important precondition for acquiring other kinds of capital, for instance, social capital—that is, belonging to a certain social group. Finally, and more importantly for Stresemann’s path, there is cultural capital, which is related to education, and symbolic capital, which refers to the resources used to gain social prestige and social recognition.

In general, all these different kinds of capital have the same value and are exchangeable under certain circumstances. Economic capital can potentially be transformed into social capital and thus into cultural capital. However, this transformation process (especially in relation to cultural capital) is not easy and may sometimes be impossible. Existing capital owners tend to distance themselves from newcomers and impede access to their own group. The struggle to gain admission to one of these milieus is a protracted and sometimes painful one, and the goal might not be reached at all. This was the situation Stresemann had to face all his life.

An individual’s position within the “social field” is determined by all the types of capital a person owns. According to Bourdieu, this field has a sort of “dual existence.” It exists both in the minds of contemporaries and in reality. In this context, the term “habitus” is of major importance. The habitus of a human being, the set of long-term dispositions acquired at an early stage of life, influences and, at the same time, decisively structures his or her perceptions. It helps individuals find their bearings in the existing concrete world and is shaped by certain thought patterns (norms, aesthetic criteria, matters of taste, etc.). Thus, it “preforms” human actions in a certain sense.³⁰

However, the habitus is not hereditary but acquired through socialization, becoming somehow ingrained or second nature. It is “a piece of internalized society whose structures are incorporated by socialization. It guides the agents to practice strategies.”³¹ This implies that Stresemann had to acquire a certain habitus in order to leave behind the (petit-bourgeois) milieu he had been born into and enter a new bourgeois milieu.

However, the wealth, property, and political prestige that Stresemann soon obtained were not enough to allow him to pass as an equal among the bourgeoisie. Not only in early twentieth century Germany were cultural capital and the bourgeois habitus—that is, the possession of education and knowledge, of taste and aesthetic judgment, but also of formal educational qualification or artworks—essential for a person to become “one of them.” Habitus and internalized

cultural capital also consisted of the ability to move and act in “high society” based on a deeply rooted set of cultivated dispositions. As already mentioned, this ability had to be developed over a long-term process of internalization. And this was exactly where Stresemann had his shortcomings.

Taking into account these considerations, Stresemann’s life can be represented less as a straight line than as a Bourdieuan field within which human beings and their lives are placed.³² This field contains three almost equally important factors: time, space, and the acting subject himself. It is not, however, hermetically sealed against the outside world, but permeable. It is situated—or rather it moves—within an environment consisting of this field and its agents, and interacts with them in all aspects of human life. Pictured in this way, Stresemann’s life is embedded in a network of references, phases, and developments at different levels.

How Do These Considerations Affect This Stresemann Biography?

This biography does not focus on Stresemann’s seemingly straightforward trajectory through life or on his political successes. Instead, it places equal emphasis on cultural and economic elements. It reflects on his habitus and its possible changes and explores the social fields in which Stresemann operated. It also acknowledges parallel areas of his life in their own right and does not assume a meaningful context from the outset. It attempts to take coincidence into account.

The factors that influenced Stresemann’s life will largely be described as instances that had latent effects on most of his activities and expressions rather than being deduced from meaningful courses of action or the progress of his political career. This could refer to instances when Stresemann himself believed that all his wishes had come true. Most of all, they do not necessarily have to be the well-known “great events.” For instance, the model “coming of age” may be accompanied by a feeling of harmony and contentment and by social inclusion and acknowledgment.³³

Thus, the course of certain identifiable events (for instance, in politics or economics) cannot automatically be interpreted as necessary steps along a direct path “to the top.” “Descending lines,” or seemingly random, erratic occurrences and chains of events are equally important, even when these are difficult to categorize, cut across other dimensions, and seem to have nothing to do with each other.

From a physician’s perspective, for instance, Stresemann’s life appears as a string of ups and downs in terms of health, clearly heading in the long-term toward a predictable premature death.³⁴ This physical decline contrasts with Stresemann’s apparently unstoppable political success. The only solution is to appreciate and take into account both dimensions: constantly looming death, that is, declining health, and a seemingly unstoppable career, Stresemann’s political rise, and, if appropriate, link the two.

The biography attempts to follow this approach in its arrangement, structure, and style. Throughout the topics investigated, it offers considerations from other contexts, passages of “thick description,” structure-oriented chapters, extensive interpretations of photographs, texts, and primary sources. The style of the text thus corresponds with the non-unilinear biographical approach favored here and, in doing so, fractures the image of a straightforward life trajectory as often as possible. This “collage” places the interpretation of Stresemann’s poems next to his medical history and the analysis of his voice next to the investigation of his relationships and acquaintances. First and foremost: culture, economics, and politics are regarded as equally important—and as interconnected in a multiperspectival way.³⁵

On the Content

Previous literature has mainly concentrated on Stresemann the politician, particularly during the Weimar Republic. The seminal biography by Jonathan Wright, for instance, describes Stresemann’s activities in Saxony, where he spent almost half of his active professional and political career, on only 16 of its 666 pages. That this is disproportionate is self-evident. The question is whether there is, in fact, nothing more to say about the early years of his career and whether such an approach does justice to Stresemann’s entire life (instead of just to his short but—on the surface—brilliant period as a Weimar politician).

Instead of emphasizing the Weimar years to such an extent, this biography pays particular attention to the years in Saxony. These years were of paramount importance for Stresemann not only due to their length but also because it was during this time that he developed core convictions in various matters and started to forge his life.

It also casts doubt on the current interpretation, which allows little room for ambivalence, of Stresemann as a model democratic/republican statesman. Stresemann’s evolution from monarchist to republican is hardly ever questioned today. And yet it should be asked why there is such reluctance to accept ambivalence and why a consistent coexistence of the incompatible, the “simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous” (Ernst Bloch), cannot be admitted. Stresemann certainly came to terms with the Weimar Republic. But that was the only form of allegiance he felt for Weimar. During Imperial Germany, by contrast, he had experienced an unprecedented political rise and the success of his reform policies.

He loved the system of Imperial Germany, and still loved it after the revolution of 1918/19. Stresemann accepted the republic, but his heart still beat for the monarchy throughout his life. He chose to bow to the crown prince rather than agree to strengthen further radical-democratic policies. A consistent democratization of state and society would have required a fervent democrat, which he never became. This has to be closely scrutinized.

There are similar ambivalences regarding Stresemann's obvious inclination toward the military, which always ranked higher in his affections than a functioning democracy. He cherished this secret love even in the Weimar Republic, despite the military's inherently antidemocratic ideas.

Stresemann was not only a politician, but also an economist and lobbyist. He quickly became a rich man. This is another aspect of his life that has to be taken into account. He possessed, to use Bourdieu's terminology, substantial economic capital, particularly during his time in Saxony. We have to investigate how he became rich and how he felt about it, what economic power meant to him, how he reacted to it and made use of it, and whether he tried to transfer it into social and cultural capital. Existing literature offers only incidental answers to these questions.

It is therefore important to overcome an excessively political focus on Stresemann and to take the three spheres of economics, culture, and politics equally into account. In the economic sphere, this approach reveals Stresemann to be a cunning and successful businessman, who often, though not always, operated on the fringes of legality and had the ability to combine politics and business in order to become a bourgeois among other bourgeois. It is paramount to closely analyze Stresemann the legal advisor in order to understand him as the Weimar politician.

Stresemann concentrated, in particular, on the cultural aspects of his bourgeois life, which, given his background, were especially unfamiliar to him. They meant a great deal to him, maybe even more than his political and economic success. He therefore dabbled in writing poems and other pieces and in being a literary connoisseur until the end of his life. Only by taking these activities seriously and analyzing his literary products, by examining how he presented himself as a *Bildungsbürger* and accepting these facets as an important part of his self-image and worldview, by taking into account his wish to be "one of them" in his cultural life, can the full breadth of Stresemann's life be brought to the fore.

On Stresemann as a man of culture, we also have to examine his life from the perspective of gender history: On the one hand, he appears to be a rather soft man, not especially likeable at first glance, apparently happily married, the father of a model family.³⁶ On the other hand, he appears to be a man with a virulent desire for emotional security beyond the family, for instance, within the German people's community or within male societies such as the *Burschenschaften* (fraternities), the Dresden *Liedertafel*, or the Freemasons.

And how did he, as a civilian who had never actively fought in the war, feel during the Weimar Republic as an outsider excluded from the community of "warriors," given the fact that he loved being in male company so much? His attraction to "real" men and to the military may have been attributable to this unfulfilled desire, even during the Weimar Republic. How did this influence his politics?

Part of this set of bourgeois values was his view of women. Despite his liberalism in political and economic spheres, Stresemann favored an image of women that stemmed from the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie and had no place for modern, emancipated women. This is another possible constant of his life. At least verbally, he continued to reproduce (old) bourgeois norms and values during the Weimar Republic. In real life, however, his image of women mirrored a clear tension between modernity, reform-mindedness, and a deep conservatism—a tension that also shaped Stresemann’s activities in other areas.³⁷

Thus, Stresemann’s life was much more colorful and varied and, above all, less straightforward than has previously been described. There are numerous unknown facets that have still not been taken into consideration because they have been unnecessary to supporting the commonly constructed image of him and the purposeful, direct life journey it implies. But these facets are as important as the better-known sides of his character. This is precisely what this biography is about: it aims to break down the seemingly intrinsic cohesion of this popular image of Stresemann, deconstruct it, and add new perspectives.

Notes

1. Three new biographies have been published since 2002: Wright, *Gustav Stresemann: Weimar’s Greatest Statesman*; Kolb, *Gustav Stresemann*; and Birkelund, *Gustav Stresemann: Patriot und Staatsmann*. On this, see Pohl, “Gustav Stresemann: New Literature on the Saxon Syndic and Weimar Politician.”
2. Peter Krüger has written an excellent summary of this position: “Zur europäischen Dimension der Außenpolitik Gustav Stresemanns.”
3. The quote is the subtitle of Jonathan Wright’s biography, Wright, *Stresemann*. On the portrayal of Stresemann as a European, see, among others, Duchhardt, *Europäer des 20. Jahrhunderts: Wegbereiter und Gründer des “modernen” Europa*.
4. Since the mid-1950s Stresemann’s estate has been held by the Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA AA) in Berlin. Almost the entire estate is recorded on microfilm, is easy to purchase, and is available to researchers without restrictions.
5. On this, see the early study by Walsdorff, *Bibliographie Gustav Stresemann*.
6. See Pohl, “Gustav Stresemann: Überlegungen zu einer neuen Biographie”; Pohl, “Gustav Stresemann: A German *Bürger*”; and Pohl, “Gustav Stresemann: Zur Konstruktion einer neuen Biographie.”
7. I understand the term “thick description,” introduced by Clifford Geertz, either as a condensed observation and description of local events during a short, limited period of time (Dresden 1903), or as the condensing of research findings concerning a specific political issue (policy of Locarno); see Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”; Kaschuba, *Einführung in die Europäische Ethnologie*, 252–53.
8. On the current state of biographical research, see the recent Lässig, “Biography in Modern History—Modern History in Biography”; and Lässig, “Die historische Biographie auf neuen Wegen?” There are interesting ideas related to this in Ullrich, “Die schwierige Königsdisziplin.”

9. Luhmann, *Short Cuts*, 32; see also 16: "A biography is a series of coincidences; the continuous lies in the sensitivity to coincidence."
10. *Ibid.*, 16.
11. Bourdieu, "Die biographische Illusion"; Bourdieu, "The Biographical Illusion."
12. See, for instance, Kolb, *Stresemann*, 6–8
13. Henning Luther, "Identität und Fragment."
14. On this, see the studies by Erikson, who paid particular attention to this aspect. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*; Erikson, *Life History and the Historical Moment: Diverse Presentations*.
15. See Peter Loewenberg's psycho-historical approach: Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past*.
16. Henning Luther, "Identität und Fragment."
17. Erikson, *Identität und Lebenszyklus*, 114–16. Contrary to Erikson, this biography is not looking for a binding template. Instead it suggests a sort of screen covering Stresemann's life that might well be vague and diffuse in some respects.
18. Henning Luther, *Identität und Fragment*, 160–82.
19. On this context, see especially Pierre Bourdieu's complete works. For an introduction see Schwingel, *Bourdieu zur Einführung*.
20. On this topic as a whole, see Riesman, *Die einsame Masse*.
21. Previous biographical research has largely ignored this aspect with the exception of the biography by Koszyk, *Gustav Stresemann: Der kaisertreue Demokrat*, who, however, does not systematically pursue this approach.
22. For a recent work on this, see Birkelund, *Stresemann: Patriot und Staatsmann*.
23. Pohl, "Gustav Stresemann: A German *Bürger*," 55; Pohl, "Gustav Stresemann: Überlegungen zu einer neuen Biographie."
24. There is a great deal of evidence for this. For example, one can regard his love of beer halls (and less than elegant wine restaurants), and his wish to be among simple folk (membership in a singing society) within this framework. The same is true of popular poetry and his preference for folk songs.
25. Henning Luther, *Identität und Fragment*.
26. See, on this, Dowe et al., *Parteien im Wandel vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik*. There are hardly any examples of successful women's cohorts in this period.
27. For a summary on *Bürgertum*—the bourgeoisie or middle class in Imperial Germany and in the Weimar Republic—see Lundgreen, *Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des Bürgertums*; also A. Schulz, *Lebenswelt und Kultur*.
28. The German writer Hans Fallada used a part of this sentence as the title of his famous novel *Ein Mann will nach oben* (A man wants to get to the top) from the 1920s.
29. On *Bürgertum* as a cultural phenomenon, see among others Hettling and Hoffmann, *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel*.
30. Schmuhl, "Lebensbedingungen und Lebenslagen von Menschen mit geistiger Behinderung in den v. Bodelschwingschen Stiftungen Bethel seit 1945."
31. Sven Reichardt, "Bourdieu für Historiker? Ein kultursoziologisches Angebot an die Sozialgeschichte," in *Geschichte zwischen Kultur und Gesellschaft*.
32. See Bourdieu, "Social Space and the Genesis of 'Classes.'"
33. Such personal aspects are always difficult to pinpoint. This is particularly true for Stresemann since they can only be addressed based on the source material of his estate. However, it is almost impossible for a biographer to identify what is relevant in this material without being influenced by the suggestions of the estate itself and the intentions of those who created and maintain it. Thus, this biography will also use source material that has been largely ignored by historical researchers—material beyond that written by Stresemann himself—instead of focusing on his own interpretation (what he had written for posterity) in his papers. A good

- example of the more limited approach is the biography by Birkelund, who does not use any source material apart from Stresemann's estate and the documents of the Foreign Office.
34. On this, see the preliminary brief information by his last physician, Zondek, *Auf festem Fuße: Erinnerungen eines jüdischen Klinikers*.
 35. This biography takes into account different social fields at the same time, such as his close environment (family and friends); the wider environment, that is, the general social group he belonged to (petite bourgeoisie) or wanted to belong to (bourgeoisie); and his professional environment (industry); the nation and politics (which he represented as a member of the Reichstag and active politician); and, finally, the "German *Volksgemeinschaft*" (people's community) that he loved and strove to achieve.
 36. On this, see W. Stresemann, *Mein Vater Gustav Stresemann*.
 37. On this, see his telling letter to his female party comrade Dr. Bünger of 11 February 1928, PA AA Berlin, NL Stresemann 228, in which he expresses his views on the women's movement and the role of woman in society in detail. See the section "The System of Bourgeois Values" in chapter 2.