

The World as Metaphor in Robert Musil's
The Man without Qualities

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

The World as Metaphor
in Robert Musil's
The Man without Qualities

Possibility as Reality

Genese Grill



CAMDEN HOUSE

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*For Burton Pike,
translator, scholar, teacher,
without whom this would scarcely have been possible.*

Man könnte tagelang in Gleichnissen fortfahren. Was heißt das? . . .
Gleichnisse gehen mehr an als Wirklichkeit.
Es kommt nicht auf das an, was ich tue, es könnte ebensogut etwas
anderes sein, aber es muss den gleichen Gleichniswert haben.
Obgleich Gleichnis, Gefühl der inneren Notwendigkeit.
Nichts ist fest. Jede Ordnung führt ins Absurde.
Nur hier ist das Gefühl des tiefen Lebens.
Die Kategorien der Welt erscheinen als erstarrte Gleichnisse . . .
Die Welt nur ein möglicher Versuch.
Zugleich mit den Gleichnissen fühlt man, das Leben löst sich in
einem Hauch auf.
Es ist da u[nd] nur bis zu einem gewissen Grad da.

[One could continue all day with metaphors. What does that mean?
Metaphors are more meaningful than reality.
It doesn't depend on what I do, it could just as easily be something
else, but it must have the same metaphoric value.
Despite metaphor, feeling of inner necessity.
Nothing is certain. Every order leads to absurdity.
Yet the feeling of deep life is found here.
The categories of the world appear as frozen metaphors . . .
The world is only one possible attempt.
Along with the metaphors one feels life dissolve in a breath.
It is there a[nd] only there to a certain degree.]

— Musil, *Nachlass*