Clumsy Democrats: Moral Passions in the Federal Republic[*]

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To Michael Geyer

> "It seems strikingly clear that there has never been a society in Germany. People live without form or focus; they lack shape (and are disordered within). Everything is there, but nothing is in its proper place."
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> (Siegfried Kracauer, 1956)

> "The Germans are idealistic, conscientious and devoted to duty, whether or not it leads them in the right direction."
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> (*Woman's Guide to Europe*, 1954)

Twentieth-century Europe was marked by two extremes: the descent into war and genocidal dictatorship on the one hand, and the return to peace and democracy on the other.[1] Throughout much of the 1920s and 1930s democracy, the rule of law, and

[1] Mark Mazower, *The Dark Continent. Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York, 2000); on twentieth-century Germany see especially Konrad H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *A Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, 2003), and Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Press, 2006). The second quotation is from Olivia Meeker, "The European Male. Different Approach, Same Old Subject," in Eugene Fodor ed., *Woman's Guide to Europe, Continental edition* (New York: Fodor's Modern Guides, 1953), pp. 60-69, p. 64. As Canada Research Chair in German and European Studies the author is indebted to the Social Sciences and the Humanities Research Council. Many thanks also to The Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Bad Homburg, and The Freiburg Institute of Advanced Studies for a chance to discuss earlier versions of this article, and to Seyla Benhabib, Paul Betts, Charles Blattberg, Nicholas Dew, Mark Greengrass, Holger Nehring, Lucy Riall, Natalie Scholz, Annette Timm, Nina Verheyen, and Oliver

liberalism seemed outdated to many in Western and Central Europe as well as in the United States. Indeed, in his interpretation of twentieth-century European history, Mark Mazower has argued that the idea of liberal democracy "was virtually extinct" by the late 1930s.[2] Given the renaissance of liberal democracy an exploration of postwar European history in light of larger questions about the inherently fragile nature of democracy as a way of life is a task for scholars interested in the future of representative government, the rule of law, and of the idea of a liberal polity.[3] And yet, a noticeable hesitation is discernible among historians in addressing larger questions about the contingent nature of democracy. My aim is to encourage more studies that explicitly explore the contingency and fragility of representative government and the rule of law. Given the somewhat elusive nature of such large questions, the arguments advanced in this essay are best understood as tentative, even speculative, but hopefully as suggestive. As an attempt to foster a genuinely historical understanding of liberal democracy the following reflections freely draw on recent scholarship on postwar Germany.

Against the backdrop of recent interpretations of the interwar and war years that emphasize how widespread the disenchantment with representative government and the rule of law was all over Western Europe (as well as in the United States), this essay draws on the concept of "moral history" to shed new light on postwar German history.[4]

Zimmer, as well as the journal editors for their willingness to listen to and engage with the working out of the ideas presented in this article.

[2] Mazower, *Dark Continent*, p. 5; see also: Horst Möller, "Gefährdungen der Demokratie. Aktuelle Probleme in historischer Sicht," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55 (2007), no. 3, pp. 379-391, esp. 382-383.

[3] Charles Maier, "Democracy since the French Revolution," in John Dunn ed., *Democracy. The Unfinished Journey* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 125-154; Ian Shapiro, *The Moral Foundations of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Nadia Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006); Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); John Keane, *The Life and Death of Democracy* (New York: Norton, 2009); Paolo Flores D'Arcais, *Die Demokratie beim Wort nehmen. Der Souverän und der Dissident. Politisch-philosophischer Essay für anspruchsvolle Bürger* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2004), esp. p. 16.

[4] On moral history see note 5 below. On the interwar and war years see Mazower, *The Dark Continent*; Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2001). Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation, 1940-1945* (London: Macmillan, 2002); Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci ed., *L' homme nouveau dans l'Europe fasciste (1922-1945): Entre dictature et totalitarisme* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Dietrich Orlow, *The Lure of Fascism in Western Europe: German Nazis, Dutch and French Fascists, 1933-1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Walter Struve, Elites *against Democracy: Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), Möller, "Gefährdungen der Demokratie," esp. pp. 382-383; Nigel Townson, *The Crisis of Democracy in Spain: Centrist politics under the Second Republic, 1931-1936* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2000); Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father*

Key questions include: How did concepts of civility, morality and manners, of trust and civic virtue foster or threaten the "unsocial sociability" of citizens (Immanuel Kant)? How were bonds of belonging imagined and formed and what role did they play in producing a sense of the self? When and why were these bonds torn? How did moral dramas, conflicts over manners, and controversies over ethics—in the wake of genocide and total war—shape the larger story of a fledgling democracy that was the Federal Republic?

Democratic Passions and Nazi Morality

To invoke the concept of moral history is not to suggest that we would do well to write the history of postwar Germany from the vantage point of contemporary morality. Nor should moral history, as Michael Geyer and John Boyer have pointed out, be "mistaken for either a judgmental and incriminating or a melodramatic history." Instead, the concept directs our attention to how central conceptions of morality, moral passions, and moral practices were to the search for democracy in the shadow of man-made mass death. "Above all," Geyer and Boyer note, "moral history engages in a debate on violence. It finds its supreme challenge in an age that is marked by genocidal confrontations." If moral history sheds light on how "institutions, groups of people, and individuals … renew the social bonds that constitute communities and nations and the integrity of their 'body politic'," such an endeavor is indispensable to the analysis of postwar German history and perhaps postwar European history generally.[5]

Coughlin and the Great Depression (New York, 1982); Glen Jeansonne, *Gerald L.K. Smith: Minister of Hate* (New Haven, 1988); Mark Christian Thompson, *Black Fascisms: African American literature and culture between the wars* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Benjamin L. Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture. Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy* (Chapel Hill, NC 2003); Wolf Lepenies has recently reminded us of the pan-European dimension of fascism's "aesthetic appeal"; Lepenies, "Overestimating Culture: A German Problem. Exile and Emigration, The Survival of German Culture," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 121 (2003): 235-256, esp. 243-245. For a welcome contrast see Giovanni Capoccia, *Defending Democracy. Reactions to Extremism in Interwar Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2005). For contemporary Anglo-American reflections see especially Harold J. Laski, *Democracy in Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC 1935), Moritz Julius Bonn, *The Crisis of European Democracy* (New Haven, 1925), and John Dewey, "The Public and Its Problems," Idem, The Later Works, Vol. 2: 1925-1927 (Carbondale, IL 1984), pp. 235-374, Max Lerner, *It Is Later Than You Think. The Need for a Militant Democracy* (New York: Viking Pr., 1938), and Ignazio Silone, *The School for Dictators*, with a preface by the author to the new edition (New York: Atheneum, 1963; first published: London, Jonathan Cape 1939).

[5] Michael Geyer and John W. Boyer, "Resistance against the Third Reich as Intercultural Knowledge," in eidem eds., *Resistance against the Third Reich, 1933-1990* (Journal of Modern History, Supplement), Chicago 1994, pp. 1-11, quotations: pp. 7-9; Victoria Kahn, Neil Saccamano and Daniela

Languages of morality invoke the juxtaposition of good and evil, the distinction between right and wrong, and the difference between vice and virtue. Yet are such binary oppositions primarily based on reason, as Habermasian proponents of a discourse theory of ethics seem to imply? In his inaugural lecture of 1965, "Knowledge and Human Interest," postwar Germany's most influential political philosopher called for a rational basis for collective life which could only be achieved when "social relations were organized 'according to the principle that the validity of every norm of political consequence be made dependent on a consensus arrived at in communication free of domination.'" In both substance and style such arguments raise the question whether fantasies of the "forceless force of the better argument" are perhaps best understood as a form of magical thinking embedded in the austere rationality that was characteristic of postwar German political theory.[6] Particularly to foreign commentators, Habermas

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Coli eds., *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006); Steven Lukes, *Moral Relativism* (New York: Picador, 2008); George Cotkin, "History's Moral Turn," in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69 (2008), pp. 293-315; idem, *Morality's Muddy Waters. Ethical Quandaries in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal eds., *The Moral Authority of Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Roman Dilcher et al., "Moralisch-amoralisch," in Karlheinz Barck et al eds., *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Historisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart, 2002), pp. 183-224; Dieter Kliche, "Passion/Leidenschaft," in *ibid.*, pp. 684-724; Didier Fassin, "Les économies morales revisitées," in *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 64 (2009), no. 6, pp. 1237-1266; Mariella Pandolfi and Vincent Crapanzano eds., "Passion politique," special issue of *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 32 (2008), no. 3 (among the essays see especially Giulia Sissa, "Postface: Passions politiques, un défi pour l'anthropologie contemporaine", pp. 173-177); Raymond Massé ed., "Anthropologie de la morale et de l'éthique," special issue of *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 33 (2009), no. 3; José Brunner ed., *Politische Leidenschaften: Zur Verknüpfung von Macht, Emotion und Vernunft in Deutschland* (Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte, vol. 38, 2010). While my reflections are indebted to the burgeoning field of the history of emotions, my aim is more modest. What I hope to draw attention to is less the historical significance of emotions as such, but that of moral sentiments, passions, and fears more specifically. Even if the concept of "moral sentiments" seems quaint at first, it may prove useful to explore avenues that avoid the two pitfalls in the history of emotions that Sophia Rosenfeld has recently identified. Scholars, Rosenfeld notes, should be "equally wary of banal, unsubstantiated assertions of mood … [and] the direct application of either turn-of-the-century psychoanalysis or contemporary neuropsychology to the analysis of historical phenomena." See Rosenfeld, "Thinking about Feeling, 1789–1799," in *French Historical Studies* 32 (2009), no. 4: 697-706, quotation: 703. On the history of emotions generally William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge 2001); Ute Frevert, "Was haben Gefühle in der Geschichte zu suchen?" in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 35 (2009), pp. 183-208; Jan Plamper, "The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns," in *History and Theory* 49 (2010), pp. 237–265, Frank Biess, Alon Confino et al., "Forum: History of Emotions," in *German History* 28 (2010), pp. 67-80.

[6] Stephen K. White, "Reason, Modernity, and Democracy," in Stephen K. White ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 3-16, quotation p. 6 (Zitat im Zitat: Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interest [Boston: Beacon Press, 1971], p. 284). To my knowledge Habermas first uses the phrase "forceless of force of the better argument" in his: "Vorbereitende Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie der kommunikativen Kompetenz", in idem and Niklas Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie*, Frankfurt 1971, p. 137. Generally see Clemens Albrecht et al. eds., *Die intellektuelle Gründung der Bundesrepublik. Eine Wirkungsgeschichte der Frankfurter Schule* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000); Martin J. Matustík, *Jürgen Habermas. A*

seemed like "a rationalistic utopian who measures the crooked timber of humanity against standards gained by viewing it *sub specie emancipationis*."[7]

Discourse ethics, it seems, evaded the question of moral incommensurability through an attempt to make passion the slave of reason. This school of moral philosophy is perhaps best understood against the background of post-Fascist sensitivities that responded to a specific (historical and, therefore, contingent) understanding of Nazism as the triumph of passions over reason.[8] And, if so, are distinctions between right and wrong as well as conceptions of justice and freedom more fruitfully conceptualized as political passions, as what David Hume labeled "moral sentiments"?

Hume believed that moral distinctions result not from sober reasoning but derive from feelings of approval and disapproval. Morality, he emphasized, is "more properly felt than judg'd of."[9] In response to controversies over whether conceptions of vice and virtue were innate or conventional, the Scottish philosopher argued that whereas some

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Philosophical-Political Profile (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), and Matthew G. Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010).

[7] Michael Rosen, "Utopia in Frankfurt," in *Times Literary Supplement* October 8, 1999, pp. 3-4. For an attempt to analyze "the extent to which Habermas' work situates itself in the particularities of the German situation since the 1940s" see: Max Pensky, "Universalism and the Situated Critic," in White ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, pp. 67-94, quotation p. 67. See also idem, "Jürgen Habermas and the Antinomies of the Intellectual," in Peter Dews ed., *Habermas: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1999), pp. 211-240, esp. p. 221. For an analysis of the context in which to situate the skeptical sobriety inherent in Habermasian discourse ethics see Nina Verheyen, *Diskussionslust. Eine Kulturgeschichte des „besseren Arguments" in Westdeutschland* (Göttingen, 2010). The first scholars to call attention to the problematic implications of Habermas' emphasis on rationality were, of course, feminist philosophers such as Alison M. Jaggar, Susan Moller Okin, and Nancy Fraser.

[8] As Matthias Iser and David Strecker note, Habermas' conception of deliberative democracy is driven by an "Ablehnung einer Politik, die statt auf Argumente auf Gefühle oder ästhetische Erfahrungen setzt—wie etwa die Inszenierung der nationalsozialistischen Parteitage." Eidem, *Jürgen Habermas. Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2010), p. 22. The nexus between the memory of Nazism and discourse ethics is more explicit in the work of Habermas' close interlocutor Karl-Otto Apel; see his "Zurück zur Normalität? - Oder könnten wir aus der nationalen Katastrophe etwas Besonderes gelernt haben? Das Problem des (welt-)geschichtlichen Übergangs zur postkonventionellen Moral aus spezifisch deutscher Sicht," in idem, *Diskurs und Verantwortung: Das Problem des Übergangs zur postkonventionellen Moral* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 370-474, esp. pp. 372-373. Generally see Dirk A. Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), esp. pp. 105-130.

[9] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton, Oxford philosophical texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 301 (book 3, pt.1, sect. 2). My understanding of Humean moral philosophy and its uses for an analysis of the place of moral sentiments and political passions in postwar Germany is indebted to Annette C. Baier's work; see especially *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), and *The Cautious Jealous Virtue: Hume on Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); see also Rachel Cohon, "Hume's Moral Philosophy," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; entry updated in August 2010 (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/). I owe a huge debt to Neil Saccamano, Cornell University, for his advice on Hume's moral philosophy; see also idem, "Parting with Prejudice. Hume, Identity, and Aesthetic Universality," in Kahn et al. eds., *Politics and the Passions*, pp. 175-195.

ethical distinctions were "natural," others were "artificial." The latter, like justice, fidelity, modesty, and good manners, were artificial in the sense that they grow out of the quotidian encounters among citizens, be they impersonal, harmonious, or contentious. Yet, if artificial virtues are "entirely artificial, and of human invention" (338), such moral sentiments are simultaneously a prerequisite for, and a result of, the quotidian encounters and conflicts between citizens, practices Immanuel Kant would soon label the unsocial sociability of citizens. The "artifice" of moral sentiments that grow out of civic sociability gives rise to a form of "restraint" that is not "contrary to the passions," but "only contrary to their heedless and impetuous movement." Artifical virtues such as justice and good manners therefore cannot transcend the natural "partiality of our affections," but allow citizens to develop the elementary skills of restraining and checking selfishness and resentment (314).[10]

Even if Kant rather than Hume served as the guiding light of postwar German moral philosophy, the Scottish philosopher's reflections on moral sentiments are helpful for our understanding of a democratic polity in the shadow of violence.[11] For, if Hume is right, insights into the emotional basis of morality and the passions that inform conceptions of justice and equality are critical to any analysis of the fragile nature of liberal democracy. Such ruminations may seem superfluous to those who view democracy as a formal system of governance. They seem indispensable, however, if one subscribes to a pragmatist conception of "Democracy as a Way of Life" or a thick constitutionalism informed by a "Liberalism of Fear." As Judith Shklar put it, this is a nonutopian liberalism that abandons the idea of "a *summum bonum*" toward which everyone should strive, and instead begins "with a *summum malum*," namely "cruelty

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[10] David Hume, "Of the origin of justice and property," in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton, Oxford philosophical texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 301 (book 3, pt. 2, sect. 2), pp. 311-322, quotations: p. 314; for a provocative reading of the dictinction between natural and artificial virtues see: Annette Baier, "Hume's Account of Social Artifice: Its Origins and Originality," in eadem, *Cautious Jealous Virtue*, pp. 123-148, esp. 124-125.

[11]   For the three decades between 1960 and 1990, the "Philosopher's Index" lists a total of 445 German-language essays on ethics; among these scholarly publications 93 invoke Immanuel Kant whereas only 4 invoke David Hume. For the following two decades, the same index lists 1458 German-language essays on ethics out of which 240 refer to Kant and only 9 to Hume. A look at essays published in English also suggests a preponderance of Kant; the ration, however, is far less striking: 919 to 353 for the period between 1960 and 1990, and 1499 to 513 since 1991. World Cat lists exactly one German-language publication on "David Hume" and "Ethics" as subject headings published between 1950 and 1980, as opposed to 84 on Kantian ethics. The ratio for books published in English in the same period is 63 on Hume and 136 on Kant.

and the fear it inspires, and the very fear of fear itself."[12] In light of the far-reaching destruction of civil society, the pervasiveness of violence, not to mention genocidal warfare prior to May 1945, it is remarkable that—within barely two to three decades— (West) Germans not only came to accept a "thin" conception of democracy, i.e. as formal system of governance, but increasingly embraced a "thick" conception of democracy. This unlikely renaissance of democracy would have been unthinkable had they not begun to cherish "Democracy as a Way of Life"—to borrow the felicitous phrase of Sidney Hook. In 1939, at the height of the disenchantment with democracy during the interwar years, the pragmatist philosopher argued that democracy needed to be based on "an affirmation of certain attitudes" that were "more important than any particular set of institutions": the belief in the "intrinsic … dignity" of every individual, the belief "in the value of difference, variety and uniqueness," and a "faith in some method" by which conflicts between irreconcilable and incommensurable moral passions can be hedged in and regulated.[13]

To speak of moral history and allude to the concept of morality within a genuinely historical analysis of postwar Germany reflects a conscious decision not to perpetuate the seemingly self-evident and well-established distinction between ethics and morality. Instead, I am particularly interested in what happens when we call into question the distinction between morality, often associated with restrictive if not repressive regimes of bourgeois or petty bourgeois morality, on the one hand, and the allegedly more respectable and dignified realm of ethics, on the other. What I encourage is therefore not an analysis of abstract ethical ideals but an exploration of the entanglement of, and the shady areas between, on the one hand, manners and civility, and on the other, sociability and the political. Historians, in other words, need not turn into philosophers; instead they have something to offer to the minority of moral

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[12] Judith Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," in eadem, *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, Stanley Hoffmann ed. Foreword by George Kateb (Chicago, 1998), pp. 3-20, quotation pp. 10-11; eadem, "Putting Cruelty First," in *Daedalus* 111 (1982), No. 3: 17-27; Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in idem, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 118-172; Bernard Williams, "The Liberalism of Fear," in idem, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument*, ed. by Geoffrey Hawthorn (Princeton, NJ, 2005), pp. 52-61; for recent examples that this intellectual tradition is alive and well see the work of Jacob T. Levy and George Kateb.

[13] Sidney Hook, "Democracy as a Way of Life," *Tomorrow in the Making*, John N. Andrews and Carl A. Marsden eds. (New York: Whittlesey House, 1939), pp. 31-46, quotations: 42-44. Hook obviously sought to popularize Dewey's conception of democracy as experience; see William R. Caspary, *Dewey on Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), and Robert B. Westbrook, *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

philosophers who, as Mary Douglas put it, "have tried to incorporate into their account of morals the notion that humans are social beings and that their essential moral ideas (not just the local, culturally specific, and dispensable ones) are the result of negotiated conventions,"—and therefore the product of history.[14]

There are, conventionally, two ways of reasoning about morality. One tries to arrive at viable generalizations regarding what should be valued, usually under all circumstances and by all right-minded people—as long as they don a Rawlsian "veil of ignorance". This is known as normative reasoning. Another attempts to describe the morals, ethics and evaluative procedures that individuals and occasionally communities in fact adhere to, putting aside the question of whether those values are really worth having. This line of reasoning is descriptive rather than normative. Although this distinction between normative and descriptive ways of reasoning appears to be self-evident, the boundaries are often blurred.[15] Scholars of moral history cannot be expected to set their own moral passions aside. Close to three centuries of reflections on not just the inevitability, but the necessity of inherently subjective viewpoints and vantage points for any form of historical knowledge suggests that this is impossible. Instead, the challenge historians of moral sentiments face, is how to transform their own moral passions and fears into what Siegfried Kracauer identified as the key qualification for scholars in the humanities, namely "moral ingenuity." In "History: The Last Things Before the Last" Kracauer argued that an adequate study of the historian's world "calls for the efforts of a self as rich in facets as the affairs reviewed."[16] If he is right we need to carefully draw on our own fantasies and fears, desires and demons that emerge out of the moral dramas and moral incommensurabilities of our present rather than putting them aside when we write the history of moral passions in postwar Germany.

To study the entanglement of democracy and intimacy in postwar Germany from the vantage point of moral history seems particularly compelling in light of the fact that historians have begun to reject interpretations of Nazism (as well as fascism and Stalinism) as amoral and barbaric. In recent years, Claudia Koonz, Alon Confino, Peter

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[14] Mary Douglas, "Morality and Culture," in *Ethics* 93 (1983), no. 4: 786-791; quotation: 791.

[15] Steven Connor, "Honour bound?" in *Times Literary Supplement*, January 5, 1996, pp. 24-26; Konrad Ott, *Moralbegründungen. Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2005), p. 7.

[16] Kracauer, *History: Last Things before the Last*, p. 62; see also Johann Gustav Droysen, "Historik. Die Vorlesungen von 1857," in idem, *Historik. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Peter Leyh, (Stuttgart 1977), pp. 107-108.

Fritzsche and Raphael Gross have emphasized that the Third Reich drew on ethical concepts and moral passions, that Nazism possessed "a 'moral foundation'—at least in the eyes of Nazis and their followers."[17] It is misleading therefore to interpret the Holocaust as the result of "weakened moral values." On the contrary, as Confino has noted, moral passions "helped create the extreme war conditions."[18] The monstrosity of Nazi crimes should not distract us from an analysis of how central passions of love and fear, dreams of salvation and redemption as well as concepts of justice and liberty, humanity and peace were to Nazi morality. Unless we acknowledge the moral foundation of Nazism we cannot begin to understand the twisted paths Germans took as they came to embrace democracy as a way life.[19]

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[17] On Stalinism see the recent work by Jochen Hellbeck, Stephen Kotkin, or Karl Schlögel; on Vichy France see Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation, 1940-1945* (London : Macmillan, 2002); Patrick Buisson, *1940-1945, Années érotiques. Vichy ou les infortunes de la vertu* (Paris: Michel, 2008); on Nazi Germany: Raphael Gross, "Relegating Nazism to the Past. Expressions of German Guilt in 1945 and beyond," in *German History* 25. 2007, 219-238, quotation: 221; idem, *Anständig geblieben. Nationalsozialistische Moral* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2010); Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003); Alon Confino, "Fantasies about the Jews. Cultural Reflections on the Holocaust," in *History & Memory* 17 (2005), no. 1-2, pp. 296-322; Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); idem and Jochen Hellbeck, "The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany," in Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick eds., *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 302-341, and Sheila Fitzpatrick and Alf Lüdtke, "Energizing the Everyday: On the Breaking and Making of Social Bonds in Nazism and Stalinism," in *Beyond Totalitarianism*, pp. 266-301; Andrew Stuart Bergerson, *Ordinary Germans in Extraordinary Times. The Nazi Revolution in Hildesheim* (Bloomington, IN 2004); interventions by philosophers include Rolf Zimmermann, *Moral als Macht. Eine Philosophie der historischen Erfahrung* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt-Taschenbuch-Verl., 2008), Wolfgang Bialas, "Die moralische Ordnung des Nationalsozialismus. Zum Zusammenhang von Philosophie, Ideologie und Moral," in Werner Konitzer and Raphael Gross ed., *Moralität des Bösen. Ethik und nationalsozialistische Verbrechen* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2009), pp. 30-60; André Mineau, *Operation Barbarossa: Ideology and Ethics against Human Dignity* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004); idem ed., "Ethics and the Holocaust," special issue of *The European Legacy* 12 (2007), no. 7.

[18] Confino, "Fantasies about the Jews," p. 300.

[19] This is, of course, hardly an original insight. "Seit einem halben Jahrhundert," Helmuth Plessner noted in 1962, "erlebt die in Staaten zerklüfftete Welt eine Epoche von Blut und Gewalt, die, wollte man sie als Rückfall in die Barbarei bezeichnen, gewissermaßen noch eine Unschuldsmiene aufgesetzt bekäme. Die Greuel der Massenvernichtung und der Hexensabbat der Konzentrationslager können kaum als Regression begriffen werden." Helmuth Plessner, "Die Emanzipation der Macht," in idem, *Macht und menschliche Natur. Gesammelte Schriften 5* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp. 259-282, quotation p. 280. The essay first appeared in Heinz Haller et al., *Von der Macht. Hannoversche Beiträge zur politischen Bildung 2* (Hannover: Niedersächsischen Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1962), pp. 7-25, and was immediately republished in the journal *Merkur* 16 (1962), pp. 907-924. On how central such institutions for "Politische Bildung" were see: Dieter K. Buse, "The 'Going' of the Third Reich: Recivilizing Germans through Political Education," in *German Politics & Society* 26 (2008), no. 1, pp. 29-56. See also "Politische Psychologie. Eine Schriftenreihe," eight volumes of which appeared between 1963 and 1969, including: Walter Jacobsen et al., *Politische Psychologie als Aufgabe unserer Zeit.* Politische Psychologie, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: EVA, 1963); Wanda von Bayer-Kaette et al. eds., *Autoritarismus und Nationalismus, ein deutsches Problem?* Politische Psychologie, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: EVA, 1963); René König et al. eds., *Vorurteile. Ihre Erforschung und ihre Bekämpfung*. Politische Psychologie, vol. 3 (Frankfurt: Europ. Verlag.-Anst., 1964); Peter Brückner et al. eds., *Politische*

When embarking on such an endeavor, we would do well not to lose sight of national specificities: once the focus shifts to those countries of Western Europe that were to play a key role in the early postwar search for democracy and reconciliation, it becomes clear, for example, that Germany and Italy share certain peculiarities that set them apart from their partners with whom they built the European community—such as Belgium, the Netherlands, and France or Britain. True, by 1930, a general disenchantment with the idea of liberal democracy could be found all over Western Europe as well as in the United States. It was "remarkable," the French essayist Paul Valéry noted in 1934 in a special issue on "Dictatures et Dictateurs" of the quarterly *Témoignages de notre temps*, that "the idea of dictatorship is as contagious today, as the idea of freedom was in days gone by". ("Il est remarquable que la dictature soit à présent contagieuse, comme le fut jadis la liberté.")[20] What is peculiar about Germany (and Italy) within the context of Western Europe is not that they were only fragile democratic polities in the wake of World War I, but that both societies willfully destroyed parliamentary rule. Nazism and Fascism, whatever their differences, were "homemade" North and South of the Alps. Both countries voluntarily dismantled representative government, the rule of law and liberal institutions generally and opted for dictatorship, a charismatic leader and a style of politics that was at once utopian and paranoid and which would lead to mass-murder, total war, and, in the case of Nazi Germany, genocide.[21]

I. In the Wake of Real Evil

From their earliest formulations, democratic citizenship rites and concepts of civility have reflected at once the tension between diversity and civility as well as the entanglement of democracy and intimacy. On the one hand, they demand some

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Erziehung als psychologisches Problem. Politische Psychologie, vol. 4, (Frankfurt: EVA, 1966); Thomas Ellwein, "Was hat die politische Bildung erreicht?" in Theodor Pfizer eds., *Bürger im Staat. Politische Bildung im Wandel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971); idem, "Politische Bildung," in Josef Speck and Gerhard Wehle eds., *Handbuch pädagogischer Grundbegriffe*, vol. 2 (München: Kösel, 1970), pp. 330-346.

[20] Paul Valéry, "Au sujet de la dictature," Idem, *Œuvres*, vol. 2, Jean Hytier ed. (Paris, 1960), pp. 977-981, quotation: p. 981

[21] For a primer on comparing postwar Germany and Italy see Charles A. Maier, "Italien und Deutschland nach 1945. Von der Notwendigkeit des Vergleichs," in Gian Enrico Rusconi and Hans Woller eds., *Parallele Geschichte? Italien und Deutschland 1945-2000* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2006), pp. 35-53.

renunciation or sacrifice of prior allegiances to family or region, religion or estates; on the other hand, human and civil rights allow for, and encourage, expressions of "democratic individuality" (George Kateb) that give rise to an intricate structure of difference within which cultural tensions, political enmities and economic conflicts can be negotiated.[22] Indeed, the challenge for any democratic polity lies in the ability of its citizens to construct a public space that both encourages the "unsocial sociability" of citizens and recognizes their right to be different.[23]

If some of the following arguments are relevant for a more general understanding of liberal democracy, there are also elements to the story that are peculiar to postwar Germany. Unlike other postwar Europeans, West Germans could not invoke a rich memory of popular resistance against Nazism in order to salvage national traditions. As a result, their sense of moral catastrophe and rupture was more pressing. Building on the large body of scholarship that has explored how Germans and Europeans got into fascism and Nazism, war and genocide, this essay draws on Dan Diner's argument that postwar German (and European) history is an era after a "rupture with civilization," a breach that seemed to call into question if not to invalidate liberal or secular humanist, Christian, conservative or socialist conceptions of morality.[24] When the war ended and the camps were liberated Lord Acton's dictum of 1895 that "the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity" seemed like it had been made centuries ago.[25] At the very moment when humiliation, cruelty, and mass murder on a scale well beyond the power

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[22] George Kateb, "Introduction: Individual Rights and Democratic Individuality," in *The Inner Ocean. Individualism and Democratic Culture* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 1-35.

[23] Immanuel Kant, "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht (1784)," in idem, *Schriften zur Ästhetik und Naturphilosophie. Text und Kommentar*, eds. Manfred Frank u. Véronique Zanetti, Bd. 1, Frankfurt 2001, pp. 321-338, quotation from pp. 325-326. For a useful primer on the essay see the contributions to Amélie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt eds., *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), especially Allen Wood, "Kant' s Fourth Proposition: The Unsociable Sociability of Human Nature," pp. 112-128, and Jerome Schneewind, "Good Out of Evil: Kant and the Idea of Unsocial Sociability," pp. 94-111. For postwar German attempts to breath new life into Kant's concept of unsocial sociability see especially: Helmuth Plessner, "Ungesellige Geselligkeit. Anmerkungen zu einem Kantischen Begriff," in Karl Dietrich Bracher et al. eds., *Die moderne Demokratie und ihr Recht. Festschrift Gerhard Leibholz*, vol. 1: Grundlagen (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), pp. 383-392, and Christian von Krockow, "Grenzen der Gemeinschaft," in *Gesellschaft, Staat, Erziehung. Zeitschrift für politische Bildung und Erziehung* 2 (1957): 340-347.

[24] Dan Diner, "*Rupture in Civilization*: On the Genesis and Meaning of a Concept in Understanding," in Moshe Zimmermann ed., *On Germans and Jews under the Nazi Regime. Essays by three Generations of Historians* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2006), pp. 33-48

[25] Lord Acton, Inaugural Lecture on the Study of History, 1906 (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1906acton.html); quoted in: Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth-Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 1.

of human imagination tested Acton's moral certainties they proved ephemeral and unreliable. In light of the most violent and destructive period in German history, many would have agreed with Adorno's poignant observation that postwar reflections on morality would have to start with an "attempt to make conscious the critique of moral philosophy, the critique of its options and an awareness of its antinomies."[26]

The insight that the cataclysmic violence of the war years challenged any sort of moral certainties let alone a Eurocentric moral triumphalism was not a distinct feature of critical theory but a pervasive sentiment in postwar Europe. Take the Polish writer Tadeusz Borowski who survived more than two years in Auschwitz and other camps. In May 1945, he found himself as one of millions of DPs just outside Munich, in a West Germany that he recalls as an "incredible, almost comical, melting-pot of peoples and nationalities sizzling dangerously in the very heart of Europe." Like other survivors, Borowski "did not know where to turn" and found himself under the command and protection of "young American boys, equally stupefied and equally shocked at what they had found in Europe." They

> had come like the crusaders to conquer and convert the European continent, and after they had finally settled in the occupation zones, they proceeded with dead seriousness to teach the distrustful, obstinate German bourgeoisie the democratic game of baseball and to instill in them the principles of profit-making by exchanging cigarettes, chewing gum, contraceptives and chocolate bars for cameras, gold teeth, watches and women.[27]

Along with three other Polish survivors of the camps, Borowski managed to escape American tutelage and secure an apartment in Munich in the fall of 1945 where they hosted a "certain Polish poet … his wife and mistress (a philologist)". At the time, Borowski was at work on his book, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, short stories about daily life in Auschwitz. When he shared a draft with the famous poet, the latter found it "much too gloomy and definitely lacking faith in mankind." In a word, Lord Acton's moral certainties clashed with the moral sentiments of the witnesses to the life of the concentration camps:

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[26] Theodor W. Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*. Ed. Thomas Schroder. Translated by Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 167.

[27] Tadeusz Borowski, "The January Offensive (1948)," in idem, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp. 164-168, quotations: pp. 164-165. On Borowski, who served as the model for "Beta" in Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (London : Secker & Warburg, 1953) see Dariusz Tolczyk, "Hunger of the Imagination: Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski, Tadeusz Borowski, and the Twentieth-Century House of the Dead," *Literary Imagination* 3 (2001), no. 3, pp. 340-362.

The four of us became involved in a heated discussion with the poet, his silent wife and his mistress (the philologist), by maintaining that in this war morality, national solidarity, patriotism and the ideals of freedom, justice and human dignity had all slid off man like a rotten rag. We said that there is no crime that a man will not commit in order to save himself. And, having saved himself, he will commit crimes for increasingly trivial reasons; he will commit them first out of duty, then from habit, and finally – for pleasure.

We told them with much relish all about our difficult, patient, concentration-camp existence which had taught us that the whole world is really like the concentration camp; the weak work for the strong, and if they have no strength or will to work – then let them steal, or let them die.

The world is ruled by neither justice nor morality; crime is not punished nor virtue rewarded, one is forgotten as quickly as the other. The world is ruled by power and power is obtained with money. To work is senseless, because money cannot be obtained through work but through exploitation of others. And if we cannot exploit as much as we wish, at least let us work as little as we can. Moral duty? We believe neither in the morality of man, nor in the morality of systems. In German cities the store windows are filled with books and religious objects, but the smoke from the crematoria still hovers above the forests.[28]

Another commentator who believed that the cataclysmic violence of the mid twentieth century constituted a rupture in the history of morality and was best understood historically was Hannah Arendt. In a public lecture of February 1965, she based her reflections on moral philosophy on the insight that both Nazism and Stalinism had called into question the seemingly self-evident distinctions between right and wrong.[29] Such certainties, she noted had

collapsed almost overnight, and then it was as though morality suddenly stood revealed in the original meaning of the word, as a set of mores, customs and manners, which could be exchanged for another set with hardly more trouble than it would take to change the table manners of an individual or a people. (740)

Yet if Stalinist Russia was a case in point, "German developments" were "much more extreme and perhaps also more revealing," Arendt argued: "There is not only the gruesome fact of elaborately established death factories and the utter absence of hypocrisy" among those "involved in the extermination program. Equally important, but perhaps more frightening, was the matter of-course collaboration from all strata of German society." (743) The dazzling riches of the economic miracle could not exorcize the ghosts this moral cataclysm had engendered. "We witnessed the total collapse of a

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28 Tadeusz Borowski, "The January Offensive," p. 168. Generally see Tzvetan Todorov, *Face à l'extrême* (La couleur des idées), Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1991; translated as *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camp* (New York: Holt 1996).

29 Hannah Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," in *Social Research* 61 (1994), No. 4: pp. 739-764.

'moral' order," Arendt argued, and the "sudden return to 'normality,' contrary to what is often complacently assumed, can only reinforce our doubts." (744-745). Postwar Germans needed to face their complicity in "real evil," in "sadism, the sheer pleasure in causing and contemplating pain and suffering." This "vice of all vices" needed to be distinguished from "radical evil" which "comes from the depths of despair" and is embodied by Lucifer "the light-bearer, a Fallen Angel." To confront the historical realm of "real evil" as opposed to the literary and philosophical realm of "radical evil," she concluded, leads to "speechless horror, when all you can say is: This should never have happened." (761 and 763)

And yet this inversion of morality had happened, and it is therefore hardly surprising that moral doubts, fears, and questions were at the heart of larger postwar European obsessions of how to establish stable democracies and "avoid repeating the political breakdowns of the interwar period."[30] Against this backdrop, then, this essay is a plea for a moral history, a history of how Germans and Europeans freed themselves from the experiences of mass murder and mass death, and how they came to embrace democracy as a way of life. I am less interested, in short, in revisiting the political effects of the economic miracle or of American military and cultural presence, than in opening up new avenues for studying the unexpected "political miracle" of West Germany's "democratic moment" within the context of Western Europe's "Velvet Revolution" of the 1950s and 1960s (Mark Lilla).[31] Whereas many studies explore the six postwar decades within a framework of Americanization and Westernization or Sovietization, Liberalization or Democratization, I would like to call attention to the more peculiar aspects of German history since the "Zero Hour." As a point of departure I think we need to abandon these concepts. Such inherently teleological and normatively charged categories, alas, have a way of changing from valiant attempts at interpretation into opiates. "Conscientious historians," Siegfried Kracauer noted, should try to make do

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[30] Jan-Werner Müller, "A European Constitutional Patriotism? On Memory, Militancy, and Morality," in idem, *Constitutional Patriotism* (Princeton, 2007), p. 15.

[31] Mark Lilla, "The Other Velvet Revolution: Continental Liberalism and Its Discontents," in *Daedalus* 123 (1994), no. 2: 129-157; see also Martin Conway, "The Rise and Fall of Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945–1973," in *Contemporary European History* 13 (2004), no. 1: 67-88; the phrase "democratic moment" is a nod to Philip Nord whose analysis of the making of a democratic culture in nineteenth-century France informs my understanding of postwar Europe; see idem, *The Republican Moment. Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass. 1995).

without such "ideological props or crutches", an observation that is particularly lucid and relevant in the field of moral history.[32]

II. Hemiplegic Citizens – Postwar Peculiarities

If the quest for "normality" characterized other postwar European societies as well, fantasies of normality took on a peculiar flavour in postwar Germans' search for democracy as a way of life. While citizens of most countries pride themselves on being different, postwar Germans since 1949 have longed to be normal. In 1960, the liberal journalist Klaus Harpprecht noted that German fantasies about their "exceptionalism" (*Besonderheit*) had withered after the total defeat of 1945. Postwar Germans "have had enough of standing apart, in splendid or miserable isolation." If they spoke about the past, they viewed it as a "time of life-threatening illness (and indeed, whenever 'the past' is mentioned, unspecified, then what is meant is the war and the Nazi era)." To hold such memories at bay, Germans had developed a "boring longing for normality." Foreign observers, therefore, were surprised that they could no longer distinguish Germans

in the restaurants of European capitals from other continental Europeans *at first glance . . .* as they now looked like everyone else, though perhaps they could be recognized *at a second glance*, since they wanted to be even more unremarkable than the others.[33]

Small wonder than that critics of the European Union would quip that the label European was no more than a "euphemism for Germans traveling abroad."[34] More than

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[32] Siegfried Kracauer, *History: Last Things before the Last* (Oxford 1969; reprinted Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1995), p. 170.

[33] Klaus Harpprecht, "Die Lust zur Normalität," in *Magnum. Zeitschrift für das moderne Leben*, no. 29 (April 1960), pp. 17-19, quotation: p. 18 (Harpprecht, né 1927, had been an American prisoner-of-war camp in 1945, having spent the previous two years as a flak volunteer and artillery soldier); see also Reinhard Mohr, "Total normal? Der Streit zwischen Martin Walser und Ignatz Bubis wühlt die Nation auf," in *Der Spiegel*, November 30, 1998, no. 49: pp. 40-47. Groundbreaking is the work of Jürgen Link; see his "Normal/Normalität/Normalismus," in Karlheinz Barck et al eds., *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe* vol. 4, pp. 538-563; see also Julian B. Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880-1940* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2007). One of the few historians of twentieth-century Germany who defends "normality" as a useful analytical category is Jean Solchany, *L' Allemagne au XXe siècle. Entre singularité et normalité* (Paris: Presses Univ. de France, 2003); an interesting comparison is Québec between the 1950s and the 1980s. The anticlerical elites that engineered the "la révolution tranquille" fervently believed in a future in which Québec would become a "normal" society. To this day, such a desire coexists with ethno-cultural fantasies of a "société distincte" whether within Canada or in an independent nation-state. For a primer see Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison, WI: Univ. of Wisconsin Pr., 1988).

[34] Ruth O'Brien, "Foreword," in: David Marquand, The End of the West: The Once and Future Europe (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. xi.

anything postwar Germans wished to be like everyone else, to blend into Socialist or Western modernity, to become invisible citizens of a post-national Europe on either side of the Iron Curtain. Not surprisingly, the quest for normality turned out to be at once elusive and futile. Many turns in postwar German history reminded citizens of the ephemeral and inherently unstable nature of normality and the peculiar place of their country within larger trajectories of Socialist and Western modernity.

Postwar Germans' peculiar desire to become "normal" calls for methodologies and analytical approaches similar to those of scholars who explore stories of magic and miracles, of monsters and saints to understand late medieval and early modern cultures in their ways of envisioning normality and enforcing norms. Perhaps specialists in contemporary history can learn a thing or two from medievalists and early modernists who have developed methodologies and narrative techniques that assign a key role to the "creative and disruptive presence of 'the other'—the outsider, the stranger, the alien, the subversive, the radically different—in systems of power and thought" (Natalie Zemon Davis).[35] What this essay seeks to provoke is an historical awareness of particularities, of individualities, oddities, discontinuities, contrasts, and singularities, of diverse ways of belonging and being a citizen in the postwar Germanies.

This essay at once takes seriously and questions the growing sense that the history of postwar Germany can be interpreted as an astounding "success." I am less interested in challenging Axel Schildt's, Edgar Wolfrum's or Hans-Ulrich Wehler's argument that we should view the Federal Republic as a "Successful Democracy" or the notion that contemporary Germany is a "stable democracy" than in side-stepping such reasoning.[36] As a source of inspiration for an analysis of the peculiarities of postwar

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[35]   Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Quest for Michel de Certeau," *New York Review of Books*, vol. 55, no. 8 (May 15, 2008). Other than Davis and Certeau, I am also thinking of the work of Caroline Walker Bynum, Lorraine Daston, Patrick Geary, Carlo Ginzburg, Christian Jouhaud, H. C. Erik Midelfort, David Nirenberg, Christine R. Johnson, Klaus Schreiner, Philip M. Soergel, and Daniel P. Walker; for a primer see: Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger eds., *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles. Studies in the medieval and early modern imaginations* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), as well as Georges Canguilhem, "Monstrosity and the Monstrous," in *Diogenes* 10 (1962): 27-42, and idem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, 4th printing (New York: Zone Books, 1998). For an attempt to make sense of the place of obsessions in politics see Michael Jeismann ed., *Obsessionen: Beherrschende Gedanken im wissenschaftlichen Zeitalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995). For an attempt to put the idea of wonder--albeit in a more literal fashion than in this essay--at the heart of twentieth-century history see Alexander C.T. Geppert and Till Kössler eds., *Wunder: Poetik und Politik des Staunens im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011).

[36] Axel Schildt, Ankunft im Westen: Ein Essay zur Erfolgsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1999); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte Bd. 5: Bundesrepublik und DDR

Germany it is perhaps useful to turn to travelogues and letters in which émigré and rémigré commentators reflected on their postwar experiences which are often informed by a unique combination of intimate familiarity and deep knowledge on the one hand, and a sense of existential estrangement on the other.[37] To foreign observers such as Israeli journalist Amos Elon, who visited the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic during the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial in 1965, postwar Germany seemed less like a successful democracy than a country in the shadow of violence and genocide. "Millions of people live in this new world of prosperity and yet the atmosphere is less than metropolitan," Elon noted early in his amazing travelogue "Journey Through a Haunted Land," first published in 1966:

Well-dressed, well-fed people crowd the sidewalks, fill the streamlined subways and spacious streetcars … The homes of the rich are decorated with bearded Chagall Rabbis, on canvas or on paper. Formidable old knights' castles, where the Nazis once trained specially selected youths … 'to look at a thousand corpses without batting an eyelash' (Himmler) today flourish as whimsical hotels for romantically inclined tourists. Nearby international student centers conduct symposiums on 'French-German understanding' or for 'Christian-Jewish cooperation'.[38]

All over Germany a "harmless present camouflages a noxious past," Elon emphasized. The booming cities of the Ruhr to him seemed like "a double exposed negative: a pretty modern Technicolor photo superimposed on the black-grey shadows

1949-1990 (München: Beck, C H, 2008); Edgar Wolfrum, Die geglückte Demokratie. Geschichte der Bundesrepublik von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2006); Karl Christian Lammers, "Glücksfall Bundesrepublik: New Germany and the 1960s," in Contemporary European History 17 (2008): 127-134; Andreas Rödder, "Das "Modell Deutschland" zwischen Erfolgsgeschichte und Verfallsdiagnose," in: Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 54 (2006), pp. 345-363; Anthony D. Kauders, "Democratization as Cultural History, or: When is (West) German Democracy Fulfilled?" in: German History 25 (2007), pp. 240-257. On religion, a dimension central to a history of moral passions and practices that is often overlooked, see Mark Edward Ruff, "Integrating Religion into the Historical Mainstream: Recent Literature on Religion in the Federal Republic of Germany," in Central European History 42 (2009), pp. 307-337.

[37] On rémigrés in postwar Germany see Alfons Söllner, "Normative Westernization?: The impact of remigres on the foundation of political thought in post-war Germany," in Jan-Werner Müller ed., German ideologies since 1945: Studies in the political thought and culture of the Bonn Republic (New York, 2003), pp. 40-60; Marjorie Lamberti, "Returning Refugee Political Scientists and America's Democratization Program in Germany after the Second World War," in German Studies Review 31 (2008): 263-284; Irmela von der Lühe et al. eds., "Auch in Deutschland waren wir nicht wirklich zu Hause:" Jüdische Remigration nach 1945 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008), and Marita Krauss, Heimkehr in ein fremdes Land: Geschichte der Remigration nach 1945 (München: Beck, 2001).

[38] Amos Elon, Journey through a Haunted Land. The New Germany, transl. Michael Roloff (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), pp. 14-15. On how Elon came to write the book see Amos Elon, "Ein Gespräch mit Amos Elon – 20 Jahre danach," in: idem, In einem heimgesuchten Land. Berichte aus beiden Deutschland (Kleine Jüdische Bibliothek), Nördlingen: Greno, 1988, pp. 389-397. Elon recalls that German papers ran "many reviews, almost all positive." For an example see Peter Hemmerich, "Mich interessiert nur Karl Schmidt: Das Deutschlandbild eines Israeli," in Die Zeit, November 18, 1966, No. 47.

of a massacre" (p. 49). To the Israeli journalist, in short, a pervasive "moral schizophrenia" marked public life in this fledgling democracy: "At official receptions in Bonn," he noted, World War II decorations and service medals "clink and shine on the breasts of the prominent. What clinks inside? The same decorations sat on the chests of men who stood guard in Auschwitz (awards that were won there because their recipients were good at throwing cyanide gas into sealed chambers packed with screaming naked human beings)." (pp. 20-21)

Whereas Elon's metaphors may have been stark and his assessment bleak, doubts about the democratic future of postwar Germany were common currency between the mid-1940s and the early 1970s. When the "Cultural Association for the Democratic Renewal of Germany" (*Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands*) invited Theodor Heuss as the first West German politician to address an audience in Soviet occupied Germany in early 1946, he chose March 18 as the date for his speech in Berlin. On the day the revolution of 1848 had begun in Prussia, the future president of the Federal Republic offered his reflections "On Germany's Future." No matter how powerless Germans may seem in light of the total defeat of 1945, Heuss argued, they were free to decide about their future, not in the sphere of politics and the economy, but in the "spiritual and moral realm" ("Im Raum des Geistig-Moralischen"). The twelve years of Nazi rule had tainted every aspect of German life and culture. No matter how many citizens were now claiming to be dyed-in-the-wool "democrats," any attempt to construct a better polity would fail unless they realized that they were in fact absolute beginners and would have to "learn to spell out the word democracy from scratch."[39] In 1961, looking back on the first twelve years of the Federal Republic, Jürgen Habermas claimed that the young democracy was in fact an "Elective Monarchy" (*Wahlmonarchie*) about to succumb to a renewed Fascist temptation. The ubiquitous "veil of de-politicization (*Schleier der Entpolitisierung*)" was triggering a "well-known social-psychological dialectic …: that the politically indifferent masses could in fact be superficially politicized by means of coup-de-main plebiscites, and mobilized under the guidance of a rigidly authoritarian régime." Independent of other differences, many intellectuals noted the extent to which the shadow of total war,

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[39] Theodor Heuss, "Um Deutschlands Zukunft (18. März 1946)," in idem *Aufzeichnungen 1945-1947*, aus dem Nachlaß hg. und mit einer Einleitung versehen von Eberhard Pikart, (Tübingen: Wunderlich Verlag, 1966), pp. 184-208; quotations pp. 189 and 207.

genocide, and moral catastrophe lay over the fledgling democracy. "Whoever lived through the 30s and 40s as a German," the melancholy conservative Golo Mann said in a speech before the World Jewish Congress in August 1966,

can never again fully trust his nation; he cannot trust democracy any more than any other system of government; he can never again fully trust humanity, and least of all that which optimists used to call the 'meaning of history'. He will remain, regardless of how hard he may and should try, sad to the depths of his soul until he dies.[40]

Indicative for postwar German doubts about the viability of the Federal Republic as a democratic polity were, for example, anxieties over the making of morally mature citizens as well as the "moral makeover of Germans" as reflected in controversies over etiquette, childrearing, (civic) education, and cultural diplomacy since 1945.[41] In 1948, the first volume of the "Yearbook of Education," to appear after the end of the war, for example, noted "an interruption in Western civilization, with all that that implies; the question to be answered in the next ten years is whether this has been an interruption or a downfall." As might be expected such anxieties had not disappeared by 1958. Obsessions over the moral development of toddlers, the development of ethics in early childhood or the moral disorientations and possible aberrance of teenagers, fueled the intellectual passions of scholars like Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget and Alexander Mitscherlich, Benjamin Spock and Arnold Gesell in the immediate postwar years, and of Lawrence Kohlberg and Jürgen Habermas in the closing decades of the twentieth century. What such a list of luminaries obscures, moreover, is how thousands of movers and shakers in countless family and educational associations contributed to such debates. In 1952, Karl Borgmann, the editor of the monthly *Caritas* and a key figure in the Catholic laicization movement, argued that many Christians continued to support an ideal of the family that was "modeled on bygone conceptions of the state, in which citizens were governed from above and thus sentenced to enforced inactivity." In the January issue of the Catholic monthly *Frau und Mutter*, which then boasted more than half a million subscribers, Borgmann emphasized that for children to learn to "experience freedom and to live by" this ideal early on, the family should not take its

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[40] Jürgen Habermas, "Die Bundesrepublik – eine Wahlmonarchie?," in Alfred Neven Dumont eds., *Woher – Wohin: Bilanz der Bundesrepublik*. magnum, Sonderheft (Cologne: Dumont, 1961), pp. 26-29; quotation p. 29. Golo Mann, "Deutsche und Juden," in *Deutsche und Juden* (Frankfurt, 1967), pp. 49-69, here: 69; on Mann's position in intellectual history of the Federal Republic, see Tilmann Lahme, "Nachwort," in *Golo Mann, Briefe 1932-1992, ed. Tilmann Lahme* (Göttingen, 2006), 483-520.

[41] Paul Betts, "Manners, Morality, and Civilization: Reflections on Postwar German Etiquette Books," in Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller eds., *Histories of the Aftermath. The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 196-214, quotation: p. 197.

cues from the ideal of "absolute monarchy" or, worse, "dictatorship." Whoever defended patriarchal-authoritarian forms of child-rearing pretended not to know that those responsible for Nazi crimes had come from "'orderly' families and not from the margins of society." Fathers who had raised their children with "authoritarian [...] and violent methods" had been the midwives of the Nazi dictatorship. Those who kept treating their children "wrongfully" had to be aware that these children would themselves "turn into oppressors" as adults Borgmann cautioned: "Some henchmen of the concentration camps came evidently from so-called 'orderly' families".[42]

Throughout the postwar period the struggle over how best to inculcate and practice the moral sentiments that would allow mature citizens to serve as guardians of a democratic future gave rise to numerous cultural , educational, and scholarly institutions. These ranged from the "Max-Planck Institut für Bildungsforschung," especially under the directorship of two Jewish rémigrés Saul B. Robinson (1916-1972) and Wolfgang Edelstein (born in 1929) as well as Dietrich Goldschmidt (1914-1998), of partial Jewish background, to the ever-expanding plethora of lavishly funded foundations affiliated with political parties, like the Friedrich Ebert- or the Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung, as well as to the *Bundeszentrale* and *Landeszentralen für politische Bildung*.[43] Similar concerns also form the raison d'être for the wide spectrum of

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[42] "Foreword," in *The Yearbook of Education*, ed. by Institute of Education, University of London, and Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1948, p. VI. Sonja Levsen, Freiburg, was kind enough to share this quotation with me. Her research project, "Autorität und Demokratie: Debatten über die Erziehung der Jugend in Frankreich und (West-)Deutschland zwischen Kriegsende und 1970er Jahren," is obviously directly relevant in this context. Karl Borgmann, "Völker werden aus Kinderstuben: Um die rechte Ordnung in der Familie," in *Frau und Mutter: Monatsschrift für die katholische Frau in Familie und Beruf*, 35 (1952), no. 1, pp. 4-5. On education and child rearing generally Lukas Rölli-Allkemper, *Familie im Wiederaufbau: Katholizismus und bürgerliches Familienideal in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945-1965* (Paderborn, 2000); Dirk Schumann, "Legislation and Liberalization: The Debate About Corporal Punishment in Schools in Postwar West Germany, 1945-1975," in *German History* 25 (2007), pp. 192-218; Miriam Gebhardt, *Die Angst vor dem kindlichen Tyrannen : Eine Geschichte der Erziehung im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: DVA, 2009); Meike Sophia Baader ed., *'Seid realistisch, verlangt das Unmögliche': Wie 1968 die Pädagogik bewegte* (Weinheim: Beltz, 2008); Jürgen Oelkers, "Demokratisches Denken in der Pädagogik," in *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 56 (2010), no. 1, pp. 3-21; Till van Rahden, "Fatherhood, Rechristianization, and the Search for Democracy in 1950s West Germany," in *Raising Citizens in the 'Century of the Child:' Child-Rearing in the United States and German Central Europe in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Dirk Schumann (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 141-164.

[43] During a series of conversations in Berlin in July 2009, Wolfgang Edelstein was kind enough to provide me with a sense of the institute's history between its founding in 1963 and the late 1970s. According to the institute's long-time director its focus on questions of moral development reflected larger concerns about the viability of liberal democracy after a "rupture with civilization"; see also Dietrich Goldschmidt, "Unter der Last des Holocaust 1945-1989: Entsetzen, Trauer, bemühter Neuanfang," in *Neue Sammlung*, 29 (1989) no. 2, pp. 145-160; *In memoriam Dietrich Goldschmidt: Reden auf der Akademischen Trauerfeier am 16. Oktober 1998* (Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut für

generously financed flagships of postwar German cultural diplomacy such as the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation and the German Academic Exchange Service, the Goethe-Institutes or, as the perhaps oddest of them all, the German Historical Institutes which are indicative of how the Federal Republic consciously rejected nineteenth-century strategies of cultural hegemony and self-promotion. Programmatically they emphasized exchange and dialogue instead in an attempt to assuage fears about the persistence of a "German Question."[44]

If oddities and particularities, miracles and monsters, freakish episodes and bizarre stories serve as sign posts for a larger understanding of postwar German history we begin to realize that it might be fruitful to conceive of the Federal Republic not just as an unschooled and unlearned, but rather as a "Clumsy Democracy" (unbeholfene Demokratie).[45] In struggles over the legacy of the Nazi past and the memory of World War II, debates about reparations and the presence of Jewish "fellow citizens" (*Mitbürger*), Islam in the public sphere, immigration and xenophobia, in controversies over a shared culture (*Leitkultur*) and the moral foundations of democracy, postwar Germany's lubberly citizens and doltish elites rarely missed an opportunity to put their feet in their mouths, thereby marking another stage in the elusive quest for "normality."[46]

Bildungsforschung, 1999), and *Reden und Vorträge zum 80. Geburtstag von Wolfgang Edelstein* (Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung, 2010); an influential textbook by two interlocutors of Edelstein: Fritz Oser and Wolfgang Althof eds., *Moralische Selbstbestimmung: Modelle der Entwicklung und Erziehung im Wertebereich* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992); generally see Buse, "The 'Going' of the Third Reich," along with the other works listed in note 19.

[44] On cultural diplomacy generally see Johannes Paulmann, "Auswärtige Repräsentationen nach 1945. Zur Geschichte der deutschen Selbstdarstellung im Ausland," in idem ed., *Auswärtige Repräsentationen: Deutsche Kulturdiplomatie nach 1945* (Köln: Böhlau, 2005), 1-32, as well as the other essays in the volume; on the institutional background see Ulrich Pfeil ed., *Die Rückkehr der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft in die ›Ökumene der Historiker‹. Ein wissenschaftsgeschichtlicher Ansatz* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008); Christian Jansen, *Exzellenz weltweit. Die Alexander-von-Humboldt-Stiftung zwischen Wissenschaftsförderung und auswärtiger Kulturpolitik* (Köln: DuMont, 2004); Peter Alter ed., Der DAAD in der Zeit. Geschichte, Gegenwart und zukünftige Aufgaben (Bonn: Dt. Akad. Austauschdienst, 2000); *Wandel durch Austausch. Der Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst 1925 – 2010* (Bonn: DAAD, 2010).

[45] Karl Markus Michel, "Muster ohne Wert: Westdeutschland 1965," in idem, *Die sprachlose Intelligenz, edition suhrkamp 270* (Frankfurt, 1968), pp. 63-124, quotation: p. 72. See also Michael Rutschky's essay *Reise durch das Ungeschick und andere Meisterstücke* (Zürich: Haffmans, 1990).

[46] Michael Geyer and Miriam Hansen, "German-Jewish Memory and National Consciousness," in Geoffrey Hartman ed., *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shape of Memory* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 175-190; Hans Dieter Schäfer, *Das gespaltene Bewusstsein: Vom Dritten Reich bis zu den langen Fünfziger Jahren*, expanded edition, (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009); Martin H. Geyer, "Im Schatten der NS-Zeit: Zeitgeschichte als Paradigma einer (bundes-)republikanischen Geschichtswissenschaft," in Alexander Nützenadel and Wolfgang Schieder eds., *Zeitgeschichte als Problem: Nationale Traditionen und*

According to M. Rainer Lepsius a peculiar trait of early twentieth-century German history was the "dramatization of moral boundaries" between distinct cultural groups. Few of these milieus survived the cataclysmic violence of the first half of the twentieth century. Whereas moral boundaries no longer seemed as dramatic in the postwar decades, they, however, became all the more impermeable. When the journal *Magnum* invited the luminaries of the time to assess the first twelve years of the Federal Republic in light of the preceding twelve years of Nazi Germany Helmuth Plessner, who survived as an émigré in the Netherlands, responded that Germans on both sides of the Iron Curtain suffered from "hemiplegia:"

only with this difference: what Marx is achieving on the other side through a kind of synthesis of catechism and field service regulations, is coming about here by voluntary self-control [*freiwillige Selbstkontrolle*]. Thanks to their turn to the West and their struggle for European unity, there is agreement about the rules of the game in which differences are being resolved: everything is kept in careful proportion. The churches and the political parties have divided between them the vacuum left by the demise of the Nazi dictatorship, and have achieved a balance of power in which toleration, but not tolerance, is part of a formalistic liberalism. Each group, in its own way authoritarian or totalitarian, defines itself in negative terms vis-à-vis others, and there is an agreement to avoid pushing the boundaries of the possible[47]

Perspektiven der Forschung in Europa (Göttingen, 2004), pp. 25-53; Peter Reichel et al. eds., *Der Nationalsozialismus. Die zweite Geschichte. Überwindung, Deutung, Erinnerung* (München: Beck, 2009); Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory. Germany Remembers its Dead of World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Jeffrey K. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat, 1943-1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Moses, *German Intellectuals*; Neil Gregor, *Haunted City. Nuremberg and the Nazi Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Devin O. Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963-1965. Genocide, History and the Limits of the Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); Frank Biess, *Homecomings. Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 2006); Svenja Goltermann, *Die Gesellschaft der Überlebenden: Deutsche Kriegsheimkehrer und ihre Gewalterfahrungen im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich: DVA, 2009); Wolfram Wette ed., *Filbinger, eine deutsche Karriere* (Klampen, Springe 2006); Jan C. König, "'Wenn du einmal im Sarg liegst, kommst du nicht mehr raus.' Nach Vorlage genehmigte Niederschrift des Gesprächs mit dem Bundestagspräsidenten a.D., Dr. Philipp Jenninger, am Dienstag, 16. Mai 2006," in *Monatshefte* 100 (2008), no. 2, pp. 179-190; Frank Stern, *The Whitewashing of the Yellow Badge: Antisemitism and Philosemitism in Postwar Germany* (Oxford, 1991); Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton UP 2007); Anthony Kauders, *Unmögliche Heimat. Eine deutsch-jüdische Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Stuttgart: DVA, 2007); Constantin Goschler, *Schuld und Schulden. Die Politik der Wiedergutmachung für NS-Verfolgte seit 1945*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008); Ruth E. Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties. Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2008); Leora Auslander, "Bavarian Crucifixes and French Headscarves: Religious Practices and the Postmodern European State," in *Cultural Dynamics* 12 (2000), no. 3, pp. 183-209; Susan B. Rottmann and Myra Marx Ferree, "Citizenship and Intersectionality: German Feminist Debates about Headscarf and Antidiscrimination Laws," in *Social Politics* 15 (2008), no. 4, pp. 481–513.

[47] Helmuth Plessner, "Wir fragten: Inwiefern hat die Bundesrepublik Ihrer Erwartungen erfüllt oder nicht?" in Alfred Neven DuMont ed., *Woher, Wohin. Bilanz der Bundesrepublik. Magnum, Sonderheft 1961)* (Köln: DuMont, 1961), p. 20. This piece is not included in Plessner's *Gesammelte Schriften*. On Plessner now see: Carola Dietze, *Nachgeholtes Leben. Helmuth Plessner 1892-1985* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006); Kersten Schüßler, *Helmuth Plessner. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Berlin, 2000), and

Plessner was not the only émigré thinker to notice that something was odd (and perhaps amiss) in the quotidian life in postwar Germany. In the summer of 1956, on the occasion of his first visit to Germany since he had fled Nazism in 1933, Siegfried Kracauer articulated similar sentiments as Plessner.

We were in Germany only for three days: two in Hamburg and one in Freiburg, where we visited old Bernhard Guttman. We'd had enough after that. The attendant in the Hamburg hotel must certainly have been a keen SA man, but it's best not to ask. Other than that, everyone was quite civil to us, the young are curious (and know nothing); there is some really good material here. We shudder at the thought of staying there," Kracauer noted on October 27, 1956, in a letter to his close friend and fellow émigré Leo Löwenthal, "for another reason: It seems strikingly clear that there has never been a society in Germany. People live without form or focus; they lack shape (and are disordered within). Everything is there, but nothing is in its proper place. So they behave in ways that are insincere and overly artificial, use *stilted language*, and are completely insecure. They are *not so much human beings as raw material for human beings*. In short, I don't trust them.[48]

A lack of form (and of "politesse") and an impermeability of moral boundaries also marked daily life in the Federal Republic. The few scholars, such as Friedrich Tenbruck, who have explored quotidian encounters between postwar Germans, have pointed to the "remarkable insecurities and irritations" that shaped the public sphere. Postwar (West) Germans tended to mingle with those who shared their morality and their politics and refused to socialize with those whose politics they might hate and whose morality they might look down on or even despise. Random encounters with strangers rarely gave rise to genuine curiosity and instead led to the exchange of embarrassed platitudes. "People seek homogeneity and are highly selective in their associations, and display marked signs of idiosyncracy," Tenbruck noted in 1974.

They clearly find it difficult to open themselves up to new ideas, people, or cultural exchanges [. . .] Contacts between people are unproblematic and tolerant in a very ordinary way, but there is a lack of the kind of permeability in which individuals can express themselves, take each other seriously and interact with each other.[49]

Jan-Werner Müller, "The Soul in the Age of Society and Technology: Helmuth Plessner's Defensive Liberalism," in John P. McCormick ed., *Confronting Mass Democracy and Industrial Technology. Political and Social Theory from Nietzsche to Habermas* (Durham, N.C. 2002), pp. 139-162.

[48] Leo Löwenthal and Siegfried Kracauer, *"In steter Freundschaft:" Briefwechsel 1921-1966*, eds. Peter-Erwin Jansen and Christian Schmidt (Springe: Zu Klampen, 2003), p. 212. Phrases in italics are English in the original.

[49] Friedrich H. Tenbruck, "Alltagsnormen und Lebensgefühle in der Bundesrepublik," in Richard Löwenthal and Hans-Peter Schwarz eds., *Die zweite Republik. 25 Jahre Bundesrepublik Deutschland – eine Bilanz* (Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 288-310, quotations pp. 305-306. On "politesse" see especially Henri Bergson, *La politesse et autres essais* (Paris: Ed. Payot & Rivages, 2008) and Michel Malherbe, *Qu'est-ce que la politesse?* Chemins philosophiques (Paris: Vrin, 2008).

So pervasive and seemingly self-evident is the tendency only to mingle with kindred spirits that historians in today's Germany are surprised, baffled and even irritated to find that antagonistic intellectuals such as Jürgen Habermas and Wilhelm Hennis collaborated closely for many years and that public adversaries like Adorno and Arnold Gehlen cultivated an intimate friendship once outside the limelight.[50] Foreign observers especially were struck by the peculiarities of German academia, a world of learning they otherwise admired. In the view of scholars like the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, a culture of ceremonial courtesy left no room for playful politesse in exchanges with German scholars, especially senior colleagues who often displayed an odd combination of megalomania and an inferiority complex fueled by resentful parochialism.[51]

Whenever Galtung interacted with colleagues from German universities and research institutes, he was surprised by the pervasiveness of a peculiar intellectual style that he labeled "'teutonic thinking' […], not so much because of its form as because of its seriousness, the relentless energy, the zeal with which this type of activity is pursued." As a consequence, jokes were "considered frivolous and indicative of lack of faith in what one says." Rather than embracing a lighthearted pragmatism, German academics flaunted "non-humorous cold eyes and non-smiling faces" as they emphasized theory and deduced empirical arguments from a "small set of basic principles." Because the scholarly community consisted of several warring factions, Galtung's German colleagues spent much time on "issuing certificates, classifying other systems, articles, books, authors, groups, schools etc." Within these factions members would "develop a special esoteric language" that is "considerably better for in-group than out-group communication." On the exceptional occasions on which members of warring factions met, discussions between members of different tribes were "negative and destructive." "In general there is an assumption of undeclared war between speaker

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[50]   Stephan Schlak, *Wilhelm Hennis. Szenen einer Ideengeschichte der Bundesrepublik (*München: C.H. Beck, 2008); Stefan Müller-Dohm, *Adorno. Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003).

[51]   Johan Galtung, "Deductive Thinking and Political Practice. An Essay on Teutonic Intellectual Style," in *idem, Papers on Methodology: Essays in Methodology*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers, 1979), pp. 194-209 and 247-251 (a revised and expanded German translation was published as "Struktur, Kultur und intellektueller Stil: Ein vergleichender Essay über sachsonische, teutonische, gallische und nipponische Wissenschaft," in *Leviathan. Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft* 11 (1983), pp. 303-338. For an attempt to make sense of "Bielefeld" as a charming illustration of Galtung's observations, see: Sonja Asal and Stephan Schlak eds., *Was war Bielefeld? Eine ideengeschichtliche Nachfrage* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009); esp. the essay by Valentin Groebner, "Theoriegesättigt. Ankommen in Bielefeld 1989," pp. 179-189.

and audience." Hence the lack of curiosity and the inability to create a "relaxed and friendly atmosphere." Among adherents of the Teutonic intellectual style scholarly conversations were therefore "a series of monologues rather than a real dialogue […] It is as if each participant is seated on the top of his system, clinging to his little (or big) alp," declaring in an "unusually high-pitched voice" that "his alp is the only one."

III. Clumsy Encounters—Moral Obsessions

One need not accept every turn of Tenbruck's or Galtung's arguments to realize that postwar Germans were not exactly masters of a playful politesse. Few and far between were those who practiced Henri Bergson's insight that a *politesse des manières* and *a politesse de l'esprit* drew on a republican love of equality and "an intellectual subtlety" (*une souplesse intellectuelle*) that enables citizens to live with enmity and aversion and to cultivate forms of sociability that allow them to grasp what they cannot embrace.[52] The ability to converse with strangers, the capability to talk to one's adversaries, the capacity to regulate conflict, aversion and even enmity, the faculty to acknowledge and navigate political passions and moral incommensurability; such elementary skills of public life in a liberal democracy were (and perhaps are) anything but the *forte* of postwar Germans who preferred utopian dreams of moral harmony over an acceptance of moral diversity as the inevitable effect of individual freedom.

As a concept that is less an analytical category than a shorthand to draw our attention to a complex set of questions, "moral history" allows us to understand why the divide between the realm of politics and the private sphere has been more than usually unstable and contested in periods of revolutionary upheaval and dramatic political change like postwar European and particularly postwar German history. Utopias and obsessions, fantasies and fears about the political ramifications of private life have been central to how postwar Germans imagined themselves as citizens of a democratic polity. Over the course of the postwar decades the basic premise predominated: The basis of the political, the beginning and the end of politics, was neither enmity or competition, nor the idea of peace or of the common weal, but rather the private realm. Against this

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[52]   Henri Bergson, "La Politesse" (1892), in *idem*, *La Politesse et autres essays* (Paris: Payot et Rivages 2008), quotation p. 23. See also Clifford Geertz, "The Uses of Diversity," in idem, *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 68-88, esp. 87.

background one can begin to make sense of the peculiar simultaneity of obsessive exchanges over how best to establish democracy as a way of life and the clumsiness that postwar Germans displayed in these very controversies. These obsessions therefore perpetuated the clumsiness in encounters between citizens—experiences that in turn fueled their fears and anxieties.

It is therefore hardly surprising that some of the best studies on the second half of the twentieth century (no matter how diverse the subject matter under review may seem at first) have all explored the nexus between democracy and intimacy and have thereby provided the groundwork for a history of moral passions in postwar Germany: Debates about gender relations and the family, child-rearing and paternal authority, controversies over sexuality and abortion, heteronormativity and the rights of gays and lesbians, disputes about consumer culture and Germany's place within the world at large, debates over the meaning of victimhood and trauma, quarrels over the memory of Nazism and the Holocaust, controversies over immigration and national identity, as well as arguments over the role of religion and diversity in the public sphere—these obsessions essentially revolved around the idea that the fate of postwar German democracy depended on specific private practices and moralities.[53]

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[53] In addition to the scholarship cited so far see: Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley, CA 2004), esp. p. 16; Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany. Reconstructing National Identity* (Chapel Hill, NC 1995); Daniel Fulda et al. eds., *Demokratie im Schatten der Gewalt: Geschichten des Privaten im deutschen Nachkrieg* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010); Dieter Gosewinkel, Adolf Arndt, *Die Wiederbegründung des Rechtsstaats aus dem Geist der Sozialdemokratie 1945–1961* (Bonn: Dietz, 1991); Jens Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit. Die liberalkonservative Begründung der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen, 2006); Ulrich Herbert ed., *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland: Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945 bis 1980* (Göttingen, 2002); Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism. Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2005); Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins. The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill, NC 2002); Kaspar Maase, *BRAVO Amerika. Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur der Bundesrepublik in den fünfziger Jahren*, Hamburg 1992; Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood. Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley, CA, 1993); Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home. Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley, CA, 2005); Holger Nehring, *Life Before Death: West European Protests against Nuclear Weapons and the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Aribert Reimann, Dieter Kunzelmann, *Avantgardist, Protestler, Radikaler* (Göttingen, 2009); Hanna Schissler ed., *The Miracle Years. A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–1968* (Princeton, 2001); Michael Wildt, *Am Beginn der „Konsumgesellschaft". Mangelerfahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren* (Hamburg, 1994).