# *Introduction*

JÜRGEN HEIDEKING AND JAMES A. HENRETTA

Transatlantic comparisons in the period from 1750 to 1850 are often limited to the American and French revolutions, and recent bicentennial celebrations of the Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution have reinforced this tendency. Indeed, these two epochal events are the focal points of what R. R. Palmer has called the "age of democratic revolution" and therefore deserve the closest historical scrutiny.[1] However, there is much to be gained by broadening the perspective in order to view these revolutionary upheavals as part of a continuous transformation of Western society and culture. Moreover, Palmer's concept of a transatlantic "democratic revolution" is widely acknowledged to be flawed because terms such as *democratic* and *democracy* do not precisely convey the content and meaning of late-eighteenth-century texts. In fact, as other scholars looked closely at the sources they discovered that the revolutionary mind in America and Europe was deeply affected by republican maxims, principles, and values. Beginning in the 1970s the reconstruction and evaluation of this "republican ideology" became a major task of historians on both sides of the Atlantic. American, British, and French scholars took a leading role in this effort, whereas historians in Germany and other central European countries remained on the sidelines. In Germany the debate on the relationship between republicanism and liberalism, and the crucial importance of these ideologies for understanding the birth of the modern world has only recently begun to inspire research and generate controversy.

To push forward this transcontinental dialog, a German-American conference on "Republicanism and Liberalism in America and the German States, 1750–1850" was convened in 1996. Under the auspices of the

1 R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 3d ed., 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1962).

German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., with additional financial support from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, this conference took place at the University of Wisconsin at Madison on October 3–6, 1996. The task defined for the conference participants was threefold: to take stock of the present state of the debate over the influence of republicanism and liberalism in the revolutionary era; to extend the discussion into the first half of the nineteenth century in order to profit from fascinating new research on subsequent political, social, and cultural developments; and to explore the possibilities of comparative German-American studies, especially in the field of ideas and *mentalités*, from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century. This volume assembles most of the papers delivered at the conference, revised in the light of our discussions.

## I

Bernard Bailyn, Gordon S. Wood, and Pauline Maier initially explored the impact of British opposition ideology – both republican and dissenting Whig – on the American Revolution.[2] Their studies drew in part on the work of J. G. A. Pocock and other scholars, who had traced the course of republican thinking from classical times to Renaissance Italy and from there to early modern Britain.[3] Other historians, among them Joyce Appleby, insisted on the significance of Lockean liberalism during the revolutionary era. Subsequently, scholars have tried to evaluate the relative importance of these intellectual outlooks and traditions in the creation of the American nation, and also to relate them to specific social groups and interests.

In essence, three interpretive models have dominated discussions over the past two decades: (1) British opposition ideology reflecting either a "dissenting Whig" outlook (Bailyn) or a "neoclassical republican"[4] tradition (Wood) strongly influenced the early stages of the American

2 Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1967; reprint, 1992); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1969); Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Great Britain, 1765–1776* (New York, 1972); Robert E. Shalhope, *The Roots of Democracy: American Thought and Culture, 1760–1800* (Boston, 1990).

3 See these works by J. G. A. Pocock: "Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly* 22 (1965): 549–83; *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Republican Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J., 1975); "The Machiavellian Moment Revisited: A Study in History and Ideology," *Journal of Modern History* 53 (1981): 49–72; *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985); and the collection he edited, *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton, N.J., 1980).

4 This term is often used to distinguish eighteenth-century British republican thought (also variously called Old Whig Country, commonwealth, oppositionist, or neo-Harringtonian) from the republicanism of Aristotle and other Greek and Roman writers. The question of how many classical elements still resided in the "neoclassical" tradition is not easy to answer. See Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1992).

Revolution, but in the aftermath of independence it was replaced by a more modern, individualistic, "liberal" ideology. In politics, this transition to a liberal outlook meant that republican government did not rest on the traditional foundations of "civic virtue" and communal morality but rather on institutional mechanisms, such as a functional division of power, checks and balances, and federalism. In particular, the adoption of the U.S. Constitution in 1787–8 signaled the triumph of the modern concept of an "extended republic" with a complex system of representative government over the traditional idea of a small, harmonious republican commonwealth. In economic matters, this ideological transition symbolized a shift from agrarian austerity and self-reliance to competitive individualism and commercialism.[5] (2) Although there were dissenting Whigs and neoclassical republicans in colonial America, the ascendant intellectual tradition was that of Lockean liberalism, especially with respect to property rights (Appleby). The struggle for American "rights" during the revolution further enhanced the significance of Lockean liberalism even as independence resulted in the creation of state governments organized in accord with many traditional republican values. Thus, it happened that republican principles were important with respect to certain issues and in certain settings, whereas liberal ideas were more influential in other respects. The debate over the Constitution in 1787–8 produced a clash between these intellectual currents as Federalists and Anti-Federalists undertook a fundamental re-examination of the nature of American government.[6] (3) Liberalism and republicanism are philosophical constructs or "ideal types"; as such, they do not exactly reflect or correspond to the political and social realities of late-eighteenth-century America. Consequently, although these sets of ideas can be analytically distinguished and described by scholars, the historical actors did not perceive them as separate and competing choices. Instead, the

5 In essence, this was Gordon S. Wood's thesis in *The Creation of the American Republic*, which caused intense discussion and stimulated many new studies. Important early responses include J. R. Pole, "The Creation of the American Republic," *Historical Journal* 13 (1970): 799–803; Robert E. Shalhope, "Towards a Republican Synthesis," *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (1972): 49–80. Ten years later, Shalhope reviewed the course of the debate in "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (1982): 334–56. For another ten-year assessment, see Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism, Liberalism, and Democracy: Political Culture in the Early Republic," in Milton M. Klein et al., eds., *The Republican Synthesis Revisited: Essays in Honor of George Athan Billias* (Worcester, Mass., 1992), 37–90. In 1985 the *American Quarterly* devoted a special issue (vol. 37) to this scholarly debate.

6 See, esp., these works by Joyce Appleby: "Liberalism and the American Revolution," *New England Quarterly* 49 (1976): 3–26; "The Social Origins of American Revolutionary Ideology," *Journal of American History* 64 (1978): 935–58; *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York, 1984); and "Republicanism in Old and New Contexts," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (1986): 20–34.

revolutionary era was characterized by a fusion of republican and liberal ideas.[7] These concepts "were linked and blended" in the minds of early modern individuals whose thinking changed as they attempted to assimilate and manage new phenomena and new events, but who were neither truly classical nor fully modern in their thinking.[8]

With respect to this ongoing debate, the papers and discussions at the conference in Madison tended to support the growing consensus that republicanism and liberalism are best conceived of as "complex webs of ideas" or "languages" and that neither clearly dominated the revolutionary and constitutional discourse.[9] As the scholarly discussion continues, the task will be to assess the proportional share or the specific "mixture" of ideas, concepts, and values from republican and liberal sources.

Moreover, over the past decade the main focus of research has shifted to the early nineteenth century. In *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* Gordon Wood argued that around 1810 the United States was "a giant, almost continent-wide republic of nearly 10 million egalitarian-minded bustling citizens. . . . Americans had become, almost overnight, the most liberal, the most democratic, the most commercially minded, and the most modern people in the world."[10] These claims elicited considerable controversy. Some historians doubted that the social order of colonial British

7 This position was advanced initially by Lance Banning who elaborated it in a number of articles on the American founding period. See, esp., "Republican Ideology and the Triumph of the Constitution, 1789 to 1793," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (1974): 167–88; "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited: Liberal and Classical Ideas in the New American Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (1986): 3–19; "Some Second Thoughts on Virtue and the Course of Revolutionary Thinking," in Terence Ball and J. G. A. Pocock, eds., *Conceptual Change and the Constitution* (Lawrence, Kans., 1988), 194–212; "The Republican Interpretation: Retrospect and Prospect," in Klein et al., eds., *Republican Synthesis*, 91–117. It has now been adopted, in slightly different versions, by many of those working in the field. See Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1980); Isaac Kramnick, "Republican Revisionism Revisited," *American Historical Review* 87 (1982): 629–64; Isaac Kramnick, " 'The Great National Discussion': The Discourse of Politics in 1787," *William and Mary Quarterly* 45 (1988): 3–32; Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1990); John Murrin, "Can Liberals Be Patriots? Natural Rights, Virtue, and Moral Sense in the America of George Mason and Thomas Jefferson," in Robert P. Davidow, ed., *Natural Rights and Natural Law: The Legacy of George Mason* (Fairfax, Va., 1986); James T. Kloppenberg, "The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse," *Journal of American History* 74 (1987): 9–33; Jürgen Heideking, *Die Verfassung vor dem Richterstuhl: Vorgeschichte und Ratifizierung der amerikanischen Verfassung 1787–1791* (Berlin, 1988); Daniel T. Rogers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 11–38; Horst Dippel, "The Changing Idea of Popular Sovereignty in Early American Constitutionalism: Breaking away from European Patterns," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16 (1996): 21–45.

8 Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1995), 215.

9 Ibid., 472n75.

10 Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992), 6–7.

North America had been as hierarchical, patriarchal, and deferential as Wood suggested. Many scholars also took exception to the sweeping character of his depiction of the United States in 1810, especially because it largely ignored the South – where nearly 1.5 million African-American slaves enjoyed neither liberal rights nor commercial opportunities – and any other "dark side" of the American experiment in republican government.[11]

However, Wood's proposition that liberal ideas came to dominate the lives of many whites in the new nation was widely accepted.[12] A number of scholars had already pointed out that the era of the early Republic witnessed many important changes and innovations: the commercialization of agriculture and the first stages of industrialization; the expansion of regional market economies and, thanks to improvements in transportation, the beginnings of a national market; a shift in the aspirations of producers and consumers, many of whom became full-fledged members of a capitalist "market society";[13] the radical individualism of evangelical reform; the democratization of state constitutions and state politics; the growth of activist political parties on the state and national levels; rapid settlement of the Northwest and Southwest; and the first wave of mass immigration from Ireland and Germany. Yet, many historians pointed out that although these "liberal" changes occurred and society became more individualistic, materialistic, and competitive, the ideology of traditional republicanism continued to permeate public life. For example, republican principles informed the "Commonwealth Idea," providing an intellectual rationale for state governments to foster economic development by chartering banks and subsidizing canals and other projects. Moreover, many ordinary Americans continued to view themselves as members of a cohesive republican community. In particular, various disadvantaged groups – journeymen and wage laborers, women, immigrants, and free blacks – invoked republican ideals

11 See, e.g., the discussion of Wood's thesis in *William and Mary Quarterly* 51 (1994): 684–716.

12 John Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest, and the Foundations of Liberalism* (New York, 1984). An important German contribution to this discussion came from Hans Vorländer, *Hegemonialer Liberalismus: Politisches Denken und politische Kultur in den USA 1776–1920* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), where the author re-evaluates Louis Hartz's thesis of an American "mass Lockeanism" or "natural liberalism," that is, a pragmatic worldview centered on liberty, constitutionalism, limited government, and the protection of private property. See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York, 1955), 12.

13 Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York, 1991). Critical reviews of the new literature in this field are Sean Wilentz, "Society, Politics, and the Market Revolution, 1815–1848," in Eric Foner, ed., *The New American History*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia, 1997), 61–84; Paul Nolte, "Der Markt und seine Kultur – ein neues Paradigma der amerikanischen Geschichte?" *Historisches Zeitschrift* 264 (1997): 329–60; James A. Henretta, "The 'Market' in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (1998): 289–304.

to legitimize their political and social demands.[14] Some of the following essays reinforce the conclusion that republican values remained important well into the nineteenth century. They also suggest that the interplay between republican and liberal principles can be studied most effectively at the local and state levels.[15]

At first glance it seems problematic or even impossible to compare the American experience with developments in the German states from the Seven Years' War to the revolutions of 1848–9. Instead of behaving as actors, the German-speaking peoples during most of this period appeared to be passive observers of the fast-moving events taking place across the Atlantic or in neighboring France. In fact, to win ratification of the U.S. Constitution of 1787 the authors of *The Federalist Papers* used the Holy Roman Empire (the "Germanic empire") as a particularly instructive illustration of the dangers of a loose confederation:

> The history of Germany is a history of wars between the Emperor and the Princes and States; of wars among the Princes and States themselves; of the licentiousness of the strong, and the oppression of the weak; of foreign intrusions, and foreign intrigues; of requisitions of men and money, disregarded, or partially complied with; of attempts to enforce them, altogether abortive, or attended with slaughter and desolation, involving the innocent with the guilty; of general imbecility, confusions and misery.[16]

Although this bleak picture does not correspond exactly to the historical facts as reconstructed by modern scholarship, it represented the contemporary American view of the state of affairs in central Europe.[17] During

14 See the chapters in James A. Henretta et al., eds., *The Transformation of Early American History: Society, Authority, and Ideology* (New York, 1991); Alfred F. Young, ed., *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb, Ill., 1993). The relationship between politics and race was the topic of a roundtable discussion on James Brewer Stewart's article, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity and the Rise of the White North, 1790–1840," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (1998): 181–236.

15 See, e.g., James A. Henretta, "The Slow Triumph of Liberal Individualism: Law and Politics in New York, 1780–1860," in Richard O. Curry and Lawrence B. Goodheart, eds., *American Chameleon: Individualism in Trans-National Context* (Kent, Ohio, 1991), 87–106; Janet A. Reisman, "Republican Revisions: Political Economy in New York After the Panic of 1819," in William Pencak and Conrad Edick Wright, eds., *New York and the Rise of American Capitalism* (New York, 1989), 1–44; see also Robert E. Shalhope's essay in this book (Chapter 8).

16 Federalist paper no. 19, written by James Madison, with the assistance of Alexander Hamilton, Dec. 8, 1787, quoted in Jacob E. Cooke, ed., *The Federalist Papers* (Middletown, Conn., 1979), 119–20.

17 For an overview of recent literature, see Volker Press, "The Holy Roman Empire in German History," in E. I. Kouri and Tom Scott, eds., *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe: Essays for Sir Geoffrey Elton on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (London, 1987), 51–77; Volker Press, *Altes Reich und Deutscher Bund: Kontinuität in der Diskontinuität* (Munich, 1995); Jost Dülffer, Bernd Martin, and Günter Wollstein, eds., *Deutschland in Europa: Kontinuität und Bruch; Gedenkschrift für Andreas Hillgruber* (Berlin, 1990); Hans Erich Bödeker and Ernst Hinrichs, eds., *Alteuropa – Ancien Régime – Frühe Neuzeit: Problem und Methoden der Forschung* (Stuttgart, 1991); Rudolf Vierhaus, ed., *Frühe*

the early nineteenth century this negative impression received apparent confirmation as a result of the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, the devastation of the Napoleonic Wars, the establishment of a powerless and dependent German Confederation (Deutscher Bund) at the Vienna peace conference of 1815, the restoration of feudal rule under Metternich, and finally the failure of the democratic revolutions and a national convention in 1849.[18]

Certainly the United States and Germany followed very different paths to modernity, but notions of American "exceptionalism" and a German *Sonderweg* do not preclude a comparative perspective – indeed, they make it all the more instructive. Despite many setbacks and failures, the German states took part in the fundamental transformation from premodern, hierarchical, feudal, and corporate societies to modern nations. Except in the French-occupied Rhineland, Germans did not experience a revolution before the mid-nineteenth century. However, they followed closely the events in America and were deeply influenced by the French Revolution. German philosophers and intellectuals tried to make sense of the great changes they were witnessing and suggested the implications for their own society. Moreover, a rising class of bourgeois activists began to demand constitutionally guaranteed economic and political rights, thereby creating a public opinion or "public sphere" (*Öffentlichkeit*) that was often critical of established authorities. Some radical individuals and groups even strove for popular sovereignty and republican government on the American model.[19]

*Neuzeit – Frühe Moderne? Forschungen zur Vielschichtigkeit von Übergangsprozessen* (Göttingen, 1992); Helmut Neuhaus, "The Federal Principle and the Holy Roman Empire," in Hermann Wellenreuther, ed., *German and American Constitutional Thought: Contexts, Interaction, and Historical Realities* (New York, 1990); Helmut Neuhaus, *Das Reich in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich, 1997); Winfried Schulze, "'Von den grossen Anfängen des neuen Welttheaters': Entwicklungen, neuere Ansätze und Aufgaben der Frühneuzeitforschung," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 44 (1993): 3–18.

18 For a comprehensive study of the period, see James J. Sheehan, *Der Ausklang des Alten Reiches: Deutschland seit dem Ende des Siebenjährigen Krieges bis zur gescheiterten Revolution 1763–1850* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994); cf. Horst Möller, *Fürstenstaat oder Bürgernation: Deutschland 1763–1815* (Berlin, 1989); Otto Dann, *Nation und Nationalismus in Deutschland 1770–1990*, 3d ed. (Munich, 1996); Otto Dann, ed., *Die deutsche Nation: Geschichte – Probleme – Perspektiven* (Vierow, 1994); Dieter Langewiesche, "Reich, Nation und Staat in der jüngeren deutschen Geschichte," *Historische Zeitschrift* 254 (1992): 341–81; Dieter Langewiesche, *Republik und Republikaner: Von der historischen Entwertung eines politischen Begriffs* (Essen, 1993); Lothar Gall, "Liberalismus und 'bürgerliche Gesellschaft': Zu Charakter und Entwicklung der liberalen Bewegung in Deutschland," *Historische Zeitschrift* 220 (1975): 324–56; Paul Nolte, "Bürgerideal, Gemeinde und Republik: 'Klassischer Republikanismus' im frühen deutschen Liberalismus," *Historische Zeitschrift* 254 (1992): 609–56.

19 Horst Dippel, *Germany and the American Revolution: A Socio-Historical Investigation of Late Eighteenth-Century Political Thinking* (Wiesbaden, 1978); Horst Dippel, *Die amerikanische Verfassung in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert: Das Dilemma von Politik und Staatsrecht* (Goldbach, 1994); Erich Angermann, "Der deutsche Frühkonstitutionalismus und das amerikanische Vorbild," *Historische Zeitschrift* 219 (1974): 1–32; Hermann Wellenreuther, "Die USA: Ein politisches Vorbild der bürgerlich-liberalen

(By contrast, the disastrous history of the First French Republic fueled anti-revolutionary conservatism in Germany, assisting monarchical rulers to survive the Napoleonic onslaught.)

This intellectual and political agitation induced many princely governments – beginning with the South German states – to promulgate constitutions. Simultaneously, a process of party formation began on the local and regional levels, especially in the German Southwest. In the economic sphere, state particularism slowed progress and kept Germany as a whole dependent on foreign imports; nevertheless, the founding of the German Customs Union (Deutscher Zollverein) by several states in the 1830s was an important step in creating a common market and greater national unity. When the revolution broke out in 1848 German society was still premodern in many ways, but the German people were within reach of a constitutional monarchy and stood on the threshold of a liberal and democratic nation.[20]

Consequently, our agenda at the conference included the role played in these German developments by republican and liberal ideas. In this regard as in others, present knowledge allowed only tentative answers, and full agreement was neither expected nor achieved. Some disagreements reflected the great diversity among German localities, states, and regions. The forty-one members of the German Bund included self-governing "free cities" and tiny principalities as well as extended territorial states, such as

Kräfte des Vormärz?" in Jürgen Elvert and Michael Salewski, eds., *Deutschland und der Westen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, pt. 1: *Transatlantische Beziehungen* (Stuttgart, 1993), 23–41; Peter Wende, *Radikalismus im Vormärz: Untersuchungen zur politischen Theorie der frühen deutschen Demokratie* (Wiesbaden, 1975).

20 The best surveys of the revolutionary period are Wolfram Siemann, *Die deutsche Revolution von 1848/49* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), and Günter Wollstein, *Deutsche Geschichte 1848/49: Gescheiterte Revolution in Mitteleuropa* (Stuttgart, 1986); cf. Dieter Langewiesche, "Republik, konstitutionelle Monarchie und 'soziale Frage': Grundprobleme der deutschen Revolution von 1848/49," *Historische Zeitschrift* 230 (1980): 529–48; Dieter Langewiesche, "Die deutsche Revolution von 1848/49 und die vorrevolutionäre Gesellschaft: Forschungsstand und Forschungsperspektive," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 31 (1991): 331–443; Dieter Langewiesche, "Germany and the National Question in 1848," in John Breuilly, ed., *The State of Germany: The National Idea in the Making, Unmaking, and Remaking of a Modern National State* (London, 1992), 60–79. For the impact of the American example, see Eckhart G. Franz, *Das Amerikabild der deutschen Revolution von 1848/49: Zum Problem der Übertragung gewachsener Verfassungsformen* (Heidelberg, 1958); Günter Moltmann, "Amerikanische Beiträge zur deutschen Verfassungsdiskussion 1848," *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 12 (1967): 206–26, 252–65; Hans Boldt, "Der Föderalismus in den Reichsverfassungen von 1849 und 1871," in Hermann Wellenreuther and Claudia Schnurmann, eds., *Amerikanische Verfassung und deutsch-amerikanisches Verfassungsdenken: Ein Rückblick über 200 Jahre* (New York, 1991), 297–333; Jörg-Detlef Kühne, "Die Bundesverfassung der Vereinigten Staaten in der Frankfurter Verfassungsdiskussion 1848/49," in Wilhelm Brauneder, ed., *Grundlagen transatlantischer Rechtsbeziehungen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), 165–88; Jörg-Detlef Kühne, "Bürgerrechte und deutsches Verfassungsdenken 1848–1871," in Wellenreuther and Schnurmann, eds., *Amerikanische Verfassung*, 230–66.

Prussia and Bavaria. Communal republicanism and liberal rights existed in many South German states and distinguished them from their northern neighbors; in addition, the Elbe River formed an East-West divide, separating the modernizing western parts of Germany from a solidly agricultural and conservative East.[21] Given this diverse landscape and the absence of national parties with a clear ideological profile, it was difficult to establish the meaning of "German" republicanism and liberalism. However, as recent studies in American colonial history have confirmed, a "regional" perspective often yields the most accurate interpretations. As conveners of the conference, we hoped that historians working on early modern German history would benefit from this regional approach as well as from the sophisticated arguments developed in the course of the American debate over republicanism and liberalism.

## II

In his overview of German political discussions Rudolf Vierhaus (Chapter 1), the former director of the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen, traces various "lines of thought" in Germany from the late eighteenth century to the revolution of 1848–9. In the preabsolutist tradition of self-government by localities and estates, Vierhaus suggests, republicanism was often understood and translated as *Gemeinsinn*, the concept of a political and moral "public spirit" binding rulers and ruled together in a quest for the "common good" (*Gemeinwohl*). This political mentality was supposedly found in existing European republics such as the imperial city-states, the Swiss cantons, and the Netherlands, although many critics argued that these governments had declined into oligarchic aristocracies. Vierhaus explains that a new outlook developed in Germany during and after the French Revolution: "Constitutional liberals" envisaged a constitutional monarchy with a representative legislature and a separation of powers. Under such governments the people, aided by enlightened education, would develop patriotism and a "republican attitude." Many members of the growing middle class endorsed this outlook, trusting in peaceful reforms, enlightened government, and public education to turn dependent subjects into patriotic citizens. However, the resulting constitutional monarchies remained "paternal administrative states," as Vierhaus labels them, characterized by a low degree of political participation and the predominance

21 Hans Fenske, *Der liberale Südwesten: Freiheitliche und demokratische Traditionen in Baden und Württemberg 1790–1933* (Stuttgart, 1981); Paul Nolte, *Gemeindebürgertum und Liberalismus in Baden 1800–1850* (Göttingen, 1994).

of a public discourse focusing on legal rules. Indeed, Prussia developed a "bureaucratic absolutism," an "obsession for governing everything" that prevented the growth of a genuine "public spirit." Beginning in the 1830s a radical "left" wing among the constitutional liberals demanded a German nation-state in the form of a parliamentary democratic republic. In 1848–9 the advocates of a democratic republic proved stronger than the majority of the liberal revolutionaries had expected, Vierhaus notes, accentuating fears of social upheaval and undermining the solidarity of the reformers. In conclusion Vierhaus emphasizes the continuity of the German traditions of local self-government, private charitable societies and associations, and particularly the ideas of a "state of laws" and the law-abiding citizen. Containing at least a "republican potential," these traditions became part of Germany's political and legal culture in the twentieth century.

The exact nature of this "republican potential" in the late eighteenth century is the subject of the initial five chapters, those by Hans Erich Bödeker (Chapter 2) and Otto Dann (Chapter 3) on Germany, a comparative study of the Prussian county of Weingerode and Pennsylvania by A. G. Roeber (Chapter 4), and essays on women and republicanism in England and the United States by Vera Nünning (Chapter 5) and Rosemarie Zagarri (Chapter 6).

As Bödeker points out in "The Concept of the Republic in Eighteenth-Century German Thought," political writers of that era usually thought of republics as "free" states, small territories or city-states governed by citizens elected to office because of their wealth or renown. Such states, as Vierhaus noted, were believed to have the greatest potential to inspire patriotism or "civic virtue" among their citizens and provide them with "civil" and "political" freedom. However, this claim was contested by those who defended rule by princes and enlightened monarchs and those who pointed out that these governments provided "just laws" that safeguarded the "civil freedom" of individuals – their persons, their property, and their standing before the law. Bödeker demonstrates that many German political writers of the late eighteenth century sought a compromise between these positions by drawing on the writings of Montesquieu and praising the "English model" of a "monarchic republic." In their view, this mixed form of government preserved both the monarchical principle and civil freedom while also providing the people with a modicum of political power – "participation of the citizen in rulership," as the journalist August Ludwig Schlözer asserted in 1793.

The subsequent centrality of monarchical republicanism in German political discourse testified both to the actual power of the princes and