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THINKING AND KILLING

PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE IN THE SHADOW OF THE THIRD REICH

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Foreword

The motivation for writing this book began with my, one might say, naïve belief that critical thinking could have avoided the rise of the Third Reich and the *Shoah* in World War II. The main culprits were put on trial in Nuremberg, and then came the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem and the Auschwitz trials in Germany. Later on, the compliancy of Heidegger, Gadamer, and others with the Nazi regime was exposed by prominent scholars.[1] Thus, the personal and public reputations of Heidegger, Jünger, Schmitt, Gadamer and others were destroyed and then partly rehabilitated. Their teaching, which was essential in consolidating and promulgating the Nazi world-view and in creating and designing the atmosphere of support for the Nazi movement, has, however, mostly remained untouched and continues to be uncritically studied and referred to. As Alain Finkielkraut writes:

> As Jankélévitch has rightly noted, the extermination of the Jews "was doctrinally founded, philosophically explained, methodically prepared by the most pedantic doctrinarians ever to have existed." The Nazis were not, in effect, brutes, but theorists. It was not because of blood-thirsty instincts, economic or political interests, or even because of prejudice that they sacrificed all scruples. On the contrary, it could be said that the objections and scruples of interest, of instinctive pity, and of prejudice were sacrificed on the altar of their philosophy of history. "It is thus an erroneous and stupid conception," Theodore Fritsch commented as early as 1910 in his Anti-Semite's Catechism, "to explain the opposition to Judaism as an outgrowth of a stupid racial and religious hatred, whereas in fact it is a disinterested battle animated by the most noble ideas, against an enemy of humanity, morality and culture" (Finkielkraut 1992: 29–30).[2]

Studies that focus on biography crumble and wind up with the banality of evil of a mass murderer, the weakness of the human will, rumors of a love affair between Heidegger and Arendt, the tensed relationship between Heidegger and Löwith, Gadamer's alleged collaboration with the Nazis, etc. On the contrary, provided that Fenkielkraut and Jankélévitch are correct, then understanding the Third Reich and the crimes perpetrated in its name entails dealing critically with the philosophy that shaped and justified Nazism.

Heidegger is the most famous and most studied philosopher related to Nazism. As Domenico Losurdo (2001) and Hans Sluga (1993) show, Heidegger's work survived due to its quality and originality. He was, however, part of an

1 See for example Farías (1989), Orozco (1995), Lilla (2003), Wolin (2001, 2004), and Faye (2009).
2 See also the forgotten work by Max Weinreich (1999).

expansive intellectual milieu whose members shared similar ideas and support of Nazism. My study starts with Heidegger because he is the most remembered and the most currently influential. The first chapter focuses mainly on the *Letter on Humanism*. The title suggests an apologetic tone. The content, however, reveals parallels to his work from the time in which he supported Nazism. The excursus of the chapter focuses on two approaches to Heidegger—one of approval by Hannah Arendt, and one of disapproval by Emmanuel Lévinas.

The second chapter focuses on Carl Schmitt's teaching, which was supposed to give Nazism its moral and political foundation. His teaching is seen as a blueprint whose possible translation into reality is unfolded in a short text, which is provided in the excursus in a new English translation.

The third chapter focuses on Ernst Jünger, who was not a supporter of the Nazi movement and regime, but whose teaching created the model for the Nazi warrior and Nazi warfare.[3] The trend of Jünger's philosophy is developed in the excursus, in a new English translation.

The fourth chapter focuses on Karl Löwith, who points at the relation between Nazi ideology and German philosophy, especially Heidegger's. Löwith's critique tends sometimes to be personal and not objective, and this tension is shown and discussed.

The fifth chapter focuses on Hannah Arendt. It considers the flaws in her historical report in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. It shows that these flaws are irrelevant to Arendt because her aim in dealing with the case was in fact a philosophical one.

The sixth chapter focuses on Gadamer's striving to rehabilitate the humanities in reaction to the inhuman phenomenon of Nazism and on his use of hermeneutics and phenomenology to neutralize detrimental components in the German language that might lead to catastrophic consequences. It turns out that despite his ambition, Gadamer falls prey to the philosophy of Heidegger and Nazism.

The seventh chapter focuses on Jean Améry, who applies terms coined mostly by Heidegger to his experience as an inmate in the death camps. The effect of this strategy is a shock that is directed above all at the intellectuals who continue to maintain the old terminology and philosophy of the Nazi era as if nothing has changed.

The eighth chapter focuses on Jan Assmann, who claims to have found the origin of anti-Semitism and annihilation of the Jews in the "Mosaic Distinction." Assmann thinks that the Jewish religion introduced into human history the religious violence that finally led also to the annihilation of the Jews in the *Shoah*.

3 See Bartov (2000), Vondung (1988).

The chapter surveys his manipulative reading of texts from the Jewish tradition and his conspicuous omission of important details in order to maintain his theory about the responsibility of the Jews for their own annihilation.

The selection of subjects dealt with in a book is arbitrary, and influential authors and important texts are left out or referred to only in the footnotes. One usually resorts to the cliché about the limited scope of the book. Likewise, it is impossible to mention all the people who assisted and supported. Special thanks are due to Jeffrey Herf and Alexander Orbach. I am grateful to Michiel Klein-Swormink, the chief editor at Walter de Gruyter, and his wonderful team for their support, confidence, and professional work.

The manuscript of this book has gone through numerous iterations, each different from the previous version due to fruiteful encounters, comments, advices and disagreements with scholars, students and friends that led me to re-thinking and re-formulating my theses: Richard Wolin, Mitchell Cohen, Klaus Vondung, Franz Navon, Reiner Wiehl, Hans-Friedrich Fulda, Mark Lilla, Omer Bartov, Goerge Heffernan, David Graizbrod, Thomas Sheehan, Robert Dostal, Peter Kopf, Alexander Dubrau, Jay Ticker, Thomas Meyer, and colleagues and students at Heidelberg, Cologne, The University of Pennsylvania, The University of Illinois Springfield, and Fordham University.

Contents

Introduction

Nazism and the genocide of the Jews are arguably among the most studied, analyzed, and debated subjects in modern history. Even when one disregards the question of whether these are unique or rather potentially repeatable events, they remain a reference point in dealing with any other mass killings. It is common to ask, for example, whether Stalin's mass executions or the genocide in Darfur exceeds the Holocaust in number of causalities, cruelty, or thoroughness of the perpetrators carrying out the annihilation. In posing the question regarding the Holocaust in that way, one tends to utilize a *quantitative* analysis, or to view it as an unexplainable phenomenon without antecedents (or some combination of the two).

Despite all of its scholarly merits and insights, it was Hannah Arendt's most influential study, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1966), which started a trend of claiming that mass killing is connected to mass production and territorial expansion; both are characteristic of modern societies.[1] In this framework, the distinctive traits and motivations of Stalin's mass executions and deportations versus Hitler's persecution and murder of the Jews get lost. The outcome, millions of displaced and murdered people, is indeed similar, but the motivation, the ideology, and the peculiar mindset behind these phenomena do not comport with what Arendt's general theory says about the relation between mass production and mass killing.

Related to that claim is the philosophical–theological account according to which the Third Reich and the genocide of the Jews are outcomes of destiny, of the peculiar fate of the German and the Jewish peoples to become murderers and murdered. An illustrative example is Günther Anders' statement that we are all Eichmann's sons in that we risk falling victim as human beings in the modern society to the same fate of the destructive potential of technology, leading to mass destruction and killing (Anders 1988). To reduce everything to destiny is to beg the question and again to ignore the peculiar traits and philosophy which stood behind the Third Reich. At this point, we can already sense the methodological obstacles which stand in the way of the study at hand.

The present volume aims to address the *philosophy* related to the genocide of the Jews and to the Third Reich by looking at the works of eight German thinkers, some of whom will be more familiar than others to the reader. By treating

1 The relationship between mass killing, mass production and mass consumption is also the theme of Horkheimer and Adorno (1981).

unknown texts and translating completely forgotten texts, this study sheds new light on the "canonical texts," providing a critical supplement to the literature that currently exists on post-Holocaust thinking. The eight German thinkers considered here refer individually to the genocide of the Jews, anti-Semitism, the Third Reich, and other related issues in their own works. Some of them helped to formulate and promulgate the Nazi world-view—often under the guise of objective philosophy and metaphysics—while others tried to account for the rise of the Third Reich and the genocide of the Jews.[2]

The methodological problems related to this study are indicated by the following questions: Why, of all the many German thinkers, these eight? Does it not beg the question to first choose a topic and formulate a general claim, and then pick the best candidates to support the main thesis? Which criteria were used to choose German thinkers—is he or she somebody who published in German or lived in Germany? Hannah Arendt, to whom the fifth chapter of this study is dedicated, wrote and published mostly in English and lived most of her life in the USA. Similarly, Jean Améry, to whom the seventh chapter of this study is dedicated, was an Austrian who lived in Belgium. Furthermore, does it still count as philosophical research to focus on particular figures mostly in their relation to particular places, politics, and historical eras? The first question, however, is ostensibly the easiest to reply to: every investigation has a limited scope which it must outline beforehand by making some painful and arbitrary decisions regarding the depth and breadth of the study. The question of the criteria for selection is more complicated. Two comprehensive studies, one by Hermann Lübbe (1963) and one by Hans Sluga (1993), on German philosophy before, during, and to some extent after World War II, clearly manage to point to distinctive characteristics of German philosophy, such as its ambition to identify itself *as* German, related to the German nation, language, and even race.[3]

2 The first group includes Ernst Jünger, Martin Heidegger, and Carl Schmitt. The second includes Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jean Améry, and Jan Assmann. This classification is by no means a clear-cut one. Rather, the two groups intersect, for we cannot distinguish sharply someone's world-view from his way of accounting for phenomena and his reason for supporting a particular ideology, etc. Enzo Traverso (2000) classifies these particular intellectuals into four streams: (1) the collaborator (Heidegger, Jünger, and Schmitt), (2) the survivor (Primo Levi and Jean Améry), (3) the prophet (Walter Benjamin, who, according to Traverso, foresaw the Nazi catastrophe), and (4) people who wrote about it (Arendt, Anders, and Adorno). This classification is pointless; it makes no more sense to identify Améry's or Levi's work with their being survivors than with their being Jews or human beings. It is likewise pointless to identify Heidegger's and Jünger's works solely according to their relationship with Nazism.

3 In this respect, other important works are to be mentioned: Adorno (2003), Marcuse (1998), and Strauss (1995 and 1999).

Thus, it could become a tool for achieving and promoting political goals.[4] A study by Klaus Vondung (1988) focuses on the apocalyptic motif as peculiar to German thought. A volume edited by Theodor Haering (1942), *Das Deutsche in der deutschen Philosophie* ("The German in German Philosophy"), undertakes to show the special traits of German philosophy which distinguish it from any other philosophy.[5] Other representatives are Alfred Baeumler's essay (1937) *Hellas und Germanien* ("Greece and Germany"), Werner Sombart's (1915) *Händler und Helden* ("Merchants and Heroes"), and Oswlad Spengler's (1920) *Preussentum und Sozialismus* ("Prussianism and Socialism"). Herbert Marcuse's (1998) *Feindanalysen* ("Studies on the Enemy") is a refined and meticulous analysis of the dominant traits of German philosophy such as anti-liberalism, anti-rationalism, heroism, racism, etc.

Thus, we have here themes that are common to many German thinkers. In the present study we will encounter them either as the core ingredients of a given teaching or as the focus of critical reflection on that teaching. This complex of common subjects treated by German thinkers will also serve as our reference point in regard to which we can speak about thinkers who used this terminology

4 "Überblickt man das politische Denken der deutschen Philosophie von Hegels Tod bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg, so würde man selbst verständlich der Philosophie dieses Krieges am ehesten ideologischen Charakter zusprechen. In der Formulierung der 'ldeen von 1914,' wie sie im vierten Teil dieser Arbeit dargestellt ist, unternimmt es die deutsche Philosophie, den Gegensatz Deutschlands zu seinen Feinden als einen in letzter Instanz weltanschaulich bestimmten Gegensatz darzutun. In dieser Tendenz erklärt sie die geschichtlich bedingten Nationaleigentümlichkeiten Deutschlands in politischer und gesellschaftlich-kultureller Hinsicht, indem sie sie zugleich übertreibt, zu Ausdrucksphänomenen eines quasi-metaphysischen 'Wesens' und läßt den Krieg einen Krieg um Selbstbehauptung und Welt-Sieg dieses Wesens sein. Dabei wagt sie Thesen, die nicht mehr aus rationalem Ursprung, sondern einzig ideologisch aus der Absicht zu verstehen sind, dem Krieg jene höhere Rechtfertigung zugeben, die keine etwaigen Zweifel an seinem Sinn aufkommen läßt." (Lübbe 1963: 21–22)

Sluga emphasizes the utmost importance of Fichte—who related philosophy to the German language and nation—for the philosophers who supported the Nazi movement. "Only one other language could be compared to German and that was Greek, which was 'of equal rank, a language equally primordial.' Other Germanic people, such as the French, had abandoned their original tongue and adopted a foreign, dead language. Their language had 'movement only at the surface' but was 'dead at the root.' The French had Latinized themselves in language and Romanized themselves in culture, whereas the Germans like the Greeks had maintained a primordial language and culture. In terms of this contrast between the primordial, on the one hand, and the derived and dead, on the other, Fichte stylized the political conflict between Napoleon and the German princes. The military confrontation became nothing less than a metaphysical difference. Since the Germans had a primordial language, Fichte also said, they were qualified to engage in a primordial thinking." (Sluga 1993: 37)

5 See Haering's contribution in that volume, which is called *Albert der Deutsche*—who is known in any other context as Albertus Magnus.

before and during the Nazi era (Heidegger, Schmitt, and Jünger); thinkers who consciously distanced themselves from this philosophy and criticized it (Adorno, Löwith, and Améry); and thinkers who continued to use it after the end of World War II and the collapse of Nazi ideology and philosophy (late Heidegger and Jünger, Arendt, and Gadamer).

We pointed to some themes that are common to many German thinkers. The relationship between truth and power is specific for different cultures in different eras in their history and it plays different role in different contexts. It should thus be studied in the particular context in which it was realized. A general theory of the relationship between truth and power—e.g. Nietzsche's and Foucault's—seems, accordingly, to be too general. Yet, philosophy and critical thinking would become redundant without the attempt to go beyond the particular context, politics, and personal interests. As Sluga succinctly puts it:

> Insofar as philosophy has any task to perform in politics, it is to map out new possibilities. By confronting actual political conditions with alternatives, it can help to undermine the belief that these conditions are inevitable. If the German philosophers of the 1930s had engaged in such reflection, they would not have surrendered so readily to the false certainties of Nazism (Sluga 1993: x).

The aim of critically philosophizing with the works of these eight German thinkers is to examine to what extent they yielded to political situation, ideology, and world-view and to what extent they truly tried to go beyond them. The present study assumes that—if at all, then only—by means of philosophizing can we succeed in penetrating through the cover of words and rhetoric to the philosophical intention of the thinkers. We can, for example, examine whether the assessment that Heidegger and Jünger changed their political posture after the war is correct or not. Likewise, does Gadamer really mean to neutralize language from detrimental components that might lead to horrible consequences and to rehabilitate humanities, as he claims—or is it only lip service?

Numerous philosophical studies examine Heidegger's, Schmitt's, Jünger's, and recently also Gadamer's (Oroszco 1995) alleged relationship to Nazism.[6] In dealing with a thinker, biographical and historical attitudes are indispensable

6 As far as the personal aspects are concerned, Farías's study of Heidegger and his relation to Nazism is the most famous one. Regarding Heidegger, see also Taureck (2008) as well as Emmanuel Faye (2009). Morat (2007) focuses on Heidegger and the Jünger brothers. Gross (2000) does the same with Carl Schmitt. Wolin (2003) explores the personal relationship between Heidegger and his Jewish disciples. As for the philosophical aspects of these thinkers and their relation to Nazi ideology, see for example Löwith (chapter 4 in the present study), and von Krockow (1958). Zehnpfennig (2002) is a unique attempt to introduce Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as a philosophical work comparable with Hobbes's *Leviathan*.

for bringing him or her, and the intellectual context in which they worked, closer to the reader. They cannot, however, fulfill the task of critically dealing with the philosophy of a given thinker.

There are two other prevalent "philosophical" attitudes. The first approach uncritically adopts and utilizes the same terminology used by the thinker who is the subject of the research. This is the approach adopted by Hannah Arendt[7] and Slavoj Žižek.[8] The second approach subsumes the thinker or the philosophy that it studies into another system, as Georg Lukács, for example, does in tracing philosophy back to economic principles. Lukács's approach brings him to ridiculous conclusions, such as when he tries to measure the achievements of Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust according to economic criteria. This is not to say that social-economic context is inherently superfluous in approaching intellectual content. Moreover, not everything on the social-economic level is relevant to the philosophical level, and vice versa. Measuring Marcel Proust's literacy achievement according to that yardstick and hence underscoring it as bad is, therefore, ridiculous.

> Bergsonian intuition was projected outwards as a tendency to destroy the objectivity and truth of natural science knowledge; and it was directed inward as the introspection of an isolated parasitic individual divorced from the life of society during the imperialist period. (It is no accident that the greatest literary influence Bergson exerted was on Proust.) (Lukács 1981: 24–25 / 1955: 27).

Because the world-view and terminology used by German thinkers are so peculiar to the era and are wholly idiosyncratic, especially when it comes to Heidegger, of great importance to this study is the consideration of linguistic and sociological aspects.[9] Many central concepts used by these eight thinkers are borrowed from mystical, religious, and apocalyptical literature. There are no parallels in contemporaneous English and French philosophy to the massive use of religious terms by German thinkers and their recurrent reference to apoca-

7 See chapters 1 and 5 in this book.

8 Žižek employs Heideggerian terminology in accounting for Heidegger's support of Nazism: Žižek (2008), especially part 1, chapter 3, "Radical Intellectuals, or, Why Heidegger Took the Right Step (Albeit in the Wrong Direction) in 1933."

9 Important sociological and economic works on Germany are Neumann (1944), Löwenthal (1990), and Rauschning (1938). Spengler (1920) attempts to draw the line between the so-called Prussian type versus the English type. Bourdieu (1991) is a provocative and too often inaccurate sociological study of the social background of Heidegger's work. An excellent sociological study is Marcuse (1998). Herf (1984) explores the intellectual mood in the time before, during, and after World War II in its reaction to technological progress. Adorno (2003) combines sociological and linguistic attitudes.

lypse. For example, *Ereignis* is a key term in Heidegger's philosophy. It relates to the apocalyptic event—Heidegger's rendition of the Greek *καιρός* in its religious use—and to the authentic experience of time as finite. It also implies special insight which is gained in the *καιρός*: *Eräugnis* alludes to *Auge*, the German word for "eye." There is no English translation that conveys the full meaning and connotation of this term. This is also the case with the key term "crisis" as it is used in this particular context. As Sluga writes on the German thinkers between the wars: "They believed themselves to be living at a moment of world-historical crisis, and this profound conviction motivated their political activism" (Sluga 1993: viii). The term "crisis," as Sluga shows, is intimately related to "nation" or "race," "leadership," and "order" (Ibid: 23). Likewise, Carl Schmitt stipulates that all political terms must be understood as translations of religious terms. For modern English and French readers, who are accustomed to thinking of Church and State as two different institutions, this claim must be elucidated and put in the right cultural and intellectual context.

At this point, linguistic studies become an indispensable tool for accessing the peculiar terminology.[10] An illustrative example for the need also to rely on the linguistic approach is apparent in the case of Heidegger. It became a popular strategy of Heidegger's advocates to claim that we can separate the private person Heidegger, who allegedly supported Nazism, from Heidegger the great philosopher. The linguistic approach can point to parallels between Heidegger's use of language and fascistic jargon. This linguistic approach toward Heidegger probably started with Adorno's *Jargon* (1964). Meticulous and thorough treatments of the linguistic aspects of German thinking are carried out by Klaus Vondung (1988), Victor Klemperer (2007), Robert Minder (1977), and Pierre Faye (1977). The same holds regarding the claim of Heidegger and his supporters concerning the "turn," the *Kehre*, as an example of a significant change in his philosophical thinking and political view. The linguistic apparatus helps us to assess the validity of these two statements. It was a prevalent belief among German thinkers that philosophy can be meaningfully carried out only in Greek, German, or a Hellenic-German cross-breeding, as we shall later see in Heidegger, Gadamer, and Löwith, who criticize this tendency, and to some extent also in Arendt. Using idiosyncratic terminology already points to a possible tendency to adhere to a distinct world-view, and a philosophical agenda can bear meaning only when stated in that particular terminology to people who are familiar with it. As Losurdo explains it:

10 The idiosyncrasy and particularity of these thinkers gets lost in the psychological or psychoanalytical attitude. See for example Reich (1946). Fromm (1941) is an important work in that field. See the pertinent work by Mitscherlich (1967). See also Dessuant and Grunberger (2000).

> The pathos of the Western world is strictly linked, in Heidegger, with that of "German essence" and "German destiny." Clearly, Germany has a role, a unique mission to accomplish. The opposition between the East and the West, and the appeal for a renewed salvation of the West founded upon the example given by the Greeks in ancient times, constitute a central theme in Heidegger's works at this time. The reference to Hellenism is not, and cannot be, a unifying element for all of humanity, but it serves to define the fighting parties: "Heraclitus's name" is not "the formula for the concept of a humanity which encompasses the entire world in its embrace (*Allerweltmenschheit an sich*). It is, rather, the name for a primal power of Western-Germanic historical existence, in its first confrontation with the Asian element." (Losurdo 2001: 103–104)

In fact, as scholars we cannot imagine the inception of Postmodern thought without the terminology coined by Heidegger. The approach of the present study relies on linguistic and historical studies as an indispensable precondition for understanding modern German philosophy after Heidegger. It employs, however, a critical and philosophical approach, which means that it does not stop at the linguistic description of terminology, but instead continues to explore its philosophical use. It does not search for *smoking guns* and does not hunt down Nazis and collaborators, as has become popular in research on modern German thinkers. It rather utilizes philosophical and critical procedures in order to find out to what extent these thinkers strive for truth and, on the other hand, succumb to political agendas and a particular world-view.

Chapter One

Martin Heidegger on Humanism

It is natural to start with Heidegger, to whom Continental philosophy owes its philosophical jargon and themes. As Sluga and Losurdo show in their historical studies, Heidegger did not invent the vocabulary he used *ex nihilo*. It was the common jargon used by academics and at that time also by politicians, such as crisis, the call for sacrifice and warfare, brave decision, courage in the face of death, as opposed to the bourgeois craving for security, and the praise of German philosophy contrary to English and French thought.

> On the one hand, the shallow "rationalism" and the even shallower "empiricism" (Latin and Anglo-Saxon, respectively) of the countries to the west of Germany is still denounced. On the other hand, however, there now emerges the pathos of the unity of the West, regarded in its authenticity and defined by its opposition to the threat from the East. There is sometimes an attempt to solve this contradiction by distinguishing, on a linguistic level, between the "liberal Western world [West]," that is, the "Roman/Anglo Saxon" world, and the *Abendland*, the authentic West, which, far from excluding Germany, sees her as its center and guide. (Losurdo 2001: 95)

Sluga traces it back to Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (*Addresses to the German Nation*) (something that can be also seen in Lübbe's book [1963] although it does not include Heidegger). Losurdo shows that similar expressions are also used by Husserl and Jaspers. In Mosse's study (1999), one sees how deeply this jargon and attitude is rooted in the German Youth Movement (*Jugendbewegung*) and the *Völkisch* [ethnic] Movement (*völkische Bewegung*)—that is, the call to return to the German ethnic identity (*Volk*) as the only possible metaphysical and political unity—although Mosse's focus is not on Heidegger. And yet it was Heidegger who disseminated this jargon and molded all of Continental philosophy with it.

It seems plausible to expect that in the wake of World War II and Nazi barbarity, the most critical issue to be addressed is education. In *Jargon* (1964), Adorno points to symptoms characterizing the disease of Nazism, such as excessive authoritative control and lack of distinct moral and humanistic standards. He then also shows that these symptoms are manifested in some of the prominent German writings after the War. In *Education* (Adorno 1971), Adorno emphasizes the "therapeutic measures" to be taken as an antidote to this disease, although his prognosis is quite pessimistic.[11] In *Jargon*, Adorno mostly targets

11 Emphasis is put on education in Marcuse (1998). See Gottfried Benn (1965: 388): "*Wünsche für Deutschland*: Neue Begriffsbestimmung für Held und Ehre. Ausmerzung jeder Person, die

Heidegger, whose role in shaping the German pre- and post-war intellectual strata is not unimportant.

The stories about Heidegger's supposed collaboration with the Nazis started to circulate after the release of Victor Farías's book *Heidegger and Nazism* (1989), which was followed by numerous articles and books on the topic. This, however, was not the first time the subject circulated within the public sphere. When Heidegger himself realized that Germany had lost the war, he authored apologetic remarks, explanations, and letters[12] that were followed by efforts on his behalf by friends and adherents such as Hannah Arendt, Ernst Nolte, and later Hans-Georg Gadamer. The fuss and the attention to rumors and stories create the impression that Heidegger was a Nazi criminal on the order of Goebbels and Himmler.[13] But he was not, by any means. People usually refer to Heidegger's *Rectorial Address* as evidence for the intimate relationship between his philosophy and the Nazi world-view and politics. However, as Löwith describes it:

> In comparison with the numerous pamphlets and speeches published by the co-ordinated professors after the Nazi takeover, Heidegger's speech is philosophically demanding—a minor stylistic masterpiece. (Löwith 1986: 33 / 1994: 34)[14]

And as Hans Blumenberg puts it: "Heidegger, the incarnation of the petit bourgeois, was not created to be a 'Nazi,' but rather to pay the party's membership bill" (Blumenberg 2005: 79). These two remarks support the task of seeking the problem in Heidegger's philosophy and not in his personality.

Starting the critical discussion with the *Rectorial Address*, which has already been branded an expression of Nazism, would be uninteresting and unrevealing, as Heidegger's philosophy is at stake and not his personality. More challenging would be to start with two later texts which appeared in one volume in 1947: *A Letter on Humanism* of 1946 and *Plato's Doctrine of Truth* of 1931–32. Both bear titles that point in a different direction than the *Rectorial Address*; both apparently deal with the education and improvement of a human being.

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innerhalb der nächsten hundert Jahre Preußentum oder das Reich sagt. … Die Kinder vom sechsten bis sechszehnten Jahr nach Wahl der Eltern in der Schweitz, in England, Frankreich, Amerika, Dänemark auf Staatskosten erziehen."

12 See the apologetic volume edited by Heidegger's son Hermann Heidegger (2000b).

13 Works above all by Faye (2009) and Taureck's anthology (2007) based on yet unpublished manuscripts of Heidegger have shown that Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi movement was much deeper and more devoted than used to be thought. These biographical works, however, are only marginally related to my approach, which is philosophical instead.

14 Sluga compares and points to the parallels between Heidegger's *Rectorial Address* and other addresses given at that time. It turns out that Heidegger's is not exceptional in its tone and spirit.

The text known as *Letter on Humanism* was composed as a reply to the question posed by Jean Beaufret to Heidegger in 1946 following the atrocities of World War II: "*Comment redonner un sens au mot 'Humanisme'?*," that is, "how can we restore meaning to the word 'humanism'?"

Heidegger begins his reply to this question by working out what he conceives to be the true, and yet mostly hidden, essence of a human being. The essence of a human being, Heidegger posits, does not consist in achievements which can thenceforth be evaluated according to the profit and advantage which they bring to the man who accomplished them. At first sight, it may look like a Kantian ethics built on autonomic moral judgment which should not be influenced by any expectation of profit and gain. The true essence of the human being, Heidegger continues, consists in carrying out (*vollbringen*) that which has already been given to him to carry out, that which is already there (Heidegger 2000a: 5). This can also be read as Kantian moral stipulation. The autonomous moral will is present before anything else. The human being is required to execute the will's decrees. Heidegger continues:

> But what "is" above all is Being. Thinking accompliches the relation of Being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation solely as something handed over to it from Being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking Being becomes language. Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. (Heidegger 1992: 217 / 2000a: 5)

The true essence of man consists in his relationship to Being, in his existence *beyond* the objects and tasks with which he is concerned in his daily activities. This statement by Heidegger can still be read in a Kantian context, for it stipulates that the human being not be conceived as an instrument, as a means. However, at this point we can already discern the difference between Heidegger and Kant. Kant, first of all, wanted his moral philosophy to be practical, while Heidegger seems here to draw a clear line between thinking and acting: "But all working or effecting lies in Being and is directed toward beings. Thinking, in contrast, lets itself be claimed by Being so that it can say the truth of Being" (Heidegger 1992: 217–218 / 2000a: 5). Being is the "open domain," the transcendence which enables the human being to relate to entities—be it through activity, production, or calculation. By contrast, "Thinking is '*l'engagement par l'Être pour l'Être*'" (2000a: 5). Thus, any reference to *responsibility*, to *answerability*, must evaporate, must become irrelevant to the essence of the human being.

The relationship between Being and human being is constituted by Being; the human being dwells in this relationship. This relationship, this essence of the human being, Heidegger defines as language. It is, however, not the human being who meaningfully speaks here, because he is not the author of that rela-

tionship, but rather, the medium in which this relationship is expressed; he does not "stand behind his words." Note that in this frame of Heidegger's philosophy, any attempt to mold the relationship between language, Being, and man, according to the common pattern of man as a *talking animal* making use of language, would degrade that relationship to one between entities. Eric Voegelin's remark on this matter is illuminating: "If language speaks, then the contact between thinking and language and between object and reality is interrupted, and these problems arise because one is no longer thinking in relation to reality" (Voegelin 1999: 250).

Heidegger's claim is vague, because it is evident that in any kind of meaningful use of language—that is, which must refer to some entity—the essential relationship between Being and human being cannot be demonstrated. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger distinguishes between idle talk (*Gerede*), which does not expose the essential relationship of man to Being, and genuine *silent*—"non-referential"— talk (*Rede*), which does expose it. Heidegger likewise rejects scientific language as an option. We should rather stop regarding language and thinking as rational tools for calculating that are designed to achieve practical results and profit (Heidegger 2000a: 5), a tendency which Heidegger traces back to Plato and Aristotle, who already conceived thinking, θεωρία, as *τέχνη* in the derivative practical context of *πρᾶξις* and *ποίησις* (Ibid: 6–7). It is rather poetic language in which the relationship between thinking and Being can be reflected, although not in the poetic expression of every poet. It is not the bourgeois Goethe, Heidegger argues, but rather Hölderlin, in whose poetry Being speaks (Ibid: 31).

It is in the famous interview with *Der Spiegel* of 1968 that Heidegger repeats that it is Ancient Greek and German within which the essential relationship between thinking and Being can be said, echoing his claims from the Nazi period and his reliance on Fichte who, in his *Addresses to the German Nation*, distinguishes the German from all other people, for only the German language can relate to Being, can be philosophy. Philosophy and German are synonyms, according to Fichte. Other people can learn the German language but not speak it like a German man. This means that Fichte's distinction cannot be solely founded on language[15] (although he does not talk about race, as far as I know).

15 "Die wahre in sich selbst zu Ende gekommene und über die Erscheinung hinweg wahrhaft zum Kerne derselben durchgedrungene Philosophie hingegen geht aus von dem einen, reinen, göttlichen Leben,—als Leben schlechtweg, welches auch in alle Ewigkeit und darin immer eines bleibt, nicht aber als von diesem oder jenem Leben; und sie sieht, wie lediglich in der Erscheinung dieses Leben unendlich fort sich schließe und wiederum öffne und erst diesem Gesetze zufolge es zu einem Sein und zu einem Etwas überhaupt komme. Ihr entsteht das Sein, was jene sich vorausgeben lässt. Und so ist denn diese Philosophie recht eigentlich nur deutsch, d.i. ursprünglich; und umgekehrt, so jemand nur ein wahrer Deutscher würde,

It is, however, in Heidegger's later text more than advocacy of irrationality that evidences a kinship to the Nazi era. The relationship between Being and human being is characterized by obedience and submission, and it is constituted in apocalyptic event. Contrary to the concept of the human being in the technological era, in which the human being uses rational technological tools to manipulate objects and nature, in the original relationship between Being and human being, the human being is controlled, is led by Being.

> Said plainly, thinking is the thinking of Being. The genitive says something twofold. Thinking is of Being inasmuch as thinking, propriated by Being [*vom Sein ereignet*],[16] belongs [*gehört*] to Being. At the same time thinking is of Being insofar as thinking, belonging [*gehörend*] to Being, listens [*hörend*] to Being. As the belonging [*das Gehörende*] to Being that listens, thinking is what it is according to its essential origin. (Heidegger 1992: 220 / 2000a: 8)

Rational thinking not only enables mastering nature by means of technology, it also enables asking meaningful questions, debating, doubting, and arguing. In its absence, the relationship between Being and human being becomes authoritative and dictatorial, one which in turn becomes the characteristic relationship between the philosopher and his pupils, as Löwith remarks regarding Heidegger. These are the terms which Heidegger uses to characterize the relationship between Being and human being: "listening" (*hören*) and "belonging" (*gehören*) to Being allude to "obeying" (*gehörchen*) and "submissiveness" (*hörig sein*). Heidegger first rejects what he calls the "dictatorship of the public realm" (Heidegger 1992: 221 / 2000a: 9). Now we see him replace that dictatorship with the dictatorship of Being, urging us to solely obey the command of Being (Ibid: 9–10).

In light of the genuine relationship between Being and human being, the traditional concept "human being" must be rejected along with the traditional concept of humanism. This concept developed from the *metaphysical* definition of the human being as *animal rationale*. Heidegger uses the word "metaphysics" in this context in a derogatory way, for metaphysics does not conceive the human being according to his true essence—his relationship to Being—but rather as a substance, as an animal endowed with the ability to calculate and

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so würde er nicht anders denn also philosophieren können." (Fichte 1881: 170–171). Compare Jünger (1930a: 26): "Dennoch, und das ist unser Glaube, gehört die deutsche Sprache den Ursprachen an, und als Ursprache flößt sie der zivilisatorischen Sphäre, der Welt der Gesittung, ein unüberwindliches Mißtrauen ein."

16 The meaning of "*ereignet*" here is that *thinking* is not *caused* by Being as its effect; thinking rather emenates from Being as an apocalyptic event (*Ereignis*). Thus, it is not a matter of causality but rather of destiny.

reason. Metaphysics, in other words, is *inhuman*: "Metaphysics thinks of man on the basis of *animalitas* and does not think in the direction of his *humanitas*" (Heidegger 1992: 227 / 2000a: 15). Thus:

> In defining the humanity of man humanism not only does not ask about the relation of Being to the essence of man; because of its metaphysical origin humanism even impedes the question by neither recognizing nor understanding it. (Heidegger 1992: 226 / 2000a: 13)

The true essence of the human being consists in his relationship to Being, which Heidegger dubs "*Ek-sistence*":

> This way of Being is proper only to man. Ek-sistence so understood is not only the ground of the possibility of reason, *ratio*, but is also that in which the essence of man preserves the source that determines him. (Heidegger 1992: 228 / 2000a: 16)

> Ek-sistence, thought in terms of *ecstasis*, does not coincide with *existential* in either form or content. In terms of content Ek-sistence means standing out into the truth of Being. … Ek-sistence identifies the determination of what man is in the destiny of truth. (Heidegger 1992: 230 / 2000a: 18)

> But Da-sein itself occurs essentially as "thrown [*geworfen*]." It unfolds essentially in the throw of Being as the fateful sending [*schickend Geschickliches*]. (Heidegger 1992: 231 / 2000a: 19)[17]

In other words, the relationship between Da-sein and Being can be formulated only in terms of destiny and apocalyptic event, but never in terms of cause and effect.

Despite the obscurity, the tenor of this passage cannot escape our attention. The human essence is derived from the destiny of Being, which must, in turn, imply culture, language, and tradition to which man belongs. Education, choice, and reason are subordinate to this definition. Being human is derived from history and destiny.[18] Heidegger points at the etymological kinship of

17 The German philosopher and television host Peter Sloterdijk published in *Die Zeit* a reply to Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* which he entitled "Rules for the Human Park." While Heidegger's openness or lightening of Being remains obscure, Sloterdijk suggests a clearer alternative according to which humanism has to improve the human being and to check his bestial drives and instincts in favor of culture. The openness which Sloterdijk talks about is a genetic one, and the humanistic task employs qualities of planning and cultivating the best "exemplars" out of the human race, which will rule and lead the rest to their best realization. The best, Sloterdijk claims, is to be achieved not only through lesson (*Lektion*) but also through selection (*Selektion*) (Sloterdijk 1999).

18 "Insofern das Denken sich in seine Aufgabe bescheidet, gibt es im Augenblick des jetzigen Weltgeschicks dem Menschen eine Weisung in die anfängliche Dimension seines geschichtlichen Aufenthaltes." (Heidegger 2000a: 44)

delivering, destiny, occurrence, and history: *schicken—Geschick—geschehen—Geschichte* (Heidegger 2002a: 27–33). Submission to destiny is a stipulation with which we are acquainted from the Nazi era. It reminds us, for example, of Heidegger's *Rectorial Address*:

> The primordial and full essence of science, whose realization is our task, provided we submit to the distant command of the beginning of our spiritual-historical existence, is only created by knowledge about the people that actively participates and by knowledge about the state's destiny that always keeps itself prepared, both at one with knowledge about the spiritual mission. (Cited in Sluga 1993: 27)[19]

Heidegger himself saw in Hitler the messiah or the executor of the destiny of Being. Now, shortly after the end of the War, Heidegger writes to Jean Beaufret:

> What still today remains to be said could perhaps become an impetus for guiding the essence of man to the point where it thoughtfully attends to that dimension of the truth of Being which thouroughly governs it. But even this could take place only to the honor of Being and for the benefit of Da-sein, which man ek-sistingly sustains; not, however, for the sake of man, so that civilization and culture through man's doings might be vindicated. (Heidegger 1992: 233 / 2000a: 21)

Abandoned to destiny and history and freed from responsibility, the human being is now the shepherd of Being, as Heidegger puts it (Heidegger 2000a: 23); he is now called upon to shepherd Being (Ibid: 34). However, Being does not only shine in the light of truth, Heidegger qualifies his statement, but also withdraws from it. As Heidegger puts it: "Being comes to its destiny in that It, Being, gives itself. But thought in terms of such destiny this says: it gives itself and refutes itself simultaneously" (Heidegger 1992: 239 / 2000a: 27). Morality and responsibility are thus reduced to ontology, to Being, to destiny. As Adorno remarks, "In the name of timely, appropriate authenticity, the torturer too could give all kinds of ontological excuses, provided that he was a genuine torturer" (Adorno 1997: 95).

In order to substantiate his claim that the essence of the human being is rather *Ek-sistence*, Heidegger points to the primordial meaning of the word "ethics." Quoting Heraclitus, he writes: *ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων*—"man's residence [is] God" (Heidegger 2000a: 46). Heidegger explains: "The word [*ἦθος*] names the open region in which man dwells. The open region of his abode allows

19 See also the following remark by Sluga regarding the *Address*: "Heidegger arranged it that way. It was he who chose to express his commitment not in the form of a treatise, a philosophical discourse, but as an "inauguration," an act of augury and divination, a reading of omens, a moment of decision and destiny." (Sluga 1993: 1)

what pertains to man's essence, and what in thus arriving resides in nearness to him, to appear" (Heidegger 1992: 256 / 2000a: 46). As Losurdo shows, Heraclitus symbolizes for Heidegger the "primal power of Western-Germanic historical existence" (Losurdo 2001: 104).

Genuine ability to distinguish between good and bad is to be attained from that original experience of ethics, from the *ἦθος*, the *Ek-sistence*, and not from education and moral formation, Heidegger claims. He comes to this conclusion by inquiring after the origin of our ability to affirm and negate, to ascribe to or deny a subject its predicate. Negation and affirmation are not attached to things and situations. Our judgment rather acquires the ability to affirm and negate from transcendence, at the *Ek-sistence* or *ἦθος*, Heidegger claims (Heidegger 2000a: 51). As Ernst Tugendhat explains, "being" and "nothing" is the transcendental precondition which enables us to affirm and negate (Tugendhat 1970). Heidegger says:

> With healing, evil appears all the more in the clearing of Being. The essence of evil does not consist in the mere baseness of human action, but rather in the malice of rage. Both of these, however, healing and raging, can essentially occurs only in Being, insofar as Being itself is what is contested [*das Strittige*]. In it is concealed the essential provenance of nihilation. (Heidegger 1992: 260 / 2000a: 51)[20]

Being morally good and bad is not at man's discretion. They are determined by destiny, in the shining forth and withdrawing of Being.[21] Good and evil are, in other words, the outcome of historical fatalism. The authoritative and dictatorial tone and content of these statements stand out.

> It remains to ask, granting that thinking belongs to ek-sistence, whether every "yes" and "no" are not themselves already dependent on Being. As these dependents, they can never first posit the very thing to which they themselves belong. (Heidegger 1992: 260 / 2000a: 52)

Approval and disapproval are subjugated to Being, and not vice versa, according to Heidegger. Thus, good and evil too are subjugated to Being. "The healing

20 I do not see any historical support for Anson Rabinbach's claim that the "malice of rage" is "an unambiguous reference to the bad motives of the victors" (Rabinbach 2000: 103–104). But even assumed that there is historical support for this interpretation, Rabinbach still misses the whole point, for Heidegger emphatically contends time and again that *motives*—be it political or moral—are irrelevant to his discussion, because history is determined by and derived from the destiny of Being. Thus, human motives and moral evaluations do not even deserve to be a theme of serious philosophical discussion, according to Heidegger.

21 Compare also Heidegger's remark from the 1949 edition: "Bejahen und Verneinen, Anerkennen und Verwerfen schon gebraucht in das Geheiß des Ereignisses—vom Geheiß des Unterschieds gerufen in das Entsagen." (Heidegger 2000a: 52, footnote)

of Being first grants ascent into grace; to raging its compulsion to malignancy" (Heidegger 1992: 261 / 2000a: 52).

It seems that one would look in vain for a significant change in the tone and content of Heidegger's philosophy. Being is understood as a fatal event to which the human being is subjected.

Plato's Doctrine of Truth, a lecture from 1930–1931, conveys the same message as the *Letter* alongside which it appeared in the same volume in 1947 and then in 1954. In this text, Heidegger concentrates on education, which he wants to understand in light of his interpretation of the ancient Greek notion of education, παιδεία.

The term "παιδεία," according to Heidegger, defines a complete transformation of the whole existence of the human being from being "uneducated" to "educated" (Heidegger 1954: 23). It does not imply formation of the human being, but rather *trans*-formation into his appropriate domain, which is the openness of Being (Ibid: 24). This transformation is the outcome of an apocalyptic event (Ibid: 25–26). Following this transformation, the human being is detached from his world and directed to the light of Being (Ibid: 30). In the Nazi era, it was Joseph Goebbels who publicly talked about an utter transformation of the human being:

> The revolution that we have carried out is a total one. It has reached into all levels of public life and reshaped them anew from their ground. It has completely changed and restructured anew the relationships of man to his fellowmen, the relationships of man to his state, and to the questions of existence [*Dasein*]. (Cited in Faye 1977, Volume 2: 584)

As Jean Pierre Faye remarks, it is not Heidegger who speaks the language of Goebbels, but rather Goebbels who speaks Heidegger's (Ibid). According to Heidegger, the human being does not become free from unchecked drives by means of education, but rather his sight is freed by the light of Being (Heidegger 1954: 31). This light is the original meaning of Plato's *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*, Heidegger says. Heidegger rejects any ascription of moral quality to that idea (Ibid: 37). *Τὸ ἀγαθόν* rather specifies the shining light which lets entities be seen (Ibid: 38). But already in Plato we see how this open area in which entities appear—*ἀλήθεια*—degenerates into the inferior state of truth as correctness—*ὀρθότης*—as correspondence between representation and object, Heidegger says. Truth, as correspondence between representation and object, marks, for Heidegger, the first and crucial stage of the fall from the original experience of Being to metaphysics. It is the birth of humanism and education and of degenerated values. The human being thinks in terms of correctness and adequate correspondence between representation and object. Better correspondence implies higher value.

Comparing the content of the famous *Rectorial Address* with the *Letter on Humanism* and *Plato's Doctrine of Truth*, we observe parallels. The essence of the

German university, Heidegger states at the very beginning of the *Address*, stems from the destiny (*Schicksal*) which everybody—the *Führer* included—ought to attentively obey (Heidegger 2000b: 107). It is the utmost responsibility of the German university to attend to that destiny (Ibid: 108). In terms of the *Letter*, the German university ought to "shepherd" Being. The goal of science, Heidegger says in the *Address*, is neither to gain knowledge nor to educate; it is rather supposed to point us to Being (Ibid: 110–111). Science is not procedure, Heidegger claims, it is rather a fundamental event (*Grundgeschehen*) (Ibid: 111) which results in pointing the human being to the destiny of Being. This openness—as in *Plato's Doctrine of Truth*—is the outcome of a transformation (*wandeln*) (Ibid). Freedom, as Heidegger stresses in the *Address*, does not consist of bohemian student life; it is rather attentive obedience to the destiny of Being:

> This [German] people shapes its fate by placing its history into the openness of the overwhelming power of all the world-shaping powers of human being (*Dasein*) and by ever renewing the battle for its spiritual world. (Heidegger 2003: 8 / 2000b: 113)

The difference between the *Rectorial Address* on the one hand, and *Plato's Doctrine of Truth* and the *Letter on Humanism* on the other hand, seems cosmetic. In all of them, we find authoritative tone; rejection of rationality, humanism, and education; and a call to succumb to the destiny of Being. Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Lévinas are among the most renowned pupils of Heidegger. To what extent did they follow the authoritative tone and call to succumb to the destiny of Being?

Excursus

I. Hannah Arendt

In her Gifford lectures called *The Life of the Mind*, Hannah Arendt claims that for Heidegger the "turn" (*Kehre*), or "reversal," as she prefers to call it, does not suggest a turn in the biography of Heidegger. It is rather a turn in his philosophy, although it bears on Heidegger's biography.

> … What the reversal originally turns against is primarily the will-to-power. In Heidegger's understanding, the will to rule and to dominate is a kind of original sin, of which he found himself guilty when he tried to come to terms with his brief past in the Nazi movement. (Arendt 1978, Volume 2: 173)

If Heidegger rued his support of the Nazi movement, as Arendt claims, the question is why did he not express his regret in clear language. *Being and Time*,

Heidegger's *magnum opus*, was conceived as a study of the meaning of Being. Heidegger, however, published only part of the plan he had sketched. In this part, he deals with the various ways in which the human *Dasein* interprets Being. The *turn* marks the shift from the study of the human *Dasein* to the study of Being, Arendt claims. At this turning point, Arendt identifies Heidegger's repentance, for it is the shift from human arrogance and will-to-power to humility in the face of the destiny of Being. "Now he desubjectivizes thinking itself, robs it of its Subject, man as a thinking being, and transforms it into a function of Being..." (Ibid: 174).

It is not clear to me why concentrating on the human *Dasein* must necessarily be coupled with chauvinistic and racial arrogance and support of Nazism, as Arendt claims, while concentrating on Being and man's submissiveness implies repentance. Focusing on the human *Dasein* does not necessarily lead to barbarity, while stressing Being does not necessarily lead to humanity. It could well be the other way around. As Hitler says in one of his *Table Talks* (*Tischgespräche*):

> The life of the individual must not be set at too high a price. If the individual were important in the eyes of nature, nature would take care to preserve him. Amongst the millions of eggs a fly lays, very few are hatched out—and yet the race of flies thrives. What is important for us, who are men, is less the sum of knowledge acquired than the maintenance of conditions that enable science constantly to renew itself. (Picker 2000: 142)

Seen now in the light of the non-subjective will to power, the subjective will to power is a self-negation. Arendt argues:

> Seen from the perspective of the Will ... (nothingness) is the extinction of the Will in not-willing .... Hence ... (quoting Nietzsche) our will "would rather will nothingness than not will". ... "To will nothingness" here means *to will ... the negation, the destruction, the laying waste*. (Arendt 1978, Volume 2: 177)

As such, the distinction between the will to power and the will not to will does not make sense, for either way the *individual* will to power is swollen into the general will to power.[22] Arendt does not explain why submission to the will to

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22 The explanation by Walter A. Kaufmann elucidates the point, and it may make us suspect the accuracy of Arendt's reading of Nietzsche:

> Nietzsche, however, insists—in conformity with tradition—that what remains is the essence and what is changed is accidental. He considers the will to power, which remains throughout, the "essence," while "all 'ends,' 'objectives'" and the like, are merely accidental and changing attributes "of the one will," "of the will to power" (WM 675). In other words, not only the energy remains but also the objective, power; and those so-called objectives which are canceled are only accidental attributes of this more basic striving: they are, to use one of Nietzsche's favorite terms, mere "foregrounds". (Kaufmann 1974: 221–222)

power or to Being must lead to overcoming the *hubris* which Heidegger expressed in his *Rectorial Address*. Likewise, she does not show why she identifies the *Rectorial Address* with *hubris*, for Heidegger preached obedience and submissiveness in the *Rectorial Address* exactly as in the *Letter on Humanism*.

As Faye argues, in *Being and Time* Heidegger already uses the term *Dasein* instead of *human* in order to reduce the importance of the individual in favor of Being and the destiny of his people (Faye 2009: 15–16). As Arendt puts it, "But what man thinks does not arise from his own spontaneity or creativity; it is the obedient response to the command of Being" (Arendt 1978, Volume 2: 174). Submissiveness to the call of Being and erasing the individual human being can also suggest submitting to authorities and annihilating other races. But even if it leads instead to tranquility (*Gelassenheit*), as Arendt claims, it cannot clear Heidegger. By tranquility, Heidegger does not mean pacifism and tolerance, and not only were the active murderers part of the disaster, but also the tranquil bystanders who did nothing to prevent it.

In shifting the accent from the human *Dasein* to Being, Arendt sees repentance and reversion. As I suggested, this turn can likewise imply compliancy with authority and perpetration of crimes. Arendt's complicated maneuver to combine morality with the destiny of Being is farfetched. It makes the impression that she wants to clear Heidegger at any expense. The kind of account that she applies to Heidegger will return in her thesis on the *banality of evil*, as we shall later see.

II. Emmanuel Lévinas

Emmanuel Lévinas observes moral defect where Hannah Arendt observes moral value. Lévinas's attack is directed above all at *Being and Time*, but his point becomes even stronger in our context.

Lévinas holds against Heidegger that it is absurd to claim that not only things in the world but also my fellowmen are meaningfully understood out of the horizon or openness of Being. A fellowman, Lévinas argues, cannot be (*morally*) understood subsequent to ascending into Being. "Here perception is not projected toward a horizon—the field of my freedom, power and property—in order to grasp the individual upon familiar foundation" (Lévinas 1996: 7). The fellowman, Lévinas claims, is not first of all an object, which can be understood in advance by means of a concept, and then becomes an interlocutor, but he is both at once.

> In relation to beings in the opening of being, comprehension finds a signification for them on the basis of being. In this sense, it does not invoke these beings, but only names them, thus accomplishing a violence and a negation—a partial negation which is violence. This partiality is indicated by the fact that, without disappearing, those beings are in my power. Partial negation, which is violence, denies the independence of being: it belongs to me (Ibid: 9).

Now, regarding the fellowman,

> I cannot negate him partially, in violence, in grasping him within the horizon of being in general and possessing him. The Other (*Autrui*) is the sole being whose negation can only announce itself as total: as *murder*. The Other (*Autrui*) is the sole being I can wish to kill (Ibid).

The problem, Lévinas specifies, consists in the precedence which Heidegger gives to ontology over morality, and once he gives precedence to ontology, the fellowman can no longer be meaningfully—that is, *morally*—understood. Understanding something in advance out of the transcendence means to subjugate it to one's own concept, to annul its independence, and to turn it into one's property. Heidegger's ontology is then immoral in that it leaves no room for independent fellowman, in that it gives license, so to speak, to kill the fellowman. The only way to obviate murder, Lévinas says, is to look at the face (*visage*) of the fellowman. Looking at the human face does not allow subjugating the fellowman and turning him into an object. The face saves one from killing and being killed.

Lévinas's claim that Heidegger's philosophy lacks moral aspect makes more sense than Arendt's complicated attempt to introduce morality into Heidegger's obscure mythology about the destiny of Being. However, his argument looks weak. One can argue against him that in place of ontology, he proposes a "*face-ology*" that allows no meaningful differentiation, i.e. a general theory of face from which no moral judgment can be derived: the mass killer and his prey, the innocent and the guilty—they are all *faced*. Likewise, there is nothing inherent in the "face" that necessitates ascription to a human being and not to a work of art or an object. Thus we can, in principle, deny particular ethnic groups a human face, and we are then entitled to exterminate them. On the other hand, we can ascribe to Being or to an object a face. Lévinas is fair enough to admit this difficulty: "Can things take on face? Is not art an activity that lends faces to things? Does not the facade of a house regard us? The analysis so far does not suffice for an answer" (Ibid: 10).

The claim, according to which the hegemony of ontology does not leave room for ethics, makes sense. Lévinas's alternative, however, not brings us closer to morality. The shift from Heidegger to Lévinas can be described as the shift from dogmatic ontology to dogmatic *face-ology*. Having a face should rather

be formulated as a demand, as a challenge, as a standard to which the human being ought to refer in his conduct: one should behave in a human way—morally, sympathizing, mercifully—to justify and to deserve his having a "human face."

Chapter Two

Carl Schmitt on God, Law, and the Führer

The biographical relationship of Carl Schmitt to Nazism is well documented, as are his support of the Röhm-Putsch, his exchanges with Heidegger and Jünger, his support of discrimination against Jews, and his opposition to democracy and the parliamentary system. Less studied is rather the kinship between his philosophy and Nazism, Heidegger, and Jünger, and their common intellectual interests and world-view. Hence, again in the case of Carl Schmitt we see a tendency to draw a line between the person and the thinker. Jacob Taubes tells about the peculiar coincidence subsequent to which he, the Jew, and Schmitt became acquainted (Taubes 1993: 133–134). It is my aim to point out the ideological and intellectual kinship between Schmitt and Nazism. The excursus below is a translation of an address given by Schmitt at the Conference of the *Reichsgruppe* of University Professors of the NSRB[23] in October 1934. Smoking guns were found long ago. My purpose is rather to demonstrate the essential connection between ideology, politics, and philosophy.

Political Theology (1922) is one of Schmitt's most influential texts. The suggestion that politics and religion are intimately related makes this title conspicuous. We have already seen Heidegger introduce religious terms into his philosophical writings. Hence, it should not surprise us that long after the Enlightenment—and especially after Hume showed the impossibility of miraculous divine intervention in the course of history—Schmitt argues that all political terms and conceptions are adaptations of or secularized religious terms[24] and, furthermore, compares the act of the sovereign with God's intervention in the course of history.

Revelation is the main religious component that Schmitt has in mind when arguing that all political concepts are secularized religious concepts, for it reflects the sovereign's unchecked intervention in the historical chain of events and his ability to change its course. This suggests that Schmitt has in mind a par-

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23 NSRB is the *National Socialist Lawyer's (*literarily: the Guards of the Law*) Association* (*Nationalsozialistischer Rechtswahrerbund*).

24 "Alle prägnanten Begriffe der modernen Staatslehre sind säkularisierte theologische Begriffe."

"Nicht nur ihrer historischen Entwicklung nach, weil sie aus der Theologie auf die Staatslehre übertragen wurden, indem zum Beispiel der allmächtige Gott zum omnipotenten Gesetzgeber wurde, sondern auch in ihrer systematischen Struktur … Der Ausnahmezustand hat für die Jurisprudenz eine analoge Bedeutung wie das Wunder für die Theologie." (Schmitt 1934: 49)

ticular religion in which revelation is dominant and a particular political setting which is built upon sovereignty, and not a necessary relationship that exists between any religion and any political setting. If this suggestion is true, then it means that Schmitt does not talk about a necessary situation but rather about a desired one. The question is why does Schmitt look to religion to corroborate his political conception? Is it because he needs religion to justify a particular political setting? Is it that Schmitt tries to create a bridge between certain aspects of the past and the present and future by projecting religion onto politics? Erik Peterson, Schmitt's intellectual rival, shows in his scholarly work *Monotheism as a Political Problem* (1935) how political camps in Western history manipulated religious concepts to substantiate and support political agendas, regimes, and rulers. As he writes at one point, "Thus, for Orosius, the Roman Empire and Christendom had become one, so he could say '*ad Christianos et Romanos Romanus et Christianus accedo*' [I come as Roman and Christian to Romans and Christians]" (Peterson 1935: 92). Regarding Orosius, Peterson says, "As nobody else, this Spanish provincial tied together the Roman Empire and Christendom, most clearly in the joining of Augustus with Christ" (Ibid: 92–93).

In Schmitt, the whole state as a body politic is built up around the *sovereign* who summons the people and makes them cohere by means of a free act of resolution (*Entscheidung*) in a state of emergency. An example of state of emergency and of the necessarily subsequent act of sovereignty is the so-called "Röhm-Putsch" and the subsequent executions. Schmitt writes:

> The Führer protects justice against the worst misuse, insofar as he, in a moment of danger, instantly creates justice by virtue of his Führership [*Führertum*] as the court's highest judge: "In this hour I was responsible for the destiny of the German nation and hence the *court's highest judge of the German people*." The true Führer is always also a judge. His judgeship [*Richtertum*] emanates from his Führership. If one severs one from the other or even poses them one against the other, he turns the judge into either an adversary Führer or an instrument in the hand of the adversary Führer and seeks to unhinge the state with the help of justice. (Schmitt 1934: 946–947)

The "Führer-principle" [*das Führersprinzip*], which Schmitt introduces, means to allow the sovereign, the Führer, a spontaneous and unbound act that constitutes a law. Binding the capacity of the Führer to parliamentary procedures could only lead to such horrid results as the Treaty of Versailles (Ibid: 950). Genuine justice implies the free will of the Führer and vice versa. The spontaneous act of the sovereign is "divine" in that it is free and lies outside the code of laws which it constructs. Thus, this act can never be bad and can never be illegal, according to Schmitt. Schmitt writes:

> Looked at normatively, the decision emanates from nothingness [*Nichts*]. The legal force of a decision is different from the result of substantition. Ascription is not achieved with the aid of a norm; it happens the other way around. A point of ascription first determines what a norm is and what normative rightness is. (Schmitt 1985: 31–32 / 1934: 42–43)

There is, however, an important difference between a divine act and a sovereign act, which Schmitt wants to overlook. A sovereign act can never be completely autonomous; it can never be the first initiative act, as a divine one is. It always takes place in the historical context against which it reacts. It always relies on given settings and resources. It can abolish parliamentary procedures and institutions, but it still takes place in historical and political context. Schmitt seems to use the *ex post facto* to justify or to brand *legitimate* particular acts. Thus Schmitt exempts the Führer from the need to provide explanations and justifications. Schmitt's recourse to the divine, however, is unfounded. As Derrida explains:

> Justice in the sense of *droit* (right or law) would not simply be put in the service of a social force or power, for example an economic, political, ideological power that would exist outside or before it and which it would have to accommodate or bend to when useful. Its very moment of foundation or institution (which in any case is never a moment inscribed in the homogeneous tissue of a history, since it is ripped apart with one decision), the operation that amounts to founding, inaugurating, justifying law (*droit*), making law, would consist of a *coup de force*, of a performative and therefore, interpretative, violence that in itself is neither just nor unjust and that no justice and no previous law with its founding anterior moment could guarantee or contradict or invalidate. No justificatory discourse could or should ensure the role of meta language in relation to the performativity of institutive language or to its dominant interpretation. (Derrida 2002: 241–242)

That said, we ought to consider whether the sovereign reacts to an emergency situation, or instead concocts one.[25] Does the emergency situation create the sovereign as the Fatherland's savior, the right person in the right place and time? Or does *he* create *it* in order to consolidate his position and achieve his goal? As a product of the situation, he cannot really be called sovereign. Nor as initiator of the critical situation is he really eligible to be called sovereign, because he does not really produce *ex nihilo*, as Schmitt says. Now, what is the difference between an act that constructs a law and caprices of the sovereign? Is any sovereign act really a law-constructing one meant to build and not just destroy?

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25 See Fraenkel on the Reichstag fire: "Gelegentlich wird von nationalsozialistischer Seite zugegeben, dass der Reichstagsbrand gelegen kam und dass die ihm folgende kommisarische Diktatur den erwünschten Anlass zur Beseitigung des Rechtstaates bot." (Fraenkel 1984: 36)

Ernst Fraenkel has more earthy things to say about Schmitt's thesis than Derrida. In a study based instead on sociological, historical, and legal data, he demonstrates that Schmitt's thesis is not about the indispensable violent act that constructs any law, the "illegal" act that founds a legal system. It is rather the ambition to subjugate the legal system to the will and caprices of the Führer and the Gestapo. In Nazi Germany, Fraenkel claims, there seems to be no criterion—except racial and casual ones—for defining a situation as an emergency (Fraenkel 1984: 94–95). As Christian Graf von Krockow claims, the sovereign act is directed to nothing but achieving each time a particular *ad hoc* goal, enhancing the sovereign's power (Krockow 1958: 64–65).

Leo Strauss argues that Schmitt's ultimate goal is to undermine *liberalism*, which, in Schmitt's eyes, destroys the state as body politic (Meier 1995: 92). Liberalism destroys politics because it is founded on parliament and parliamentary procedures whose resolutions are reached through discussion and voting. The sovereign stands above the law; he is not bound by norms and juridical procedures in executing his will (Schmitt 1934: 13). He creates a new situation through a free act that is never determined by any reason other than his own will. "Sovereignity is the highest, legally independent, underived power" (Schmitt 1985: 17 / 1934: 26). Relying on Thomas Hobbes, Schmitt writes: "*Autoritas, non veritas facit legem*" (Schmitt 1934: 44) and thus frees the Führer from any need to explain and justify his act—neither before the representatives of the law, nor before the people.

Parliament and autonomous acts of the sovereign exclude one another. Furthermore, the outcome of the parliamentary resolution is opposed to the outcome of the autonomous act of the sovereign. The parliament strives to construct global standards which are supposed to refer to opposing sides and interests by means of compromises. The sovereign's act, on the contrary, results in a sharp distinction between *friend* and *enemy*. The resolute act of the sovereign—and this is the only thing that can give it a content—is now seen to be about the distinction between friend and enemy.

In *The Concept of the Political*, Carl Schmitt discusses what he holds to be the most basic principle of our living together in a state. According to common opinion (stemming from the theories of the social contract of the 18th and 19th centuries), it is the state which gathers us together. But there is a still more basic principle, Schmitt claims, which both brings us together and sets us apart. Schmitt calls it the "friend-and-enemy" distinction. This distinction is *existential* or ontological and thus it precedes the foundation of any political body. The attempt to extirpate this existential distinction and to insert, in its place, a global political system led to the destruction of the state.

> The era of statehood is now dying. No additional word is needed in this regard. Along with it the whole superstructure of all the state-concepts which the Europe-centric science of international and political law built in four hundred years of thought comes to an end. The state as the model for political unity, the state as the bearer of the most astonishing monopoly of all monopolies, namely the monopoly of political resoluteness, this gem of European form and Occidental rationalism, is dethroned. (Schmitt 1963: 10)[26]

Suppressing the friend-and-enemy existential principle leads to the destruction of the state.

> There exists no rational purpose, no norm no matter how true, no program no matter how exemplary, no social ideal no matter how beautiful, no legitimacy nor legality which could justify men in killing each other for this reason. (Schmitt 1976: 49 / 1963: 49–50)

It is rather the friend-and-enemy existential principle that brings about the agglomeration of people in the political body:

> But, rationally speaking, it cannot be denied that nations continue to group themselves according to the friend-and-enemy antithesis, that the distinction still remains actual today, and that this is an ever present possibility for every people existing in the political sphere. (Schmitt 1976: 28 / 1963: 29)

It follows then that discord between different parties in the same state is either a non-political occurrence or, if it becomes a political occurrence, it will entail the lapse of the state into a civil war (Schmitt 1963: 32). Once the inner bodies of the state become political, that is to say, adversaries to one another and to the state (trade unions and parliamentary parties, for example), the state will crumble. Even neutrality, Schmitt argues, must presuppose the friend-and-enemy existential principle (Ibid: 35). Neutrality is attacked by Schmitt as non-political. His discussion echoes Christoph Steding's huge volume *The Reich and the Illness of the European Culture* (1942), which is, as Franz Neumann puts it, "A wholesale attack upon knowledge, education, and the intellect, upon the endless 'palaver' of the democracies" (Neumann 1944: 134). Steding speaks out against neutrality and the lack of determinism: "One decides to make no longer real decisions, and one 'keeps' for himself the Swiss democratic theologians in order for them to speak about decisions, for this is the safest way to verbally sabotage deeds and decisions" (Steding 1942: 71).

As we have seen above, it is not clear whether the sovereign is a product of the situation or whether he, instead, creates it. If he creates it—and this would come closer to the definition "sovereign"—there is still the question regarding differentiation. Without saying what the sovereign is supposed to create

26 The whole important *Foreword* chapter from which this passage is taken is not included in the English translation of Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*.

or toward what he is resolved (*entschieden*),[27] this expression remains empty. If human existence, however, is according to Schmitt in a state of perpetual war, then it is understandable why he leaves this claim abstract: perpetual war requires perpetual sovereign decisions. As he writes in his *Leviathan*, echoing Ernst Jünger, "The experience gained from World War I (1914–1918) waged against Germany contains a noteworthy lesson, for only the just war is the true 'total' war" (Schmitt 1996: 48 / 1982: 75).

Apparently, Schmitt does create a differentiation in this abstract claim by introducing the friend-and-enemy principle. The resoluteness of the sovereign is about the distinction between friend and enemy. This distinction stems from his act of resoluteness. Yet, neither is this addition sufficient to make Schmitt's claim less abstract: What is the criterion applied in drawing the line between enemy and friend? The enemy is a political rival? Or is he the enemy of the state? Or is he the enemy of the race?[28] Or what are the basic units presupposed in this distinction—hostile families, hostile tribes, hostile states, or battling military units? Contrary to Hobbes's *Leviathan*, in which the primeval hostility—which is hypothetical, for Hobbes never refers to a historical time in which there was a state of global war—is between individuals whose interest was to end the war of one against the other, Schmitt talks about an *actual* and permanent state of war between nations. He writes, "The independent, peaceful states, in and of themselves, must stake their entire vital power against one another in order to assert themselves" (Schmitt 1996: 49 / 1982: 76–77).

One may still wonder whether Schmitt can really be content with an abstract thesis detached from any definite situation, or whether he rather hints at a desirable specific situation. In Schmitt's description, there are two homogenous hostile masses. It is unlikely that this clean cut between two homogenous masses refers to two states, for even the relationship between two hostile dictatorial states cannot simply be reduced to a relation between two homogenous masses. According to Schmitt, the existence of two hostile masses can never be abolished. Through the autonomous act of the sovereign, a distinction between two camps is created. This distinction circumscribes the domain of the sovereign. The sovereign can forfeit his domain either by succumbing to his enemy or

27 See the chapter on Löwith.

28 According to Faye, Heidegger claims against Schmitt that the friend-and-enemy is not radical enough as long as it does not refer to race. "Er [Heidegger] hält die Schmittsche Unterscheidung zwischen Freund und Feind nicht für ursprünglich genug. Wie Alfred Baeumler bezieht Heidegger das Politische auf die Selbstbehauptung eines Volkes oder einer Rasse. Auf diese Weise kann er behaupten, dass sein Begriff des Politischen ursprünglich und der Schmittsche Begriff lediglich abgeleitet ist." (Faye 2008: 50)

by wholly subjugating the enemy, for in both scenarios, the distinction between enemy and friend gets lost:

> The political entity cannot by its very nature be universal in the sense of embracing all of humanity and the entire world. If the different states, religions, classes, and other human groupings on earth should be so unified that a conflict among them is impossible and even inconceivable and if civil war should forever be foreclosed in a realm which embraces the globe, then the distinction of friend and enemy would also cease. What remains is neither politics nor state, but culture, civilization, economics, morality, law, art, entertainment, etc.. (Schmitt 1996: 53 / 1963: 54)

Thus, Schmitt must talk about plurality:

> ... The concept of the political yields pluralistic consequences, but not in the sense that, within one and the same political entity, instead of the decisive friend-and-enemy grouping, a pluralism could take it place without destroying the entity and the political itself. (Schmitt 1996: 45 / 1963: 54)

As the following translation of Schmitt's address may suggest, it is the racial factor to which Schmitt's friend-and-enemy pair can neatly be applied, for in this example, the idea of two homogenous hostile camps can be realized after Schmitt has demonized one group. It is, of course, not to suggest that he could not pick other examples, but the following text is a concrete example of a possible realization of the friend-and-enemy principle that draws a line between two homogenous camps.

Carl Schmitt

German Jurisprudence in the Battle against the Jewish Spirit—Concluding Remarks at the Conference of the *Reichsgruppe*[29] of University Professors of the NSRB[30], October 3rd and 4th, 1936

[1193] I. Our conference has yielded a large number of ideas and viewpoints. Fortunately, it has also produced an overall picture. The result does not yet need to be summed up in elaborated theses and statements. For practical scholarly legal work—which we can already tackle in this semester—innumerable issues have been brought to light in the immediate tasks which lay before us. I remind you only of the need for cooperation between jurisprudence and economics in the

29 (N.B.: Professional Association of the Reich.)
30 (N.B.: *Nationalsozialistische Rechtswahrerbund*, i.e. Association of National Socialist Protection of the Law.)

field of commercial and civil law; and of the need for juristic-historical cooperation—not in the sense of the old archeological history of right, but rather in the sense which is demanded by Dr. Ruttke, namely, the work in the field of the Jewish right to which RA Schroer has already contributed a lot with his works on *Shulchan Aruch*.[31] The common thread of all the lectures given here was the dominance of Jewish legal thought in all the fields of the law and the lack of relevance this legal thought has in the German sense of justice and law. Jewish law appears, as all the lectures have pointed out, as the salvation from chaos of some sorts. The peculiar polarity—between Jewish chaos on one hand and Jewish law on the other, anarchistic nihilism on one hand and positive normativity on the other, abrasive sensual materialism on one hand and abstract moralism on the other—stands now before us so clearly and vividly that we can use this fact as scientifically decisive recognition of our conference also for the study about race psychology [*Rassenseelenkunde*]—as a starting point for further jurisprudential work. Therefore, we, in our capacity as German guardians of the law [*Rechtswahrer*] and teachers of the law, have for the first time contributed to the important research that race science [*Rassenkunde*] has already done in other fields. Working together for these two days, we have reached an initial result which saves our reputation as a science, compared to the other achievements which Dr. Falk Ruttke rightly referred to and which can set the standards for us in many respects.

II. Apart from these scientific findings, a series of practical questions has emerged. The Reichsrechtsführer,[32] Reichsminister Dr. Frank, has very clearly formulated demands in his speech that go into concrete details and that concern the technical tasks of bibliography, librarianship and citation.

1. The necessary task of creating a bibliography is a very difficult one, for it is naturally necessary that we determine who is a Jew and who is not a Jew as precisely as possible. The smallest mistakes in this respect can be made to seem greater, cause perplexities, and help the enemies of Nazism achieve cheap victories. They can also cause damage in that young students might be led astray from the main idea because of minor inaccuracies, for they can easily be tempted, out of a false sense of justice—which is to be found also in our German character—to concentrate on this minor particular case of inaccuracy [1195] instead on the great and just cause for which we fight.[33]

31 (N.B.: The Code of Jewish law.)

32 (N.B.: The chairman of the above-mentioned NSRB.)

33 At the instigation of the *Reichsrechtsführer*, the *Reichsleiter*, Dr. Frank, the ministry of Justice in the Reich [*Reichrechtsamt*] of the NSDAP has already started to compile a list of Jewish authors. Further announcements regarding the kind of required cooperation will be issued shortly.

2. Only by virtue of an exact list can we continue to work in the field of technical cataloging, and through purging our libraries, we will protect our students from a perplexity that emerges when, on one hand, we direct them to the necessary battle against the Jewish spirit, but on other hand, by the end of 1936, a normal library of any law faculty still looks as if the greater part of the juristic literature was composed by Jewish authors. Consequently, this formidable impression—which emerges because Jewish works are still present in law faculties and students are actually required to make use of Jewish ideas—will be avoided. All juristic works composed by Jewish authors, as *Reichsminister* Dr. Frank aptly remarked, belong without bibliographical exception in a particular section called "*Judaica*."

3. There also exists a grave problem concerning citations. After a conference like the current one, it will no longer be possible to cite a Jewish author as any other author. It would be downright irresponsible to cite a Jewish author as a principal witness or as a kind of authority in the field. A Jewish author has no authority for us, not even a "purely scientific" authority. This assessment shall serve as the starting point in the treatment of the question regarding citations. For us, a Jewish author is, in so far as he is cited at all, a Jewish author. The addendum of the word and the designation "Jewish" is not cosmetic, but rather, essential—because the Jewish author cannot actually be prevented from using the German language. Otherwise, the purging of our juristic language is impossible. If somebody writes "Stahl-Jolson" today, he has, in a genuinely scientific and precise manner, achieved more than somebody could have done by means of great remarks against the Jews which are given in general and abstract expressions in such a way that not a single Jew feels himself to be concerned *in concreto*. Only if we have solved the problem of citations in this way, do we get a German juristic literature not infected by the Jews. The problem of citations is hence not only a practical, but also an altogether fundamental one. One can recognize a writer by the way he is citing. Let me remind you only of the brazen obviousness with which the Vienna school of the Jew Kelsen had cited only its own members, and how different opinions were disregarded with cruelty and impudence incomprehensible to us Germans. The problem of citation is therefore not a negligible matter. The Jewish Question today has no longer negligible issues. Everything is interrelated in the closest and deepest manner—this has been true since the real battle for the world-view began.

The question regarding citation will necessitate the clarification of many separate questions, like the question regarding [1196] the citation of half-Jews, of people with Jewish relatives, etc. From the outset, I am warning against focusing on such marginal and interposed questions. This is a much liked method to evade definite decisions. We have hundreds of cases where we are undoubtedly

dealing with *Volljuden*.[34] It is an especially typical Jewish trick to avert the attention from the core of the matter to dubious, interposed and marginal questions. Authors, about whom there is no doubt they are *Volljuden*, will be in the future labeled as Jews in our German juridical literature. If it is for objective reasons necessary to cite Jewish authors, then it will be done only with the addition of the word "Jewish." Mentioning the word "Jewish" will already emanate salutary exorcism.

4. The last practical application concerns the question of scientific work, especially the question of dissertations. The lectures given in the last two days provided much material for good dissertations. I do not consider it necessary that 70–80% of the hundreds of dissertations—which are nowadays being written in Germany—will unchangingly continue to be composed in the old style of the BGB and the StGB[35]-dissertations. This, too, is a serious issue, if one considers how much talent and actual intellectual power are available among the German youth. And what does it mean if German law professors—who are responsible for the education and scientific training of these young Germans—call forth those topics that deviate from the present life of the German people? Here lies a professional task of the highest order. If one bears in mind what this conference has yielded, regarding subjects of dissertations in the fields of History of Justice and Constitutional History—also for the exploration of the Jewish spirit in its influence on the German intellectual life, in its "intersection" with the German spirit, as one speaker puts it very clearly—then it does not seem difficult to remind a young student of the influence of, for example, B. Lasker, Friedberg or Johann Jacoby on the development of German justice, or to motivate him to examine the emergence of the code of civil procedure, the code of criminal procedure and of other laws as far as the Jewish influence is concerned, or to direct his attention to the topic of "Judaism and the state under the rule of law." There is no shortage of new subjects for dissertations, and it would only be the most stupid inefficiency if those new subjects were not utilized.

III. The most important matter, however, which has emerged in our conference is the clear and definite insight that Jewish views, as far as their intellectual content is concerned, cannot be on par with those of German or other non-Jewish authors. With the uttermost clarity, we have all become aware that it is only a seeming difficulty if there are also Jews who have expressed nationalistic and patriotic views, as the famous Stahl-Jolson has done. Time and again in our con-

34 (N.B.: Somebody with at least three Jewish grandparents.)

35 (N.B.: "BGB" stands for Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch [civil code] and "StGB" stands for Strafgesetzbuch [criminal law code].)

ference, the recognition has come through that the [1197] Jew is unproductive and sterile to the German intellectual character. He has nothing to tell us, may he ever so astutely reason or so zealously assimilate. He can indeed showcase his enormous talent for trade and mediation, but in fact he creates nothing. It is a sign of lack in instruction in the race theory, and therefore also in National Socialistic thought, not to see and believe that it is a deep problem that some Jews write and speak in a nationalistic manner and others in an internationalist manner, that they sometimes represent conservative, sometimes liberal, sometimes objective and sometimes even subjective theories. Even the very much praised critical talent of the Jew stems only from his wrong relation to everything which is essential and species-specific. However, a completely different sort of critique is exercised when German law professors criticize and support one another in a real collaboration. It is also wrong to call the Jew particularly logical, particularly comprehending, constructive or rationalistic. His "care-free logical astuteness" is not really what we mean by logic, but rather a weapon which is pointed at us; it stems from the wrong attitude toward the issue and the subject.

1. The relationship of Jewish thought to the German spirit is of the following kind: the Jew has a parasitic, tactical and trading-like relationship to our intellectual work. Due to his talent for trading, he has often a sharp sense for the genuine; with great resourcefulness and a quick *schnozzle*, he knows how to strike at the genuine. This is his instinct as a parasite and real merchant. The fact that Jewish art dealers discover agenuine Rembrandt faster than German art historians does not prove a particular Jewish gift for painting. Likewise, in the juridical field, when the Jew has recognized, with great speed, good authors and theories for what they are, this does not prove a particular Jewish gift for legal thought. The Jews find out quickly where the German matters that attracts them are to be found. We should not consider this character trait of theirs a merit, which would then cause us to plague ourselves with inhibitions. It is simply based within the general situation of the Jew, and his parasitic, tactical and merchant attitude toward German intellectual property. Even a very atrocious and uncanny mask-changing, like the one which makes up the general existence of Stahl-Jolson, could no longer mislead people. If it is time and again emphatically said that this man has been "intrinsically honest," so it may be true—yet I have to add that I cannot look into the mind of that Jew, nor do we have any access to the innermost essence of the Jews. We only know of their ill-balanced relation to our species. If one has ever grasped this truth, he also knows what race means.

2. It is furthermore necessary to recognize how differently the Jews have acted in different historical periods. Heinrich Lange has emphatically pointed

this out in his eminently essays.[36] The particularly significant turning points of the Jewish way of acting in the past century are the following years: 1815, 1830, 1848, 1871, 1890—Bismarck's resignation [1198], the beginning of the Wilhelminian era—1918, 1933. It is therefore inadmissible to put the case of the Jewish conduct from 1830 on the same level with the case of 1930. Here, again, the Jew Stahl-Jolson surfaces, who, today, still influences the denominational-clerical opposition to the National Socialistic state. It is completely wrong to posit him as an exemplary conservative Jew in contrast to latter Jews who unfortunately were different. Therein lies a dangerous misapprehension of the basic insight that with every change in the general situation, with every new chapter in the course of history—so fast that we can notice it only with the utmost attention—a change in Jewish conduct also occurs, a mask-change of demonic crypticness because of which the question concerning the inner credulity of some individual Jew is of no interest at all. The great talent of the Jew for adaptability has risen to immensity through his history of several thousand years and on the ground of peculiar racial dispositions; and the virtuosity of mimicry has improved in a long exercise. We can recognize it in its consequences, but we cannot understand it. And still, we should not overlook that this virtuosity of the Jew does exist.

3. I repeat again and again the urgent request to read every sentence in Adolf Hitler's "*Mein Kampf*" about the Jewish question, especially his remarks on "Jewish Dialectics." What has been presented at our conference by experts in many scientifically eminent talks is stated [in *Mein Kampf*] simply, in a way which is comprehensible to every national comrade, and exhaustive. You should also refer your law students again and again to those sentences of the Führer.

We should not, however, forget the German side in this question about the Jewish problem. In immediately applying of what Dr. Falk Ruttke said, one can, for example, say that the case of Karl Marx and the impact which stemmed from him is for us, indeed, the case of Friedrich Engels or Bruno Bauer or Ludwig Feuerbach or maybe even Hegel. Herein, a tragic problem is grounded. How was it possible that a German man from Wuppertal was captivated by the Jew Marx? How could it be that thousands of decent and honest national comrades surrendered in that way to the Jewish intellect, for many and long decades? Wherefrom stems that vulnerability of so many men with German blood and wherefrom stems the weakness and degeneration of the German kind in that moment of history, the lack of resistance against Judaism? The examination of these questions pertains to our scientific self-contemplation and is armament for the new round in the battle.

36 Compare: *Deutsche-Juristen Zeitung* (1935: 406 / 1936: 1129).

We have recognized this [state] with the utmost scientific clarity in our conference. Contrary to the blindness and the cluelessness of earlier times, this is a revolutionary recognition. Armed with it, we can enter the battle a new round of which has begun. We should not deceive ourselves about the difficulty of that battle. The speeches on the Nuremberg Party Conference leave no doubt about it. Judaism, as the Führer says in his book *Mein Kampf,* is [1199] not only adverse to everything which is adverse to Judaism, but also is the mortal enemy of any true productivity within every other *Volk*. Its world power does not tolerate any *völkisch* [ethnic] productivity; otherwise its particular way of existence would be proven wrong. Yet, the interest in the genuine productivity of other *Volk* and the haste with which the Jewish dealer of art or spirit rushes to the German artist, poet or scholar, in order to use him by means of annuity, are neither merits nor qualities which can divert our attention from what is essential. The Jew occupies us not because of himself. What we search and fight for is our own unadulterated character, the intact purity of our German people. "In that I fend off the Jew," says the Führer Adolf Hitler, "I am fighting for the work of our Lord."

Chapter Three

Ernst Jünger on War for the sake of War

The name Ernst Jünger, no less than those of Heidegger and Schmitt, is related to Nazism. To the enthusiastic postwar moralists and Nazis hunters, however, Jünger is definitely a disappointment, for in his biography—apart from maintaining long friendships with Schmitt and Heidegger—support will not be found for Nazism, but rather implied disapproval and critique, a relationship with Ernst Niekisch, and a close relationship with the anti-Nazi conservatives who tried to assassinate Hitler in 1944 (Schramm 1964: 12–13). Yet, Jünger's work is indispensable for understanding the mindset that enabled the rise to power of the Third Reich.

In his book on the Nazi world-view, Nicolaus Sombart describes a work which he calls "the protocol of ideas" (Sombart 1987: 144) that opens for us a view into the political and ideological mindset in Germany that led to World War II. This work is Jünger's *The Worker* (1932). That work promotes the three most essential components of the Nazi mindset: *first*, the completion of the industrial-technical revolution; *second*, the completion of the state as the highest instance; and *third*, the realization of the German vocation in that state (Sombart 1987: 148). *The Worker*, Sombart says, is not a futuristic novel, but rather an analysis of the German mindset which had been realized by Hitler. Jünger vehemently rejected the suggestion that *The Worker* is related to the Third Reich.[37]

The most obvious common trait in the writings of Heidegger, Schmitt, and Jünger is the centrality of the act of resoluteness—in Heidegger enacted by Being and in Schmitt by the sovereign; and, we shall presently see, in Jünger it is the resoluteness to kill and be killed. As Jünger puts it: "In the sphere of death, everything becomes a symbol of death, and in turn, death is the nourishment from which life is nurtured" (Jünger 1982: 205). Already in *Being and Time*, Heidegger defined the genuine existence of the human *Dasein* as a state in which one lives resolutely toward his own termination (*Sein-zum-Tode*). To live genuinely (*eigentlich*) means to live *entirely* toward one's own termination. Hence, there is no sense in asking *for what sake* I am dying or whether it is *justified* or *unjustified*, etc. One's own termination is experienced genuinely in anxiety (*Angst*) that does not relate to death as an event of which one is afraid (as in

37 See for example his introduction to *The Worker* from 1963 (Jünger 1982) as well as his letter from 1978 (ibid: 315).

terminal illness and life risk) or which one desires when suicidal. We have identified the same pattern in Schmitt. No matter what, one is entirely involved in a conflict. Hence, he disapproves of any parliamentary discourse. Submissiveness and lack of critique is good soil for Nazism to bloom in. In Jünger, it is the excruciating pain and blood and war that give human existence meaning and goal. As Julia Encke says, "The lost war [i.e. World War I] turned into an 'inner victory' and along with it announced the birth of a 'new human type' who continues to celebrate the 'war cult' even when there is in reality no longer an enemy" (Encke 2006: 9). Jünger included in the first edition of *In Stahlgewittern* photos taken on the battlefields. In one of them, he is seen standing with three other comrades next to the body of an enemy soldier. Jünger writes in the introduction to an edited volume called *War and Warriors* from 1930:

> The inner context that is the basis of the essays collected in this volume is German nationalism, which is characterized in that it lost its share in the idealism of the grandparents as well as in the rationalism of the fathers. Instead, its approach is heroic realism: It aims to grasp that substance, that layer of absolute reality of which both ideas and rational conclusions are only expressions. Hence, this approach is at the same time symbolic insofar as it grasps every deed, every thought, and every feeling as the same and unchangeable Being whose rule it is impossible to evade. (Jünger 1930a: 5)

The Worker is probably Jünger's best known and most read work. Heidegger dedicated seminars to *The Worker* (Heidegger: 2004). The resemblance to Schmitt and Heidegger stands out immediately in Jünger's scornful critique of daily idle talk and chatter as a means of channeling and circulating information. It is what Heidegger calls "*Gerede*" in *Being and Time*, and what Schmitt identifies with parliamentary discourse. Like Schmitt, Jünger also speaks out against the parliament and the social contracts of the 19th century. He endorses what he calls "organic construction."[38] Their critique is directed at the bourgeois lifestyle and values and principles and, above all, the seeking of security and well-being. In their eyes, the value is not *external*—I live or die or fight for the sake of this or that ideal—but rather *internal*: I am toward death for the sake of being toward it (Heidegger), I am animus for the sake of animosity (Schmitt), and I am waging war for the sake of war (Jünger).

Further, Jünger's description of work in *The Worker* resembles Heidegger's description in *Being and Time* of the *Dasein* in his daily activities. Likewise, Jünger's attitude toward the work of art resembles Heidegger's in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks*. The true meaning of the work of art is to bring to the fore the most original experience of Being. Primordial truth cannot be accounted for by

38 See for example Jünger (1982: 120).

means of giving reasons and referring to causes. It is rather *imprinted* or *stamped* into things and events. Hence, Jünger calls it "*Gestalt*."

The first task which Jünger sees himself confronted with in talking about the worker is to draw a clear line between his world-view, in which the worker is the basic way of conceiving reality, and all other world-views, in which "worker" stands instead for a particular social class. Bourgeois society fears death, war, and conflict. It strives for security. The worker in this society can better his social and economic conditions and security by means of strikes and struggles. This is the worker of the revolutions which took place in Europe—the one who gained social-economic recognition and justice. His freedom, however, is only an economic autonomy, not a real or essential one. He has, therefore, no access to the "planetary forces"—as Jünger calls them—of existence. The real worker, on the contrary, is the one who rebels against and destroys the bourgeois social and economic order. "The one who still believes here that this process can be maintained by the orders of the old style belongs to the race of defeated and is doomed to extermination" (Jünger 1982: 59).

The genuine worker has no external aim, such as better living standards, annuity, defense, territory, etc. He wages war for the sake of war. The real worker is a warmonger. He does not shun death, but on the contrary is always prepared to die as a martyr and a front-line soldier. The bourgeois is distinguished from the front-line soldier in that even in the heat of war, he looks desperately around for any opportunity to negotiate. For the real worker-soldier, on the contrary, the battlefield is the realm in which one must die—that is, to live in a manner fitting the standards of the Reich (Ibid: 40).

"Real worker" does not designate a social distinction, but rather a *Gestalt* (Ibid: 35), a particular way to live and, accordingly, to look at reality. Reality, in Jünger's eyes, is an endless *global* struggle, and the appropriate way to comply with it is *global* war, mobilization, and armament. The worker is a warrior, and his work is global war. Jünger identifies his worker-warrior with the martyr. There are, however, suggestions in the text that the notion of "noble worker-warrior" applies solely to the noble German race.[39]

There are two questions that should be addressed in this context: the first concerns the relationship between the economic recession that plagued Germany after World War I and the economic blossoming that followed Hitler's rise to power and the arms race. Does *The Worker* implicitly refer to the connection between economic prosperity, work, and the arms race, despite Jünger's

39 See Jünger (1982: 38). See also: "Schon früh in diesem Jahrhundert sah man den Deutschen im Aufstande gegen diese Welt, und zwar vertreten durch den deutschen Frontsoldaten als den Träger einer echten Gestalt." (Ibid: 38–39)

insistence that the war which he is describing has no *external* goals or standards, such as prosperity and profit, but is rather war for the sake of war? Jünger points to this option as well: "The state of unemployment, correctly seen, is to be considered training of a reserve force" (Ibid: 271–272). And again, "A different form of wealth is concealed here, which Bourgeois thinking cannot identify. Millions of men without an occupation—this fact is power, is a fundamental asset, and here too we see the worker who alone possesses the key to this capital" (Ibid: 272). This question entails a second one. Must work not imply hierarchy, distribution of roles, and assignments which are derived from the goals to be achieved? This also leads to a class hierarchy. Otherwise, work would be an incomprehensible notion. Jünger, however, denies this world-view: "The Führer is recognized in that he is the first servant, the first soldier, and the first worker" (Ibid: 15), he says, in a way that is reminiscent of Heidegger's *Rectorial Address*. What, then, is the work that Jünger has in mind when he talks about the "worker?" Jünger writes to Carl Schmitt (who asked the same question):

> Our concern is not to assess the worker according to merely economic, moral, or human worth as Marxism does, but rather to recognize his activity as a form in which the law of the race is expressed. (Kiesel 1999: 34–35)

Because of the title *The Worker*, it is necessary to distinguish Jünger's ideas from the Marxist world-view. Jünger argues here that there is a race whose end, *τέλος*, is to work or whose potential is best realized in working. As in other investigations regarding the end, we are going in circles when we try to answer it; we cannot say which race it is whose end is working without assuming what should be proved. Jünger is not bothered by logical fallacies, because he does not admit the supreme validity of reason. We should then look at the entire picture that Jünger portrays.

Jünger rejects the traditional role of reason because reason creates hierarchies and explains everything by means of cause and effect. Through these means, reason promises security and comfort and thus creates a bourgeois society (Jünger 1982: 49–50).[40] Under the reign of reason, war should be avoided as an irrational incident (Ibid: 51–52). Superior to reason and the hierarchies

40 Reason and its dominance are destroyed in one apocalyptic blow. "Ebenso nimmt der gläubige Mensch an einem erweiterten Kreise des sinnvollen Lebensteils. Durch Unglück und Gefahr bezieht ihn das Schicksal ebenso wie durch das Wunder unmittelbar in ein mächtigeres Walten ein, und der Sinn dieses Zugriffes wird in der Tragödie anerkannt. Die Götter lieben es, sich in den Elementen zu offenbaren, in glühenden Gestirnen, in Donner und Blitz, im brennenden Busche, den die Flamme nicht versehrt. Zeus bebt auf dem höchsten Throne vor Lust, während der Erdkreis unter der Schlacht der Götter und Menschen erdröhnt, weil er hier den ganzen Umfang seiner Macht gewaltig bestätigt sieht." (Jünger 1982: 50)

that it introduces into nature (cause and effect) and into society (classes) is the *Gestalt*. The *Gestalt*, Jünger says, is imprinted[41] into things and events and is the prism through which they are now seen.

There is no gradual path from reason to *Gestalt*, but rather an instantaneous transformation. Suddenly, reality is seen in the light of destiny and worship and no longer of causality. "How could an eye that is trained in observation avoid the insight that destiny and worship are active behind the veil of cause and effect that moves beneath the struggles of the day" (Ibid: 48). Subsequently, freedom and destiny become one (Ibid: 59–60). Man becomes free through sacrificing himself for the sake of global order (Ibid: 74); supreme force dissolves man from the historical chain and sets him free (Ibid: 84). Time now implies apocalypse (Ibid: 170). "The deep cut which threatens life in our time divides not only two generations, not only two centuries, but it [also] announces the end of thousands years of [bourgeois] historical continuity" (Ibid: 205).

Seen through the *Gestalt*, the individual vanishes in the collective, the race of the worker. Jünger speaks about cultivating this race (*Aufzucht*) (Ibid: 294) and enumerates the desired physical traits of that race. He claims that it has nothing to do with any biological race (Ibid: 149). However, it is revealed in many passages that he means the German race.

> The face has also changed—as it appears to the observer—under the steel helmet or the cap. It has lost its diversity and hence individuality in its range of expression, as can be seen in photos of assemblies or groups while it has acquired sharp features and special characteristics. It has become more metallic and on its surface galvanized; the bone structure stands out, and the features are blank and tense. The gaze is calm and fixed, trained to inspect objects that move at a high velocity. This is the face of a race that is beginning to develop from complying with the special demands of the new landscape which man represents, not as a person or individual, but rather as a species (Ibid: 112–113).

Speaking of this, Walter Benjamin sarcastically remarks that "these trail blazers of the *Wehrmacht* could almost give one the impression that the uniform represents their highest end, most desired by all their heartstrings, and that the circumstances under which one dons the uniform are of little importance by comparison" (Benjamin 1979: 121). Klaus Vondung shows that Jünger was not content with Nazism. But the model of the new man that he portrays in *The Worker* corresponds precisely to the Nazi model of the new man (Vondung 1988: 390). It is likewise no longer the individual that comes to the fore in the work of art (Jünger 1982: 217) and in the media (Ibid: 276–277), but rather the species. Seen through the *Gestalt*, the individual gets lost, and what remains is the species of

41 Jünger uses the terms "*Prägung*" and "*Stempel*."

the worker-soldier who wears the uniform (Ibid: 125). The individual person has vanished into the species long before his body can be killed at the battlefield. It is thus obvious why Jünger does not think that it is a disaster to be killed in a war, for it is not the individual person, but rather the species that both exists and perishes (Ibid: 148), depending on the outcome of the war. Hitler presents in *Mein Kampf* his version of the same idea:

> Now the basic disposition out of which such an activity grows we call idealism, to distinguish it from egoism. By this we understand only the individual's ability to sacrifice himself for the community, for his fellow citizens. But as true idealism is nothing but subjecting the individual's interest and life to the community, and as this again represents the presumptions for any kind of creative organizing forms, therefore in its very heart it corresponds to the ultimate will of Nature. Idealism alone leads men to voluntary acknowledgment of the privilege of force and strength and thus makes them become a dust particle of that order which forms and shapes the entire universe. (Hitler 1941: 410; cited in von Krockow 1958: 51)

Seen through the *Gestalt*, the strategies and tactics of war must accordingly change, Jünger claims.

> Thus emerged the concept of an "extermination zone" created by steel, gas, fire, or other means, and by political and economic impact. In those zones, there is *de facto* no longer any difference between combatant and non-combatant. (Jünger 1982: 149)

The evidence that Jünger did not support Nazism and was not anti-Semitic is well-founded and can be supported. In March 2009, Tobias Wimbauer claimed in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that Jünger helped Paul Celan find a publisher and thus survive financial difficulties (Wimbauer 2009). Yet, in Jünger's world-view as unfolded in *The Worker*, mass killing, torture, death camps, and sadism are natural and legitimate. He also praises "nationalism as the first attempt to confront brutal reality with brutality" (Cited in Morat 2007: 81).

The use of technology is legitimate insofar as it is subjected to the movement of total mobilization. "Technology is the mobilization of the world through the *Gestalt* of the worker" (Jünger 1982: 156). The first phase of this mobilization is necessarily destructive. During war, technology functions while other human activities fail; hence it is superior. "The perfection of the technical instruments of power is seen in an insurmountable state of formidableness and the capability of complete extermination" (Ibid: 200). Seen through the *Gestalt*, the weapon, the instrument of killing, is part of the human body:

> The pincers of the scorpion, the trunk of the elephant, and the shell of the mussel do not replace any artificial instrument. We likewise have the instruments which are appropriate for us, not only in the near or distant future, but at any instant. They will be obedient

> tools for destruction insofar as the spirit plans to destroy, and they will construct insofar as the spirit is determined to build up magnificent buildings (Ibid: 202).

Jünger has not yet provided answers to all our questions. *First*, we tried to find out how work can be understood without an external goal. Jünger identifies work with war. But this cannot be the answer, for the war he describes has no external goal; it is fighting and killing for the sake of fighting and killing. At one point, Jünger suggests that war should be seen as a work of art which is created for the sake of itself. That is the reason, he claims, that the Germans decided not to destroy beautiful Paris (Jünger 2002: 217). *Second,* global war and mass killing can be achieved only by means of advanced technology. Hence Jünger marks off technology as the most essential trait of the worker-warrior. At the same time, Jünger rejects rationality and reason and praises irrationality and apocalyptic experience of reality. "... The elementary ... is the unreasonable and hence the immoral altogether" (Jünger 1982: 49). In addition, Jünger regrets the small degree of illiteracy and the wide distribution of education: "The less education in the usual sense the rank [of leadership] has attained, the better it will be. Unfortunately, the epoch of general education has deprived us of a capable reserve of illiterates ..." (Ibid: 213) The question then is, How can advanced technology thrive on a basis of illiteracy and irrationality? It would be more reasonable to talk about irrational use of technology. This could account for the Nazis' mass killing. This may be suggested when he writes, "A movement of participation in war, a social-revolutionary party, and in this manner an army transforms into an aristocracy that owns the decisive spiritual and technical means" (Ibid: 272). Elsewhere, Jünger speaks against private property, which must be part of the global mobilization by the state (Ibid: 297). As Hannah Vogt puts it, "As in a distorted picture, one believes one can recognize [in *The Worker*] American Capitalism, Russian Communism, European Fascism, and Japanese Imperialism" (cited in von Krockow 1958: 54).

Jünger's 1943 essay *Peace* suggests a *turn* in his world-view. Jünger writes:

> Therefore whoever emerges from the struggle as victor bears a heavy responsibility. The logic of pure violence must come to an end so that the higher logic of alliance may be revealed. The world war will reach its conclusion only when it is crowned with universal peace and thus gives meaning to the sacrifice. That demands an ascent to other, higher pronciples, to ascent from the fire to the light. (Jünger 1948: 41–42 / 2002: 210)

Jünger's world-view of elementary powers and destiny does not seem to have changed. The claim about legitimate victims in the light of peace must imply in this context *theodicy*, for the Nazis did not fight for the sake of that peace or of other justifiable goals. The Germans were forced to accept that peace agreement

as they were forced to after their defeat in World War I. Can we really think of the millions of innocent victims of the death camps—who adhered to no side in the war—as meaningful or useful (*sinnvoll*) victims, as Jünger suggests? It seems, on the contrary, that precondition for peace and stability should be conceiving and admitting them as illegitimate victims of barbarity and race fanaticism. The praise of the war now *purportedly* seen in the light of peace goes on:

> Then in every people and in every army there were deeds of wonder and to spare, and long-established fame in arms acquired its meed of new laurels. In this battle of giants each opponent could be proud of the other; and to the extent that time tempers enmity the secret respect and even the secret love between conqueror and conquered will grow. The one gains meaning from the other. (Jünger 1948: 212 / 2002: 196–197)

This encomium honors peace no more than war. According to Jünger, this peace is the due outcome of a justified war in which the millions of innocents who were tortured to death and brutally murdered by the Gestapo and the Wehrmacht either play no role or are part of the ideal picture that Jünger is painting.

Jünger's teaching in *The Worker* remains abstract despite his reference to a particular race and series of historical events. As we have seen, it is so abstract that it seems impossible even to distinguish, to draw a clear line between, war and peace. As Benjamin remarks:

> But Jünger's mysticism of war and pacifism's clichéd ideal of peace have little to criticize each other for. Even the most consumptive pacifism has one thing over its epileptically frothing brother for the moment; a certain contact with reality, at least, some conception of the next war. (Benjamin 1979: 121)

It is not clear what Jünger's alternative to the bourgeois hierarchy is within this belligerent world view in which everybody and everything is engaged in the dynamic of killing and fighting with no apparent external purpose.

The following text sheds light on Jünger's attitude toward liberalism, fascism, democracy, and the Jews. It can serve as a concrete example in which Jünger's abstract teaching can be realized. The Jew is identified with liberalism and the bourgeoisie, which Germany should fight against in order to realize its *Gestalt*. It by no means suggests that this is the only concrete example which Jünger could have used to illustrate his teaching.

Ernst Jünger

On Nationalism and the Jewish Question

[843] If one considers the two movements of national aspirations in our time—on the one hand the traditionally tinged one, in which civic, legitimistic, reactionary, and economic tones merge or diverge in various ways—and on the other hand, the revolutionary one—one finds that anti-Semitism is the cornerstone of correlations. While its joy of war-ornamentation is in one case more or less dismissive, it is in the other case overt. This may be unpleasant for the Jew and also, potentially, dangerous for him.

The anti-Semitism of forces tied by kinship is, in its essence, the late and weak offspring of the feudal world. In the same manner as one likes to maintain a façade in front of burnt buildings from which the creative elements have long ago vanished, one considers it to be a cosmetic error to see the Jew in representative positions. This, however, does not prevent making use of the Jew and finding him often in real working places. In the course of the 19th century, he occupies more and more many of these positions and quite early exerts his influence—for instance in the manner of Professor Stahl—on the constitutional foundation of the legitimate powers, or furthermore—this is not unimportant—on the mending maintenance of that foundation and on conservative thought. In the course of the Wilhelminisches Reich,[42] in which the official access to the hierarchy remains difficult or closed for him, when one scratches the surface one still encounters him everywhere in the highest and most important spheres. Almost nothing has changed, as everybody knows, after the coup d'état.

Wherever one explores today the active forces in terms of moderate and legitimate reaction or of wide national civic restoration, it will not be long until one runs into the unavoidable type of the Jewish advocate—the speaking, writing, consulting or bargaining attorney—who uses men and powers, regardless to which movement they belong, with an unbiased manner that is characteristic of his race. This is clearly the case today—in order to be able to take a stand in this sense against liberalism, namely, to combat it with its own means and with its own vocabulary—resentment is much more essential than it was hundred years ago. The keyboard that can produce all gamut of tricks, from the idealistic burst of indignation to the anxious yells of the threatened culture—that is to say, above all the reflective tones—needs performers with extensive training in resentment that has become a part of them. Hence, the expert will not be surprised by the odd blossom of the well-cultivated conservative prose that

42 (N.B.: Germany under Emperor Wilhelm, 1871–1918.)

nowadays flows more frequently from the Jewish pens. One encounters sharp pleas of defence for culture, witty mocking of the civilization enterprise, aristocratic snobbism, the Catholic farce, pseudo-morphologic interest in historical processes, inconspicuously deliberated soundness; it would be altogether mischevious to mention names. For this is too nice to be angry at—is one not delighted by the beautiful advertisement for the reputable cigarette merchant Overstolz who keeps accounts at his little Biedermeier-comptoir with dignified strictness? Here, the merchandise reaches such a degree of an "as if attitude" that it is almost impolite to moreover notice it any longer. In any case the Jew, who really has talent, who really has the ability to scent, currently argues conservatively. There are hidden here [844] positions and intricate possibilities for mental attitude which has already been fought over with great astuteness. The Jew cannot complain about the attention he receives from the forces that represent today's conservative ideas, and the question is whether or not he benefits from the anti-Semitic shiny surface of those forces. For he needs a basic mood for his rhetoric, which always has ethical structure because it cannot have a heroic one, a basic mood which can be described as the opposite of the pathos of the distance. Hence, he relies on persecution, on anti-Semitism; as likewise, according to the right remark, the Ghetto is a Jewish invention. Muted conservative attitude, which is broken in its root, can, however, provide this scope most cheaply, most painlessly and most invisibly, in so far as it can melt him into a fine conservative line, which is, in addition, very flexible regarding "efficiency," "spirit" and, of course, money. Hence, neither the British Empire nor the Habsburg monarchy had ever, in modern times, a shortage of Jewish paladins.

Of course, today there exists in the political language, besides the word "conservative" only one other word which is just as frequent and just as little convincingly used, namely, the word "revolutionary." Both our so-called conservatives and our so-called revolutionaries lack originality to the same extent. What marks the originality of the conservative is that it must be very old, and of the revolutionary, that it must be very young. The conservatives of today are, however, almost without exception a hundred years old, and the revolutionaries are even older. In other words, the influence of liberalism is wider than one generally believes, and almost every debate takes place within its vicinity. The vocabulary of our great-grandfathers has revived in a spooky way, and with a dull repertoire of political terms—which one does not attempt to rebaptize and at which the naïve joy of discovery delights among contemporaries—spread out from all the platforms of the public opinion.

Here lies the lack of consistency that is part and parcel of the anti-Semitic nature of national movements which define themselves as revolutionary. Even if one overlooks those sects which create their world-view out of negation, one

will be amazed by the lack of confident instinct from which the blow against the Jew often comes, often with great effort; but it is always too flat to be effective. The reason for this is that one tries to determine and destroy the influence of the Jew on German life in accordance with the methods of real individualistic thinking. Favored are the images of traditional medicine in which a neutralization of a swarm of single-cell attacking bacteria plays an important role. Against this, demagogically seen, nothing could be done—and demagogy plays an important role among the arts, if one suspects that behind that lies a priesthood which is superior to its profane doctrine. Thus, the praise of honesty is the highest thing that the critique has to grant.

The Jew, however, is not the father, but rather, child of liberalism, as he can play no creative role, neither positively nor negatively, as far as German life is concerned. In order to be able to become dangerous, infectious, corrosive, it was necessary for him to first have a status that enabled him to be in his new figure, the figure of the civilized Jew. That status was created by liberalism, by the grand declaration of the independence of the spirit, and it likewise will be destroyed again by nothing but the [845] complete bankruptcy of liberalism. Any attack on the civilization-Jew [*Zivilisationsjude*] launched from the liberal sphere has failed, for exactly there, where it could succeed, its effect would simply be equal to external disinfection. And the liberal sphere reaches, as we said, much further than one commonly believes. Hence, it is not a coincidence that Italian Fascism is on good terms with the civilization-Jew, for fascism is no doubt nothing but the latter phase of liberalism, a simplified and abridged procedure, as it were, a brutal shorthand of the liberalist constitution which has become too hypocritical, too empty, and above all, too verbose. But for Germany, neither fascism nor bolshevism is proper; they incite, but will not satisfy, and one can expect from that land that it be capable of a distinct and stricter solution.

What justifies German hope is the will to *Gestalt*, the beginnings—scattered and yet strong—of the morphological thinking which stands opposed to liberalism, as water is to fire. It is a new sight of the inner *Gestalt*, of the character of the things that, still hesitating, trains in observing, and strives to penetrate into the depth, not through abstraction, but rather through originality. Although this posture, this new German posture as such, does not have to occupy itself with the civilization-Jew; it will encounter him with certainty in each of its steps as an opponent who immediately feels endangered by it—for the end of this will is the *Gestalt* of the German Reich as a power which lies on its original roots. Wherein the German borders lie, what German literature, German history, German science, German psychology really are, what the war, work, dream, and art mean to us—that this and much more is seen and recognized and becomes effective—this is the only danger which threatens the civilization-Jew. For all

this confirms the first German principle, which the Jew always strives to deny—namely, the principle that there is a fatherland which is called Germany. One of the obvious consequences stemming from that principle is that there are Jews. The finest and most skillful efficacy of the civilization-Jew is seen in the uninterrupted proving that there is no Jew; in any serious Jewish theory one can sense this statement. The recognition and realization of the distinct German *Gestalt* separates visibly and clearly the Jewish *Gestalt* like clear und motionless water renders the oil visible as a distinct layer. At the moment, however, in which the Jew gets unmistakably seen as a distinct force obeying its distinct rules, he ceases to be virulent and thus dangerous to the German people. The most effective weapon against him, the master of all the masks, is to notice him.

The civilization-Jew still sticks *en masse* to liberalism, to which he owes everything. Admittedly, his dialectic—that endless feuilleton prattle of civilization—has become so dilute that it starts to disgust even harmless minds. As one of the penultimate efforts to maintain the old position, one can, with certainty, foretell the participation of the Jew in the legitimatalist restoration. To the same extent, however, in which the German will acquires sharpness and *Gestalt*, also the faintest illusion of the Jew to be German in Germany will become unrealizable, and he will find himself standing before his last alternative which is, in Germany, either to be a Jew or not to be at all.

Chapter Four

Karl Löwith on Sense of Humor and Departure from the German Masters

Karl Löwith will be dealt with here in terms of his critique of German philosophy, especially Heidegger's. Löwith's critique unfolds as a memoir. He points to the relationship between mainstream German philosophy and Nazism. As a non-Jew of Jewish descent who fought for Germany in World War I, was severely wounded, and spent time in an Italian jail, and had been decorated, Löwith's resentment can be understood, particularly after he had to flee Germany and give up his academic career in 1933.[43] His critique, however, cannot be traced back exclusively to his resentment. It also contains accounts of how he was fascinated by and attracted to German philosophy, especially Heidegger's.

His autobiography, *My Life in Germany before and after 1933* (1986); a monograph on Heidegger, *Heidegger—Thinker in a Destitute Time* (1960); and an extended essay on Carl Schmitt and Heidegger, "Der okkasionelle Dezisionismus von C. Schmitt" (1984), make up an intellectual testament of German philosophy before, during, and after World War II. It is an attempt to point at the links and parallels between Nazi ideology and politics and German philosophy as regards their idiomatic jargon, world-view, and ideas.[44] He composed his autobiography, *My Life in Germany before and after 1933* (1939), long before the greatest Nazi crimes had been committed and become known. Regarding the completely assimilated Jews who were part of the George circle and could never think of themselves as non-German, he writes:

> The universal fate of both the German and the Jewish intelligentsia was mirrored in the destinies of the circle around George. Its members had formed an elite in German intellectual life, and the Jews belonging to it had proved by their appreciation, participation and work that they were capable of becoming Germanized without reservation. But inspite of this, the Jews were neither able to escape their Jewish fate, nor could the others escape the assimilation of their ideas in 1933. They prepared the path of National Socialism, which later they themselves did not follow. (Löwith 1994: 25 / 1986: 24)

43 Compare Löwith (1986: 13): "Ich würde heute nicht zögern, im Notfall auch militärische oder politische Dienste auf Seiten von Deutschlands Feinden zu leisten, weil dieses Deutschland der Feind aller Menschlichkeit ist und weil es entschlossen verneint, was an unserem Dasein lebenswert ist. Keine Not und kein Tod der nun in dem Krieg verwickelten Deutschen wird mich mitleidend machen mit den Folgen eines Systems, das prinzipiell mitleidlos ist und ein einziger Fußtritt auf die Achtung des Menschen."

44 See for example his description of the George circle and the Nazi ideology (Löwith 1986: 19).

The opposition to Arendt's suggestion in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* that the Jews were responsible for their extermination is seen clearly in this passage, for "the Jews" were nothing but a product of the Nazi politics of discrimination.

The first trait Löwith identifies in the German philosophy of his time is the stipulation "To understand time on the basis of time."[45] This is to say that only the present perspective is true. It is a call to fill empty transcendental structures with content. One is only obligated to the present situation, to the naked existence (*faktisches Dasein*) (Löwith 1960: 29) which is embodied by the Third Reich as the destiny of the German people.

> The Germans will never be able to understand why their methods are loathed. In 1916 there was still one philosopher, Max Scheler, who, in the midst of war, was taking pains to explain to the Germans the 'origins of the hatred toward Germans,' whereas the present *Reich* philosophers think along exactly the same lines as their leadership, because the philosophy of 'life' and 'existence' itself has made any philosophy of law impossible. If the law is merely an expedient for people, it is indeed absurd to speak of the law at all. (Löwith 1994: 107 / 1986: 102)

Löwith then does not hesitate to conclude that Nazism is a particularly German phenomenon:

> The objection of well-meaning foreigners that Hitler is not Germany is both right and wrong—the former if one evaluates what is German by Hitler's own claim to embody the German *Volk*; and the latter because this *Volk* does not consist of Chinese but has chosen a Führer of its own accord, and submits for the present to a leadership that would not be tolerated of its kings, chancellors, emperors and leaders from Frederick the Great to Hitler, had been in a serious conflict with its character. (Löwith 1994: 140 / 1986: 133)

"To understand time on the basis of time" means to set the transient as principle, to give the temporal the status of an ontological and moral principle. It is a paradox which is inherent in existentialism and *Lebensphilosophie*. However, it cannot alone account for Nazism, which is founded on belief in the superiority of the German people, culture, and race.

The first important event on which Löwith reports in his autobiography is his capture and incarceration in the Italian jail:

> Despite all the suffering, my war imprisonment in Italy awakened my everlasting love for this country and its people. Even today, after eighteen years of fascist rule, people in Rome and in the tiniest village are much more *human* [*mensch*] than those in the North. They have the gift of an indestructable sense of personal freedom, as well as an appreciation of human weakness which the German is seeking to eradicate. (Löwith 1994: 8 / 1986: 8)

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45 Löwith (1960: 50): "... die Zeit aus der Zeit zu verstehen..."

In other words, the horrors of the war and of the Fascist regime did not necessarily lead to barbarity and cruelty as they did in Germany. The second important event described in his autobiography is his encounter with Martin Heidegger. "He became my actual tutor to whom I owe my intellectual development" (Löwith 1994: 28 / 1986: 27). Löwith also indicates his unsuccessful efforts to get closer to Heidegger and his subsequent disappointment (Löwith 1986: 44, 58). The description of his encounter with Heidegger is followed by a critical discussion of Heidegger's philosophy.

Löwith mocks the primary "existential" in *Being and Time*, resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*)—namely, the *Dasein*'s resoluteness in living according to its most authentic possibility, which remains meaningless until it gains hold of reality.[46] In being-resolute, the human *Dasein*, in light of its own finite existence and death, shuddered with *Angst*, is called on by his conscience in a moment of insight (*Augenblick*) (Heidegger 2002: §74) to choose its authentic possibility of being. Löwith mocks the abstraction of resoluteness from any context: "One of the students invented the pertinent joke: 'I'm resolved, only toward what I don't know'" (Löwith 1994: 30 / 1986: 29). The extreme possibility of being, Löwith goes on to explain, Heidegger identifies with the obligation "to be" in accordance with one's predetermined factual fate (*Faktizität*) (Löwith 1986: 31). Here, Löwith points to the link between abstract philosophy and concrete political situation—to be resolute, to choose one's own most extreme possibility of being, becomes one with the vocation of the German people (not only in Heidegger but also in Carl Schmitt, Ibid: 30), as appears clearly in Heidegger's *Rectorial Address*.[47]

> The rebellion against the 'spirit' had its advocates in very different camps: in that of Klages and Baeumler, and that of Heidegger and Schmitt; and perhaps one had to live outside Germany to appreciate such local differences as variations on one and the same theme. (Löwith 1994: 33 / 1986: 32)

Löwith admits that although the similarity between Heidegger's jargon and tone and Nazi propaganda is striking (Löwith 1986: 36–37), he could not foresee

46 Heidegger (2002: 299): "In der Entschlossenheit geht es dem Dasein um sein eigenstes Seinkönnen, das als geworfenes nur auf bestimmte faktische Möglichkeiten sich entwerfen kann. Der Entschluss entzieht sich nicht der 'Wirklichkeit,' sondern entdeckt erst das faktisch Mögliche, so zwar, dass er es dergestalt, wie es als eigenstes Seinkönnen im Man möglich ist, ergreift."
47 Löwith (1986: 33): "Man kann darum diese Rede weder bloß politisch noch rein philosophisch beurteilen. Als politische Rede wäre sie ebenso schwach wie als philosophische Abhandlung. Sie versetzt Heideggers Philosophie der geschichtlichen Existenz in das deutsche Geschehen hinein, so dass der formale Umriss der existenziellen Kategorien einen entscheidenden Inhalt bekam." See also Bourdieu (1991).

the emergence of Nazism and Heidegger's adherence to it from his writings and speeches. In his *Rectorial Address*, Löwith continues, Heidegger specifies the duties of the rector, who is the spiritual leader of both the academic staff and the students. But even the Führer in his turn is led by the spiritual command of his people. It remains unclear, Löwith explains, wherein this historical command consists and in what way it makes itself known. "The commander is eventually the 'destiny' which one should want" (Löwith 1986: 34).[48]

> Even today, Hitler's daring decision to risk a war for the sake of Danzig serves a good illustration of Heidegger's philosophical concept of 'courage for fear' before nothingness ("*Mut zur Angst" vor dem Nichts*)—a paradox which captures the entire German situation in a nutshell. (Löwith 1994: 42 / 1986: 40)

In 1936, Löwith and his wife spent time with Heidegger's family in Rome. Heidegger did not remove, even for a second, the party badge from his arm. To Löwith's remark that Heidegger's support of Nazism lies at the heart of his philosophy, Heidegger replies that, "His concept of 'historicity' (*Geschichtlichkeit*) formed the basis of his political 'engagement'. He also left no doubt about his belief in Hitler" (Löwith 1994: 60 / 1986: 57). Löwith next asks Heidegger about his relationship to Julius Streicher. Heidegger sees a huge gap between Hitler and Streicher, Löwith says. And yet, Heidegger claims, one has to look at the concept, at the essence, and not at the particular individual. However, Löwith sums up: "In truth, the programme of that 'pornography' [i.e. *Der Stürmer*] was fulfilled in every last detail and became German reality in November 1938; and nobody can deny that Streicher and Hitler were in total agreement on this matter" (Löwith 1994: 61 / 1986: 58).

Löwith hints that the motivation for writing a monograph on Heidegger, *Heidegger—Thinker in a Destitue Time*, was to distance himself from his mentor. "One repays a teacher poorly if one always remains only a pupil" (Löwith 1995: 33 / 1960: 5). The outcome, however, seems to be more than a distancing. It is a harsh critique of Heidegger's philosophy, his abuse of language, and *Germanocentrism*. Löwith points at the emptiness of Heidegger's arguments and his distorted reading of Nietzsche. He concludes by questioning why Heidegger still attracts so much admiration and esteem, implying that Heidegger's work is not philosophy at all.

Heidegger's main argumentative strategy is to point to apparently necessary etymological links between words. Löwith shows that the links in this etymological game do not really demonstrate any necessary relationship between words. These links, according to Heidegger, exist only in German and ancient Greek,

48 My own translation. This important point by Löwith is missing in the English translation.

which means that they are the only philosophical languages. In order to show the emptiness of Heidegger's arguments, Löwith demonstrates that the links Heidegger attempts to forge between words are arbitrary. The following passage makes no sense in English—and, as Löwith tries to show, not in German either—because it is structured around German morphology. Hence it is presented in German. The key words are underlined to draw attention to the morphological similarity. English translation of the passage is provided in the footnote.

> Das Denken verbindet sich mit Danken; die *ratio* mit dem bloßen Rechnen und die Richtigkeit mit bloßer Berechenbarkeit; die Geschichte mit dem Geschick und dieses mit der Schicklichkeit; die Entschlossenheit mit der Erschlossenheit; das "es gibt" (Sein) mit dem Geschenk des Sichgebens; die Liebe als "mögen" mit dem vermögen als dem eigentlichen "Mög-lichen," aus dem das Sein das Denken vermag, so dass am Ende dieser Ableitungen das Sein als das "Vermögend-Mögende" das "Mög-liche" ist! (Heidegger 1953: 14)[49]

Löwith's critique seems to be indirectly leveled against Heidegger's moral standards:

> If one wanted to ask Heidegger whether this makes the matter clearer, he would give us the answer: "No, nothing is clear; but everything is significant!" Of course neither the subject matter nor the word makes it clear why, for example, *correctness* [*Richtigkeit*] could not be brought into an essential meaning-connection with justice [*Gerechtigkeit*] rather than with reckoning [*Berechnung*], and why *Wahrheit* could not be brought into such a connection with the English word "truth" (= "trust") or with "trow" (loyality [*Treue*], to trust [*trauen*, *vertrauen*], to believe) rather than with the Greek word *a-letheia* (un-concealedness) or the Old German "*war*". (Löwith 1995: 41 / 1953: 15)

We can say that the intimacy that Heidegger creates between language and thought does not allow any reflection or critical dealing with what is said, for truth is identified with language correctly understood or with understanding language as Heidegger does. Language thus gets the status of divine revelation of truth. As Löwith writes regarding Heidegger:

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49 Thinking is connected with thanking; *ratio* with mere calculation and correctness with mere calculability; history [*Geschichte*] with destining [*Geschick*] and the latter with propriety [*Schicklichkeit*]; resoluteness [*Entschlossenheit*] with the disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*]; the "there is" [*es gibt*] (Being) with the gift of the self-giving [*Sichgeben*]; love as "wanting" [*mögen*] with being capable [*vermögen*] as that which is authentically "possible" ["*Mögliches*"], on the basis of which Being is capable of thinking, so that at the end of these derivations Being, as "that which is capable and which wants" [*das Vermögend-Mögende*] is "that which is possible" [*das Mög-liche*] As-that-which-regions [*Gegnet*], the region [*Gegend*] becomes the concealed essence of truth, and the thinking of the truth of Being is "releasement toward that-which-regions" because the essence of thinking rests in the "regioning" [*Vergegnis*] of releasement! (Löwith 1995: 40–41). I corrected the German words in brackets that were in the wrong case.

> In order to be able to satisfy fully the claim of Being, his apodictic linguistic thinking must in fact be an inspired language of revelation and a thinking that follows the dictate of Being. (Löwith 1995: 39 / 1953: 13)

Heidegger could reply to Löwith that he is purging the language of detrimental elements, as almost every philosopher before him did, in order to pave the way for philosophical thinking. Yet, one can still wonder about the necessary connection which Heidegger—like Fichte—sees between philosophy and the German language: that philosophy can meaningfully function only in German (and partly in ancient Greek). According to them, the German language becomes the sole valid standard of truth.

As we have seen, Hannah Arendt conceives Heidegger's "turn" (*Kehre*) as an expression of remorse. Löwith conceives this *turn* as fictitious. Usually, the *turn* refers to the shift in Heidegger's focus from the temporal human *Dasein* in *Being and Time*—who mostly understands *Being* through the entities that he encounters in his projects—to *Being* as such in the latter writings. As we saw, after the *turn*, the human *Dasein* is reduced to be the shepherd of Being. Löwith's main question to Heidegger in this respect reads:

> Indeed in the understanding of Being and of Being-in-itself an understanding Dasein is presupposed, but of course this presupposition does not posit the Being and the Being-in-itself that are understood. Hence, we are thrown back on the question whether it is essential to Being-in-itself that an understanding and perceiving Dasein be there and be cleared or not. (Löwith 1995: 52 / 1953: 26)

Being-understood must imply understanding, but not the content that is supposed to be understood. Does it then necessarily follow that Being-as-such must be understood by the human *Dasein*? Löwith replies:

> According to the essay "On the Question of Being," the essence of Being, how it essences and presences, is already in itself the relation to the human essence and is nothing in an for itself, just as for the same token the human being is not a Dasein posited for itself but rather is founded upon its dwelling in the turning-toward and turning-away of Being [*Zu- und Abwenden*]. (Löwith 1995: 53 / 1953: 27)

Both Heidegger's thesis and Löwith's critique must presuppose that "Being" has one meaning, that the manifold uses of "to be" have one primordial reference. This is doubtful. If we assume, however, that they do have one primordial reference, then Löwith's critique is still obscure. If the understanding of the human *Dasein* is identical with Being, Löwith's critique turns out to be empty. On the other hand, if they are not identical, then understanding Being does not entail that Being be properly understood, but it also does not entail that it be misunder-

stood. It can also sometimes be understood and sometimes misunderstood, but as long as we do not have the means of distinguishing between understanding and not understanding in this respect, Löwith's critique is empty.

According to Heidegger, Being should not be understood as an entity.

> ... It gets characterized as the "entirely other dimension" and as "the Other pure and simple." Hence even the thinking of the Being in beings can seek "no stopping-point," but instead it expends itself for the truth of Being in the sacrifice which is a "departure from beings". (Löwith 1995: 67 / 1953: 40–41)

But on the other hand, Being "confers" existence on entities. At this point, Löwith becomes strict with Heidegger. He asks, How is it possible that Being "confers" existence on entities if it is not part of the realm of entities? Likewise, how should our thought "help" and "rescue" Being, as Heidegger puts it? How could it "take care" of it and "initiate" a new destiny-of-Being if it owes its existence to the grace and protection of the caring Being? (Löwith 1953: 43). Heidegger would reply to Löwith that Being is not the source of entities, but rather its *un*-source—*Abgrund*—abyss. It lets entities shine forth, but it does not create them. And yet, the distinction between letting entities shine forth and creating them cannot be demonstrated—Being would then turn into an entity—but rather dogmatically accepted as the destiny of Being.

The destiny of Being implies historical determinism, Löwith claims. For Heidegger, Hitler realizes that destiny of Being (as Napoleon does for Hegel) (Löwith 1953: 45–46). Löwith wonders about Heidegger's thesis that Being's history is identical with Occidental history. Likewise, how can this history be wholly comprehended in one apocalyptical moment?

> The question arises: can world-history, as humans in the West from the Persian Wars up to the last World War have in thousand ways experienced and endured it, and have contemplated it, reported on it, and thought it through philosophy—can world-history be recognized once again in the self-willed project of history on the basis of "Being toward the end," which is always one's own? (Löwith 1995: 74 / 1953: 48)

One has to be resolute (*entschlossen*) regarding that historical moment, as Heidegger says. But, Löwith asks, How is one supposed to know that the *real* great historical moment has arrived, and not what Heidegger calls the vulgar (*vulgär*) one? And how can Heidegger account for falling prey to that *vulgar* history embodied by Hitler and Nazism?

In consequence of this character, that which happens historically does not get misinterpreted on the basis of personal mistakes in judgement, for which the individual would be responsible, but instead gets misinterpreted "necessarily," in consequence of a destining Being (Löwith 1995: 76–77 / 1953: 51).

Löwith's strategy, with respect to Heidegger, is to let him talk and entangle himself in his own words and claims. Löwith believes that he has exposed Heidegger's emptiness. Löwith also implicitly entertains the suspicion that Heidegger's teaching is not philosophy at all (Löwith 1953: 109). He is now going to tackle the question of why Heidegger still enjoys so great a reputation and so much attention. The concluding chapter of his monograph is called "On the Critical Appraisal of Heidegger's Influence." Löwith carries out this evaluation by comparing Heidegger with Stefan George. He concludes that the German people have a special penchant for pathos and leadership (*Führung*) and dislike of sober skepticism, intellectual easiness, and common sense (Ibid: 109). Heidegger also owes his popularity to his

> Negative relationship to the rationality of "representational" (*vorstellend*) and "productive" (*herstellend*) *science*, which objectifies things into objects, and on the other hand his positive relationship to poetry, particularly to Hölderlin .... (Löwith 1995: 133 / 1953: 111)

He also owes it, Löwith says, to the vague religious motives in his writings. Although Heidegger has distanced himself from religion, he appeals by means of his dogmatic vagueness to those who are no longer devout Christians but yet would like to be religious (Löwith 1953: 111).

Löwith's weakness surfaces when he talks about the German people in general, thus himself approaching Heidegger and others who couple philosophy with German. Lastly, Löwith identifies the Germans' greatest flaw as a lack of humor. For Löwith, who was born German and grew up German, fought as a German in World War I and was severely wounded and sat in an Italian jail, it was a hard blow to be stigmatized as a Jew and subsequently be forced to flee Germany and then Europe. When he comes to talk about sense of humor in his autobiography, he refers to the Jews.[50]

> The Jews' special gift of assimilating with others, and even understanding what counts *against* them (the best and most biting jokes about Jews have always been invented by Jews), is based on a self-transperancy and self-criticism that are peculiar to the Jew. Jews know very clearly who they are. And for that reason the German and the Jew never see eye to eye on this question: German Jews are always more likely to understand what is German than modern pseudo-Germans can grasp what is Jewish, no matter how many institutes for 'Research into the Jewish question' they may found. (Löwith 1994: 103 / 1986: 98)

50 Compare Kracauer (2004: 24): "The Germans arise from their traditional ideology, which tends to discredit the notion of luck in favor of that of fate. The Germans have developed a native humor that holds wit and irony in contempt and has no place for happy-go-lucky figures. Theirs is an emotional humor which tries to reconcile mankind to its tragic plight and to make one not only laugh at the oddities of life but also realize, through that laughter, how fateful it is. Such dispositions were of course incompatible with the attitudes underlying the performances of a Buster Keaton or Harold Lloyd."

Chapter Five

Hannah Arendt on Banality

Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem—A Report on the Banality of Evil* is the book that made her a popular subject of discussion since its appearance in 1963. The book is a report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. It contains, however, much more than a dry report. It tells the life story of Eichmann before, during, and after the war, as well as his role in the annihilation of the European Jewries; it portrays his negotiations with representatives of the Jewish communities in Europe and the Zionist emissaries; it describes the alleged collaboration of the Jewish functionaries with the Nazis, and it refers to the court, the judges, the public attending the trial, and the state of Israel. The book also criticizes the process, the kidnapping of Eichmann, the judges' and the prosecution's inability to grasp the philosophical meaning behind the Holocaust, and the state of Israel and its institutions. The book incited furor among many Jews in Israel and abroad, for it accuses the Jewish functionaries of being in collaboration with the Nazi, without which the annihilation of the European Jewry would be impossible,[51] according to Arendt. Her provocative remarks on the state of Israel—she compares the rabbinic marital rules in Israel with the Nuremberg Laws (Arendt 1965: 5), and the deportation of Eichmann from Argentina resembles the deportation of the Jews from Europe (Ibid: 54)—also caused a negative reaction. As Deborah Lipstadt writes:

> In her letters from the trial, she voiced a personal disdain for Israel that bordered on anti-Semitism and racism. In a letter to her husband, she complained that "honest and clean people were at a premium." She described to her teacher and friend Karl Jaspers the "peies (side curl) and caftan Jews, who make life impossible for all reasonable people here." She was full of praise for the judges, but even that contained a note of German Jewish disdain for Ostjuden, Eastern European Jews. The judges were "the best of Germany Jewry," whereas Hausner was "a typical Galician Jew.... one of those people who don't know any language." (Since he presented his case in multiple languages, she may have meant that his German was not up to her standard.) He spoke "without periods or

51 "'There can be no doubt that without the cooperation of the victims, it would hardly have been possible for a few thousand people, most of whom, moreover, worked in offices, to liquidate many hundreds of thousands of other people.... Over the whole way to their deaths the Polish Jews got to see hardly more than a handful of Germans.' Thus R. Pendorf in the publication mentioned above. To an even greater extent this applies to those Jews who were transported to Poland to find their deaths there." (Arendt 1965: 252)

> commas ... like a diligent schoolboy who wants to show off everything he knows.... [He has a] ghetto mentality." She had shown her contempt for East European émigrés and their concerns as early as 1944, when she denigrated the European émigré press in the United States for "worrying their heads off over the pettiest boundary disputes in a Europe thousands and thousands of miles away—such as whether Teschen belongs to Poland or Czechoslovakia, or Vilna to Lithuania instead of to Poland." As Tony Judt observed, "No 'Ost-Jud' would have missed the significance of these disputes."
>
> However, it was Middle Eastern, often called Oriental, Jews who elicited her most acerbic comments. "The country's interest in the trial has been artificially whetted. An oriental mob that would hang around any place where something is going on is hanging around in front of the courthouse." (In another letter, she again used the term "oriental mob." It was clearly not a slip.) She felt as if she were in "Istanbul or some other half-Asiatic country." She showed particular contempt for the Israeli police, many of whom were of Middle Eastern origin. "Everything is organized by a police force that gives me the creeps, speaks only Hebrew and looks Arabic. Some downright brutal types among them. They would obey any order." (Lipstadt 2011: 152–153)

The most outrageous, however, was her assessment that Eichmann was only a cog in the machine—that he was neither anti-Semitic nor sadistic, but rather a devout Zionist. He read "Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*, the famous Zionist classic, which converted Eichmann promptly and forever to Zionism" (Arendt 1965: 40). His deeds were not motivated by evil intentions, and hence Arendt dubs the evilness of his deeds "banal."

The disapproval and critique of Arendt are, however, surpassed and diminished by other declarations of admiration and support. Walter Laqueur describes it as the "Arendt Cult" (Laqueur 1998). Later studies showed that Arendt was wrong as far as her description of the events is concerned.[52] A very recent book on Eichmann by Bettina Stangneth shows that he was by no means a desk murderer, as Arendt describes him (Stangneth 2011). Joachim Schwelien, who analyzes Eichmann's jargon of violence, writes:

> Eichmann does not suspect that exactly where he is—stubbornly or cannily-shrewdly, lying or covering and cloaking—trying to turn the truth of the events and of his deeds into its opposite, he actually lets the whole truth surface. Not that what he is saying is of importance for posterity, but *how* he says it, for as pure language mirrors truth in thought, in the jargon of violence, dark inhumanity is reflected relentlessly even where it is supposed to remain hidden. (Schwelien 1961: 6)

Lipstadt shows that Arendt's use of Raoul Hilberg's work verges on plagiarism. Hans Mommsen writes in the foreword to the German translation of *Eichmann*

52 See Lipstadt (2011), Syrkin (1963) and Ezorsky (1963).

in Jerusalem that despite the mistakes and flaws in her analysis and reports,[53] she manages to accurately fathom the essence of a totalitarian regime: terror, submissive bureaucracy, technocracy, and consolidation achieved by isolating a scapegoat (Mommsen 1986: 12). The question we should pose to Mommsen is, How could Arendt fathom the essence of totalitarianism if her historical investigation was indeed so flawed? To say general things about the nature of totalitarian regimes cannot tell us much about the distinctiveness of a given regime or its philosophy, and there was a huge difference between the four totalitarian powers that fought in World War II. Hence, Michael Burleigh writes: "Arendt also vehemently rejected notions of a separate German historical path to modernity, and favored a radical rupture with the course of European civilization, almost as if Hitler and Stalin were temporary visitors from Mars" (Berleigh 2000: 17).[54] Meticulous research, such as George Mosse's *The Crisis of German Ideology* (1999), which leads us through the work and youth movement, the new paganism, and the development of a distinct intellectual background during the rise of the Third Reich, would not leave us with the impression of a leap or "rupture," as Burleigh calls it. If one sees gradual development, as Mosse does, it also makes sense to talk about education as a means of changing detrimental dispositions. As Gottfried Benn provocatively puts it:

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53 "Als Darstellung der blossen Abläufe, die zu Auschwitz führten, das die Gesamtheit der gegen Juden gerichteten Massnahmen des Völkermords symbolisiert, ist Hannah Arendts Interpretation lückenhaft, manchesmal nicht widerspruchsfrei und quellenkritisch nicht hinreichend abgesichert." (Mommsen 1986: 11). See also Wolin (2001: 113): "As Michael Marrus has aptly observed, as the Eichmann polemic unfolded, 'It became apparent how thin was the factual base on which [Arendt] had made her judgments.' He concludes his assessment with the following sober caveat: 'The Jewish negotiations with the Nazis... were, in retrospect, pathetic efforts to snatch Jews from the ovens of Auschwitz as the Third Reich was beginning its death agony. Yet it should be mentioned that, however pathetic, these efforts seemed sensible to some reasonable men caught in a desperate situation.'"

54 Benhabib compares Arendt's historical attitude with Heidegger's, Husserl's, and Benjamin's: "Let us recall that in treating tradition and the past, Arendt herself exercised two methodologies: the phenomenological methodology of Heidegger and Husserl, which sought to recover the 'originary' meaning of terms and conditions of phenomena; and a fragmentary methodology, inspired by Walter Benjamin, according to which one treats the past by acting either as a collector or as a pearl diver, digging down for those treasures that lie now disjoined and disconnected," (Benhabib 2000: 172–17)3. Benhabib correctly sees Arendt's fragmentary concept of history in its relation to Benjamin. She is, however, far from accurate in placing Husserl and Heidegger in this context: both Husserl and Heidegger were completely against *method* insofar as phenomenology is concerned. It is the lack of method that brings them in the end to mysticism. Furthermore, she does not see the similarity between Arendt and Heidegger in how history is seen by Heidegger, and sometimes by Arendt as well, as it is derived from the destiny of Being.

> Wishes for Germany: new definitions for hero and honor. To wipe out any person who speaks in the course of the next hundred years of "Prussia" or "Reich."... To educate children from age six to sixteen—following the decision of their parents—in Switzerland, England, France, America, and Denmark on account of the state. (Benn 1959: 388)

Arendt does not see this need; for her there is no continuity, as we shall presently show. Eichmann, according to Arendt, was by no means a Jew-hater, either before or after the war. Instead it *happened* to him to become a cog in the Nazi killing machine, and then it *happened* to him again to become a normal person. The banality of evil—the ability to kill innocent people with no bad motivations or criminal inclinations—is the outcome of a totalitarian regime, Arendt claims. But what caused people to become banal evildoers and then later to stop assuming this role? What impelled people to turn on this machine? Historical studies must talk about continuity and discontinuity of processes. Philosophy and religion can talk about leaps. Philosophy, however, must somehow refer to reality, especially a philosophy that is as intimately related to reality as Arendt's. And yet, in dealing with Arendt, we are conducting philosophy by means of critical thinking rather than historical investigation, which has already demonstrated the flaws in Arendt's writings.

Hannah Arendt was sent by the *New Yorker* to cover the Eichmann trial. Her reports were later released in a volume named *Eichmann in Jerusalem—A Report on the Banality of Evil*. The keyword "evil" in the title is conspicuous in relation to a report from a court, and not only because it is bombastic. Courts investigate *criminal* motivation, while evil is rather a subject of theology or philosophy. Arendt says that the case which the court in Jerusalem had to deal with was unprecedented in the course of human history. She defines her role by examining to what extent the court succeeded in adequately dealing with this case.[55] Yet allusion to theology is unusual. The peculiarity of the case required peculiar attention. Hence, Arendt was outraged by the prosecutor Hausner's opening address:

> For it was history that ... stood in the center of the trial. "It is not an individual that is in the dock at this historic trial, and not the Nazi regime alone, but anti-Semitism throughout history." This was the tone set by Mr. Hausner, who began his opening address ... with Pharaoh in Egypt and Haman's decree "to destroy, to slay, and to cause them to perish." ...

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55 "And the question of individual guilt or innocence, the act of meting out justice to both the defendant and the victim, are the only things at stake in a criminal court. The Eichmann trial was no exception, even though the court here was confronted with a crime it could not find in the law books and with a criminal whose like was unknown in any court, at least prior to the Nuremberg Trials. The present report deals with nothing but the extent to which the court in Jerusalem succeeded in fulfilling the demands of justice." (Arendt 1965: 298)

> It was bad history and cheap rhetoric; worse, it was clearly at cross-purposes with putting Eichmann on trial, suggesting that perhaps he was only an *innocent executor* of some *mysteriously* foreordained destiny or … even of anti-Semitism, which perhaps was necessary to blaze the trail of "the-bloodstained road traveled by this people" to fulfill its destiny. (Arendt 1965: 19)

Hausner's address may sound too theatrical and not entirely relevant. Yet, if we overlook this aspect of his speech, we see him point at the relation between Eichmann and the long-practiced anti-Semitism that inspired the Nazis. As the books by Claudia Koonz and Daniel Goldhagen show, the Nazi conscience was conditioned by norms and customs whose shaping can be explained by this long history. For example:

> The recollections of a former Hitler youth member, Alfons Heck, illustrate how such knowledge formed moral thinking. In 1940, when Alfons watched the Gestapo take away his best friend, Heinz, and all Jews in his village, he did not say to himself, "How terrible they are arresting Jews." Having absorbed knowledge about the "Jewish menace," he said, "What a misfortune Heinz is Jewish." As an adult he recalled, "I accepted deportation as just." (Koonz 2003: 5)

Yet, this by no means suggests that Eichmann can be reduced to the executor of a historical plan to annihilate the Jews. But this is what Arendt sees in Hausner's address. And if it were true, she claims, Eichmann would be discharged from any responsibility (Arendt 1965: 297–298). Arendt, however, sees in the Holocaust something *completely new* that cannot be considered the outcome of traditional anti-Semitism. Arendt tries to bind her theory of innovation to the Nuremberg trial that the Allies conducted against the Nazis. She writes:

> However, it was by no means this sort of well-known offense that had prompted the Allies to declare, in the words of Churchill, that "punishment of war criminals [was] one of the principal war aims" but, on the contrary, reports of unheard-of atrocities, the blotting out of whole peoples, the "clearance" of whole regions of their native population, that is, not only crimes that "no conception of military necessity could sustain" but crimes that were in fact independent of the war and that announced a *policy of systematic murder to be continued in time of peace*. (Ibid: 257, emphasis added)

This appears overstated, because if we accept the assumption that the Jews were at no point part of the War, then the distinction between war and peace is irrelevant here. If, however, we assume that the Jews were part of the War, then again this assessment turns out to be meaningless. The Nazis were in a war with world Jewry that justified their annihilation. This assumption is also supported subsequently, for example, by the historian Ernst Nolte[56] and the psychologist Peter

56 See in Santner (1990: 78).

Robert Hofstätter (1963), who claim that the annihilation of the Jews by the Nazis followed Chaim Weizmann's declaration of war against Germany.

To the question posed by Judge Landau to Eichmann as to whether he had a conscience, Arendt replies:

> Yes, he had a conscience, and his conscience functioned in the expected way for about four weeks, whereupon it began to function the other way around. (Arendt 1965: 95)

According to Arendt, Eichmann's conscience functioned normally and then suddenly failed. Eichmann was not alone, but rather one of millions. Arendt says:

> Conscience as such had apparently got lost in Germany, and this to a point where people hardly remembered it and had ceased to realize that the surprising "new set of German values" was not shared by the outside world. (Ibid: 103)

Arendt does not discuss factors that may condition conscience, such as differences between races.[57] In the Western part of the world, a normal man would have a bad conscience if he accidentally ran down a child on the street but hardly any remorse if he ran down only a cat or dog, or if he supported euthanasia. This is also true as far as human races are concerned. Rudolf Höss felt pity for the gentlemen who needed to carry out the dirty job of annihilating the Jews, but not for the murdered ones.[58] Arendt must back away from this possibility in order to defend her theory that Eichmann could do what he did only as a small cog in the huge totalitarian machine. Eichmann, according to Arendt, adopted Kant's moral categorical imperative, although he replaced his own will with the will of the Führer:

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57 See the discussion in Finkielkraut (1999: 5).

58 "Nun hatten wir das Gas und auch den Vorgang entdeckt. Mir graute immer vor den Erschießungen, wenn ich an die Massen, an die Frauen und Kinder dachte. Ich hatte schon genug von den Geiselexekutionen, von den Gruppen-Erschießungen, die vom RFSS oder RSHA befohlen. Nun war ich doch beruhigt, daß uns allen diese Blutbäder erspart bleiben sollten, daß auch die Opfer bis zum letzten Moment geschont werden konnten. Gerade dieses machte mir am meisten Sorge, wenn ich an die Schilderungen Eichmanns von dem Niedermähen der Juden mit MG und MP durch die Einsatz-Kommandos dachte. Grauenhafte Szenen sollen sich dabei abgespielt haben: das Weglaufen von Angeschossenen, das Töten der Verwundeten, vor allem der Frauen und Kinder. Die häufigen Selbstmorde in den Reihen der Einsatz-Kommandos, die das Im-Blut-waten nicht mehr ertragen konnten. Einige sind auch verrückt geworden. Die meisten Angehörigen dieser Einsatz-Kommandos haben sich mittels Alkohol über diese schaurige Arbeit hinweggeholfen. Nach Höfles Schilderungen haben auch die Männer der Globocnik'schen Vernichtungsstellen unheimliche Mengen von Alkohol verbraucht." (Broszat 1987: 127)

> Act as if the principle of your actions were the same as that of the legislator or of the law of the land—or, in Hans Frank's formulation of "the categorical imperative in the Third Reich" which Eichmann might have known: "Act in such a way that the Führer, if he knew your action, would approve it" (Ibid: 136).

But as Marie Syrkin shows, Arendt not only evades but also distorts historical facts in order to defend her theory on the totalitarian machine with the little cogs obeying orders.

> When German defeat became imminent, Eichmann received orders to stop the deportation of Hungarian Jews to the death camps. Instead of obeying, he speeded up the transports. Hilberg, Miss Arendt's chief source, writes of this passage, "*Eichmann could not rest until all the Hungarian Jews were in their graves*." Miss Arendt has no difficulty in explaining Eichmann's enthusiasm: "For the uncomfortable truth of the matter is that not Eichmann's fanaticism but his very conscience had prompted him to adopt his uncompromising attitude during the last year of the war." Suddenly everyman, the conscientious cog, appears to have become a zealot: yet Miss Arendt views the uncontested evidence of his enterprise as further proof of his supine loyalty to Hitler; the Führer's words are law and superseded all written instructions by others, be it Horthy or Himmler.
>
> Dr. Robinson has pointed out the astonishing negligence with which Miss Arendt has examined the relevant documents in order to reach this conclusion. In a communication (quoted also by Hilberg) from Ribbentrop to Veesenmayer, the Nazi plenipotentiary in Hungary, the German Foreign Minister warns: "The Führer expects that the measures against the Budapest Jews will now be taken without any further delay by the Hungarian government, with those exceptions which were allowed to the Hungarian government by the German government."...The exceptions involved permission for about 7000 Jewish families to leave Hungary, apparently via Rumania (Trial Doc. T1214-par. 5.) In a telegraphic report that Veesenmayer sent to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin (T1215-par. 2), *Eichmann is shown as questioning Hitler's concession and appealing to Himmler to get a new decision from the Führer.* Now, of this damaging report Miss Arendt writes: "When Himmler's order to stop the evacuation of Hungarian Jews arrived in Budapest, Eichmann threatened, according to a telegram that Veesenmayer sent to Himmler, "to seek a new decision from the Führer." But notice that Miss Arendt has here switched the roles of Hitler and Himmler. The document leaves no doubt that it is Hitler, not Himmler, who had given the order to stop the deportation. Consequently, Miss Arendt's elaborate structure (for Eichmann, the little bureaucrat, Hitler's word is sacred) crashes. The evidence shows Eichmann as seeking to contravene Hitler himself. (Syrkin 1963: 347–348)

Arendt does not refer to these factors and does not hesitate to distort historical facts in order to maintain her theoretical structure. According to Arendt, Eichmann could do what he did *only* as a small cog in the big totalitarian machine, which released him from a bad conscience. But what incited this machine to start working? And what brought it to a halt? Can the claim that people lost their consciences and then retrieved them be entirely convincing? Or rather, were

their consciences so conditioned that it enabled them to turn on, and then off, the annihilation machine?

Arendt's motivation, however, seems to be philosophical, not historical. She wants first of all to undermine Hausner's picture, in which Eichmann embodies the *τέλος* or the acme of a long history of Jew-hatred and killing. It is necessary to do that, according to Arendt, because we can meaningfully put on trial only free agents. Hence, in her description, *all of a sudden,* Eichmann, along with the German people, lost his conscience and became a mass killer. In the same way, he also probably retrieved his conscience and became a normal person. Arendt refers to leaps in another context as well, as she is asked by Günter Gaus how she felt as she returned to Germany after the war:

> Whatever took place in 1933 with respect to what took place later was insignificant....
>
> [With such feelings] I came [to Germany]. And today, as everything, let us simply say, has embarked on a stable track, the distances have become bigger than they were before, as they were then in that shock. (Gaus 1964)

Also Eichmann had a sudden transformation, according to Arendt:

> I heard from an acquaintance who had just returned from a trip to Germany that a certain feeling of guilt had seized some sections of German youth... and the fact of this guilt complex was for me as much of a landmark as, let us say, the landing of the first man-bearing rocket on the moon. It became an essential point of my inner life, around which many thoughts crystallized. This was why I did not escape... when I knew the search commando was closing in on me.... After these conversations about the guilt feeling among young people in Germany, which made such a deep impression on me, I felt I no longer had the right to disappear. (Arendt 1965: 242)

Sudden transformation sounds odd in a historical study. It also cannot serve as a way of portraying Eichmann as a free agent, for a member of an anti-Semitic society is also a free agent to the extent that he can choose to kill or not kill Jews. Instead, he ceases to be a free agent when he is *suddenly* transformed into a cog in a killing machine, as in Arendt's description, and then transformed back into normality;[59] it *happens* to him to become a mass murderer and then again

59 See Wolin (2001: 98): "In the writing of history we seek to 'understand.' She [Arendt] thus characterized anti-Semitism and imperialism as 'elements' that, at a certain point, ultimately 'crystallized' in modern totalitarian practice. Yet what it was that catalyzed this mysterious process of 'crystallization' remained murky in her account." As George Kateb accurately points out, writing on Arendt's concept of "Freedom," Arendt's notion of a principle "comes to one from outside and inspires 'from without.'" Quoted in Kalyvas (2004: 325). De Vila claims that Arendt's alternative to authoritarian submission to the metaphysical first principle of action is

become a normal man. An alternative example is Voegelin (1999), who calls on the Germans to come to terms with the *present* instead of the past; "*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*" ("coming to terms with the past") is a term used in Germany to deal with their Nazi past as if, according to Voegelin, it did not continue into the present, as if there were no continuity between what happened before the war and what happened after it, or as if the Nazi past were not a chapter in German history. Arendt, however, must introduce *rupture* and discontinuity in her theory in order to maintain its well-roundedness and to present the Holocaust as something completely new. The Holocaust, according to Arendt, was not a cumulative outcome of a long history of Jew-hatred, but rather something completely unanticipated.

> It was when the Nazi regime declared that the German people not only were unwilling to have the Jews in Germany but wish to make the entire Jewish people disappear from the face of the earth that the new crime, namely the crime against humanity—in the sense of crime "against the human status," or against the very nature of mankind—appeared. Expulsion and genocide, though both are international offenses, must remain distinct; the former is an offense against fellow-nations, whereas the latter is an attack upon human diversity as such, that is, upon a characteristic of the "human status" without which, the very words "mankind" and "humanity" would be devoid of meaning. (Arendt 1965: 267–268)

It was completely new in the sense that, for the first time in human history, an attempt had been made to eradicate an entire race from the earth. It means that the Jewish genocide was *not* a crime committed against the *Jewish people*, but rather against *humanity as such* (Ibid: 255). Eichmann is then, according to Arendt, *hostis humani generis* and not *hostis Judaeorum* (Ibid: 260).

Arendt's use of the term "crime against humanity" deviates from its use when it was devised in the Nuremberg Trials. Crimes against humanity, according to her, are committed against the "human status." This was something completely novel, Arendt argues, and hence we should not conceive the annihilation of European Jewry as part of a long history of Jew-hatred and killing. Arendt writes:

> It was a crime against humanity, perpetrated upon the body of the Jewish people, and that only the choice of victims, not the nature of the crime, could be derived from the long history of Jew-hatred and anti-Semitism. (Ibid: 269)

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action out of nothingness or abyss. This is indeed Heideggerian teaching, and Arendt herself uses it to excuse Heidegger's support of German Nazism, as we have seen. Villa, however, does not examine the alternative to submission to metaphysical principle; that is, submission to an authoritarian system as one can no longer rely on himself and his will and on moral principles. (Villa 1996: 117)

Now, this claim reflects not historical truth, but Arendt's philosophical scheme. Because we cannot separate the Holocaust from anti-Semitism—the Final Solution invented to solve the Jewish Problem—likewise we cannot claim, as Arendt does, that the Germans and the Jews are inessential to this story. It was the Jewish Problem that called up the Final Solution and the introduction of a more efficient means to carry it out (Zyklon B instead of shooting and gas wagons), and not vice versa. In other words, it could also be anti-Semitism combined with technological capabilities—after all, men control the machines and not the other way around—which led to the annihilation of European Jewry. The Holocaust is in many respects peculiar, but this does not entail that the choice of victims was inessential, as Arendt claims. Eichmann's report to Himmler from 1944 in which he describes the success of his undertaking leaves no doubt: "I will jump into my grave laughing because the fact that I have the death of five million Jews on my conscience gives me extraordinary satisfaction" (Syrkin 1963: 347). The introduction of the term "crime against humanity" does not by any means point to the birth of a new reality, as Arendt claims. It can also be a new formulation referring to an old reality that now draws attention or appears differently than before because of its new dimension (mass killing), consequences, and outcome of a conflict. Robinson shows how Arendt relied on the juridical processes in the Nuremberg Trials in order to corroborate her thesis about the novelty of the Holocaust, and to how great an extent she misunderstood it and misused the terms used in the Nuremberg Trials (Robinson 1965: 69). He writes:

> Certainly the destruction of European Jewry was unique in its continental scope, in its psychological pressures, in its technical methods, in its masses of active perpetrators (members of one of the most educated peoples of the world), in its involvement of the three pillars of the Nazi regime (State, Army, Party), in its connection with pseudoscientific racial theories in general and Judaistic pseudoscience in particular, and in its absolute (six millions) and relative (the high percentage of the victims in relation to European Jewry—namely, two-thirds—and to world Jewry—namely, one-third) figures of victims. It was also unique in the revulsion of the non-Nazi world, in the universal realization of its inherent criminal character under existing law and the responsibility of individuals for these crimes, and in the determination of the world community to take measures for the prevention of its repetition by affirmation of the Nuremberg Principles, by adoption of the Genocide Convention, and by outlawing war in the United Nations Charter. But could it be really claimed—as Miss Arendt does—that history knows of no previous cases at all of genocide, and genocide of the Jews in particular? (Ibid: 71–72)

Like Heidegger in *Being and Time* but also like other 20th-century thinkers, such as José Ortega y Gasset, who was also influenced by Heidegger, Arendt talks about the mass-man who lives without distinction from others and with no ability to think and judge authentically. His existence is reduced to the consumption and selling of goods (Arendt 1945–1946a: 656).

> What we have called the "bourgeois" [*Spießer*] is the modern man of the masses [*Massenmensch*], not in his exalted moments of collective excitement, but in the security (today one should say the insecurity) of his own private domain (Baehr 2000: 153–154 / Arendt 1945–1946b: 342–343).[60]

Against this background of the mass-person, and *not* of anti-Semitism, is where Arendt wants to see Eichmann. Hence she writes:

> The mob man, however, the end-result of the "bourgeois," is an international phenomenon; and we would do well not to submit him to too many temptations in the blind faith that only German mob man is capable of such frightful deeds. (Baehr 2000: 153 / Arendt 1945–1946b: 342)

Her last statement on Eichmann reads:

> In the face of death, he had found the cliché used in funeral oratory. Under the gallows, his memory played him the last trick; he was "elated" and he forgot that this was his own funeral. It was as though in those last minutes, he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us—the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*. (Arendt 1965: 252)

Is the "banality of evil" the lesson we learn from Eichmann's case, or is it what we learn from Arendt's theory of the mob and the *Spießer*? The *Spießer*, Arendt claims, is an international phenomenon of banality, of being part of a huge machine and acting without intention. Eichmann, as Arendt portrays him, is a typical example of this machine. The problem with this theory is that Arendt needs to brush aside too many facts in order to maintain it. And then, what about the people who sacrificed their lives in order to save Jews? Were they also banal—the Danes and the Bulgarians and many others? Why not talk about the banality of the sacrifice or the banality of non-collaboration with the Nazis, or the banality of being a *mensch*? A wiser alternative would be to demonstrate that neither "evil" nor "good" is banal, or at least not in every case.

60 Canovan (1978) explores the discrepancy between the two central attitudes in Arendt's work—democracy on the one hand and elitism and snobbism on the other.

Chapter Six

Hans-Georg Gadamer on the Phenomenological Disinfection of Language

Hans-Georg Gadamer is Heidegger's most renowned disciple in Germany.[61] In one respect, he is always seen as Heidegger's successor. Conversely, he is also seen as the one who returned humanism to philosophical discussion and thus revolted against Heidegger, who as we have seen banned humanism as the offspring of a degraded metaphysical concept of the human being. Gadamer pinpoints the loss of humanism in the Enlightenment, when the natural sciences became the sole legitimate procedure for attaining truth, while the humanities lost any claim on truth. *Φρόνησις* (prudence, circumspection) and *τέχνη* (skill) completely lost their claim on truth and their role in attaining reliable knowledge, Gadamer claims. The *accuracy* of natural sciences became the only valid criterion for truth. Hence the humanities fell to a very low level on the scale of knowledge and truth. The humanities continued to live by adopting the quantifying and abstracting *methods* of the natural sciences in which the distinctiveness of the individual is lost, Gadamer says. This also occurred in hermeneutics, the procedure which is supposed to open our horizons to others and to distant peoples whose culture and language are not immediately accessible to us. This problem lies in applying *method*, which means quantifying the particular historical existence of the human being and leveling it according to the standard of the natural sciences. The counter-attitude would be to restore the important position of *φρόνησις* and *τέχνη* as legitimate procedures for attaining knowledge and truth. Hence, education or personal cultivation (*Bildung*) and the development of common sense become important. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of taste and common sense by means of education implies, according to Gadamer, the *destruction* of the "Cartesian" ambition to trace our *historical* existence back to an *unhistorical* point of view (Hegel, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Droysen, Ranke) or to submit our historical situation to *inductive* procedures (Hume, Mill, Helmholtz).[62]

The question is whether Gadamer addresses the problem of Nazism when he writes on education and cultivation. Gadamer begins the restoration of prudence and common sense by describing our experience of art. This experience

61 On Gadamer's relationship to Nazism see Orozco (1995), Wolin (2004: 89–128).
62 For a concise summary see: Gadamer (2001).

is not methodic and systematic, for it cannot be abstracted and subsumed under a general scheme. Education, tact, and taste condition our experience of art and enable our access to it.

Because *φρόνησις* is also the way we initially understand and interpret our own lives and existence, Gadamer's choice of art turns out to be his strategy for exposing the most basic understanding of the human being. Hermeneutics, then, is no longer a *method* of interpreting, but rather our most basic way of existence, of behaving toward our own existence. In describing the ways in which the human being interprets and relates to his existence, Gadamer relies more than anything else on terms taken from Husserl's phenomenology. These phenomenological terms provide Gadamer with a better alternative than the quantifying method for describing the ways in which the human being understands and interprets his finite existence.

Phenomenology attracts Gadamer because it inhibits or brackets reality and thus enables us to become aware of detrimental uses of language which might lead to disastrous consequences. Gadamer's hermeneutics has received due attention. The decisive role that phenomenology plays in his philosophy, however, is almost completely overlooked.[63]

Gadamer claims that the basic motive of Husserl's phenomenology is a *moral* one—that is, how to become a real philosopher or an unbiased thinker, which is to achieve full responsibility for one's deeds and statements by supplying full justifications (Gadamer 1972: 194). Gadamer seems to agree with this moral ideal. He believes, however, that this process should be completed in accordance with his concept of common sense (Ibid: 201).

For Gadamer, temporal finitude entails limited historical perspectives that are, in principle, relative and always liable to change with the change of history. Hence, he never seriously examines the possibility of non-relative perspectives. He never really asks why finite existence must imply a relative perspective at all. According to him, finite existence means dependency on traditional and cultural norms of interpreting and understanding reality. These perspectives are imposed on man; he did not choose them and can never entirely shed them. Contrary to rational philosophy, which identifies tradition with prejudices and unchecked presumptions and hence sees in it an obstacle to achieving the truth, Gadamer conceives tradition positively as the most basic mode of truth, bound up with the most basic fact of our finitude. Finitude implies perspectivism, which in turn implies submission to tradition and authority, which Gadamer calls us to obey.

63 See Segev (2007), Sokolowsky (1997), and Theunissen (2001).

Phenomenology inhibits or brackets reality in order to avoid falling prey to prejudice and unchecked presumptions and in order to turn attention to the acts that constitute meaning. Gadamer gives a hermeneutical twist to this phenomenological procedure. Recognizing that my perspectives are limited, I allow new and different perspectives to enter my horizon, to both change and enhance it. The result is what Gadamer calls "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*), which enables us to abandon detrimental perspectives and adopt others. This procedure is not as radical as Husserl's phenomenological *ἐποχή* because it does not do away with reality as a whole, for we can never entirely cast off our historical situation with all its prejudices, but only a part of it. The fusion of horizons along with the adoption of fruitful presuppositions and dismissal of unfruitful ones takes place in what Gadamer calls "experience" (*Erfahrung*). This is Gadamer's version of the phenomenological *ἐποχή*; the prejudices regarding reality are not inhibited all at once, but part by part. Experience is the basic structure of our understanding. Gadamer borrowed "experience" from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. However, he stresses, contrary to Hegel, that *experience* does not lead to absolute transparency, but to further experience, and so on. Hence, understanding is never fully achieved.

Conducting meaningful dialogue, Gadamer claims, illustrates how the fusion of horizons is achieved. The goal and the criterion of the dialogue is the thing-itself (*die Sache selbst*), Gadamer stresses, and not the victory of one perspective over another. Convictions and prejudices are made legitimate or discarded according to their *agreement* or achieved *consensus* (*Verständigung* or *Einverständnis*) with the thing-itself. Gadamer emphasizes time and again that this *consensus* is neither about *my* convictions and opinions nor about *yours*. Nor is it by any means a representation of traditional conservatism. The consensus is rather about the thing-itself; that is, about ideal meaning, which, though being constituted in the flux of tradition, is still beyond the tradition and therefore cannot be "distorted" by it.

One may ask whether the thing-itself destroys historical perspectives or, conversely, is destroyed by them. We cannot exclude the possibility of eternal essences which appear in the temporal flux or are constituted in it, as Husserl argues. Yet we have seen that, according to Gadamer, we submit first of all to the authority of tradition. We now may ask Gadamer, What guarantees that in conducting dialogue, we do not yield to the more eloquent, authoritative, superior, or elderly interlocutor? By what means is recognition of the thing-itself—which according to Gadamer is supposed to be the outcome of the dialogue—effective in preventing submission and yielding to authority? If it is something that we must accept as valid, as we would a geometric shape or mathematical sentence, then there is no point in conducting dialogue; and if it is not, then we are always

prone to falling prey to authority or giving up our perspective out of fear or interest. This was the concern of Jürgen Habermas, who suggested psychoanalysis to overcome biased perspectives and enable fair dialogue. The problem is, as Georgia Warnke claims (Warnke 1987: 115), that false ideology does not lie simply in the debris of prejudices and unjustified convictions, but that it is rather sunk deeper in a silt of "polluted" language (Habermas 1970: 99). Habermas's concern is real but his alternative is not convincing, for psychoanalysis enforced by the doctor over the patient may not always lead to release from biased perspectives. In principle, it can lead to the opposite. Gadamer can reply to Habermas that the phenomenological hermeneutics which he utilizes is still much more radical and effective than psychoanalysis for checking prejudices.

Gadamer himself expresses concerns about the threat of historical relativism, of the loss of personal and national responsibility, and consequently of irrational yielding to historical fate. Gadamer puts it provocatively: some people might suggest, having in mind the atrocities perpetrated in World War II, that the great philosophy of Germany (from Leibniz to Hegel) had become the fetish of the spirit, an escape from the demands and needs of social reality into irrationality (Gadamer 1967: 21–22). He also mentions the *Lubbe Case* of 1933 and its consequences as an example of the wrong and unchecked use and application of juridical language (Gadamer 1993: 74).

Contrary to Habermas, who is worried about an unchecked and submissive attitude toward tradition and authority, Richard Rorty praises Gadamer for overcoming the traditional view of truth as the mirror of nature and for replacing it with the fusion of horizons. Rorty, however, is not entirely correct in assessing Gadamer, for Gadamer does not reject truth in the sense of mirroring, as emerges from his long discussion of the portrait and the photo in *Truth and Method* (Gadamer 1990: 139). Following Husserl's phenomenology, Gadamer thinks that mirroring and correspondence are founded on and secondary to a more original experience of truth in our act of constituting and intending meaning, as we shall later see.

Both Habermas and Rorty overlook the phenomenological procedure that Gadamer uses in dealing with the process of understanding. This process can never achieve full transparency because we are situated in a historical situation. If they had been aware of the phenomenological background of Gadamer's procedure, their assessment of Gadamer would have been completely different.

Gadamer begins his treatment of our historical conception by criticizing what he holds to be the false conception of our historical existence. The flaw in this conception of history, Gadamer says, lies in treating history as if it could be conceived and dealt with as a subject of natural science; that is, as if we could remain indifferent to and untouched by it, free from our traditional preju-

dices and perspectives that characterize our finite existence. Gadamer rejects the application of Cartesian method and principles to history and humanities (Gadamer 2001: 10). According to Gadamer in *Truth and Method* and *The Problem of Historical Consciousness*, when applied to history the "Cartesian ideal" has two main harmful consequences. First, it is the determination to trace history back to one ahistorical principle or scheme. This ambition is related first to Hegel[64] and then to Dilthey, Droysen (Ibid: 20), Ranke (Gadamer 1990: 207), and Schleiermacher (Gadamer 2001: 25). It leads us to ignore our historical situation, which is made up of incessant interplay between the known and the unknown, of endless encounters with the new and reformulations of the old. Second, it leads to inductive generalization, as in Hume, Mill, and Helmholz. This attitude is wrong, according to Gadamer, because it irons out any *distinctiveness* (*Besonderheit*) and *uniqueness* (*Einzigartigkeit*) by subsuming it under general laws that are already present (Ibid: 12).

As previously stated, Gadamer calls our encounter with the distinctiveness and uniqueness of our historical existence "experience" (*Erfahrung*). Experience means encounter our historically confined context through confrontation with *new* and *foreign* perspectives, thus resulting in a new and fresh reformulation of our historical perspectives on the thing-itself. Such an encounter imports and incorporates new and productive insights into our world-view and lets us rid ourselves of false and unproductive assumptions. This experience can take place only in the manner of a *fair dialogue*; that is, only if we let foreign or other perspectives appear valid and appear to have something new to tell us can we bring about productive reformulation and enrichment of our historical context.[65]

The "other" can only be a human expression—be it text, tradition, gesture, work of art, etc. Hence the "other" must be acknowledged as *non-instrumental* (we should let it stand as valid, as true), but it is still a phenomenological *means*. In encountering new perspectives, Gadamer claims, we can get rid of our unproductive and false perspectives that shadow the thing-itself. It is not the truth of *my* or *your* private matter that we strive to achieve an understanding of, but instead the thing-itself, Gadamer claims. The precondition for successful encounters with the "other" and through it with my own historical existence is

64 "Aber bedeutet die geschichtliche Seinsweise unseres Bewußtseins nicht eine unüberwindliche Grenze? Hegel löste das Problem durch die Aufhebung der Geschichte im absoluten Wissen." (Gadamer 2001: 18)

65 "Nur an anderen lernen wir uns selbst wahrhaft kennen. Darin liegt nun, dass geschichtliche Erkenntnis nicht notwendig zur Auflösung der Tradition führen muss, in der wir stehen. Sie kann sie auch bereichern, verändern, bestätigen, kurz, zur eigenen Identitätsfindung beitragen." (Ibid: 4)

that we let the opposite opinion or perspective appear valid and true and even turn out to supersede our own.[66]

The question is whether the *dynamic* of conducting dialogue and exchanging opinions *alone* is sufficient to guard against immoral and dangerous consequences. Can the thing-itself serve as a moral guarantee? Is there any contradiction in claiming along with Gadamer that the Wannsee Conference took place as a fair dialogue and the Final Solution was the essence, the thing-itself, which was crystallized by means of the fair dialogue at that conference?

Because we are historically situated and conditioned, Gadamer claims, the process of understanding must always start with certain prejudices and axioms. As we come to understand and interpret something, we project some general meaning onto it that we bring with us. Hence the process of understanding is a circular one, but it is not a vicious circle; we interpret in light of the meaningful whole that we projected beforehand, Gadamer says. The particulars of the text are understood in light of the projected whole (*Vollkomenheit*), but in turn, they always reveal something new. They compel us, therefore, to reformulate and refine the projected whole. Gadamer calls this process "the hermeneutical circle." It is the phenomenological procedure of inhibiting and *bracketing* (*suspendieren, Einklammerung*) (Ibid: 52) our prejudices and axioms and *clearing* (*Bereinigung*) (Ibid: 49) our sight in order to be able to direct it to the thing-itself. As we can see, Gadamer describes understanding in a manner akin to Husserl's phenomenology. He continues in this direction. At this point, he turns to the experience of art. He justifies this step in the following passage:

> So even Husserl's perceptive remark that in the realm of the aesthetic, the eidetic reduction is spontaneously fulfilled insofar as the "position" or positing of actuality is suspended, only represents half the story. Here Husserl speaks of "neutrality modification." If I now point to the window and say, "Look at the house over there," then anyone who follows my directions will see the house over there as the fulfillment of what I said, simply by looking in the right direction. On the other hand, if a poet describes a house in his

66 "Jede Begegnung mit dem anderen bedeutet daher 'Aussetzung' der eigenen Vorurteile, ob es sich dabei um einen anderen Menschen handelt, an dem man sich kennen und begrenzen lernt, oder um die Begegnung mit einem Werk der Kunst ('Da is keine Stelle, die dich nicht sieht. Du musst dein Leben ändern') oder mit einem Text: es ist immer noch etwas mehr verlangt, als das andere zu 'verstehen,' das heißt, als die immanente Kohärenz zu suchen und anzuerkennen, die in dem Anspruch des Anderen liegt. Es handelt sich nicht nur darum, dass man den anderen 'versteht'—es liegt immer auch eine weitergehende Zumutung darin. Wie eine unendliche Idee ist darin eine 'transzendente' Kohärenzforderung impliziert, die im Ideal der Wahrheit liegt. Man sucht das Richtige: das gilt für den interpretierten Autor so gut wie für den Interpreten. Das aber verlangt, dem anderen potentiell recht zu geben, ihn oder es gegen mich gelten zu lassen." Ibid: 5.

> own words or evokes the idea of a house, we do not look in the direction of any particular house, but each of us constructs his own image of a house in such a way that it stands there for him as "the house." In all of this, an eidetic reduction is at work insofar as the house is a universal that is given through his words as a spontaneous "intentional fulfillment." The word is true in the sense that it discloses, producing this self-fulfillment. The poetic word suspends the positive and the posited [*das Gesetzte*] as that which might serve to verify whether our statement corresponds with what lies outside it.
>
> The realization that occurs by means of the word eliminates any comparison with whatever else might be present and raises what is said above the particularity of what is usually called "reality." It is quite incontestable that we do not look beyond the word to the world of confirmation. On the contrary, we construct the world of the poem from within the poem itself. (Gadamer 1998: 112 / 1993: 76–77)

Gadamer's example of this phenomenological procedure is the staircase on which Smerdyakov fell in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (Gadamer 1993: 75 and Gadamer 1979: 35–36). Whoever reads the book, Gadamer says, "creates in his mind" the *same* staircase. It would be futile to look for verification either in reality, namely, to ask whether this staircase really corresponds to some real staircase, or to consider whether the same staircase exists in the minds of different readers and the author. The poetic word does not need verification in reality. It brings forth the meaning without any reference to reality; it is autonomous (Gadamer 1977: 75). Because we can intend the *very same* meaning without leading it back either to some objective qualities or texture or to a specific psychological condition, we can translate and enjoy reading the novel in other languages, Gadamer argues (Ibid: 76).

This claim is not unambiguous. It is clear that reading and understanding *The Brothers Karamazov* presupposes, in addition to the ability to read and comprehend, a particular background. Hence, readers from a culture that does not use staircases in its architecture (a community of Bedouins living in the desert, for example) probably could not understand the meaning of Smerdyakov's falling down the staircase as we do. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the so-called "eidetic variation" would work with every type of art, for example, with political art, social realism, hermetic poetry, etc.

Gadamer expands the scope of his phenomenological research by introducing three modes of using language:

> Pledge (*Zusage*):
>
> Now it is not only the poetic word that is "autonomous" in the sense that we subordinate ourselves to it and concentrate all our efforts upon it "as a text." I think there are two other such kinds of text. Clearly, the religious text is one of these. What is the meaning of the Lutheran translation mentioned earlier: "It stands written?" In Luther's usage, this often

> applies to a particular kind of speech that I should like to call "pledge." We can always call upon something that has been pledged—as in the case of a promise that someone has made to us. (Gadamer 1998: 109 / 1977: 74)
>
> Proclamation (*Ansage*):
>
> Another privileged form of text that may be found in the modern state seems to me to be the legal text. The law is in a sense binding by virtue of its being written down, and it has a specific character of its own. I should like to call this kind of saying a "proclamation". (Gadamer 1998: 109 / 1977: 74)
>
> Statement (Aussage):
>
> These two forms of saying, the pledge and the proclamation, should serve as a backdrop for our discussion of the poetic text, which correspondingly I should like to call "statement."
>
> It is a saying that says so completely what it is that we do not need to add anything beyond what is said in order to accept it in its reality as language. The word of the poet is autonomous in the sense that it is self-fulfilling. (Gadamer 1998: 110 / 1993: 74–75)

Gadamer mentions the Lubbe Case of 1933 and its consequences as an example of the wrong and unchecked use and application of juridical language (Gadamer 1993: 74). This remark is odd, for under Nazi rule, as we saw in our discussion of Carl Schmitt, the law could be changed according to momentary need. Gadamer could say instead that phenomenological analysis as he conducted it could avoid unchecked uses of language that led to many catastrophes, including the execution of Marinus van der Lubbe. He would, however, need to explain how people such as Heidegger and himself who, despite mastering the phenomenological method, still supported Nazism.

Gadamer now focuses on the acts that constitute meaning (the thing-itself) while dealing with the experience of art. At this stage, Gadamer introduces the suspension of physical-temporal reality. On the way to this goal, Gadamer destroys what he holds to be two false attitudes toward the experience of art. The first attitude, Gadamer claims, severs it from its historical context and leads it back to the subject, namely, either the artist or the perceiver (Kant and Schiller) (Gadamer 1990: 87). In this attitude, the meaning of the work of art is explained as stemming from either the artist or the perceiver. The second attitude traces the meaning of the experience of art to the object—to the material components that make up the *original* object or text (Ibid: 91). Gadamer classifies these two attitudes under the rubric "aesthetic difference" (*ästhetische Unterscheidung*). This "aesthetic difference" presupposes a perceiver and object detached from historical and traditional context as well as from one another. Both attitudes fail to explain the *identity* (and *not* "continuity," as Gadamer puts it inaptly in

Truth and Method[67]) of an artwork as the *same* work of art in innumerable performances, duplicates, recordings, perspectives, etc.

Gadamer believes he solves the problem of identity by bringing together his theory of application (*Anwenden*), *φρόνησις*, and phenomenology. He brings them together by working out the components that make up a "game" (*Spiel*). Gadamer claims that the "practical" side of a game consists in its application and how it is played. The playing of a particular game requires a human subject, an object such as a ball or cards, and finally an allotted space and time in which the game takes place. But the essence of the game, Gadamer emphasizes, is neither the playing subject who loses his mundane identity within the game, nor the game as a complex paradigm of rules, nor the object that the players use throughout the game (Ibid: 108). On the contrary, their existence consists in abruptly ceasing to be static components and turning into an element in the actual dynamic of the game. This sudden turn in the dynamic of the game Gadamer calls "transformation into arrangement" (*Verwandlung ins Gebilde*) (Ibid: 116). By "transformation" Gadamer means that no gradual change takes place on an unchangeable substrate, but rather a sudden rupture which causes reality as we know it from daily life to vanish and turn into a completely different arrangement. The game has a "*medial* sense" (i.e. the middle voice), as Gadamer emphasizes:

> Hence the mode of being of play is not such that, for the game to be played, there must be a subject who is behaving playfully. Rather, the primordial sense of playing is the medial one. Thus we say that something is "playing" (*spielt*) somewhere or at some time, that something is going on (*im Spiele ist*) or that something is happening (*sich abspielt*). (Gadamer 2006: 105 / 1990: 109)

There is neither a passive subject and an active object nor an active subject and a passive object, but rather an all-encompassing "happening." Gadamer contends that the game enables him to look into the emergence of meaning as such, without the need of tracing it back either to the consciousness of the subject or to the materiality of the object. "We are inquiring into the mode of being of play as such," Gadamer argues (Gadamer 2006: 103 / 1990: 108).

> This suggests a general characteristic of the nature of play that is reflected in playing: all playing is a being-played. The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts, consists precisely in the fact that the game masters the players. Even in the case of games in which one tries to perform tasks that one has set oneself, there is a risk that they will not "work," "succeed," or "succeed again," which is the attraction of the game. Whoever "tries" is in fact the one who is tried. The real subject of the game (this is shown in precisely those

67 See Gadamer (1990: 138).

> experiences in which there is only a single player) is not the player but instead the game itself. What holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there is the game itself. (Gadamer 2006: 106 / 1990: 112)

In order to account for the identity of the game—which can be explained neither by referring to the player nor by referring to the rules or the object (ball, cards, etc.)—Gadamer introduces another component which he borrows from Husserl's *Lectures on the Phenomenology of Inner Time-Consciousness* (Husserl 2000: 486–490): meaningful arrangement (*Gebilde*). The *arrangement* is something that *comes to stand* in the endless disarranged stream of temporal consciousness. The *arrangement* constitutes itself in this temporal stream. It achieves autonomous status to which everyone has access, exactly as in the case of the mathematical sentence *2×2=4*. It is similar to the *ἔργον*, Gadamer says, the completed piece of work that lies beyond the process in which power (*δύναμις*) turns into its realization (*ἐνέργεια*) (Gadamer 1990: 116). As *free* agents, Gadamer explains, we have the ability to conjure something up, to put something forth, to present it to ourselves free from determining causal order. We can likewise act without purpose of gain, profit, or advantage (*zweckfrei*) (Gadamer 1979: 30). This ability makes the game possible. We set tasks and goals whose achievement constitutes the dynamic of the game. In this manner, Gadamer says, we constitute the identical and repeatable meaning of the game.

Gadamer's term for the act of intentionally relating to these goals and tasks and of constituting the game as *meaningful* is "displaying" (*Darstellen*). We intentionally determine meaning by displaying something. This display constitutes the meaning of the game and shifts the attention of the players and the perceivers to the meaning of what is being played and performed. This causes the player and the perceiver to share and to be led by the same meaning. In performing *Oedipus Rex*, for example, the performer intends to display the meaning of the play and cause the perceiver to direct his attention to the meaning rather than to the performer's individual personality and technical abilities, Gadamer says.

Gadamer now goes on to explain how the meaning, the *Gebilde*, is constituted and intended. To this end, Gadamer uses the *game* and the *display*, in which a dynamic amalgam of all the components is established. What is left after all components have been swallowed up in the dynamic of the game as it is being played (*das Gespielte*) (Gadamer 1990: 117) is pure meaning.

The problem with this thesis is that this unity is fully realized only in bacchanalian feasts. It is true that when we concentrate on a musical performance or on reading a book, we are detached, to a certain extent, from our daily existence. But it is also true that a good craftsman is detached from daily distractions while he is working, as Gadamer himself seems to recognize (Ibid: 129).

Thus when we are focused on one thing, we are paying little attention to anything else. And still, both the subjective elements and the objective ones (the material) are indispensible in judging the merit of the work: Did the artist create his piece with inspiration? Did the audience correctly understand him? Did the artist choose the right material?

In the experience of art, the daily routine and flow of time are suspended and we become concentrated on one long temporal stretch which, for Gadamer, is the phenomenological time experience.[68] This is the time experience of a festival when we do not count the minutes and are not worried about a task to be performed in the future. We are simply *there*, totally immersed in one long-spanning present (Ibid: 128).[69] In this experience of time, we gain access to the thing-itself. Gadamer thinks that by means of this last phenomenological reduction, he regains the identity of meaning that has been lost in the hectic daily life as well as in wrong philosophical attitudes.

We have been following Gadamer in his long journey, for he promised us rehabilitation of humanity, dialogue, responsibility, and suspension of premises that might lead to disastrous consequences. As we have seen, the hermeneutical experience is supposed to create a distance between us and our premises and prejudices and rid us of the detrimental ones while keeping the productive ones. When we look carefully at the last stage of the journey, we see that Gadamer himself has not distanced himself from premises that he shares with the Hellenic-German philosophy of the Third Reich, but rather reaffirms them.

Gadamer claims that in the experience of art, we recognize and regain the truth and value of our finite existence. His thesis begins with the perceiver. He says that not every perceiver—not someone who goes to the theater for fun (*der Neugierde*)—can experience the truth and value of finite existence, but only someone who is genuinely devoted to art (Gadamer 1990: 131). Gadamer uses the example of Greek tragedy to demonstrate how the "authentic" perceiver becomes acquainted with the truth of existence. The disasters befalling Oedipus evoke in the devoted perceiver genuine emotions of fear (*Φόβος*) and pity (*ἔλεος*). Overwhelmed by these tragic emotions, he *suddenly*, in a moment of revelation, catches a glimpse of his *finite existence*. Akin to Heidegger's thesis on existing-toward-one's-own-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*), this insight into one's own

68 "Was sich da vor ihm abspielt, ist für einen Jeden so herausgehoben aus den fortgehenden Weltlinien und so zu einem selbständigen Sinnkreis zusammengeschlossen, dass sich für niemanden ein Hinausgehen auf irgeneine andere Zukunft und Wirklichkeit motiviert. Der Aufnehmende ist in eine absolute Distanz verwiesen, die ihm jede praktische, zweckvolle Anteilnahme verwehrt." (Gadamer 1990: 133)

69 See Segev (2003).

finitude is the most basic experience upon which everything else is founded. Gadamer writes:

> So we must repeat the question: what does the spectator affirm here? Obviously it is the disproportionate, terrible immensity of the consequences that flow from a guilty deed that is the real claim made on the spectator. The tragic affirmation is the fulfillment of this claim. It has the character of a genuine communion. What is experienced in such an excess of tragic suffering is something truly common. The spectator recognizes himself and his own finiteness in the face of the power of fate. (Gadamer 2006: 128 / 1990: 137)

The experience of finitude must be different from case to case. I do not see how we can meaningfully generalize it. Gadamer, however, sees it as positive to the extent that it is combined with heroism and courage in meeting destiny and death. As in Ernst Jünger, it is the courage to bear destiny regardless of any *moral* questions.[70] It is a call—although in Gadamer, an indirect one—to reject moral aspects as bourgeois standards and values which get destroyed by fear (*φόβος*) and pity (*ἔλεος*), and death is then seen as the highest value of our existence.

Gadamer promises to rehabilitate humanity. He ends up aestheticising existence. His huge hermeneutic project leads to the experience of death. He promises to show us how we are expected to rid ourselves of detrimental premises, but turns out to be uncritically bound to the same premises as the philosophers of the Third Reich.

70 See Jünger (1982: 50): "Ebenso nimmt der gläubige Mensch an einem erweiterten Kreise des sinnvollen Lebens teil. Durch Unglück und Gefahr bezieht ihn das Schicksal ebenso wie durch das Wunder unmittelbar in ein mächtigeres Walten ein, und der Sinn dieses Zugriffes wird in der Tragödie anerkannt. Die Götter lieben es, sich in den Elementen zu offenbaren, in glühenden Gestirnen, in Donner und Blitz, im brennenden Busche, den die Flamme nicht versehrt. Zeus bebt auf dem höchsten Throne vor Lust, während der Erdkreis unter der Schlacht der Götter und Menschen erdröhnt, weil er hier den ganzen Umfang seiner Macht gewaltig bestätigt sieht."

Chapter Seven

Jean Améry on Phenomenology in the Death Camp

It seems that there can be no greater contrast to Gadamer than Jean Améry. While Gadamer uncritically takes over Heidegger's and Husserl's terms and uses them without reflecting on any moral implications, Jean Améry applies them to his experiences in the death camps. The result shocks. It emerges as a desperate attempt to reach the heart and mind of the people who, as we have just seen in Gadamer, twenty years after Auschwitz, still identify death as the most noble pinnacle of existence. Améry claims that only one who went through the Nazi inferno can understand and convey its meaning to the people who were not there. Améry calls his critical dealing with his experience "phenomenology" (Améry 2005b: 258). He entitles the material, the personal experience, to which he applies his critical lens "*le vécu*" (Améry 2005a: 13) and "*situation vécue*" (Ibid: 189): that is, life as it is experienced, or what Husserl calls *Erlebnis*. Thus, lacking that experience, one can talk about the banality of evil only insofar as one sees Eichmann in the glass cage at the court in Jerusalem (Améry 1970: 38). This attitude raises the question we shall later treat about the prospect of writing meaningfully about the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis for people who were not there. Améry himself is skeptical, especially when it comes to the intellectuals' ability to understand. He writes bitterly:

> In my incessant effort to explore the basic condition of being a victim, in conflict with the necessity to be a Jew and the impossibility of being one, I believe to have recognized that the most extreme expectations and demands directed at us are of a physical and social nature. That such knowledge has made me unfit for profound and lofty speculation, I know. It is my hope that it has better equipped me to recognize reality. (Améry 1986: 101 / 1970: 119)

Améry expresses mistrust in the intellectuals who failed to stand up for morality. His affinity to Julien Benda's *Trahison des clercs* (1928) (Benda 1978), to whose German translation he wrote the introduction, is apparent.

Améry expresses his attitude toward the superficiality of culture as seen from the perspective of the death camp with the following remark:

> A comrade who had once been asked about his profession had foolishly told the truth that he was a Germanist and that had provoked a murderous outburst of rage from an SS man. In those same days, across the ocean in the USA, Thomas Mann, I believe, said, "Wherever I am is German culture." The German-Jewish Auschwitz prisoner could not

> have made such a bold assertion, even if by chance he had been a Thomas Mann. (Améry 1986: 8 / 1970: 18)

This remark is complex. It is a critique of the intellectuals outside the death camp for whom business was as usual, despite the horrors that were taking place. At the same time, Améry must presume the presence of some literate intellectual strata, for otherwise his critique could never be heard. The pain and suffering at the beginning of *Beyond Guilt and Atonement* are those of the intellectual in the death camp. Unlike professionals who immerse themselves in their work routine because of their skills (Améry 1970: 12) and hence also in society, the intellectual can hardly integrate.[71] He used to look at the world through logic and reason, but they have suddenly collapsed (Ibid: 20). At the same time, his critique is mainly directed against the hollowness of the intellectuals.

As we have seen in our previous discussion, especially in Gadamer, Heidegger, and Jünger, death is the ultimate possibility of human-existence; the human is hence supposed to face it heroically. This philosophy must change in the death camp, as Amery shows:

> The first result was always the total collapse of the *esthetic* view of death. What I am saying is familiar. The intellectual, and especially the intellectual of German education and culture, bears this esthetic view of death within him. It was his legacy from the distant past, at the very latest from the time of German romanticism. It can be more or less characterized by the names Novalis, Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Thomas Mann. For death in its literary, philosophic or musical form there was no place in Auschwitz; no bridge led from death in Auschwitz to *Death in Venice*. Every poetic evocation of death became intolerable, whether it was Hesse's "Dear Brother Death ..." or that of Rilke, who sang: "Oh Lord, give each his own death.'" The esthetic view of death had revealed itself to the intellectual as part of an esthetic *mode of life*; where the latter had been all but forgotten, the former was nothing but an elegant trifle. In the camp no Tristan music accompanied death, only the roaring of the SS and the Kapos. (Améry 1986: 16–17 / 1970: 28)

For the prisoner in the death camp, Améry says, there was no poetic death (*Tod*), but only brutish dying (*sterben*).[72] The intellectual, Améry goes on, was just as occupied as the non-intellectual with the concrete, physical aspects of dying:

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71 "Der Intellektuelle suchte, zumindest im Anfang noch, ständing nach der Möglichkeit sozialer Kundgebung des Geistes. In einem Gespräch mit dem Bettnachbarn etwa, der umständlich vom Küchenzettel seiner Frau erzählte, wollte er gerne die Feststellung einschmuggeln, daß er selbst daheim viel gelesen habe. Wenn er aber hierauf zum dreißigsten Mal die Antwort erhielt: 'Scheiße, Mensch!', ließ er es bleiben." (Améry 1970: 17)

72 Compare Adorno (1997: 117): "Was da in höherer als bloß empirischer Gewißheit sich ankündigt, reinigt ihn [i.e. den Tod] so falsch von Elend und Gestank des animalischen Krepierens wie nur ein Wagnerscher Liebes- oder Erlösungstod, ähnlich dem Einbau des Todes in die Hygiene, den Heidegger den Uneigentlichen ankreidet."

> Then, however, the entire problem was reduced to a number of concrete considerations. For example, there was once a conversation in the camp about an SS man who had slit open a prisoner's belly and filled it with sand. It is obvious that in view of such possibilities one was hardly concerned with whether or *that* one had to die, but only with how it would happen. Inmates carried on conversations about *how* long it probably takes for the gas in the gas chamber to do its job. One speculated on the painfulness of death by phenol injections. (Améry 1986: 17 / 1970: 28–29)

Contrary to Heidegger, who conceives death as the highest possibility of the human being for realizing his genuine existence if he relates to it resolutely and authentically, in the death camp the experience of dying reduces the human being to an indistinct brute entity lacking distinctive characteristics. Thus Améry writes regarding Heidegger:

> Occasionally, perhaps that disquieting magus from Alemannic regions came to mind who said that beings appear to us only in the light of Being, but that man forgot Being by fixing on beings. Well now, Being. But in the camp it was more convincingly apparent than on the outside that beings and the light of Being gets you nowhere. You could *be hungry*, *be tired*, *be sick*. To say that one purely and simply *is*, made no sense. And existence *as such*, to top it off, became definitively a totally abstract and thus empty concept. (Améry 1986: 18–19 / 1970: 30)

"To-be-in-the-world" (*in-der-Welt-sein*) is a term which Heidegger uses in *Being and Time* to describe the basic ways in which the human Dasein exposes the entities in their Being in his daily life. The human Dasein finds himself in familiar surroundings in which he relates to the entities *not* as bare-objects, but rather as tools to accomplish tasks. Tools and work are the mode in which the human Dasein encounters entities in his daily activities in a mode of occupation and not of scientific observation. "World" denotes the projected organized complex of working, collaborating to accomplish tasks, and using tools, which the human Dasein finds himself encountering in his daily life. "World" does not refer to an object or a sum of objects. It is rather the basic mode in which entities encountered in daily life are familiar and trustworthy. Hence Heidegger says that the *world* is *Existential*, namely, a mode of existence. Trust and familiarity characterize this mode of existence, and they allow the human Dasein to immerse himself in his tasks and accomplish them intuitively, without reflection or meditation. If "world" is existential, then it should be the daily mode of existence, regardless of place and time. Améry makes a caricature of this suggestion:

> I don't know if the person who is beaten by the police loses human dignity. Yet I am certain that with the very first blow that descends on him he loses something we will perhaps temporarily call "trust in the world." Trust in the world includes all sorts of things: the irrational and logically unjustifiable belief in absolute causality perhaps, or the likewise

> blind belief in the validity of the inductive inference. But more important as an element of trust in the world, and in our context what is solely relevant, is the certainty that by reason of written or unwritten social contracts the other person will spare me, more precisely stated, that he will respect my physical and with it also my metaphysical being. The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of my self. My skin surface shields me against the external world. If I am to have trust, I must feel on it only what I *want* to feel.
>
> At the first blow, however, this trust in the world breaks down. The other person, *opposite* whom I exist physically in the world and *with* whom I can exist only as long as he does not touch my skin surface as border, forces his own corporeality on me with the first blow. He is on me and thereby destroys me. It is like a rape, a sexual act without the consent of one of the partners. (Améry 1986: 28 / 1970 40–41)

To-be-in-the-world turns out to be not existential, but rather a description of a normal way of life in times of peace. In times of war, human existence loses the characteristics of familiarity, trust, and collegiality. Améry writes regarding the torturer:

> He had to *torture*, destroy, in order to be great in bearing the suffering of others. He had to be capable of handling torture instruments, so that Himmler would assure him his certificate of maturity in History; later generations would admire him for having obliterated his feelings of mercy. (Améry 1986: 30 / 1970: 43)

The human Dasein, Améry says, is tortured to death by his fellow man. The torturer tortures his fellow man in order to enhance his own personality, to become a semi-God (1970: 49). The one who is tortured loses forever his trust in the world.

> Whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home in the world. The shame of destruction cannot be erased. Trust in the world, which already collapsed in part at the first blow, but in the end, under torture, fully, will not be regained. That one's fellow man was experienced as the anti-man remains in the tortured person as accumulated horror. It blocks the view into a world in which the principle of hope rules. (Améry 1986: 40 / 1970: 54)

Being at home with one's own language and culture is an important component in German philosophy. *Heimat* or homeland in English surfaces in the literature each time the effort is made to point out what makes up the essence of German; and this long before the appearance of Nazism, as for example in Richard Wagner's text *What is German?* (Wagner 1883: 51–73). Améry claims that

> Therefore, once again very clearly: there is no "new home." Home is the land of one's childhood and youth. Whoever has lost it remains lost himself, even if he has learned not to stumble about in the foreign country as if he were drunk, but rather to tread the ground with some fearlessness. (Améry 1986: 48 / 1970: 63)

Hence, homesickness (*Heimweh*) turns out to be self-destruction, longing for the lost self (Améry 1970: 66). Likewise, the native language becomes hostile exactly as the *Heimat* does (Ibid: 68). Once one is deported and banned from one's fatherland, one will understand that homeland cannot be a mode of existence—in the sense of language and familiarity—without an actual fatherland (Ibid: 70). In addition, if you are a Jew, you find that you have never really had one (Ibid: 65).

The experience of one's finitude implies an experience of time, according to Heidegger and Gadamer. Time can be experienced inauthentically as an infinite span, or authentically as the temporally finite meaning of one's existence. This is the *Ereigniss*, *καιρός*, or the "fulfilled time" (*erfüllte Zeit*) as Gadamer calls it. It is a messianic intervention in the infinite temporal span which lets one experience one's existence as finite. This is the apex of Heidegger's *Being and Time* and of Gadamer's hermeneutical experience.[73] The theme time is also the apex of Améry's discussion, which is dedicated to resentment. Améry claims that resentment implies a traumatic past which prevents one from proceeding to the future (Améry 1970: 84). The traumatized person is chained to his past with resentment. His temporal sense is distorted (*ver-rückt*) because he wants the impossible; that is, he wants the traumatic past to be revoked. Améry focuses here on the moral aspects involved in the experience of time.

> What happened, happened. This sentence is just as true as it is hostile to morals and intellect. The moral power to resist contains the protest, the revolt against reality, which is rational only as long it is moral. The moral person demands annulment of time—in the particular case under question, by nailing the criminal to his deed. (Améry 1986: 72 / 1970: 87–88)

It is hostily to morality because the human being must revolt against the elapsing time and remember who was his torturer. The tortured and dishonored person can reclaim his basic human dignity only by revolt against the temporal chain, against historic destiny (Améry 1970: 106). This argument must be personal and impulsive, for morality, unlike revenge, cannot be based on personal recollection, and justice cannot be dependent on the victim's memory; we want the perpetrator to be properly punished, even if the victim can no longer remember what happened or is no longer alive or cognitively sound.

This issue should lead to a general evaluation of Améry's main claim—that the survivor is the only legitimate messenger of the meaning behind the terror and horrors perpetrated by the Nazis—which Giorgio Agamben (2003) and Primo Levi (1990), who write on the experience of prisoners in the death camp, also present. In general, it is a question to what extent and to what degree we can

73 See Segev 2003.

share our experience with other people, as demonstrated in the practical case of the doctor who needs to reconstruct in his mind the pain of his pateint in order to undsrstand him. We may lack the appropriate framework for meaningfully posing and answering this question. As for the Holocaust, if Améry is right and only the survivor can understand the horror of the death camp—and in some cases, maybe the attentive reader as well—then we are all potential cold-blooded torturers who consume books and films on the death camps as thrillers, which can also produce catharsis. Another question is whether *any* survivor can give testimony, or only one who was in Auschwitz; and then, whether it can be *anyone* who was in Auschwitz, or only one who was there at a given time and place and played a given role (i.e., can a Jewish survivor who cooperated with the Nazis provide reliable testimony, or not?).

Detlev Claussen expresses this difficulty in *Grenzen der Aufklärung* when he speaks about the "Holocaust" concept as an artifact, which is the attempt to give it meaning and form, as the movie *Schindler's List* does. Any transmitter is an abstracted artifact which can be transcended insofar as we are gripped by the anxiety that Auschwitz introduced to the world, Claussen claims (Claussen 1997: Introduction). The artifact or symbol is indispensable for transmitting meaning. But the artifact must at the same time be destroyed in order for the meaning of the report to come across. This is a precondition for properly understanding Améry's and Levi's reports from the death camp. Thus Améry describes the unclear parameters separating safety and danger, culture and barbarity:

> A slight pressure by the tool-wielding hand is enough to tum the other—along with his head, in which are perhaps stored Kant and Hegel, and all nine symphonies, and the *World as Will and Representation*—into a shrilly squealing piglet at slaughter. (Améry 1986: 35 / 1970: 49)

Chapter Eight

Jan Assmann on Moses and Violence

Jan Assmann is a contemporary thinker and Egyptologist who defines his goal as healing society from anti-Semitism, a mission to which he feels obligated as a German who grew up in the aftermath of World War II. Assmann writes about his main work, *Moses the Egyptian*:

> The present text reflects my situation as a German Egyptologist writing fifty years after the catastrophe which Freud saw approaching, knowing the full extent of that genocide which was still unthinkable in Freud's time, and having turned to ancient Egypt thirty years ago with questions that are all too easily forgotten as soon as one enters the academic discipline.
>
> In this book I try to remember and recover the questions, not to answer them. I attempt *a mnemohistory* of religious antagonism insofar as this antagonism is founded on the symbolic confrontation of Israel and Egypt. In this respect, I hope to contribute to a historical analysis of anti-Semitism. (Assmann 1998: 6)

Assmann thinks that the source of the sickness lies in the cultural conflict between Israel and Egypt, between Israel and the foreigner or the "other." The strategy which he utilizes to uncover this source he calls "*mnemohistory*," namely, history of memory or recollection. The source of Jew-hatred lies hidden in the consciousness of the anti-Semite, and it needs to be uncovered as the first step in the healing process. The hidden source of Jew-hatred, Assmann argues, is what he calls the *Mosaic Distinction*. This distinction implies true and false and good and evil in religion. It came into the world with the introduction of monotheism, which is seen in the eyes of the monotheist to be true, in contrast to polytheism, which is considered to be false. This is the source of the religious violence which has continued to our time and which led to the mass murder of Jews at the hands of the Nazis during World War II, according to Assmann. The monotheistic-polytheistic contrast, Assmann claims, was first introduced by Akhenaton in Ancient Egypt, but its final formulation, the *Mosaic Distinction*, was made by Moses on Mount Sinai. He believes that Akhenaton was a kind of deist who based his monotheism on experience. Moses, on the other hand, based monotheism on a revelation following which only the message that was revealed to the chosen people is true. The rest is heathen, false, pagan, heretic, and idolatrous.

> Monotheistic religions structure the relationship between the old and the new in terms not of evolution but of revolution, and reject all older and other religions as "paganism" or "idolatry." Monotheism always appears as a counter-religion. There is no natural or evolutionary way leading from the error of idolatry to the truth of monotheism. The truth can come only from outside, by way of revelation (Ibid: 7).[74]

The Mosaic Distinction is the source of religious violence in general and of Jew-hatred and anti-Semitism in particular, according to Assmann. Uncovering the source of religious violence will achieve healing first by pointing at the source of the problem, and second by tracing Mosaic monotheism (which is based on revelation) back to Akhenaton's monotheism (which is based on experience) and farther to polytheism.

> Making Moses an Egyptian amounts to abolishing this defining opposition. Tracing Moses and his message back to Egypt means leaving the realm of "revealed" or "positive" religion and entering the realm of *lumen naturale*: experience, reason, tradition, and wisdom.
>
> ...The counter-religious antagonism was always constructed in terms of unity and plurality: Moses and the One against Egypt and the Many. The discourse on Moses the Egyptian aimed at dismantling this barrier. It traced the idea of unity back to Egypt (Ibid: 168).

By "reason" and "experience," Assmann means a kind of deism (Ibid: 184, 210). His claim is odd; for the person to whom God has been revealed, there is no difference between revelation and experience: that which is revealed is experienced in a way surpassing any other experience. Furthermore, religion, as a body that incorporates belief in a single or multiple deities, precepts, taboos, and rituals, cannot be founded solely on experience, as Wittgenstein clearly demonstrated in his critique of Frazer (Wittgenstein 1993: 115). Neither monotheism nor polytheism—nor even attributing design to nature—can be founded solely on experience and observation.

Regarding the strategy by which Assmann wants to achieve this goal, *mnemohistory*, he writes:

> The aim of mnemohistorical study is not to ascertain the possible truth of traditions such as the traditions about Moses, but to study these traditions as phenomena of collective memory. (Assmann 1998: 9)

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74 Later on in the text, Assmann will distinguish between "primary religions" and "secondary religions." The "secondary religions" are the monotheistic ones that cause revolution and lead to atrocities and persecutions: "Wherever secondary religions occur, they always seem to have been established by foundational acts such as revolution and revelation. Such positive acts often have their negative complements in rejection and persecution. 'Positive' religions imply negated tradition." (Assmann 1998: 169)

> Mnemohistory analyzes the importance that a present ascribes to the past. The task of historical positivism consists in separating the historical from the mythical elements in memory and distinguishing the elements that retain the past from those which shape the present. In contrast, the task of mnemohistory consists in analyzing the mythical elements in tradition and discovering their hidden agenda (Ibid: 10).

Later on in the text, Assmann takes a stand against historical positivism, which he regards as a bad method for approaching history.[75] Assmann also writes that

> Mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered ... It concentrates exclusively on those aspects of significance and relevance which are the product of memory ... (Ibid: 9).

This strategy is akin to psychoanalysis in that the consciousness of the neurotic person is analyzed in order to release him from his sufferings. The perspective of the person regarding real and remembered events ought to change; he ought to learn how to cope with reality. This method, however, cannot be trouble-free when used in historical research. First of all, it is improbable that historical research is indifferent to events. If it is not indifferent to events and yet uses traumatized consciousness to reconstruct them, the outcome might be a distorted picture of the events. Either way, it seems that Assmann cannot effectively heal anti-Semitism by that means. He can sympathize with a traumatized person and shed light on his traumas. This can lead to more tolerance toward Jews, but it can also release suppressed hatred and aggression. On the other hand, if Assmann wants to reconstruct historical events from the traumas of the anti-Semite, he can even wind up justifying anti-Semitism. In order to avoid that, he would have to explore and reconstruct events from many perspectives, not only from that of the anti-Semite. Likewise, the conviction of a criminal cannot be solely based on the traumas of his victim. The police need more evidence to substantiate the charge.

Assmann begins his inquiry with ancient Egypt because the first monotheistic revolution took place there. Polytheism, according to Assmann, is tolerant by nature, for it allows the gods and idols of one tribe or nation to be *translated* and transformed into the inventory of gods or idols of other nations. Monotheism, on the other hand, discards that principle of translation. Hence, Assmann calls it "counter-religion" because it rejects any other religion or worship as false and bad.

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75 See for example Assmann (1998: 22).

> THE MONOTHEISTIC revolution of Akhenaten was not only the first, but also the most radical and violent eruption of a counter-religion in the history of humankind. The temples were closed, the images of the gods were destroyed, their names were erased, and their cults were discontinued (Ibid: 25).

A vivid memory of the revolution carried out by Akhenaton disappeared from the immediate consciousness and continued to subconsciously exist as a trauma (Ibid: 28). This revolution created what Assmann calls the "religious enemy" (Ibid: 29). Thus it formed the nature of the encounter with other people.

> The Egyptian phantasm of the religious enemy first became associated with the Asiatics in general and then with the Jews in particular. It anticipated many traits of Western anti-Semitism that can now be traced back to an original impulse. This impulse had nothing to do with the Jews, but very much to do with the experience of a counter-religion and of a plague (Ibid: 30).

So, the revolution made by Akhenaton has, as Assmann puts it, "Nothing to do with the Jews." The urgent question, however—why it led to the persecution and annihilation of the Jews and not of other people—Assmann chooses to skip. This explanation is further deficient because it is not clear whether religion prompts the onset of war or else serves as an additional justification for conducting it—a possibility that we encountered in our discussion of Carl Schmitt. If it is true that it can serve as an additional justification, then a polytheistic world-view can serve as justification no less than a monotheistic world-view. This alternative account seems stronger than Assmann's, for we do not invent a concept or a viewpoint and then select cases to range under it. Akhenaton did not invent a counter-religion and then search for the best candidate to ascribe it to. Concepts develop and change along with reality and along with struggles. Later they can be applied directly or indirectly to other occurrences. The alternative to Assmann's account is also supported by the story, which Freud analyzes—and to which Assmann refers as well (Ibid: 36)—of the beginning of Judaism as an aggressive act of a pagan society against lepers who were expelled from Egypt and then united and returned as Yahweh's worshipers. Furthermore, conflicts must imply politics; otherwise they would be meaningless. We have already encountered two examples—one in Carl Schmitt and the other in Erik Peterson—of how religion and politics are intimately interrelated. In Schmitt, politics is a secularized religion, and in Peterson, politics uses religion as a means of justification. We can now add Donoso Cortés, according to whom they are interchangeable as far as repression is concerned.

> ... In the ancient world, when religious repression was lowest, because it did not exist, political repression was at its highest because it became tyrannical. Very well, then, with Jesus Christ, when religious oppression is born, political repression completely disappears. (Cortés 2000: 53)

Assmann must have referred to the political factor in order to render his theory on religious conflicts meaningful, but he ignores it. Assuming that Assmann's theory is true and that religious violence was born with Akhenaton's revolution, how could the trauma of this revolution lead to anti-Semitism? Assmann replies:

> The Amarna experience shaped the Hyksos tradition and created the semantic frame of the "religious enemy" which was afterward filled by the Assyrians, the Persians, the Greeks, and finally the Jews. (Assmann 1998: 41)

It is still not clear why "the Jews" finally became the subject of religious hatred. Why did this abhorrence stop at the Jews and not continue to other people? According to Assmann, this revolution led to the loss of what he calls the "principle of translation."

> In Mesopotamia, the practice of translating divine names goes back to the third millennium B.C. In the second millennium, this practice was extended to many different languages and civilizations of the Near East. The cultures, languages, and customs may have been as different as ever: the religions always had a common ground. Thus they functioned as a means of intercultural translatability. ... The different peoples worshipped different gods, but nobody contested the reality of foreign gods and the legitimacy of foreign forms of worship. The distinction I am speaking of [i.e. the Mosaic] simply did not exist in the world of polytheistic religions (Ibid: 3).

Polytheism is religiously tolerant, according to Assmann, because one religious sect can translate or incorporate different set of gods, religious customs, etc., into its own. Polytheistic society lacked the distinction between true and false, between pagan and monotheist, which is a distinction that lies at the heart of religious tensions and wars.[76]

> The Mosaic Distinction between true and false in religion finds its expression in the story of Exodus. This means that it is symbolized by the constellation of opposition of Israel and Egypt. Books 2–5 of the Pentateuch unfold the distinction in a narrative and in a norma-

76 It is obvious that any language, religious ones included, and any norm must imply the distinction between true and false. Assmann does not refer to the scholars who dealt thoroughly with this distinction in the religious field such as Wittgenstein, D. Z. Phillips, Rush Rees, Malcolm Norman, Peter Winch, and others. For a discussion of that distinction and different strategies for approaching it see Segev (2008).

> tive form. Narratively, the distinction is represented by the story of Israel's Exodus out of Egypt. Egypt thereby came to symbolize the rejected, the religiously wrong, the "pagan." As a consequence, Egypt's most conspicuous practice, the worship of images, came to be regarded as the greatest sin. Normatively, the distinction is expressed in a law code which conforms with the narrative in giving the prohibition of "idolatry" first priority (Ibid: 3–4).

The Mosaic Distinction is obviously seen in the Commandments: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" and "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Ibid: 4). Thus monotheism, according to Assmann, rejects translatability. Monotheism is founded instead on what Assmann calls "normative inversion." Assmann writes:

> … If the Law prohibits activity x there must have existed an idolatrous community practicing x (Ibid: 58).
>
> … The reason of the Law shines forth only when it is seen against the background of the discarded tradition called *idololatria*, idolatry (Ibid: 59).
>
> The principle of normative inversion or the construction of cultural otherness is obviously working retroactively too (Ibid: 67).

It seems, however, that the "normative inversion" cannot serve as a principle applying to all of the Ten Commandments. Assmann refers only to the commandments regarding Yahweh as one single God. There are, however, also the commandments: "*You shall not murder*," "*You shall not steal*," "*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*," and "*Honor your father and your mother*," to which Assmann does not refer. It would be absurd to claim that they also take their meaning and significance from the principle of normative inversion. Should the Decalogue have meaning, the Ten Commandments must be necessarily related to one another. Hence, the prohibitions of killing, stealing, giving false witness, and dishonoring one's parents are inseparable from the commandments regarding the worshiping of one single God from which they receive their absolute validity.

The introduction of monotheism by no means implies abolition of what Assmann calls the principle of translatability. New terms, however, require different translating procedures. In the monotheistic context, we talk about conversion and reversion. As we shall see, the Jews anchored tolerance to their religion by means of the Noachide Laws, and the Christians similarly anchored it to theirs by means of compassion and mercy. The New Testament is conceived by Christians as the realization of the Old Testament's prophecy about the revelation of the Messiah. Jesus is a descendent of David's family. Islam conceives its

two elder siblings as divine revelation. It seems that untranslatability begins rather with blood and race theory—the Germanic new paganism—such as the Nazi race politics that disregards any sort of conversion.[77]

> Unlike the twentieth-century moral philosophers who saw cultural relativism as an argument for tolerance, Nazi theorists drew the opposite conclusion. Assuming that cultural diversity breeds antagonism, they asserted the superiority of their own communitarian values above all others. (Koonz 2003: 1)

As we have seen, according to Assmann, the source of anti-Semitism and Jew-hatred that achieved its apex in the annihilation of European Jewry by the Nazis is the "Mosaic Distinction." The distinction "between true and false in religion finds its expression in the story of Exodus. This means that it is symbolized by the constellation of the opposition of Israel and Egypt" (Assmann 1998: 3–4). Assmann never mentions that along with the Decalogue and the 613 precepts called *Mitzvoth* that were handed down to the Jews, there were also the Noachide Laws that regulate attitudes toward and the status of non-Jews in the state and society, some of them with particular reference to Egypt. For example:

> Leviticus 24, 22: There shall be one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the LORD your God.

> Leviticus 19, 33–34: When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

> Jeremiah 7, 6: Suppose you do not oppress foreigners, orphans, and widows, or kill anyone in this place. And suppose you do not follow other gods that lead you to your own destruction.

> Leviticus 19, 34: You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, *for you were strangers in the land of Egypt*.

Assmann's disregard of the Noachide Laws in this context can mean either crude ignorance or intentional dishonesty for the sake of supporting his theory. No genocide and persecution would be possible if people would abide by these laws. Contrary to Assmann, Finkielkraut paints a completely different picture, in which with the introduction of monotheism racial and ethnic factors were supposed to stop playing any role, for all men became equal before the one single God.

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77 See Neumann (1944: 127). "Anti-Semitism in Germany is an expression of the rejection of Christianity and all it stands for."

> … This God of the Bible declares: "The sentence you pass shall be the same whether it be on native or on stranger; for I am Yahweh your God." The one God reveals to men the unity of humankind. An incredible message, an astounding revelation, which led Emmanuel Lévinas to say, "Monotheism is not an arithmetic of the divine. It is, perhaps, a gift from on high that makes it possible to see man's similarity to man beneath the continuing diversity of individual historical traditions." (Finkielkraut 2000: 7)

According to this picture, the annihilation of the Jews on racial grounds at the hand of the Nazis cannot follow from belief in a universal God, who is one and the same for all men, but rather from belief in the racial superiority of one people over the rest.

In *The Mosaic Distinction, or the Price of Monotheism*, Assmann argues that for Christians and Muslims, the horrors stemming from the Mosaic Distinction must be overcome by missionary conversion. The truth they believe in is a single truth relating to one single God, and they are called upon to distribute and implement it either by missionary conversion and assimilation, or violently, by means of persecution, crusade, inquisition, jihad, etc. Judaism, on the other hand, Assmann claims, is a culture of difference. The difference is a matter of fact, and the non-Jewish peoples (*goyīm*) may believe in whatever gods they please.[78] He writes:

> Judaism is a culture of difference. For Judaism, it is utterly self evident that monotheism draws a border and that the Jews are responsible for policing this border. Assimilation is no less abhorrent to Judaism than discrimination is to Christianity. For Jewish readers, the category of the Mosaic distinction is therefore not a problem, but something that goes without saying. In Judaism, the universalism inherent to monotheism is deferred until a messianic end-time; in the world as we know it, the Jews are the guardians of a truth that concerns everyone, but that has been entrusted to them for the time being as to a kind of spiritual avant-garde. For Christians, of course, this end-time dawned some two thousand years ago, putting an end to the need for such distinctions. That is why Christian theology has blinded itself to the exclusionary force of monotheism. Judaism is a religion of self-exclusion. Through its divine election, Israel isolates itself (or is isolated by god) from the circle of peoples. The law erects a high wall around the chosen people, a cordon sanitaire that prevents any contamination by, or assimilation of, the ideas and customs of the environment. (Assmann 2010: 17 / 2003: 11)

Assmann disregards the important distinction between cultural and religious assimilation. Since Jews lived for two millennia dispersed on the earth among all kinds of people, they must have complied with and obeyed the laws of all sorts of non-Jewish regimes. Jews served in non-Jewish armies and were loyal citizens abiding by the laws of polytheistic, Christian, and Muslim societies. To

78 "Die 'Völker' (*gojîm*) mögen verehren, wen und wie immer sie mögen." (Assmann 2003: 11)

the question of how the Jews brought upon themselves hatred and finally the annihilation of mostly assimilated, converted, and secular Jews at the hand of the Nazis, Assmann replies:

> The other peoples are envious of the chosen people who received the Torah on Sinai. Today, this argument meets with the objection that it amounts to holding the victims responsible for their fate. But what else is martyrdom, if not the responsibility of victims for their fate? To be sure, the Jews murdered by the Nazis were not asked whether they professed faith in Judaism. But this should not blind us to the nature of faith, nor prevent us from seeing how inseparably this category is bound up with the Mosaic distinction. (Assmann 2010: 21 / 2003: 15)

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Index of names

Index of subjects