

David E. Barclay
Remembering Hermann-Josef Rupieper

Meine Damen und Herren, Freundinnen und Freunde, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,
liebe Marion,

Obwohl der Anlaß ein sehr trauriger ist, freut es mich trotzdem, daß wir hier in diesem Haus die Möglichkeit haben, Leben, Werk und Verdienst von Hermann-Josef Rupieper gebührend zu würdigen. Hermann and I first met in September 1970, appropriately enough in the hall at History Corner in front of Gordon Craig's office. I had just arrived at Stanford to begin graduate school, and Hermann, having earned an MA there, had decided to come back and pursue the PhD there. We immediately hit it off, and a few days later we decided to go out for a beer. I stopped by his apartment in graduate student housing at Escondido Village, and I noticed an interesting poster on the wall. It depicted Astérix and Obélix riding on two shiny, enormous Harley motorcycles, "hogs" in American parlance. Astérix is looking at Obélix and is exclaiming, "Die spinnen, die Amis."

This poster says a lot about Hermann, his personality, his sense of humor, and his always sophisticated but rather wry perceptions of the German-American relationship. We Americans may be slightly nuts, but the Europeans are still fascinated by those motorcycles. As we'll hear in greater detail later on, Hermann developed into a transatlantic scholar of tremendous insight, repute, and importance. But his scholarly attainments, and his indelible contribution to the German-American relationship, were grounded in a set of experiences and observations in this country that extended over his entire adult life. One of my favorite reflections on the craft of the historian is Richard Cobb's essay on that "second identity" that every historian, especially of another culture, should acquire – or at least attempt to acquire – if he or she has any hope of understanding that culture. Without ceasing to be the European that he always was, Hermann succeeded, more than any German academic I have ever known, in acquiring Cobb's second identity. As we know, over the course of many years his "official" career took him regularly to such places as Stanford, the Wilson Center, the GHI, and Vanderbilt University, to name just several. But he also took pains to acquaint himself with the norms, history, and outlooks of what we call "Flyover Country," or, as we now style them to the confusion of Europeans, the "red" states. Recently a German journalist, reporting from Washington for an important national newspaper, dismissed the entire area from Florida to the Dakotas as a "geistige Ödnis." For all his critical distance with respect both to his native country and to this one, Hermann would never have written such a thing. He knew not only the two coasts but also places like Abilene, Kansas, and, yes, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

It was obvious even during his student years that Hermann had an astounding capacity to understand and empathize with the rhythms and rituals of American life. A devoted soccer player since his days growing up in Waltrop, at Stanford he became a keen fan of American football, and to the very end of his life he could name virtually every player on the Stanford team that humiliated Ohio State and Woody Hayes in the 1971 Rose Bowl. To be sure, there were limits to his cultural understanding. He always took a rather wry view of American cars, and I well recall his jaundiced view of the monstrous Oldsmobile that I had gotten from my parents and drove in graduate school. His first years in the US took place before our microbrewery revolu-

tion, and so he shared the quite justifiable German disdain for traditional American bread and beer, as well as other substances. He always liked to recall his very first day in the United States, back in the Sixties. It was a boiling hot day in New York, and he was thirsty. He saw a drink machine, and was delighted to see that it was selling beer! Unfortunately, he didn't quite understand the significance of the word "root" before the "beer," but he bought it anyway, and he said that his first taste of this beverage was one of his more horrific experiences in this country. It's an acquired taste, I suppose. As a loyal son of the Ruhrgebiet, or, really to be more accurate, the Sauerland, Hermann always remained a Warsteiner loyalist, though König-Pilsener from Duisburg ran pretty close; and in later years he introduced me to the pleasures of Köstritzer Schwarzbier from the neue Bundesländer. But American beer in the 1970s? That was a different matter. I well remember an establishment in downtown Palo Alto that we often frequented even though Hermann insisted that the beer that came out of the tap had a green color. I should note before ending this long digression that Hermann was also an exceptional Kulturvermittler; and much of my own understanding for and appreciation of the more intimate side of German culture I owe in the first instance to my experiences with Hermann in Berlin, in Waltrop, in Marburg, and in Halle. These experiences ranged broadly, from excursions in the countryside to visits to concerts to guest appearances in seminars to the fact that, thirty years ago, Hermann was my Trauzeuge when my wife and I, both of us non-Germans, got married at Rathaus Schmargendorf in Berlin. I am certain that Hermann was a more empathetic student of American culture than, for my part, I've been of German culture. He loved American football, as I've said; but I have never been able to develop an attachment to soccer, despite the fact that Hermann constantly tried to explain it to me and carried me along with him to Bundesliga matches, especially those that involved his very own Schalke 04.

But lest this proceed to an account of the merely anecdotal, let's turn now to Hermann-Josef Rupieper the scholar. We took a number of colloquia and seminars together at Stanford, and it quickly became evident to me that Hermann was a man blessed with unusual intellectual gifts, exceptionally wide-ranging historical interests, a capacity for sustained and focused work, and a Zielstrebigkeit that most of us could only envy. We shared the house on 1938 Channing Avenue as he completed his dissertation on the Cuno government and reparations, which he then turned into his first book. And then, faced with the choice of staying in the United States and beginning an academic career, or returning to Germany for a Habilitation at the Free University of Berlin, he opted for the latter. As most of you know, his Habilitationsschrift was a social history of workers and white-collar employees at the Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg (MAN). After his time as a Privatdozent at the FU, he received a call to Marburg. And it was in those years that he returned to that kind of history he loved above all else, the place where cultural history and the history of foreign relations intersect. I'll be brief here, because later in the program we'll be hearing much more about Hermann's legacy as a transatlantic scholar; but his work on the United States and the democratization of West Germany remains both powerful and enduringly important. We'll also be hearing more about his work at Halle. Among many other things, he played a central role in the university's five hundredth anniversary and the publications associated with it. He devoted much of his work in Halle, both as a scholar and as a teacher and mentor, to the history of Sachsen-Anhalt, especially during the decades of the two dictatorships; and in doing so he made a major contribution both to the recovery of historical consciousness and historical memory after the Wende and to the study of the linkages that always exist between regional history and larger trends and forces.

Finally, let me say a brief word about Hermann as administrator. Hermann was a man in whom one could always place one's confidence with the complete assurance that he would complete a task and complete it well, even if that meant going far beyond the call of duty. His achievements as, if you will, an historical administrator are legion. As we all know, he was closely bound up with the creation of this institute. At Marburg and at Halle he made signal contributions to the development of American Studies, not least through a focused program of library acquisition. And I especially recall the pride with which he showed me, for the first time, the building in Halle, on the other side of the Saale, that before the Wende had housed a Pädagogische Hochschule and which now housed the reconstituted Institut für Geschichte. I'm sure that we will hear much more about how Hermann committed himself utterly to his university, as Dekan, ombudsman, and member of the University Senate.

But I shall always remember my dear friend Hermann-Josef Rupieper as a man who, more than probably anyone I've ever known, embodied the spirit of Richard Cobb's essay. He truly was at home in both our cultures and on both sides of the Atlantic. He embodied the spirit that sustains this institute, and his legacy should serve as an inspiration to those who aspire to live and work in this country and in the German-speaking world. His counsel and his experience are badly needed now, as the Atlantic seems almost inexorably to be getting deeper and wider. Among other things, he would remind us that the post-1945 German-American relationship always had its bumps and bruises and problems, and he would always warn us about the dangers of romanticization and nostalgia. As a hardheaded realist, he would have had much to tell us still about our two countries. He leaves an enduring legacy; und deswegen fehlt er uns um so mehr.