

generation of pianists still alive and performing regularly, Arrau had been a child prodigy, giving his first concert at age five. By the time he was a young man, he was looked to by his country, which had a magnificent concert hall built 15 years before New York's Carnegie Hall, as one of its great sons.

The videotape covers his early studies; his difficult years trying to support his mother and relatives in 1920s Germany, where he had gone to study; his recovery from a period of musical disorientation; and his later great accomplishments and prodigious recording history. Interviews with Arrau as well as with relatives and friends accompany videotaped segments of his Chilean tour.

Hero's welcome

The most extraordinary feature of the tape, however, is the reception which the artist received. There is reason to be cautious in taking for granted what appears in the press and generally in shows of public support in a country with a government such as Chile's; and certainly Arrau's entry to his country must have been sanctioned—grudgingly or not—at the top.

Bearing that in mind, however, the response of the people of Chile seems to have been extraordinary, representative of the best of Ibero-American cultural traditions. In that underdeveloped, struggling nation of about 10 million people, hundreds of newspaper articles, all positive, heralded his arrival. The arrival of his piano got front-page photo coverage. Throngs of citizens literally lined the streets of his car route to welcome him, cheering and waving.

The welcome was so overwhelming that Arrau decided to hold an open rehearsal for one of his concerts, in Santiago's Metropolitan Cathedral. *Six thousand people*, many of them children and youth, crowded in to listen and to learn as the master coached the orchestra on the performance of a hall-mark work, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5.

All this is crowned by Arrau's performance of the concerto with a university orchestra in his hometown of Chillán, which is presented in full. Five thousand people filled the cathedral, and another 6,000 stood outside *in the rain* to hear the performance! When you look at the glowingly joyful faces of the children during the applause, you see what it means to have a national hero who represents beauty. See the tape. You will see what kind of cultural renaissance we Americans need.

Two other tapes in this series are also taken from his tour of Chile. The series is hard to find in regular stores, but can be ordered from Kultur International's toll-free number, 800-458-5887. "Arrau and Brahms: The Two Romantics," features his Santiago performance of the Sonata No. 3 and Piano Concerto No. 1; the second is "The Maestro and the Masters," which features Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 and Sonata No. 7, and includes works by Schubert, Chopin, Liszt and Debussy. These tapes are 111 minutes each, and also cost \$29.95.

Two great men of the German Renaissance

by Nora Hamerman

Nikolaus von Kues 1401-1464: Leben und Werk im Bild

by Helmut Gestrich

Verlag Hermann Schmidt, Mainz, Germany, 1990
104 pages, illustrated, hardbound, DM 40

Albrecht Dürer: A Biography

by Jane Campbell Hutchinson

Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1990
247 pages, illustrated, hardbound, \$24.95

Although no doubt each of these two books was many years in preparation, they both appeared, by happy coincidence, in the glorious year of German reunification—1990. While many may think of Germany's historic contributions to universal culture mostly in association with the Weimar Classic of the late 18th and very early 19th century and such names of that era as Schiller, Beethoven, and Lessing, these two books are a reminder that in the 15th and 16th centuries, too, Germany was making an indispensable mark on the world. Each book is written in a clear, readable style, filled with information, well organized, and presented in an attractive format. I recommend them without reservations, and shall therefore limit my review to describing some of the contents.

Helmut Gestrich's biography of the great natural scientist, theologian, philosopher, and legal scholar Nikolaus von Kues, whose name is rendered in English as Nicolaus of Cusa—or Nicolaus Cusanus, as he called himself—is a splendid picture book which intersperses photographs of the places he lived and worked and numerous documents of his life and pages of illuminated manuscript and incunabula versions of his writings, with short but extremely useful summaries of the events of his life and his major intellectual contributions. The quality of printing is nothing short of spectacular, as befits the city of Mainz, where in Cusanus's lifetime (and indeed, if my sources are correct, with his active encouragement) Gutenberg printed the first Bible with the newly invented technology of movable type.

Given the growing interest in Cusanus's work world-

wide, both because his ecumenical message is so pertinent in today's dark strategic picture of threatened religious warfare, and because of the efforts of U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche and his wife, the German political leader Helga Zepp-LaRouche, to spread Cusanus's fame as the founder of modern science, it is to be hoped that this book—whose title, translated, is *Nicolaus Cusanus, 1401-1464: His Life and Work in Pictures*—will soon be available in English and other languages.

Jane Hutchinson's biography of Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) is a very different sort of book. The pictures are few, all black and white, and generally limited to Dürer's own portraits and graphic works, albeit with a very high quality of reproduction. Three maps help to situate Dürer's life and family background in the broad strategic situation of his day. This book has the unusual virtue of being punctiliously scholarly in its careful sifting of detail, yet never descending into an academic tone. I believe that no such book exists as yet in German, and I hope that some enterprising German publisher quickly picks up the opportunity to bring out a German edition.

'Patriots of the world'

Both Cusanus and Dürer were forerunners of the kind of person a great German of the later golden age, Friedrich Schiller, was to call "patriot and citizen of the world." Both spent seminal years of their early maturity in Italy. Several generations separate them, as Cusanus died in 1464, seven years before Dürer was born in Nuremberg in 1471. Cusanus was the champion of the struggle to prevent the German Church from splitting away from Rome, while Dürer's final decade was spent as a partisan of the German dissidents in the thick of the Lutheran controversy which ultimately resulted in Protestant Reformation, a development Cusanus had surely prevented from occurring earlier. (One of Hutchinson's valuable observations, however, is that the competition between Protestant and Catholic writers to each "claim" Dürer as their own, is an anachronistic absurdity, since before the Augsburg Confession was published in 1530, two years after Dürer's death, which established an official alternative to Catholicism, "Dürer cannot have been a Protestant in the modern sense." She writes, "Before that time there were a great many people, including Erasmus, Willibald Pirckheimer, Albrecht Dürer, and even their friend Philip Melanchthon—the author of the Augsburg Confession—who assumed that, once the desired reforms had been accomplished, the reconciliation of all Christians would automatically follow.")

Those of you who are bilingual would do well to start with Gestrich's illustrated biographical sketch of Nicolaus Cusanus, which begins with the young scholar's birth into a well-to-do family in Cues where his father was a ferryman on the Mosel River. Cusanus was trained in law in Padua, where he enrolled in 1417 at the age of 16, and remained until 1422 when he received his degree in canon (church)



Albrecht Dürer's portrait of his friend and patron, Willibald Pirckheimer, who bears "much of the responsibility for having exposed the artist to the literature and ideals of the Italian Renaissance." It was also through the Pirckheimer family that Dürer knew Cusa's ideas.

law. This means that he spent very critical years—roughly corresponding to the age when a young American would be in college and graduate school—in a city which was a hotbed of scientific ferment, and where he met such future intellectual companions as the Florentine doctor Paolo Toscanelli, and the Roman clergyman and philosopher Julian Cesarini. To each of these Paduan classmates Cusanus was later to dedicate his mathematical and philosophical works.

By the early 1430s Cusanus had become involved in the great Councils of the Church. At the Council of Basel he wrote his first major work, *De concordantia catholica*, which, American visitors to the Cusanus Foundation in Cues are proudly reminded, contained some of the founding principles later embodied in the U.S. Constitution. Later, in 1436 he joined forces with Pope Eugene IV to organize for an ecumenical council which convened in Ferrara and later Florence, starting in 1438. Cusanus was a leading figure in the delegation which went to Constantinople and induced the Paleologue Emperor, the Patriarch, and the intellectual leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church to attend the Council of Florence. But just as unity between East and West was being proclaimed in Florence, the German princes at the Council of Basel, which was still ongoing, excommunicated Pope Eugene IV and elected an antipope under the name Felix V.

Cusanus spent the years from 1439 to 1447 traveling from one princely parliament to another, and from one imperial diet to another, persuading the German electors to shift their allegiance to the Pope and support the cause of Christian unity. For his heroic efforts he was dubbed the “Hercules of the Eugeneans against the Germans” by Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II—an Italian who, ironically, initially sided with the Germans against Rome.

The strategic context for this Herculean effort was the need to unify Christendom against the Turkish onslaught, which threatened the remaining tiny enclave of Byzantium around Constantinople, and was knocking at the gates of Europe itself. Constantinople tragically fell in 1453. In 1444, Cusanus’s dear friend Julian Cesarini, who had presided over the Council of Florence, was killed in the disastrous defeat at the hands of the Turks at Varna, in present-day Bulgaria.

The Dürer family

The story of Dürer’s life picks up with this same strategic struggle, in which Hungary was on the front line against the Ottoman Turkish armies. It begins in 1427 with the birth of his father, Albrecht Dürer the Elder, in the Hungarian village of Ajtós, which was later totally destroyed by the Turks in 1566. Albrecht the Elder was “a figure of immense historical interest,” according to author Hutchinson, and from her report, one can only conclude that our debt to him is comparable to what we owe to Leopold Mozart for having shaped the early education of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Albrecht the Elder’s father, Anthoni Dürer, was a prominent goldsmith. Albrecht the Elder left Hungary, an increasingly dangerous place, as a teenager, and first went to the Netherlands, the artistic capital of northern Europe, and finally arrived in Nuremberg in 1455—two years after the Fall of Constantinople. In the Netherlands, this Albrecht would have gotten “the best education in the world for a goldsmith” under the enlightened patronage of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. Nuremberg when he arrived there was a free city-state approaching its peak of international importance and prosperity, at the crossroads of European north-south trade. At the age of 40, he married Barbara Holper, daughter of a local goldsmith, soon became a master goldsmith in the Nuremberg guild, and had 18 children, of whom he outlived 15. The fifth child was the future great artist, Albrecht Dürer the Younger.

The fact that Albrecht the Younger wrote down his family history, based on notes left by his father, is an indication of his unprecedented consciousness of his own importance as Germany’s most brilliant artist. Normally such family chronicles would only be kept by an oligarchical family, or to pass on a record to one’s children, of which Albrecht Dürer the younger had none.

Like Cusanus, Albrecht Dürer spent both formative and mature years in Italy. His first trip took place in 1494-95, and is only documented by works of art; he had just completed his apprenticeship and was newly married. Although such a

journey was normal for a young “journeyman” artist, the decision to go to Italy was unprecedented, and began a whole new trend for Northern artists. Dürer at the age of 34, in the summer of 1505, undertook his second journey to Italy, and remained there until 1507. Out of these journeys, and through the density of contacts between Nuremberg humanism and Italy, came Albrecht Dürer’s extraordinary efforts to bring the science of proportion and perspective into Germany through several books, especially his manual on measurement and *Four Books on Human Proportion*; just as earlier, Cusanus had struggled to share the ideas he gained by reading the Italian humanists’ translations of Greek thinkers, especially Plato and Archimedes, with the Latin West as a whole.

Hutchinson’s book is especially illuminating with respect to Dürer’s friend and patron Willibald Pirckheimer, the Nuremberg humanist and merchant who bore “much of the responsibility for having exposed the artist to the literature and ideals of the Italian Renaissance, as well as to those of the ancient world.” She has an entire chapter on Willibald, plus numerous other references throughout the book. Pirckheimer’s circle dreamed of a new German culture, and Dürer made their dream his own. Pirckheimer had “the finest private library in Germany which, in his lifetime, was always open to the community of scholars. He introduced the study of geography into the curriculum of German middle schools and is still revered as the translator of the writings of such essential Greek authors as Xenophon, Lucian, Isocrates, Plutarch, and Plato from Greek into Latin and German.” Moreover, it was evidently through the Pirckheimer family that Dürer became acquainted with the ideas of Nicolaus Cusanus, which have been shown to have influenced Dürer’s celebrated woodcut series on the Apocalypse and the Passion. An earlier member of this family, Hans Pirckheimer II, had personal connections to Cusanus.

Gestrich’s book on Cusanus presents him as man of the Church, reform thinker of the Empire (i.e., the Holy Roman Empire, the universal institution of Cusanus’s day in Germany), philosopher at the turning point from the Middle Ages into the modern era, and intellectual forerunner of the exact sciences. Each important episode of his life is illustrated with portraits, where available, of the protagonists, as well as of the places, in old woodcuts and modern photographs—from the lovely spot on the Mosel River where he spent his childhood and consecrated a foundation with a home for pensioners, chapel, and library in his last testament; to Padua, Cologne, Constantinople, and Brixen—where he spent a trying decade as bishop in his declining years—and finally Orvieto, where he died. Key aspects of his thought are brought out in the manuscript pages, including his scholarly proof that the so-called Donation of Constantine, which claimed to grant temporal power over the Emperor to the Pope, was a forgery; and his pre-Copernican assertions that the Earth is not the center of the universe, and that it moves (in *De docta ignorantia*, 1437).