

*Bearing Witness  
to the Liquidation of Western Dasein:  
Herbert Marcuse and the Holocaust, 1941–1948*<sup>1</sup>

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The historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time. And, indeed, this acceding “to legibility” constitutes a specific critical point in the movement at their interior. Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each “now” is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time.

— Walter Benjamin<sup>2</sup>

I

How did people react to the murder of the European Jews while it occurred? Was someone able to grasp the full dimension of the German *Vernichtungspolitik*?<sup>3</sup> In what ways did thinkers try to come to terms

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1. My most grateful thanks are owed to Anson Rabinbach, Christoph Berger Waldenegg, Detlev Claussen, Federico Finchelstein and Dominick LaCapra.

2. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999) 462–63.

3. Writnig about the murder of the European Jews raises the problem of using an adequate term. Recent Holocaust research in Germany prefers the terms *Politik der Vernichtung*, as is the title of Peter Longerich’s study (Munich: Piper, 1998), or *Vernichtungspolitik*, see *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik 1939–1945: Neue Forschungen und Kontroversen*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1998), whereas Dominick LaCapra argues for a synonymous and simultaneous, non-fixated use of different terms such as Holocaust, Shoah, and Auschwitz – see his *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994) 45 n. 4.

with the worst tragedy of human history? These are the questions to be addressed in the following pages. Nevertheless, these questions need to be contextualized and informed by an investigation into other questions.<sup>4</sup>

This article could be composed in many different ways. There is the history of the Frankfurt School – the *Institut für Sozialforschung* – in the United States.<sup>5</sup> There is the broader context of the emigration of German intellectuals to the United States.<sup>6</sup> And there is the different, but partially interwoven history of U.S. policy regarding Germany in World War II. The story I will tell draws from all three fields, though it is a very special story, singling out in the end one man. I shall proceed by encircling my object of study, digging through several textual layers, and finally presenting traces of the layer I am interested in.

Among the many American agencies involved in the planning of US German policy was the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), an intelligence agency (a precursor of the CIA) not having much political importance. Its main contributions to the war effort consisted, first, in the shadow war against the wartime enemies – including espionage, sabotage etc. – and, second, in analytical and theoretical work done by American and émigré

4. On the advantages as well as the disadvantages of the historian's paradigm of contextualization see LaCapra, *History and Reading: Tocqueville, Foucault, French Studies* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2000) 21-72 and *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP) 1-85, especially 1-7 and 82-83.

5. Frankfurt School and Critical Theory are used synonymously to signify the group of intellectuals associated with the *Institut für Sozialforschung*. It was Horkheimer himself who preferred the notion of Critical Theory; cf. his "Traditionelle und kritische Theorie," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 6 (1937): 245-94. Besides being the contemporary, self-chosen name of the protagonists, Critical Theory offers the advantage that it counters the idea of a close connection between the Institute and the city of Frankfurt from which the school was exiled – cf. Helmut Dubiel, *Kritische Theorie der Gesellschaft: Eine einführende Rekonstruktion von den Anfängen im Horkheimer-Kreis bis Habermas* (Weinheim: Juventa, 1992) 14, 17-19. Nevertheless, in this essay the terms Frankfurt School and *Institut für Sozialforschung* or Institute of Social Research are alternately used because of the wider range of Critical Theory in the United States and because of the familiarity with Frankfurt School. For a comprehensive history of the Frankfurt School, cf. the two standard accounts by Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973) and Rolf Wiggershaus, *Die Frankfurter Schule: Geschichte. Theoretische Entwicklung. Bedeutung* (Munich: Hanser, 1986). Cf. also Dubiel, *Kritische Theorie* 11-84; Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), especially "The Frankfurt School in Exile" 28-61; Dubiel, *Wissenschaftsorganisation und politische Erfahrung: Studien zur frühen Kritischen Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978).

6. As it is impossible to give an overview of the exploding research on emigration, cf. the *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945*, Claus-Dieter Krohn et al., eds. (Darmstadt: Primus, 1998).

intellectuals in Washington which aimed at informing the decision makers – a hope that turned out to be a dream in most cases.<sup>7</sup>

Within the OSS existed the famous Research and Analysis Branch (R&A). Its history is documented as intellectual history by Barry Katz and as political history by Petra Marquardt-Bigman.<sup>8</sup> Part of the “most brilliant team of analysts in the history of intelligence”<sup>9</sup> were several members of the Frankfurt School: Otto Kirchheimer, Franz Neumann and Herbert Marcuse. They served most of the war in the Central European Section (CES) of R&A under the direction of Neumann.<sup>10</sup>

History is an endless series of omissions. This essay cannot deal with all the aforementioned people and institutions. It deals with some of the writings of Herbert Marcuse between 1941 and the end (or some years after the end) of World War II. I selected texts by Marcuse on the following criteria: they implicitly or explicitly are concerned with National Socialist ideology in general and the murder of the European Jews, Auschwitz, in particular. These are the writings of a contemporary, a witness, a Jew, a German (left-wing) intellectual who served as an American intelligence

7. On the history of the OSS's war against Germany on all levels, cf. Christof Mauch, *Schattenkrieg gegen Hitler: Das Dritte Reich im Visier der amerikanischen Geheimdienste, 1941–1945* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1999).

8. Barry Katz, *Foreign Intelligence: Research and Analysis in the Office of Strategic Services, 1942–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989); its chapter on the Frankfurt School was earlier published as: “The Criticism of Arms: The Frankfurt School Goes to War,” *Journal of Modern History* 59 (1987): 439–78; and Petra Marquardt-Bigman, *Amerikanische Geheimdienstanalysen über Deutschland 1942–1949* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), focused on the political relevance and influence of R&A, cf. 12. An older account, concentrated on the edition of selected sources, is *Zur Archäologie der Demokratie in Deutschland: Analysen politischer Emigranten im amerikanischen Geheimdienst*, ed. Alfons Söllner, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1982), including Söllner's introductory essay “Archäologie der deutschen Demokratie: Eine Forschungshypothese zur theoretischen Praxis der Kritischen Theorie im amerikanischen Geheimdienst.” The question if the German émigrés were able to influence U.S. foreign policy is worthy a short excursus: As Marquardt-Bigman's close documentary reading reveals, the War Department and the State Department made intensive use of information provided by R&A, but there is no unquestionable link between the decisions of high ranking policy makers (who never read the R&A files, only summaries) and the suggestions of R&A. The function of R&A was not a contribution to policy, but a “contribution the political discussion on Germany that was led in Washington,” Marquardt-Bigman 166–68 and 267–72.

9. An assessment by William S. Stephenson, quoted by Marquardt-Bigman 7.

10. Besides Katz' book, cf. for Neumann's role Söllner, “Franz L. Neumann – Skizzen zu einer intellektuellen und politischen Biographie,” in Franz Neumann, *Wirtschaft, Staat, Demokratie: Aufsätze 1930–1954*, ed. Alfons Söllner (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978) 7–56 and *Reform und Resignation: Gespräche über Franz L. Neumann*, ed. Rainer Erd (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985).

officer.<sup>11</sup> Among Marcuse's many subject positions these are the ones that seem most important to me, whereas Marcuse the (Marxist-Heideggerian-Freudian) philosopher will not play a major role in my study, nor will I try to contextualize the wartime writings within his philosophical development.<sup>12</sup> Two more omissions: I do not pretend to present Marcuse within the discussions on the nature of fascism and National Socialism at the Institute of Social Research,<sup>13</sup> nor do I recount the biography of Marcuse as a symptomatic history of the experience of emigration, re-orientation, and integration.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, sometimes I may have to touch on these issues.

Some of Marcuse's texts were drafted at the Institute of Social Research in New York where many of the researchers and resources of the *Institut für Sozialforschung* found refuge in 1934, changing its original German name into an American one. These texts were published in the Institute's journal, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (*ZfS*) and *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* (*SPSS*) for the last issues in 1940 and 1941. Other texts were originally written for R&A, where Marcuse held a job beginning in 1943, or for the Office of War Information (OWI), Marcuse's first federal employer from 1942 to 1943. These texts were sometimes the product of anonymous co-operation and are not always

11. Besides some older, official papers quoted and translated in *Zur Archäologie der Demokratie*, the basis of my readings are the recently edited collected wartime writings on "fascism": Herbert Marcuse, *Technology, War and Fascism: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 1, ed. Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 1998). See Kellner's introductory essay "Technology, War and Fascism: Marcuse in the 1940s" 1-38. A somewhat different German selection and translation is available as *Feindanalysen: Über die Deutschen*, ed. Peter-Erwin Jansen (Lüneburg: zu Klampen, 1998).

12. On Marcuse the philosopher see the short bibliography by Kellner in Marcuse, *Technology*, xiii-xiv n. 1.

13. The discussion is partially documented in Max Horkheimer et al., *Wirtschaft, Recht und Staat im Nationalsozialismus: Analysen des Instituts für Sozialforschung, 1939-1942*, ed. Helmut Dubiel and Alfons Söllner (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1981); cf. also Neumann's own famous and influential major contribution, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944* (New York: Oxford UP, 1944). A fundamental weakness of Neumann's meticulous study has to be recalled: its neglect of the "irrational" traits of National Socialism. Ideology was reduced to the function of an instrument of domination (both by Neumann and later, following Neumann, by R&A - cf. Marquardt-Bigman 77-79, 94, 165-166), whereas Marcuse developed, as we will see, some deeper insights into the nature of ideology. On the discussion cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 143-72; Dubiel and Söllner, "Die Nationalsozialismusforschung des Instituts für Sozialforschung - ihre wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Stellung und ihre gegenwärtige Bedeutung," in Horkheimer et al., *Wirtschaft* 7-31; Wiggershaus 314-27 and Dubiel, *Kritische Theorie* 63-84.

14. The only biography of Marcuse using a historical approach is Katz, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Verso and NLB, 1982).

signed.<sup>15</sup> I will follow the researchers who discovered the authors of the main drafts of the discussed documents, the originals of which can be found in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.<sup>16</sup> Finally I will discuss some of Marcuse's letters to Max Horkheimer and Martin Heidegger. Unfortunately most of Marcuse's letters of the war period are lost.<sup>17</sup>

Marcuse's contribution to the war effort as a historian of philosophy was that of a *Ideologiekritiker*, a critic of ideology, whereas Neumann focused on socio-economic matters.<sup>18</sup> Marcuse's perspective included the study of social implications of National Socialist ideology. A very difficult question was that of the role of anti-Semitism in Germany. Can we observe a development or change in his thinking on these questions in the war years, perhaps due to the climate of opinion he worked in? Or does one have to take into consideration that no man is a total and monolithic being, but a being full of tensions if not contradictions?<sup>19</sup>

15. The reason for Söllner's enthusiastic approach is the fact that he identifies the OSS as archives of power with the Foucauldian "dispositives of power" and the researchers' papers with the monuments of an anonymous discursive practice. In my judgement, Söllner does not successfully carry out his project; cf. Söllner, "Archäologie" 17–22 and Marquardt-Bigman 10. He also misses some important points, e.g., the experience of the actors. His view of the early Frankfurt School positions is static, suggesting a monolithic form of Marxism that never existed there.

16. Cf. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 209 n. 19 and the listing of all relevant R&A papers by Marquardt-Bigman 287–98. Here, the quotations of these papers are used with their archival number, always beginning with R&A.

17. Note by Kellner in Marcuse, *Technology* 230.

18. Jürgen Habermas et al., *Gespräche mit Herbert Marcuse* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1978) 17.

19. Cf. Ulrich Raulff, "Inter lineas oder Geschriebene Leben," *Der unsichtbare Augenblick: Zeitkonzepte in der Geschichte* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999) 118–42 – as well as Derrida's *il n'y a pas de hors texte* in *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1967) 227; cf. La Capra's comment on Derrida in his *History and Reading* 43. Marcuse disapproved of poststructuralist theory in spite of some similarities between the French and the Frankfurt School thinkers – cf. Kellner in Marcuse, *Technology* xiv n. 2; Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* xi–xxiv; Axel Honneth, *Kritik der Macht: Reflexionsstufen einer kritischen Gesellschaftstheorie* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1989) 196–224; Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974) 3–116. See also Theodor W. Adorno, "Die revidierte Psychoanalyse," *Soziologische Schriften I, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1997) 25: for an English translation of an earlier version, see Jay, "The Frankfurt School in Exile" 36. For a description of these phenomena see Georg Christoph Berger Waldenegg, "Krieg und Expansion bei Machiavelli: Überlegungen zu einem vernachlässigten Kapitel seiner 'politischen Theorie'," *Historische Zeitschrift* 271 (2000): 55: "Rather, there are different layers of his thinking that are not always compatible, or that he was not able to harmonize completely (if at all he always was aware of the discrepancies)." See Louis Althusser's different formulation of the same problem in his *Machiavelli and Us* (London: Verso, 1999) 15–16.

## II

Marcuse's theoretical understanding of National Socialist Germany was rooted in his concept of technological rationality that was honed in the debates at the Institute of Social Research.<sup>20</sup> In 1941 Marcuse explained his own positions in detail in an article titled "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology."<sup>21</sup> Some of his remarks seem relevant to our questions.

According to Marcuse, rationality in modern industrialized societies had changed its function from a critical to a merely technological one. This opened the way for its misuse:

National Socialism is a striking example of the ways in which a highly rationalized and mechanized economy with the utmost efficiency in production can also operate in the interest of totalitarian oppression and continued scarcity. The Third Reich is indeed a form of "technocracy": the technical considerations of imperialistic efficiency and rationality supersede the traditional standards of profitability and general welfare. In National Socialist Germany, the reign of terror is sustained not only by brute force which is foreign to technology but also by the ingenious manipulation of the power inherent in technology: the intensification of labor, propaganda, the training of youths and workers, the organization of the governmental, industrial and party bureaucracy – all of which constitute the daily implements of terror – follow the lines of greatest technological efficiency. This terroristic technocracy cannot be attributed to the exceptional requirements of "war economy"; war economy is rather the normal state of the National Socialist ordering of the social and economic process, and technology is one of the chief stimuli of this ordering.<sup>22</sup>

Who is behind this gigantic misuse of rationality as an instrument of totalitarian domination? Marcuse still sounds like Neumann when he

20. See above, n. 12.

21. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9 (1941): 414–39. Cf. Kellner in Marcuse, *Technology* 39–65. On the article from a philosophical point of view, see Vincent Geoghegan, *Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse* (London: Pluto, 1981) 64–67; Morton Schoolman, *The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse* (New York: Free P, 1980) 134–50; Kellner, "Technology" 4–7; on Marcuse's view of technological rationality over a longer period of time, see Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984) 197–275.

22. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications" 41–42.

denounces big industry.<sup>23</sup> But he concentrates more on the social implications; on the co-operation of the population with the regime and the people's "highly rational compliance" motivated by their modern matter-of-factness.<sup>24</sup> This is the reason why the terroristic dictatorship can in general abstain from terror vis-à-vis the German population: the conformism of technological rationality as well as the sweet seductions of social welfare and "mass culture" are the more effective means of domination.<sup>25</sup>

Despite his Neumannian functionalism, Marcuse suspected that man cannot be fully rationalized – an argument he developed without referring to Freud whom he came to read again and intensely only after the end of World War II.<sup>26</sup> "As a member of a crowd," he writes, "man has become the standardized subject of brute self-preservation. In the crowd, the restraint placed by society upon the competitive pursuit of self-interest tends to become ineffective and the aggressive impulses are easily released." Nevertheless these impulses are again thought situational, "developed under the exigencies of scarcity and frustration."<sup>27</sup> They can be used as an instrument and "readily directed against the weaker competitors and conspicuous 'outsiders' (Jews, foreigners, national minorities)."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, a difficulty of Marcuse's article is that he talks about technological rationality as an objective force as well as an instrument of domination. It is a Janus-faced feature of a Janus-faced modernity, a means of democratization as well as of dictatorship, depending on the will behind it. What could be a solution? Marcuse takes up an unequivocal stance: "Under the terror that now threatens the world the ideal constricts itself to one single and at the same time common issue. Faced with Fascist barbarism, everyone knows what freedom means, and everyone is aware

23. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications" 42–45.

24. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications" 46 and passim.

25. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications" 54 and passim. One may compare these views to Gramsci's conception of hegemony.

26. Katz, *Herbert Marcuse* 145–61.

27. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications" 53. On the crowd, Marcuse writes: "True, the crowd 'unites,' but it unites the atomic subjects of self-preservation who are detached from everything that transcends their selfish interests and impulses. The crowd is thus the antithesis of the 'community,' and the perverted realization of individuality." A possible conclusion from this reasoning is – following Neumann – that the National Socialist regime was also in Marcuse's eyes not a state but "a non-state, a chaos, a rule of lawlessness and anarchy" (Neumann, *Behemoth* vii).

28. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications" 54.

of the irrationality in the prevailing rationality."<sup>29</sup> For the sake of the fight against National Socialism Marcuse almost adopts a New Deal position, because western democracy, as dangerously rationalized as it is, protects freedom. A second problem is posed by the last quotation: how is the dialectics of rationality and irrationality to be imagined? Marcuse's further writings advance toward a better understanding.

### III

At the end of 1941 Marcuse delivered a lecture at Columbia University. In June 1942 he finished a paper that worked out in detail its theme, "State and Individual under National Socialism."<sup>30</sup> In general it follows the lines of *Behemoth* when Marcuse writes: "National Socialism tends toward direct and immediate self-government by the prevailing social groups over the rest of the population." Simultaneously we find opposing tendencies in the paper, characterizing National Socialism as "a new master and new methods of government" that old state bureaucracy and big industry have to recognize.<sup>31</sup>

Marcuse's view of the National Socialist polycracy<sup>32</sup> sees the state as an "executive organ of the imperialist economic interests,"<sup>33</sup> but at the

29. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications" 62. These words always have to substantiate Marcuse's decision to join the OSS – see Kellner, "Technology" 4; Marquardt-Bigman, *Geheimdienstanalysen* 69; Söllner, "The philosopher not as King: Herbert Marcuse's politische Theorie in den vierziger und fünfziger Jahren," *Exilforschung* 6 (1988):108. Nevertheless, Marcuse's article ends with another, better but at the moment impossible solution, it ends "with the familiar idealistic anarchism of Marcuse's utopia" (Wiggershaus 334–35), pleading for a use of technics that ends all scarcity and that serves human emancipation.

30. Marcuse, "State and Individual under National Socialism," in Marcuse, *Technology* 69–88; "Supplement" 89–92. A preliminary draft of the lecture is available in a German translation in *Feindanalysen* 91–112.

31. Marcuse, "State and Individual" 70.

32. Power, Marcuse writes, does not belong to single persons. Rather the system is a "government of hypostatized economic, social and political forces" (78). The National Socialist state thus "emerges as the threefold sovereignty of industry, party and army which have divided up among themselves the former monopoly of coercive power" (76). That is a description of what contemporary research calls polycracy, including the permanent and radicalizing internal tensions and rivalries of the system. As *Feindanalysen* (92) seems to indicate, Marcuse may have thought about a collapse of the system because of its internal tensions. Cf. his letter (28 Jul. 1943) in Marcuse, *Technology* 245: "I do not believe a minute that the fascist stabilization will succeed [...] After more than twenty years of terror, the [Italian] fascist party dissolves itself like a *Kegelklub*." An introduction into the issue of National Socialist polycracy is provided by Ian Kershaw: Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Arnold, 2000) 47–68.



same time knows about the subordinate role of industry: "The economic relations must therefore be transformed into political relations, economic expansion and domination must not only be supplemented, but superseded by political expansion and domination."<sup>34</sup> The same tension is true for the National socialist terror – "it is not only that of the concentration camps, prisons and pogroms; it is not only the terror of lawlessness, but also the less conspicuous though no less efficient legalized terror of bureaucratization." Behind these tensions we may already discover the aforementioned structural interplay of rationality and irrationality.

In light of his understanding of the regime, Marcuse only attributed a moderate role to Hitler in this interplay of rivalries. The "harmony" between the competing systemic forces

is symbolized in *the Leader*. Ideologically, he is [...] the seat of supreme sovereignty. In reality, however, he is the agency through which the diverging interests of the three ruling hierarchies are coordinated and asserted as national interests [...] he is the locus of final compromise [...] [h]is decisions might be autonomous, particularly in minor matters, but he is still not free.<sup>35</sup>

Resuming the theme of technological rationality, Marcuse also summarizes what might be called the National Socialist politics of repressive desublimation. By the abolition of moral and social taboos, politics invades the private sphere. Even the liberation of sexuality, "the political utilization of sex" beginning in youth camps, serves the end of National Socialist *Bevölkerungspolitik*. It even serves the needs of racial politics: "the National Socialist abolition of taboos is conditioned upon the simultaneous creation of new objects of humiliation and enslavement"<sup>36</sup> –

33. Marcuse, "State and Individual" 72.

34. Marcuse, "State and Individual" 74 – the sense behind it seems close to the "Teilidentität der Ziele" of the dominant groups that Manfred Messerschmidt formulated in *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat: Zeit der Indoktrination* (Hamburg: Schenck, 1969) 1.

35. Marcuse, "State and Individual" 76. On the debate about the autonomy of Hitler, see Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship* 69–92 and his two volume biography *Hitler* (New York: Norton, 1999 and 2000).

36. Marcuse, "State and Individual" 83–92, quotations 86. On *kitsch* and pornographic art see Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984): on sexual politics Gabriele Czarnowski, *Das kontrollierte Paar: Ehe- und Sexualpolitik im Nationalsozialismus* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien-Verlag, 1991) and Ralph M. Leck, "Conservative Empowerment and the Gender of Nazism: Paradigms of Power and Complicity in German Women's History," *Journal of Women's History* 12.2 (2000): 147–69.

"Jews, foreigners, feeble-bodied and feeble-minded." Sexual intercourse as a force in the perpetuation of the system: no better description of Marcuse's later term repressive desublimation could be found. The problem still unsolved is: are permissiveness and ideology only instruments of domination – manipulation and repression? Or do they also have an intrinsic value?

#### IV

In June 1942 Marcuse wrote his most important contribution to a contemporary understanding of National Socialism. It was intended to introduce him to the Office of War Information (OWI). The title of the densely composed paper is "The New German Mentality."<sup>37</sup> The text is oriented towards showing the necessity of psychological warfare. Our interest, however, is restricted to Marcuse's comments on the National Socialist system and its politics of destruction. The *leitmotiv* of the essay is that the new German mentality differs from Western civilization as well as from traditional German culture. It is a split mentality. Its two sides are the pragmatic layer – "matter-of-factness, the philosophy of efficiency and success, of mechanization and rationalization" – and the mythological layer – "paganism, racism, social naturalism."<sup>38</sup>

Both sides belong together. The most important feature may be the rational matter-of-factness that Marcuse calls the "very center of National Socialist mentality."<sup>39</sup> This does not mean, however, that National Socialism is a solely rational system. Its core – and the core of its matter-of-factness – consists in what Marcuse calls the "rationalization of the irrational."<sup>40</sup> *Avant la lettre* Marcuse discovered the

37. In Marcuse, *Technology* 141–73, the three supplements (174–90) were already written at the OWI. See also Katz, *Herbert Marcuse* 112–13 and Kellner, "Technology" 17–19.

38. Marcuse, "The New German Mentality" 141. Marcuse explains in detail the two sides, drawing from material developed before in the papers discussed above.

39. Marcuse, "New German Mentality" 143. Marcuse seems to be close to a contemporary discussion concerning the dialectics of ideology and *Sachlichkeit* as the main characteristics of the younger National Socialist elite. This position, opposed to an interpretation that only emphasizes the rational planning of the National Socialist crimes, is most elaborately developed by Ulrich Herbert, "'Generation der Sachlichkeit': Die völkische Studentenebewegung der frühen zwanziger Jahre in Deutschland," *Zivilisation und Barbarei: Die widersprüchlichen Potentiale der Moderne. Ditlev Peukert zum Gedenken*, ed. Frank Bajohr et al. (Hamburg: Christians, 1991) 115–44 and Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996).

40. Marcuse, "New German Mentality" 162.

*Binnenrationalität*, the internal logic, conceptualized by Ulrich Herbert.<sup>41</sup> There is a continuum linking the irrational, illogical language of National Socialist ideology with the rational language of administration and technology. They are expressions of the one and the same mentality. Its internal logic – its *Binnenrationalität* – is revealed by the fact that it speaks multiple languages, depending on contexts. These different languages are held together by National Socialist ideology in which every signifier takes up “a new singular content, determined exclusively by their National Socialist utilization.”<sup>42</sup>

Marcuse bases his observations on linguistic research. The analysis and critique of ideology he derives from these results leads him to a genuinely dialectical understanding of National Socialist ideology that contradicts the Neumannian or Marxist instrumental approach that simultaneously runs through Marcuse’s essay. Every technical language, he writes,

presupposes a “supra-technical” language community from which it draws its force and appeal, otherwise it could not serve as an all-embracing medium of intersubjective understanding. This language community is chiefly one of sentiments, emotions, subjective desires and impulses. The National Socialist language possesses its supra-technical language community in the mythological layer of the German mentality, and particularly in that complex of ideas, impulses and instincts which constitutes the reservoir for the German protest against Christian civilization. But this complex is mobilized for the pragmatic goals of National Socialism and placed in the service of the technical rationality which guides the efforts to attain these goals. In transforming the mythological and metaphysical elements of the German mentality into instruments of totalitarian control and conquest, National socialism destroys their mythological and metaphysical content. Their value becomes an exclusively operational one: they are made parts of the technique of domination. The apparently irrational philosophy of National Socialism actually represents the end of “German metaphysics,” its liquidation by the totalitarian technical rationality.<sup>43</sup>

This passage must be read very carefully – brushed against the grain.<sup>44</sup>

41. Herbert, *Best* 12.

42. Marcuse, “New German Mentality” 149.

43. Marcuse, “New German Mentality” 149–50.

44. This formulation is of course borrowed from Walter Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991) 697.

*Prima facie* it seems that Marcuse views National Socialism as a fully rationalized dictatorship, its ideology being a mere instrument of domination. But this interpretation misses the foundation of Marcuse's theory. The decisive word is "presupposes." National Socialism could never use and misuse technological rationality if there were not the "'supra-technical' language community." Ideology as a "technique of domination" presupposes an ideology of intrinsic value. Germanic kitsch, the cult of violence and death, naturalism and anti-Semitism are at the same time an instrument of domination and the presupposition of domination: a genuinely dialectical relationship. The myth is real, not just tactics or manipulation, but it is also simultaneously functional in an anthropological sense: on the one hand everyone knows that it is a myth, on the other hand this myth is deeply anchored in everyone, taken for granted, because man needs myth and wants to be integrated in a community. These are the anthropological, not to say ontological foundations of Marcuse's analysis of National Socialist ideology.<sup>45</sup> Even if one argues that Marcuse in general refers to an operationalist or functionalist explanatory framework, he nonetheless noticed ideological elements not subordinated to it.

It is this process of rationalization of the irrational that made possible a rationally planned *Vernichtungskrieg* based on the general social irrationality. It marked the culmination of the "Vergesellschaftung der Gewalt,"<sup>46</sup> the embodiment of violence in all social and psychological levels. A conclusion to be drawn from this diagnosis is that the traditional foundations of society were rotten and destroyed, replaced by a violent National Socialist irrationality using technological rationality to attain its criminal goals. Marcuse, reading reports of German soldiers at the eastern front, even sounds like contemporary researchers when he describes the brutalization of warfare and the habituation to killing with the soldiers simultaneously being part of a machine and

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45. This foundation cannot hide Marcuse's Heideggerian background. On the important lifelong personal relationship between Heidegger and Marcuse see Katz, *Herbert Marcuse* 58–86 and 129–30 as well as Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001).

46. Michael Geyer, "Der zur Organisation erhobene Burgfriede," *Militär und Militarismus in der Weimarer Republik: Beiträge eines internationalen Symposiums an der Hochschule der Bundeswehr Hamburg am 5. und 6. Mai 1977*, ed. Klaus-Jürgen Müller and Eckardt Opitz (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1978) 15–100, esp. 27.

working with initiative.<sup>47</sup>

Ultimately, the irrational serves the rationalization of the apparatus of power, but it remains of intrinsic value and force. The dialectics of the irrational and the rational aptly describes the deep structure of the National Socialist system: "The rationalization of the irrational (in which the latter preserves its force but lends it to the process of rationalization), this constant interplay between mythology and technology, 'nature' and mechanization, metaphysics and matter-of-factness, 'soul' and efficiency is the very center of the National

47. Marcuse, "New German Mentality" 161, 182. "All the acts of utmost endurance and reliability, savage defiance and inhuman cruelty are performed with a likewise inhuman soberness, efficiency and smartness [here the footnote quotes from an article in the *New York Times*, giving quotations from a German soldier's diary: 'I'm surprised it didn't affect me more to see a woman hanged. It even entertained me. Spent birthday digging up bodies and smashing their faces. My sweetheart will say 'yes' when she hears how I hanged a Russian today'; the origin of this diary remains unclear – TBM]. [...] This German cause is like that of a giant machine or apparatus which constantly occupies the mind and feelings of its attendants, controls and dictates their actions and leaves them not the slightest refuge. In National Socialist Germany, all men are the mere appendices of the instruments of production, destruction and communication, and although these human appendices would work with a high degree of initiative, spontaneity and even 'personality,' their individual performances are entirely adjusted to the operation of the machine." "The German army is in its entire structure and philosophy tied up with the interests and requirements of imperialist expansion. The army and the party are two heads of the same monster. [...] In the occupied territories, the German army has endorsed, instigated and exercised every kind of atrocity, torture, oppression and exploitation." Cf. especially the books by Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941–1945: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) and Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Aaron Asher/Harper Collins, 1992). The close reading of military letters by Klaus Latzel, *Deutsche Soldaten – nationalsozialistischer Krieg? Kriegserlebnis – Kriegserfahrung, 1939–1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1998) gives evidence supporting Michael Geyer's notion ("Vergesellschaftung der Gewalt"), see, e.g., Geyer, "Organisation," and "Das Stigma der Gewalt und das Problem der nationalen Identität in Deutschland," *Von der Aufgabe der Freiheit: Politische Verantwortung und bürgerliche Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Hans Mommsen zum 5. November 1995*, ed. Christian Jansen et al. (Berlin: Akademie, 1995) 673–98. Geyer emphasizes both the industrialization of warfare and the subjective side of total mobilization as reasons for the rising willingness to engage in violence. In "Stigma der Gewalt," 679–80 he talks about the "heroic death cult of National Socialism," resulting in the "attraction of the strengthening of one's own body as well as of the collective *Volkskörper*." That is the reason behind the exorbitant degree of self-mobilization and "readiness to war" (689–90); as Geyer states, the irrational will of destruction "was not manipulated 'ideology', but a way of military conduct" – war had become a drug, a "Droge zur Selbstbestätigung." This short excursus shows that this position is very close to Marcuse's interpretation – the interplay of rationality and irrationality, of domination and self-mobilization, of myth and belief.

Socialist mentality.”<sup>48</sup> This sentence calls for further elucidation, but it is one of the best condensed interpretations of National Socialist mentality and ideology dating as early as 1942. “The New German Mentality” is the necessary supplement to Neumann’s *Behemoth*.

After having examined Marcuse’s conception of National Socialist ideology (including its anti-Semitism), we still must work through the passages that deal explicitly with the violence against Jews and other victims of National Socialist politics. Marcuse’s understanding of a “German character,” a specific pattern of thinking and feeling developed by history,<sup>49</sup> concludes that National Socialism appeals to the psychic deep-structure of the Germans in order to mobilize a mass movement motivated by protest against Christian civilization. As there exist no real common interests between the divergent social groups – the atomized masses and the system – pressure arises. “Motivated by the desire to relieve the pressure of injustice and frustration, it is quickly diverted against other foes. For example, National Socialism incited the masses to fight against the Jews and the ‘capitalist plutocrats,’ but the extermination of the Jews and the decline of ‘finance capital’ served to strengthen the hold of those industrial groups which were already predominant in German society.”<sup>50</sup>

That is still the functionalist, Marxist interpretation in line with Neumann’s spearhead theory.<sup>51</sup> Did Marcuse advance to a more complex understanding of the persecution and murder of the Jews? A last quotation indicates that he started to grasp that the dimension of the crimes was unimaginable, impossible to represent. Art, used as means of psychological warfare, has to fulfill the criteria of “estrangement”:

To fulfill this function, the work of art must be alien to the reality which it indicts, alien to such an extent that it cannot be reconciled with the reality, but at the same time, it must appeal to those who suffer from the reality and speak their undistorted language. Today,

48. “New German Mentality” 162. There are more important observations by Marcuse that have to be skipped. See especially 150–57, 165.

49. “New German Mentality” 152–53.

50. “New German Mentality” 155–56.

51. Neumann, *Behemoth* 550–52: Anti-Semitism, he says, is “the spearhead of terror. [...] in this Anti-Semitic ideology and practice the extermination of the Jews is only the means to the attainment of the ultimate objective, namely the destruction of free institutions, beliefs, and groups. This may be called the spearhead theory of Anti-Semitism” – which gives anti-Semitism a subordinate, instrumental role.

the "political" work of art must illuminate at one stroke the absolute incompatibility of the prevailing reality with the hopes and potentialities of men. [...] The power of art to serve as an anti-Fascist weapon depends on the strength with which it speaks the truth, unconditionally and without compromise. This simple fact implies a fundamental change in the form structure of art. Art can no longer "depict" reality, for the latter has passed beyond the reaches of adequate "aesthetic" representation. The terror as well as the sufferings of those who resist it is greater than the force of artistic imagination. [...] The whole truth on this world can be told only in a language not loaded with the reconciliatory hopes and promises of culture, or, in a language which contains these hopes and promises in precisely that satanic form in which National Socialism has realized them.<sup>52</sup>

## V

Marcuse joined R&A of OSS in March 1943 after having worked for the OWI since December 1942. He earned a reputation as "the leading analyst on Germany" of its Central European Section (CES).<sup>53</sup> Among others, Marcuse and Neumann created at R&A a climate of interdisciplinary co-operation,<sup>54</sup> a situation similar to the conditions at the Institute of Social Research. This collective process of thinking allowed enough

52. Marcuse, "New German Mentality" 168–69.

53. On Marcuse's way from the Institute to the Agencies, on his motives and Horkheimer's ambivalent role, see Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 33; Katz, *Herbert Marcuse* 106–20; Kellner, "Technology" 16–20; Marquardt-Bigman 68–70; Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 168–70; Wiggershaus 327–38. Marcuse himself offered the following reasons in his letters to Horkheimer of 11 and 15 Nov. 1942 (*Technology* 234–37): Although he would have preferred to work with Horkheimer on a project that later turned out to be the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (co-authored by Marcuse's rival Adorno), and although he several times asked his "adored Horkheimer" to keep him in the Institute ("It seems to me that you somewhat underrate my desire to continue the theoretical work we have been doing. In spite of my opposition to some of your conceptions, I have never and nowhere concealed my conviction that I know of no intellectual efforts today which are closer to the truth, and of no other place where one is still allowed and encouraged to think," Marcuse wrote to Horkheimer), he finally accepted the OWI's offer because of the contribution to the war effort possible there and because of the acceptable salary (\$4,600 per year, whereas at the Institute he at the end received almost nothing). He wrote: "I am too much of a materialist." Indeed he had a family that he needed to support – but he always tried to explain his decision in a way that favored the Institute: "The work I would have to do in Washington seems to be respectable and perhaps even interesting, but I consider it merely as a contribution to the War Effort and as an investment for the future. It might also be helpful for the Institute."

54. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 20, 35–36; Söllner, "Archäologie" 27–28; Marquardt-Bigman 72; 186–88 reconstructs one occasion of filtering or revision, the revision of R&A 1549, a paper on the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD), originally written by Marcuse.

space for individual nuances. Material was provided from many sources, including statistics, newspapers, radio broadcasts, prisoners-of-war interrogations – all of them not “secret” sources.<sup>55</sup> When dealing with Germany, the members of R&A regularly referred to Neumann’s *Behemoth*, a work that influenced the wording of many R&A papers. Felix Gilbert called *Behemoth* “a kind of bible” of CES. Neumann’s Marxist structural analysis was amenable to the protagonists of the New Deal.<sup>56</sup>

One should remember that the papers Marcuse wrote at the OSS cannot help being theoretically less impressive and less innovative. They served different objectives as daily work in an intelligence agency. Nevertheless Marcuse and Neumann co-operated as they did in the Institute, and the traces of the Frankfurt School’s unorthodox as well as of Neumann’s more orthodox Marxism can be tracked down in the OSS files.<sup>57</sup> As the understanding of the National Socialist system in Marcuse’s R&A papers is less complex than in the papers discussed above, I will only select and comment on those few passages that explicitly or subcutaneously approach anti-Semitism and the German *Vernichtungspolitik*.

Most of the OSS files deal with questions regarding the preparation of

55. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 34, 244; Marquardt-Bigman 60–61; Söllner, “Archäologie” 26.

56. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 34, 36–37, 69, 208 n. 14; Marquardt-Bigman 70–71, 95. The “deutschlandianpolitische ‘Grundsatzprogramm’” of R&A could be read in Neumann’s *Behemoth*; cf. Marquardt-Bigman 127. On the political positions of R&A regarding post-war Germany (including the suggestion to build a “European union”), see Marquardt-Bigman 73–79 (origins of the war: special development in Germany – fast industrialization, missing modernisation of social and political structures; therefore the influence of heavy industry had to be eliminated), 87–88 (not only destructive war aims), 124–30 (democratization of Germany in co-operation with the population; de-nazification), 152–57 (no partition of Germany; European union; thoughts about Soviet security needs). Both Neumann’s *Behemoth* and many R&A analyses expressed the hope that there would be an anti-fascist revolt by the working class against the Nazi regime – Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 37–39, 41, 43, 49, 57; Marquardt-Bigman 96–118, 128–35, 201; Mauch, 124–34. This hope turned into deep disappointment at the end of the war, when R&A learned about the apathy of the population, even the remaining support for the regime – Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 38, 50–51, 90–96; Marquardt-Bigman 138, 172–74, 183, 189, 202–03; Söllner, “The philosopher not as King.” 115. At the end of the war, Neumann even spoke about a gradual collective guilt of the German population – Marquardt-Bigman 201 (referring, without mentioning it, to 77; see also Katz 51). Resignation reigned at R&A “the more they had to recognize that they had not planned an alternative, but an utopia for Germany” — Marquardt-Bigman 189.

57. On the whole context of these files see Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 29–96 (29–57 dealing with Marcuse and Neumann); Marquardt-Bigman 35–203; Mauch 124–34.



occupation policy. A very special duty for Marcuse was on July 22, 1944 to formulate the Civil Affairs Guide called "Dissolution of the Nazi Party and Its Affiliated Organizations."<sup>58</sup> The most important element of this Guide is still unpublished: a list of 222,000 persons to be arrested.<sup>59</sup> Two of the thirty-two categories of persons to be arrested refer to war criminals. Among them or among the group of "active Nazis" was everyone who assisted in the arrest or denunciation of political enemies of National Socialism, everyone who promoted or participated in violence against political or religious enemies of the system, German and foreign workers, Jews and prisoners-of-war, and everyone who had profited from the "Aryanizations," the exploitation of the occupied countries and the confiscation of the possessions of Jews and enemies of National Socialism.<sup>60</sup>

On November 15, 1944 Marcuse tried to classify the resistance against National Socialism in a report called "Some Criteria for the Identification of Non-Nazis and Anti-Nazis."<sup>61</sup> In accordance with the criteria he used to distinguish active anti-Nazis Marcuse includes only those persons who were opposed to National Socialism in its entirety – political prisoners, participants in acts of resistance, persons removed from their jobs because of their well-known anti-Nazi attitude, and everyone publicly criticizing National Socialism or helping the victims and persecuted of the regime.

Following Marcuse's detailed criteria, the uprising of July 20, 1944 can hardly be called an act of resistance. R&A in general, not only the German émigrés, generally misconceived the conservative resistance because of their partisanship regarding the working class resistance. Nevertheless R&A's characterization of the traditional and expansionist

58. R&A 1655.5. I read the German translation – an English printed edition is so far not available – to be found in *Zur Archäologie* 149–58. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 35 with n. 16 and Marquardt-Bigman 126 n. 26; 287 identify Marcuse as the author. On the Guide, see Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 35; Kellner, "Technology" 23; Marquardt-Bigman 128–35; *Reform*, 161.

59. Cf. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 45; *Reform* 160–61. The former colleagues of Marcuse interviewed in the latter book express their opinion that the implementation of this list would have been the more successful and effective way of denazification.

60. R&A 1655.5 156–58.

61. R&A 2189. Published partially in *American Intelligence and the German Resistance to Hitler: A Documentary History*, eds. Jürgen Heideking and Christof Mauch (Boulder: Westview, 1996) 323–28 (Document 73). Marquardt-Bigman 106 n. 60, 129 n. 30 identifies Marcuse as the author. On the document, see Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 47 and Marquardt-Bigman 106, 129 n. 30.

goals of most parts of military resistance was close to the truth.<sup>62</sup>

An explicit mention of gas chambers was given on January 1, 1945, in a file attributed to Marcuse and Neumann, where they referred to the Frankfurt School explanatory framework of instrumental or technological rationality:

The sober and methodical steps taken by the Nazis to build up their system of police controls were supplemented by methods of terrorism. The men who created the administrative machinery described above were the same individuals responsible for the machine-gunning of civilians packed into cellars and even churches, for the use of gas chambers and crematories for the innocent victims of Nazi racial theories, and for the execution of hostages.<sup>63</sup>

After the end of World War II, the Central European Section of R&A was involved in the preparation of material used by the International War Crimes Tribunal at Nuremberg. While Neumann went to Europe, Marcuse stayed in Washington co-ordinating the preparations done there.<sup>64</sup> He is identified as the author of an OSS file, dating from June 12, 1945, dealing with the murder of the European Jews – “Outline of R&A 3114: Nazi Plans to Dominate Europe” – where he argued, staying in the tracks of R&A’s Neumannian instrumental and rationalizing theory, “that National Socialism,” as Katz summarizes, “which had allegedly abolished the class struggle, needed an enemy whose very

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62. On the issue, see Marquardt-Bigman 105–11, 117 and Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 42. On the problems of an assessment of the conservative resistance faces, see *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Die deutsche Gesellschaft und der Widerstand gegen Hitler*, eds. Jürgen Schmädke and Peter Steinbach (Munich: Piper, 1994); Hartmut Mehringer, *Widerstand und Emigration: Das NS-Regime und seine Gegner* (Munich: dtv, 1997). The only close empirical study of the attitudes of the resistance vis-à-vis Jews, giving evidence for the anti-Semitic conceptions of people like Goerdeler even after the mass murder of European Jews had begun, is Christof Dipper, “Der Deutsche Widerstand und die Juden,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983): 349–80. On the other hand, Peter Hoffmann, *Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg und seine Brüder* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1992) gives evidence for cases of people like Stauffenberg. While they observed Nazi politics, all traditional political aspirations were superseded by the moral demand to execute Hitler and to stop the murder of the Jews as well as the war.

63. R&A 2500.22: “German Military Government over Europe: The SS and Police in Occupied Europe.” I could only read this quotation by Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 44–45.

64. See Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 49–56 and Shlomo Aronson, “Preparations for the Nuremberg Trial: The O.S.S., Charles Dwork, and the Holocaust,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 12 (1998): 257–81.

existence could serve to integrate the antagonistic groups within society. The Jews alone could fulfill this requirement, for reasons which [Marcuse] attempted to enumerate:"

- (1) The Jew was the weakest enemy of Nazism; the attack on him therefore was the most promising and the least risky one.
- (2) The Jew was the enemy against whom the Nazis could hope to unite otherwise divergent masses of supporters.
- (3) The elimination of the Jew, as a competitor, would be most profitable to the petty bourgeoisie which furnished the largest mass support for the Nazi movement.
- (4) The Jew was found in all countries; Nazi anti-Semitism was therefore a convenient means for mobilizing potential Nazi allies in foreign countries [ . . . ]
- (5) The ubiquity of the Jew as arch-enemy provided the Nazis with a justification for carrying the struggle for power beyond the frontiers of the Reich.<sup>65</sup>

## VI

The central question this article has sought to address is Marcuse's contemporary understanding of Auschwitz. Before interpretations of his perceptions and conceptions will be given, one should once again recollect and read through all passages in the aforementioned papers and in the letters trying to come to terms with the Holocaust. In 1941, Marcuse explained in his essay "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology" that aggressive impulses, "developed under the exigencies of scarcity and frustration," can be used as an instrument by the National Socialist system and "readily directed against the weaker competitors and conspicuous 'outsiders' (Jews, foreigners, national minorities)."<sup>66</sup> His statements in "State and Individual under National Socialism" from 1942 then sound familiar: "the National Socialist abolition of taboos is conditioned upon the simultaneous creation of new objects of humiliation and enslavement" – "Jews, foreigners, feeble-bodied and feeble-minded."<sup>67</sup> About the same time he developed his most advanced theory of National Socialist ideology – "The New German Mentality." There he discovered and conceptualized the dialectics of the rational and the irrational as

65. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 56.

66. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications" 49, 54.

67. Marcuse. "State and Individual" 86.

foundation for an understanding of National Socialism. A result of this was, as I have tried to argue, that Marcuse attributed to anti-Semitism simultaneously the function of repression and an intrinsic value.

He also mentioned "every kind of atrocity, torture, oppression and exploitation" committed by the German *Wehrmacht* and Nazi troops, indicating the high degree of spontaneity and initiative – or, as one may state pointedly, the executioners wanted to do what they did although they simultaneously served the means of a gigantic machine of destruction.<sup>68</sup> Again he also emphasized the instrumental role of persecution and mass murder: "National Socialism incited the masses to fight against the Jews and the 'capitalist plutocrats,' but the extermination of the Jews and the decline of 'finance capital' served to strengthen the hold of those industrial groups which were already predominant in German society" as well as to relieve the pressure of social tensions.<sup>69</sup>

The most disturbing passage in "The New German Mentality" is the one that explains the role of art as an instrument of psychological warfare, quoted above in full length. There we find the following two thought-provoking sentences: "Art can no longer 'depict' reality, for the latter has passed beyond the reaches of adequate 'aesthetic' representation. The terror as well as the suffering of those who resist it is greater than the force of artistic imagination."<sup>70</sup> These words do not explicitly mention the fate of the Jews, but start to grasp that the dimension of the terror the victims of National Socialism suffered was unimaginable.

Whereas unsettled contradictions run through all of Marcuse's papers, this is especially true for his thinking about Auschwitz. Traces of Neumann's spearhead theory can be tracked down in almost every sentence Marcuse wrote. Nevertheless he simultaneously developed his own reflections, distancing himself from Neumann. This comment does not only refer to the quotation above. Marcuse's letters, not yet discussed in this essay, also have elements going beyond Neumann's view.<sup>71</sup> The "spearhead theory in the form in which we formulated it originally seems to me inadequate," he wrote to Horkheimer on July 28, 1943,

68. Marcuse, "New German Mentality" 161, 182.

69. Marcuse, "New German Mentality" 155-156.

70. Marcuse, "New German Mentality" 169.

71. A German edition of his letters to Horkheimer can be found in Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 17, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996). Marcuse's letters written to Horkheimer in the 1940s as well as his letters to Heidegger are also edited in Marcuse, *Technology* 229-67.

and this inadequacy seems to increase with the development of fascist anti-Semitism. The function of this anti-Semitism is apparently more and more in the perpetuation of an already established pattern of domination in the character of men. Note that in the German propaganda, the Jew has now become an "internal" being, which lives in Gentiles as well as Jews, and which is not conquered even with the annihilation of the "real" Jews. If we look at the character traits and qualities which the Nazis designate as the Jewish elements in the Gentiles, we do not find the so-called typical Jewish traits (or at least not primarily), but traits which are regarded as definitely Christian and "human." They are furthermore the traits which stand most decidedly against repression in all its forms. Here, we should resume the task of elucidating the true connection between anti-Semitism and Christianity [...]. What is happening is not only a belated protest against Christianity but also a consummation of Christianity or at least of all the sinister traits of Christianity. *Der Jude ist von dieser Welt*, and *diese Welt* is the one which fascism has to subject to the totalitarian terror.

As far as the socio-economic aspects of anti-Semitism are concerned, it seems to me that we should place more emphasis on anti-Semitism as an instrument of *international* fascism [. . .] a weapon for the "coordination" of the diverging national fascism [. . .]<sup>72</sup>

This quotation sounds like a turning of spearhead theory on its head. It was a private letter, Marcuse wavered between loyalty to his friend Neumann ("we formulated") and communicating a new insight to his adored Horkheimer. These insights, however, were not new to Horkheimer. They were in fact further developed in the context of the Institute.<sup>73</sup> A close

72. Marcuse, *Technology* 244–45.

73. Horkheimer's changed understanding of anti-Semitism in the forties is discussed by Diner, "The Limits of Reason: Max Horkheimer on Anti-Semitism and Extermination," *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000) 97–116 and Anson Rabinbach, "Why Were the Jews Sacrificed? The Place of Anti-Semitism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," *New German Critique* 81 (Fall 2000): 49–64. Whereas Diner concentrates on continuities, Rabinbach – discussing the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and the Horkheimer letters written in the 1940s – shows how Horkheimer's and Adorno's views fundamentally changed while they were observing the catastrophe in Europe. As is the case in Marcuse, the letters were a medium of intense and dialogic self-reflection. Rabinbach does not hide the problematic aspects of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – e.g., certain tendencies influenced by the mythological and transhistorical theories by Roger Caillois and Carl Gustav Jung. At the same time, however, Rabinbach tracks down layers of an advanced and innovative theory of anti-Semitism, a theory that searches for the roots and "prehistory" of anti-Semitism.

reading of this paragraph reveals four features of National Socialist anti-Semitism: (1) the chimerical, irrational, and paranoid roots of anti-Semitism – growing everywhere, colonizing even non-Jewish “traits”, never satisfied; (2) the anti-emancipatory motivation and politics of anti-Semitism; (3) anti-Semitism as consummation of the dark side of Christianity – a redemptive, religiously anchored anti-Semitism, identifying the Jews with *dieser Welt* that has to be destroyed in order to be saved;<sup>74</sup> (4) anti-Semitism as a socio-economic instrument for the co-ordination of Germany’s fascist war axis. This letter may represent one of the most subtly differentiated interpretations of anti-Semitism and the origins of Auschwitz in the forties. This interpretation is not as theoretically advanced as Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s contemporary contributions. Marcuse did not search for the deep structure of anti-Semitism. But he may have been closer to the events and to the experience of the persecuted.

Compared to these statements, Marcuse’s writings on *Vernichtungspolitik* at the OSS seem rather weak. As was explained above, they mainly documented on a few occasions the dimension of the crimes known to them, the rational organization and unimaginable cruelty of the mass murder, and once again – a relapse into the official spearhead theory – the extermination of the Jews presented as an instrument to unite society in a socio-economic way.

As an epilogue Marcuse’s letters to Heidegger are pertinent.<sup>75</sup> He wrote:

[A philosopher] cannot be deceived about a regime that has killed millions of Jews – merely because they were Jews –, that made terror into an everyday phenomenon, and that turned everything that pertains to the ideas of spirit, freedom and truth into its bloody opposite. A regime that in every respect imaginable was the deadly

74. Here Marcuse seems to describe what Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper Collins, 1997) refers to as “redemptive anti-Semitism.” Friedländer, however, focuses on leading Nazis and their relation to an anti-Semitic high culture. Marcuse outlines more general tendencies.

75. Katz, *Herbert Marcuse* 129–30 summarizes the context: They date from August 28, 1947 and May 12, 1948 – Heidegger’s answer to Marcuse’s first letter was written on January 20, 1948 – and so they were written after the end of World War II. Nevertheless they are close enough to be discussed here. In a certain way these letters intellectually belong to an older past, to the Heidegger – Marcuse relationship in Weimar Germany and to the role of a philosopher explaining his “inner emigration” in World War Two Germany. Marcuse visited his old teacher (“the man from whom I had learned philosophy” – Marcuse, *Technology* 264) at Todtnauberg in the Black Forest in the spring of 1947. The letters were exchanged afterwards, the first of them was accompanied by a “care package.”

caricature of the Western tradition that you yourself so forcefully explicated and justified. And if that regime was not the caricature of that tradition but its actual culmination – in this case, too, there could be no deception, for then you would have to indict and disavow this entire tradition. [...] My friends [...] have accused me of helping a man [Heidegger] who identified with a regime that sent millions of my co-religionists to the gas chambers (in order to forestall misunderstandings, I would like to observe that I was not only an anti-Nazi because I was a Jew, but I also would have been one from the beginning on political, social and intellectual grounds even had I been “100 per cent Aryan”).<sup>76</sup>

In his second and last letter, Marcuse rejected Heidegger's effort to relativize the Holocaust by equating the German politics vis-à-vis the Jews and the Allied politics vis-à-vis the East Germans. Marcuse recognized the singularity of Auschwitz.

People in Germany were exposed to a total perversion of all concepts and feelings, something which very many accepted only too readily. [...] This is not a political but instead an intellectual problem – I am tempted to say: a problem of cognition, of truth. You, the philosopher, have confused the liquidation of occidental Dasein with its renewal? Was this liquidation not already evident in every word of the “leaders,” in every gesture and deed of the SA, long before 1933? [...] For only outside the dimension of logic it is possible to explain, to relativize, to “comprehend” a crime by saying that others would have done the same thing. Even further: how is it possible to equate the torture, the maiming and the annihilation of millions of men with the forcible relocation of population groups [...]? From a contemporary perspective there seems already to be a night and day difference in humanity and inhumanity between Nazi concentration camps and the deportations and internments of the post-war years. [...] If however the difference between inhumanity and humanity is reduced to this erroneous calculus, then this becomes the world historical guilt of the Nazi system, which has demonstrated what, after more than 2000 years of western Dasein, men can do to their fellow men.<sup>77</sup>

## VII

How did Marcuse react to the murder of the European Jews? Why did he attempt to comprehend it in the ways discussed above? Answers

76. *Technology* 264.

77. Marcuse, *Technolog*, 266–67.

differ. I will start by a chronologically ordered summary of explanations that have been given by historians up to now. Today's historians, after decades of Holocaust research, are dealing with the question: Why does Auschwitz only play a seemingly marginal role in Marcuse's wartime writings?<sup>78</sup> The suffering of the European Jews seems to have almost been ignored by R&A – including Marcuse. And even after the crimes were understood as systematic genocide, they were interpreted in a functional way – they were rationalized.<sup>79</sup> Why?

Martin Jay more than twenty-five years ago tried to explain these disturbing phenomena by the permanent pressure of assimilation that weighed heavily upon the Frankfurt School members, being Jews without wanting to be identified with any "Jewish cause" in an atmosphere of anti-Semitism.<sup>80</sup> Another explanation was given more than fifteen years later, in 1989, by Barry Katz. The Frankfurt School theorists at the OSS, he writes,

seem unwilling to have taken the Nazis' professed hatred of the Jews literally and to have confronted the frightful implications of its deep resonance within German society. Did their insistence upon seeing the Nazi genocide of the Jews as explicable only in terms of something outside of itself serve them as a last, desperate attempt to salvage something from the shipwreck of Western rationality, or

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78. It should be remembered that we now know about the historical and epistemological earthquake of the Holocaust but still without fully understanding it – cf. Friedländer, "Introduction," *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution,"* ed. Friedländer (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992) 5–6; LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust and History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998). Recent results and trends in profound Holocaust scholarship are represented by Friedländer, *Nazi Germany*; Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999); *Vernichtungspolitik*, ed. Ulrich Herbert; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*. On theories that try to explain the origins of Neumann's spearhead and other Frankfurt School member's theories on anti-Semitism, cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 219–52; Jay, "The Jews and the Frankfurt School: Critical Theory's Analysis of Anti-Semitism," *Permanent Exiles* 90–100; Wiggershaus 390–423; and the somewhat strange book by Erich Cramer, *Hitlers Antisemitismus und die "Frankfurter Schule": Kritische Faschismus-Theorie und geschichtliche Realität* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1979).

79. Cf. Aronson; Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 55–57; Marquardt-Bigman 77–79, 199, 201.

80. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 31–37, 133 and "The Jews and the Frankfurt School," where he also mentions the Frankfurt School's faithfulness to Marxist patterns of thought as a reason of their seeming neglect of the specificity of anti-Semitism.



was it perhaps occasioned by a Marxist's lingering allegiance to the German working class?<sup>81</sup>

Two years later, he resumed the question, this time concentrating his explanation on the institutional constraints of the OSS. He discusses once again R&A files dealing with the Holocaust – most of them not written by Marcuse – and then concludes that the “evidence challenges the picture of naïveté or indifference regarding Europe's Jews that is typically ascribed to U.S. intelligence during the war.”<sup>82</sup> Important documents on the genocide were filed and used by later researchers such as Raul Hilberg. Nevertheless *Vernichtungspolitik* was not the main content of the R&A files, not only due to the spearhead theory, but especially due to the institutional and political functions of R&A: “The mandate of Research and Analysis branch was limited and did not include the rescue of the European Jews.”<sup>83</sup>

Richard Breitman on the other hand emphasizes on Marxist backgrounds:

The OSS [...] was [...] able to get a reasonably accurate picture of the Final Solution, but probably not until late 1942. Even then, some knowledgeable people (such as the German émigré political scientist Franz Neumann) allowed ideological barriers to prevent them from understanding the obvious. The fact that two very committed American Jews (Charles Irving Dwork and Abraham Duker) worked in the Research and Analysis Branch of OSS helped to ensure attention there.<sup>84</sup>

The story of these “very committed American Jews,” played off

81. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 57. The Marxist's allegiance to the working class refers to Neumann's conviction that the working class was not anti-Semitic – “the writer's personal conviction,” he wrote in *Behemoth*, “paradoxical as it may seem, is that the German people are the least Anti-Semitic of all.” (121).

82. Katz, “The Holocaust and American Intelligence,” *The Jewish Legacy and the German Conscience: Essays in Memory of Rabbi Joseph Asher*, ed. Moses Rischin and Raphael Asher (Berkeley: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1991) 301.

83. Katz, “Holocaust” 303–05.

84. Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998) 231. This argument is not new, as Jay's “The Jews and the Frankfurt School” shows. The only basis of Breitman's statement is, as the respective note reveals, Aronson's article that is discussed next. Both authors abstain from a reading of Marcuse's texts, nevertheless Marcuse is included in Aronson's criticism, and Breitman is referring to Aronson.

against Marcuse and Neumann, but without any reading of or reference to Marcuse's articles or letters, was told by Shlomo Aronson in 1998. Aronson indicates several reasons for the marginal role of the Holocaust in the OSS files – British requests not to give the impression that the Allies were waging a “Jewish war”; concentration was on the crime of aggressive war at the Nuremberg trials whereas the destruction of the European Jews was only seen as a crime entailed by aggressive war; etc. – but when talking about Neumann, he seems increasingly enraged. He blames Neumann's spearhead theory for having influenced Hannah Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem and states that “Neumann and other Marxists failed to understand the centrality of antisemitism in Nazi ideology and strategy.” This reference to the Frankfurt School's Marxism is the most obvious and simplest explanation, and it is partially true because they tended to rationalistic views due to their Marxist explanatory framework.<sup>85</sup> An agenda behind Aronson's story – a transference relation or projective identification with Dwork – becomes obvious when he writes that we have no idea whether Neumann's spearhead theory

influenced Dwork's draft indictment in the ‘Jewish case.’ Yet this was rather unlikely: a political and personal tension divided German-born assimilated Jewish and half-Jewish experts such as Neumann, who served the West's main war aims, and American Jews such as Dwork and Duker, mainly eager to punish the Nazis.<sup>86</sup>

The most recent comment on the issue is by John Abromeit. He does not give the problem much consideration. In his eyes Marcuse placed too much emphasis on the rational aspects of National Socialism and

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85. Aronson 269. Aronson does not refer to the important book by Katz, only to his earlier article, nor to the important book by Marquardt-Bigman, only to an earlier article by her (280 nn. 36–37). It also sounds strange when he writes that later the “OSS group was dropped from the case. Justice Jackson [...] preferred legal experts who could work with historical documents and testimonies over European social scientists-turned-intelligence men, above all ‘Frankfurt School’ associates such as Franz Neumann, Herbert Marcuse and Otto Kirchheimer” (272–73). One has to remember that he is talking about some of the best and most influential scholars of the twentieth century. He seems to have an animus against the Frankfurt School.

86. Aronson 274. In fact we know about papers by Dwork influenced by Neumann (cf. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 56), but we do not know anything about personal tensions between Dwork and Neumann. Aronson also ignores the Jewish dimension in Frankfurt School's theories – cf. the following remarks on the subject.

had “relatively little to say about the irrational forces unleashed by the Nazis, antisemitism being only the most obvious example.”<sup>87</sup>

### VIII

All explanations to date are lacking something. Marcuse understood better than many of his contemporaries what was happening in Europe. He needed, as everyone, some time to come to terms with it, but he made progress. To put it conceptually, human beings cannot change all their thinking at once, and any interpretation has to take into consideration that no man is a monolithic being, but a being with diverse and at times divergent tendencies, with many opinions and different subject positions at the same time.

First of all, as I have indicated in this article, Marcuse was not at all unconcerned about the genocide of the Jews in Europe. In fact several of his writings attempt as a whole – as the letters – or in part to conceptualize one of the worst tragedies in human history. Nevertheless from today’s perspective we have to explain why he seems not to have been mostly thinking about the politics of extermination.

Marcuse faced a threefold dilemma. The first was a professional or institutional one and was already touched upon by Barry Katz: the OSS served restricted objectives. The administration, always in defense against isolationist lobbies, did not want to wage a Jewish war.<sup>88</sup> The work that was assigned to Marcuse touched only marginally upon the fate of the European Jews. The second dilemma was conceptual. As many of their contemporaries, among them American Jews, the Frankfurt School thinkers were in the beginning merely able to perceive National Socialist anti-Semitism as part of a general racism and repression.<sup>89</sup>

In the case of the Frankfurt School thinkers, their Marxist explanatory

87. John Abromeit, “Book Review,” *Constellations* 8 (2001): 150. He rather is focused on other aspects of Marcuse’s texts.

88. Cf. Aronson 260 regarding the British case.

89. For Marcuse, see “New German Mentality” 141 (“racism, social naturalism”) and R&A 2500.22, quoted by Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 44–45 (“victims of Nazi racial theories”). For the United States, cf. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999) 19–59. One may reproach Marcuse with not having changed this perception fast enough. A reproach like this would not be based on a knowledge of how perception, thinking and memory function. Besides being a social one, it is also a physiological process; new perceptions are only gradually inscribed – see Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1999) and a talk by the neurobiologist Wolf Singer, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 28 Sept. 2000, 10.

framework was the main reason for their restricted response. But they did not stop there. Even if Marcuse partially remained in these tracks, he simultaneously developed understandings more appropriate to the facts – among them his analysis of the genuine dialectical relationship between myth and domination in National Socialist ideology. His Marxism was not an insuperable barrier to his ability to come to terms with reality.

The third dilemma was structural. I hope to have substantiated the fact that Marcuse arrived at an innovative understanding of National Socialist ideology, its core being anti-Semitism. Furthermore I would argue that Marcuse started to grasp the dimension of Auschwitz. The difficulty he faced was to comprehend it depending on different social and intellectual contexts. That makes it harder to interpret his writings. His seeming silence was not a sign of ignorance. It was in fact a sign of knowledge and of despair.

How could someone knowing about Auschwitz do his daily job without trying to rationalize it? How could someone write to his intellectual colleagues about Auschwitz without trying to use older, rationalizing – Marxist – concepts familiar to them and to himself, simultaneously gradually overthrowing or at least reshaping these concepts?

There was no way to talk adequately about Auschwitz. In 1948 Marcuse wrote to Heidegger that a comparative explanation of Auschwitz is “outside the dimension of logic.”<sup>90</sup> As early as 1942, Marcuse knew that the reality of the ongoing Holocaust had “passed beyond the reaches of adequate ‘aesthetic’ representation.”<sup>91</sup> As his colleague Adorno has shown, the same is true for any theoretical attempt to understand Auschwitz. His words provide the interpretative framework for Marcuse’s wartime writings, for they represent the Frankfurt School theorists’ state of mind and structural dilemma at and after the end of World War II:

Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the finished stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today.<sup>92</sup>

90. Marcuse, *Technology* 267.

91. Marcuse, “New German Mentality” 169.

92. Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” *Prisms* (London: Neville Spearman, 1976) 34. The German original can be found in Adorno, “Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft,” *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I. Prismen. Ohne Leitbild, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10.1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997) 30.

All post-Auschwitz culture, including its urgent critique, is garbage.  
 [. . .] Cultural criticism and barbarism are not without consent.<sup>93</sup>

We may even go further. Marcuse did not only conceptually recognize the impossibility to speak about Auschwitz in an adequate way. The inadequacies of his writings confront the enormous attempt to come to terms with the unimaginable in the same writings.<sup>94</sup> As early as 1942 and 1943, Marcuse knew more than any historian to date believed. In 1947, however, his partial silence was broken. The Nazi system, having “killed millions of Jews – merely because they were Jews” had “demonstrated to the world what, after more than 2000 years of Western Dasein, men can do to their fellow men.” National Socialism in its essence was,

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93. Adorno, *Negative dialectics* (New York: Seabury, 1973) 367. The second sentence is missing in the English translation; cf. the German original: Adorno, *Negative Dialektik. Jargon der Eigentlichkeit, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997) 359, 361. Even Neumann may have felt the impossibility to represent the genocide – cf. his statement vis-à-vis Raul Hilberg, when he simultaneously accepted Hilberg’s project and said: “It’s your funeral,” see Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996) 66.

94. This is especially true if we recognize the traces of Jewish traditions in Marcuse’s and other Frankfurt School members’ thoughts. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 56 and “The Jews and the Frankfurt School,” 100; in spite of his criticism explains the Frankfurt School’s unwillingness to name the ideal social “other” by the Jewish and messianic biographical roots of some of the Institute’s members. The most concrete depiction of the ideal other society is given by Marcuse, “Der Kampf gegen den Liberalismus in der totalitären Staatsauffassung,” *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 3 (1934): 161–95; reprinted in Marcuse, *Ausätze aus der Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, 1934–1941, Schriften*, vol. 3 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1979) 7–44 and *Kultur und Gesellschaft I* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1965) 17–55: “Real freedom of the individual existence (not only freedom in the liberalist sense) is merely possible in a particularly shaped polis, in a ‘rationally’ organized society” (52). Close to this is Horkheimer, quoted by Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*, 119: “The democratic state should be like the idea of the Greek polis without slaves.” He forgot to mention that his picture is true only of Athens in the middle of the fifth century; and he forgot foreigners and women, both without political rights. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 308 n. 92 and Diner also differently mention Jewish patterns of (the later) Horkheimer’s thought. The details of this discussion are not decisive regarding my project. Anyway, Evelyn Wilcock, “Negative Identity: Mixed German Jewish Descent as a Factor in the Reception of Theodor Adorno,” *New German Critique* 81 (Fall 2000): 169–87 states that the “stereotypical distinction between Jew and German is disrupted by the existence of mixed families” such as Adorno’s and that we should not expect them to have behaved more “Jewish” (183). The traces of Jewish tradition give evidence to the fact that there existed a problem. Jewish dimensions may have been totally denied or they may have been the hidden center of the text – but they were there, and in certain ways they always influenced also Marcuse’s perception of anti-Semitism and Auschwitz.

Marcuse wrote, the "liquidation of occidental Dasein."<sup>95</sup>

A possible interpretation is that the structural dilemma faced by Marcuse discussed before bore the traces of trauma. Difficulties with the symbolic representation of the tragedy; repeated returns to the traumatizing phenomena as signs of a halting, interrupted process of working through – returns after periods of silence or possible latency; the partial impossibility of testimony to his own being witness of the murder of his family: one has not to go too deep into recent trauma discourse in order to accept the possibility that Marcuse suffered from trauma.<sup>96</sup>

He had suffered the traumatic experience of emigration. He had seen his admired teacher supporting the Nazis.<sup>97</sup> As a left-wing intellectual, he had to observe how the working class succumbed to the fascist seduction. He was deeply rooted in German culture – and had to watch it being distorted by the Nazis and then collapse; he had to suffer the loss of his intellectual love-object. And like other German-Jewish intellectuals, he desperately attempted to rescue it from its ruins.<sup>98</sup> Finally and most important, although his parents and his brother fled from Germany in 1939, Marcuse had failed to warn his family. The rest of their relatives died in Theresienstadt.<sup>99</sup> Silence may be a symptom of trauma. Hence Marcuse's response may have been affected by a constellation of forces, some of them traumatic.<sup>100</sup>

95. Marcuse, *Technology* 264, 266–267.

96. As an introduction into trauma research and theory, cf. Caruth, "Introduction," *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995) 3–12; LaCapra, *Writing History*, especially 1–85; see also, with regard to the Holocaust, his *Representing the Holocaust and History and Memory*; the recent critique by Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000).

97. Cf. Katz, *Herbert Marcuse* 85, 130; Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*.

98. Cf. similar cases discussed by Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997) and his unpublished paper given at a conference at Elmau, Germany on July 17, 2001: "'To the German Patriots': Cosmopolitans and Exile During World War II," which will be published in *Catastrophe and Meaning*, ed. Moishe Postone (Chicago: U of Chicago P 2002); see also my article in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 21 July 2001, 16.

99. Katz, *Herbert Marcuse* 105–06. Caruth, "Introduction," states that "survival itself, in other words, can be a crisis" causing trauma – the trauma of survival (9).

100. On the causes, mechanisms and diagnosis of trauma, see Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, vol. 1 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994). One may in particular apply to Marcuse what they state on 21 (symptomatic reading); 105 (collapse of signification after the loss of the love-object); 130, 142 (crisis of mourning and the loss of beloved ones). It is important to add that if Marcuse was traumatized he nevertheless immediately started the process of working through – traces of which can be tracked down in his wartime writings discussed above. On the concepts of working through and acting out, linked to the concepts of absence and loss, transhistorical and historical trauma, see the lucid comments by LaCapra, *Writing History* 43–85.

Needless to add, trauma does not rule out other factors which also help to account for the ways Marcuse addressed the Holocaust.

## IX

Marcuse was a perceptive observer and astute analyst of National Socialism. In spite of his sometimes overly restricted response, in his wartime writings he gave an important critique of National Socialist ideology. This critique culminated in his own version of the Frankfurt School's theme of the dialectics of rationality and irrationality. Marcuse arrived at an advanced understanding of the irrational core of National Socialism without neglecting its rational traits. Sometimes his concepts seem close to Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* that was written at the same time in California.<sup>101</sup> They all criticized instrumental rationality that was perverted for the sake of self-preservation. Nevertheless, in Marcuse, there remained an emancipatory, even sometimes optimistic perspective. But he was not just more Marxist than his two colleagues.

Marcuse's thinking made an important turn while he was working at the OSS. Marcuse did not abandon the emancipatory project because he participated in its praxis. This point-of-view does not aim at an idealization of his "war effort". It was concrete history that made him participate in a praxis that was at least a necessary historical condition for any emancipatory project: the fight against National Socialism and for freedom. Liberal democracy put aside everything else at this historical moment.<sup>102</sup>

101. Marcuse's understanding, as it was developed in "New German Mentality" and in his letters to Horkheimer and Heidegger, reminds one of the following passage in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972) 231: "Europe has two histories: a well-known, written history and an underground history. The latter consists in the fate of the human instincts and passions which are displaced and distorted by civilization. The Fascist present in which the hidden side of the things comes to light also shows the relationship between written history and the dark side which is overlooked in the official legend of the nationalist states, as well as in the critique of the latter." Cf. Dubiel, *Kritische Theorie* 87; Söllner, "Archäologie" 15.

102. Cf. Söllner, "The Philosopher" and Stephan Bundschuh, "Und weil der Mensch ein Mensch ist . . ." *Anthropologische Aspekte der Sozialphilosophie Herbert Marcuses* (Lüneburg: zu Klampen, 1998). On New Deal democracy, see Marquardt-Bigman 69, 94–95, 114, 270–71. These circumstances changed. McCarthyism was not "real democracy," Marcuse's ideal – a democracy not exercising repressive tolerance (cf. Jay, *Permanent Exiles* 54; Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 60). That he remained in the services of the OSS and, from the end of the war until 1951, of the State Department was due to the lack of professorships (cf. his letter to Horkheimer, 30 Mar. 1949, in *Technology* 259) and especially to the fact that his wife Sophie suffered from cancer and was not able to move. She died in 1951 (cf. Katz, *Marcuse*, 134; Kellner, "Technology" 27; Söllner, "Philosopher" 114).

In the face of National Socialism, Marcuse's utopia of freedom experienced perhaps its greatest threat. His later theoretical work was built upon his confrontation with this threat. And his later success as guru of the New Left would not have been possible without his further reflection on its implications.<sup>103</sup> Most important is the fact that Marcuse's wartime writings bore witness to the Holocaust. They attempted to comprehend the murder of his family and millions of other Jews. Nevertheless, the Holocaust was not the main manifest concern of most of his writings. Why this was the case – and that he was in fact haunted by this tragedy so close to his personal life, that he recognized the singularity of the Holocaust – was the central problem addressed in this essay.

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103. Due to his OSS duties, his works were more empirically founded than his critics thought (Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 161; Kellner, "Technology" 7, 24, 36). He also experienced an acculturation under best possible circumstances – as an émigré working together with Americans in an equal-rights atmosphere. A whole generation of American scholars were influenced by their wartime co-operation with Frankfurt School thinkers, see Katz, *Foreign Intelligence* 8–21, 27–28, 165–95; Söllner, "Wissenschaftliche Kompetenz und politische Ohnmacht: Deutsche Emigranten im amerikanischen Staatsdienst 1942–1949," *Deutschland nach Hitler: Zukunftspläne im Exil und während der Besatzungszeit, 1939–1949*, eds. Thomas Koebner et al. (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1987) 145–49. Moreover, the émigrés – Felix Gilbert, Herbert Marcuse, Franz Neumann – learned much from their American colleagues. These émigrés – different from Adorno and Horkheimer – felt at home in the United States, stayed there after the war and became quite influential (Söllner, "Wissenschaftliche Kompetenz," especially 137–38, 145–49).