

Looking to the East: Thomas Mann and Max Weber's View of Russia (1)

Nobutaka YAMAMURO

In conjunction with my earlier paper on the comparison of the national awareness of Thomas Mann and Max Weber during WWI, this paper examines what constructive significance their perceptions of the great power in the east—that is, Russia—had for the national identity of both Mann and Weber. Russia stands for “the Other”, which on the one hand passed through a rapid modernization full of contradictions, just as Germany did in the 19th century, but on the other acted as an object of “Orientalism” to exert a fascinating yet depressing influence over Germany. Here, Russian literature of the 19th century plays a representative role because it is full of discourses on the Russians and Russia. In their youth Mann and Weber were avid readers of Turgenev. At the start of the 20th century Mann was inspired by the literary critic Dmitry Merezhkovsky, while Weber was discovering the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev during the first Russian Revolution. Guided by these Russian figures, Mann and Weber encountered the “holy Russia”, which possessed inexhaustible discursive potentials and which further led them both to the pair of great Russian writers Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.