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ESSAYS IN EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN
INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
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ABSTRACT

Essays in European and American Intellectual History

by

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The first essay, "Contested Languages of Order: Burke and Wollstonecraft in the Revolution Controversy," argues that Edmund Burke's and Mary Wollstonecraft's 1790 debate over the French Revolution brought into focus two competing visions of social order that were engaged in historically transformative conflict across Europe: the fixed and hierarchical versus the progressive and egalitarian.

"Nietzsche, the Genealogy of Self, History" examines Friedrich Nietzsche's writings on history, "genealogy," and will to determine how he revises previous philosophical understandings of the self and what new understanding of the self he develops.

"'Never Forget,' 'Never Again': The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Terms of Holocaust Memory in America" explores political and popular debate over the significance of the museum in its American context and the tensions within Holocaust memory revealed by the debate.
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First Essay
Contested Languages of Order: Burke and Wollstonecraft in the Revolution Controversy

Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* appeared on November 1, 1790; Mary Wollstonecraft produced a rejoinder, *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*, almost immediately, with a first edition released on November 29 and a second on December 18.¹ The two publications were opening salvoes to the pamphlet wars of the 1790s, also referred to as the Revolution debate, which went on to generate Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* and William Godwin’s *Political Justice*. Wollstonecraft, like Paine and Godwin, defends the French Revolution and the idea of natural rights against Burke’s attacks; against his celebration of tradition and the English constitution, she trumpets the injustices of hierarchical British society. For the two writers, what is in fact at stake is not French but British society and their greatly divergent understandings of it. The debate has a significance beyond the few years British intellectuals heatedly debated the French Revolution by pamphlet; the two visions of social order that can be seen in such sharp and detailed contrast here, the fixed and hierarchical and the progressive and egalitarian, were engaged in a long and historically transformative conflict across Europe.

The revolution occurred toward the end of a century marked in Britain by a newly assertive commercial sector, blurred class distinctions, and the feeling that social mores were in dramatic flux. Laments about moral degeneration and ‘uppish’ servants stood alongside widespread

Enlightenment-derived expectations of progress and ‘improvement’ and, in liberal and radical circles, a strong sense of optimism.² Supporters of political and social reform anticipated eventual success. The French Revolution so buoyed such sentiments that radical England became, in Marilyn Butler’s words, “a society that which believes it is seeing the end of an old world and the coming of a new dawn.”³

Rising in tandem with liberal hopes were conservative fears. Penelope Corfield writes, “The fierce anxiety in conservative defenses of the ‘old ways,’ especially in the political reaction of the 1790s, indicated the extent to which traditional power dispensations were held to be under threat. Reform...was halted by alarm and retrenchment, not by social inertia.”⁴ Burke of course spearheaded that political reaction, arguing that not only the existing political arrangement was under siege but along with it the entire social and moral order.

The term “revolution” was applied to the changes being experienced in English society well before the late-eighteenth-century wave of political revolution began to break out across Europe and America. Alongside its now more familiar meaning, that of “the sudden, violent emergence of something new,” the word was also used in its older, astronomical sense (which did not involve the idea of innovation) of cyclical movement or reversal.⁵ This sense appeared in the image, familiar from satirical songs and prints, of the “world turned upside down” or “the world turned topsy-turvy.” Corfield cites Susanna Blamire’s lines “The world’s turned upside down/ And every

⁴Corfield, p. 129.
servant wears a cotton gown,” representations of a horse riding a man and a baby nursing its mother, and other expressions of “ideas of inversion and misrule.”

The image of inverted social order drew in turn upon another, the traditional image of not just social but universal order termed the “Great Chain of Being,” which has its most famous explication in Arthur Lovejoy’s 1936 book of that name. From this perspective, the division of human society into rank was an aspect of the divinely decreed hierarchy that encompassed creation as a whole. Lovejoy argues that in the eighteenth century the notion of the Great Chain of Being, and the underlying principle of gradation, reached its greatest level of influence on all realms of thought. The idea received classic formulation from Alexander Pope:

Vast chain of beings! which from God began,  
Natures aethereal, human, angel, man,  
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,  
No glass can reach; from Infinite to thee,  
From thee to nothing.

So did its social implications:

Order is Heav’n’s first law; and this confest,  
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,  
More rich, more wise.7

The Great Chain of Being also encompassed the notion of humankind as an imperfect “middle state” between the animal and celestial orders. As Lovejoy notes, if human imperfections were predetermined by that “middle” rank in the scheme of the universe, a rank divinely ordained as was the scheme as a whole, then efforts at improvement or reform, that is, at ascension of the scale, could seem doomed to failure, even rebellious. He

6Ibid., p. 105.
points to the way the idea of the Great Chain here supported the injunctions of the Anglican catechism, that each should labor "to do his duty in that state of life to which it hath pleased God to call him" and that to seek to leave that state is "to invert the laws of Order" and "contrary to nature": "Cease, then, nor Order imperfection name."\(^8\)

Some human ranks were subordinate to others but, as Soame Jenyns and others argued, each "contributes, by that just subordination, to the magnificence and happiness of the whole," and each was therefore equally valuable.\(^9\) Another argument against envy or dissatisfaction was that of Samuel Johnson, that there were "fixed, invariable, external rules of distinction of rank, which create no jealousy, as they are allowed to be accidental," that is, not of human provenance and beyond human intervention.\(^10\)

This notion of a divinely sanctioned natural and social order, with all its attendant implications, is Burke's inheritance and becomes the central ordering principle of his vision of society in the *Reflections*. He lists the benefits that would have accrued to the French had they not overturned this order, among them that

you would have had a protected, satisfied, laborious, and obedient people, taught to seek and to recognize the happiness that is to be found by virtue in all conditions; in which consists the true moral equality of mankind, and not in that monstrous fiction which, by inspiring false ideas and vain expectations into men destined to travel in the obscure walk of laborious life, serve only to aggravate and embitter that real inequality which it can never remove, and which the order of civil life establishes as much for the benefit of those whom it must leave in a

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\(^8\)Quoted in Lovejoy, p. 206.
\(^9\)Quoted in Lovejoy, p. 207.
\(^10\)Quoted in Corfield, p. 104.
humble state as those whom it is able to exalt to a condition more splendid, but not more happy.  

This passage compresses many of the key ideas involved in the Great Chain of Being. “Destined” to their station in society, the people, if they are “obedient” and “laborious,” will also find themselves “protected,” “satisfied,” and as happy as they would be in a higher state. There is “real inequality” among ranks of people, and denial of it is a “monstrous fiction,” but by doing their duty in the station in life to which God has called them, as he has called everyone in every station, the people can achieve the “true moral equality of mankind.”

To describe the course the French have instead taken, Burke draws upon the image of “the world turned upside down,” “calling the rule of the people in a democracy “an unnatural, inverted dominion.” By populating the National Assembly with country lawyers, tallow-chandlers, and hairdressers, he tells his French correspondent, “you think you are combating prejudice, but you are at war with nature.” For in the natural order of things, he argues, the ordering principle is inequality: “Those who attempt to level, never equalize. In all societies...some description must be uppermost. The levelers, therefore, only change and pervert the natural order of things; they load the edifice of society by setting up in the air what the solidity of the structure requires to be on the ground.”

“Structure,” “solidity,” and other architectural terms for society appear throughout the Reflections. So do organic metaphors of society as a living “body politic.” The latter present the existing order as a natural and

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2 Ibid., p. 82.
3 Ibid., p. 43.
4 Ibid., p. 19.
unitary structure. The former stress its stability, endurance, and capacity for shelter. The social order as an ancient and capacious building fuses with another prevalent image of it, as an inheritance that is to be passed down again. As opposed to a “selfish...spirit of innovation,” “the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation and a sure principle of transmission, without at all excluding a principle of improvement.”\(^{15}\) But improvement, it should be emphasized, is here opposed to innovation or any too dramatic restructuring. Burke makes clear elsewhere that improvements should be undertaken as conservatively and cautiously, and with as great a reliance on existing materials, as is possible.

The admission that some improvement is possible constitutes a shift from the most rigid conceptions of the Great Chain of Being, in which divine decree is so fully manifest in the human as well as the natural order that the idea of any improvement at all is suspect. Burke, in contrast, acknowledges at one point that human political and social institutions are “artificial,” that is, of human making and not God’s, but does so in the context of commending Britain’s “plan of conformity to nature in our artificial institutions.” His stress is always on the naturalness, whether inherent or attained, of the existing social order. If he slightly modernizes the Great Chain of Being, its basic outlines remain constant.

This is the case with the most fundamental principle of the Great Chain, hierarchy. In the traditional conception, each creature occupied the place in the chain that was in accordance with its essential nature, so that the naturalness of rank was not an issue. But one of the liberal rallying cries of the eighteenth century, careers open to talent, constituted a critique of such rigidity. As a way of re-naturalizing the ties between social rank and political

\(^{15}\textit{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 29.\)
power, Burke argues for the importance of experience: a provincial lawyer has not had opportunity to acquire the breadth of experience necessary to govern well, while a gentleman has. Burke admits that an aristocracy of merit, alongside one of rank, is possible. But that merit must prove itself exceptional, so that the ascension of untitled men (like himself) does not disturb the basic distribution of power: "Everything ought to be open, but not indifferently, to every man...I do not hesitate to say that the road to eminence and power, from obscure condition, ought not to be made too easy, nor a thing too much of course."

In short, if writing after the Enlightenment Burke must concede that human social arrangements are not God-given, he still argues that an order on the model of the Great Chain of Being, emphasizing stasis and rank, is the most natural. When he refashions the primary liberal image of society, the contract, he substitutes those qualities of the chain of being for contract theory's usual emphasis on society as a voluntary, negotiable arrangement:

Society is indeed a contract...a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and the invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place.

He attacks liberal thinkers for "always speak[ing] as if they were of the opinion that there is a singular species of compact between them and their magistrates which binds the magistrate but has nothing reciprocal in it...that the majesty of the people has a right to dissolve it without any reason but its

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16 Ibid., p. 44.
17 Ibid., p. 85.
will.” The voluntary character of the social contract disappears: it becomes a sacred pledge, involving duty as much or more than right. The Glorious Revolution, on his view, was not a demonstration of the people’s right to dissolve an unjust government but an act, under “grave and overruling necessity,” in the interest of “preservation” of “fundamental, unquestionable laws and liberties.”

In his comparison of society to an entailed estate, Burke puts the same stress on preservation and on duty to past and future that appears in his version of the social contract: “It has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity.” These liberties and rights, what he calls the “real rights of men,” are the rights to all the advantages for which civil society is made. These include provision for “human wants,” among them “a sufficient restraint upon their passions…in the mass and body, as well as in the individuals,” since “the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done by a power out of themselves.” Rights are bound up with societal limits on this account, including the limits imposed by inequality.

Whatever each man can separately do, without trespassing upon others, he has a right to do for himself; and he has a right to a fair portion of all which society, with all its combination of skill and force, can do in his favor. In this partnership all men have equal rights, but not to all things. He that has but five shillings in the partnership has as good a right to it as he that has five hundred pounds has to his larger proportion. But he has not a right to an equal dividend in the product of the joint stock; and as to the

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18 Ibid., p. 77.  
19 Ibid., p. 24.  
20 Ibid., p. 29.  
21 Ibid., pp. 51-2.
share of power, authority, and direction which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society.22

Inequity in distribution of property and a corresponding inequity in distribution of power, he argues, in fact create stability and thereby safeguard rights. “The characteristic essence of property…is to be unequal.” If it is also “out of all proportion, predominant in the representation,” it gains a “defensive power” and forms “a natural rampart,” guaranteeing the sanctity of all property. The hereditary landowners in the House of Lords thus become “the ballast in the vessel of the commonwealth.”23

In Burke’s defenses of rank and property, Wollstonecraft detects “the latent spirit of tyranny” and asks, “Is power and right the same in your creed?”24 but it is important to note that Burke is by no means advocating absolutism. He praises the English “mixed” constitution—a term that refers to the tripartite nature of the government, made up of the monarchy, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons—as a “mixed and tempered government,” a “government of reciprocal control,” that prevents any exercise of “arbitrary power, in the few or the many.”25 Liberties are protected because “a power out of itself” checks each part of the government.

But what Wollstonecraft’s accusation reveals is how dramatic the shift from traditional to liberal conceptions of society had been. To borrow a phrase from Corfield, the very idea of the chain of being turns “into ‘chains’

22Ibid.
23Ibid., pp. 44-5.
with very different implications.”\textsuperscript{26} The bonds of society for Burke become bondage in Wollstonecraft’s text, “the ignoble chain,” “fetters.”\textsuperscript{27} The artificiality of such constraints, which for the radical can never become naturalized, is stressed throughout the \textit{Vindication}, as it is in Blake’s phrase from \textit{Songs of Experience}, “mind-forg’d manacles.”\textsuperscript{28}

For Wollstonecraft, rights derive not from history but from reason and nature. “There are rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures”—as human beings rather than, for Burke, as Britons—“who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable facilities...receiving these, not from their forefathers but from God,” so that “prescription can never undermine natural rights.”\textsuperscript{29} Given these innate rights, which are equal for everyone and furnish “the native dignity of man,” systems of social inequality must be unjust and unnatural.\textsuperscript{30} The endurance of inherited social forms is, she argues, no proof of their merit: should a father attempt to “fetter [his child] with laws contrary to reason; nature, in enabling him to discern good from evil, teaches him to break the ignoble chain.” If such a break is not allowed, she argues, “there is no end to this implicit submission to authority—somewhere it must stop, or we return to barbarism; and the capacity of improvement, which gives us a natural sceptre on earth, is a cheat.”\textsuperscript{31}

Images of movement represent this capacity for progress. To “supineness,” “frozen inactivity,” or “dormant” acquiescence to authority and pre-ordained limits, she contrasts “improving exercise of the mind,”

\textsuperscript{26} Corfield, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{27} Wollstonecraft, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{29} Wollstonecraft, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid.}
“enlargement of the understanding,” “restless enquiries that hover on the border,” and “breezes that prevent the lake from stagnating.”\textsuperscript{32} Her preference for motion reverses the values implicit in Burke’s architectural metaphors; his capacious, sheltering edifice becomes her “gross tenement.”\textsuperscript{33}

Lovejoy describes the rise of a counterconception in the eighteenth century to the Great Chain of Being’s “absolutely rigid and static scheme of things,” which he describes as “temporalizing the chain of being.”\textsuperscript{34} The scale lost its fixed quality and “becomes literally a ladder,” so that both general progress and progress of the individual up its rungs became possible thus ridding the chain of its look of “irremediable inequality.”\textsuperscript{35} At first, the possibility of ascent was largely understood as something that would take place in the next life. But, Lovejoy argues, as part of the shift in thought involved in the rise of Romanticism, this possibility came to mean understanding “the destiny of the individual” as “continual self-transcendence” and brought a new valuation of originality.\textsuperscript{36}

Wollstonecraft exemplifies this change, and her ensuant differences with Burke stand out especially in the mention each makes of the phrase “our sovereign Lord the king.” Burke approvingly notes the use of this phrase, with its parallels between divine and regal power, in arguing against Richard Price’s reference to the king as “servant” of the people. Burke states elsewhere that those “who administer the government of men” in that regard “stand in the person of God himself.”\textsuperscript{37} This echoes the tradition of the great chain, in which the king is God’s representative on earth.

\textsuperscript{32}ibid., pp. 19-20.
\textsuperscript{33}ibid.
\textsuperscript{34}Lovejoy, p. 242.
\textsuperscript{35}ibid., p. 247.
\textsuperscript{36}ibid., p. 296.
\textsuperscript{37}Burke, p. 26, 81.
Wollstonecraft, in contrast, refers to the phrase as a “servile appellation...whoever at divine service, whose feelings were not deadened by habit, or their understandings quiescent, ever repeated without horror the same epithets applied to a man and his Creator?”

Comparison of the artificial elevation of one human being among others to God’s position borders, for her, on sacrilege. Both writers turn to the conceptions of divine to buttress the principles of society they identify, but in Wollstonecraft’s case, the principle in question is not static hierarchy but progress for all. “This is one of the strongest arguments for the natural immortality of the soul,” that “everything looks like a means, nothing like an end or point of rest.”

Here she strongly parallels Addison from the *Spectator* in 1711, as quoted by Lovejoy: “Among...other excellent arguments for the immortality of the soul, there is one drawn from the perpetual progress of the soul to its perfection, without a possibility of ever arriving at it...It must be a prospect pleasing to God himself, to see his Creation ever beautifying in his eyes, and drawing nearer to him, by greater degrees of resemblance.”

Wollstonecraft’s primary interest, however, is the extent to which improvement is possible in this life, the “natural sceptre on earth.” Unlike Addison, she does not see this idea as softening hierarchy, by eliminating envy of those ranked higher and contempt for those ranked lower. Instead, for her the natural human capacity for improvement, since it exists equally in all “rational beings,” makes up part of the argument for the illegitimacy of a social order based on rank and property.

To her mind, those two principles counter progress and natural rights. "Liberty," she states, "has never yet received a form in the various

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38 Wollstonecraft, pp. 20-21.
40 Quoted in Lovejoy, p. 247.
governments that have been established on our beauteous globe” because “the demon of property has ever been at hand to encroach on the sacred rights of men, and to fence round with awful pomp laws that war with justice.”⁴¹ Clearly, liberty as it is cited here has much to do with equality, as it emphatically does not for Burke. Similarly wrapped up with equality is Wollstonecraft’s understanding of civilization. She argues, “The civilization which has taken place in Europe has been very partial...And what has stopped its progress?—hereditary property—hereditary honours.” Rank on her account cannot be separated from exploitation. “The strong gained riches, the few have sacrificed the many to their vices, and to be able to pamper their appetites, and supinely exist without exercising mind or body, they have ceased to be men...The man has been changed into an artificial monster by the station in which he was born.”⁴² Unlike Burke’s arguments that rank educates or ennobles, thereby justifying inequality in the end, Wollstonecraft holds that it degrades. Hierarchy undoes itself if those at its top sink below the status as “man” common to all. It also degrades rather than uplifts those at the bottom of the scale. When she looked to the poor for “man undebauched by riches or power,” she reports, she saw instead “a being scarcely above the brutes, over which he tyrannized; a broken spirit, worn-out body, and all those gross vices which the example of the rich, rudely copied, could produce.”⁴³

In short, Wollstonecraft, in imagining an appropriate social order, upholds progress, against stasis, as a principle both in individual life and in the life of society as a whole; does not hesitate to let innovation and improvement overturn tradition; and makes equality and innate human rights, versus

⁴¹Wollstonecraft, p. 9.
⁴²Ibid., p. 10.
⁴³Ibid., p. 58.
inherited rank and property, fundamental. Her vision is of a society in which one person would regard another, first and foremost, not as a member of a particular class but "as a man." Her greater emphasis on the individual and on individual rights runs counter to Burke’s emphasis on society as an organic whole. In an argument that reverses the principles of the Great Chain of Being, she states that “the happiness of the whole must arise from the happiness of the constituent parts, or the essence of justice is sacrificed to a supposed grand arrangement.” She is as insistent on the naturalness of human equality as he is on the naturalness of inequality, and as insistent that a hierarchy of birth is always a contradiction of nature as he is that “levelling” is. Like Burke, she is at pains to identify her preferred vision of social order as the natural order of things.

Wollstonecraft’s rhetoric of natural and artificial recurs in her repeated identification of Burke with “sensibility.” The term points to an important area of contestation between the two writers, but to understand that contestation it is necessary to look at the history of the term. Sensibility, or its frequent synonym, sentimentalism, makes its appearance in the literature of the mid-eighteenth century (termed by Northrop Frye the “Age of Sensibility”). The term denotes “the faculty of feeling, the capacity for extremely refined emotion and a quickness to display compassion for suffering,” in Janet Todd’s description; sentimental literature provided a “pedagogy” of emotional response. Burke himself had made a major contribution to the aesthetics of sensibility, in his 1757 Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, examining sensations of awe, horror, and love. The treatise’s interest was psychological,

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44 ibid., p. 11.
45 ibid., p. 52.
with the emphasis, as it was throughout discussions of sensibility, on emotional effect rather than rational judgment.

The links between class, gender and sensibility were complex. Conservatives sometimes saw sensibility as a principle of social levelling, sometimes even as dangerous on this account, since it judged by ability to feel rather than by rank. But many also held the kind of refined emotion it privileged to be the exclusive property of the upper classes. The audience for sentimental literature nonetheless tended to be assumed to be the middle or lower classes. Mid-century novels regularly featured an unusually sensitive male character, the “man of feeling,” but sensibility also came to be increasingly identified as a female quality. Fragility, susceptibility to emotion, and passivity became strongly prized virtues in women, who were held up as keepers of conscience and as a softening, ameliorating force in a steadily more competitive commercial society. Chastity also became a more specifically female virtue and a more emphatically emphasized point of honor.

Sentimental literature dwelled upon the close-knit family, dedicated servants, and devoted friends, regularly celebrating domestic affection and local attachment as the fundamentals of virtue in its characters. Burke too celebrates this kind of loyalty: “To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed toward a love to our country and to mankind. The interest in that portion of the social arrangements is a trust in the hands of all those who compose it.” 47

The notion of duty and love intermingled provides the possibility of building a social order and a nation not on force but on loyal attachment.

47Burke, p. 41.
The eighteenth century prided itself on its level of civilization, exemplified by its capacity for social affection and its refinement of manners. J.G.A. Pocock points to the importance for Burke’s thought on these matters of the Scottish historian William Robertson, who argued that the engines of these advances had been learning and charity on the part of the clergy, commerce on the part of townspeople, and, most importantly for Burke, the chivalric code on the part of the nobility. The rise of that code signified for Robertson, in Pocock’s words, “the knightly class moving out of brutal warrior courage, acquiring a code of manners, and systemizing a sense of responsibility toward others, notably women. It was in the encounter between the genders that the development of ‘manners’—courtesy, morality, a language of interpersonal behavior—largely occurred.”

Burke describes chivalry as

that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom... It was this which, without confounding ranks, had produced a noble equality and handed it down through all the gradations of social life.... Without force or opposition, it subdued the fierceness of pride and power, it obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, compelled stern authority to submit to elegance, and gave a domination, vanquisher of laws, to be subdued by manners.

The sentiments here described, subordination and pride combined into loyalty, provide the spirit of a society of rank, the bonds that hold the stratified chain together as one entity. “Freedom” and “servitude” become compatible, and the “true moral equality” of humankind cited earlier does not threaten hierarchy. Similarly, those who rule can do so from a

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49Burke, pp. 66-7.
benevolent, paternalistic sense of duty for the well-being of those below. The eighteenth century put a greater emphasis on piety and simple affection, a lesser one on wit and sophistication, than earlier, more self-consciously chivalric ages. Nonetheless, the benefits Burke holds up here are essentially those his age identified with sensibility. His emphasis on its chivalric origin is likely, as Pocock suggests, intended to tie those benefits firmly to the aristocracy and to social stratification at a time when both seemed threatened by French revolutionaries and English radicals.

For Burke, the anti-hierarchical nature of the revolt makes it also “a revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions,” an attack on the forces that hold the chain of society together in links of respect and mutual duty. He famously laments, in concluding his famous description of Marie Antoinette, that “the age of chivalry is gone...All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns and the understanding ratifies as necessary to cover the defects of our naked, shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own esteem, are to be exploded.”

Chivalry, sensibility, and other social forces work for Burke as an outer layer that covers, modifies, and elevates the inner. They serve to naturalize the artificial social order, by ingraining so deeply in the individual the sentiments and beliefs necessary to maintain that order that they, and it, become natural. Tradition and habit work in this manner as well: “the coat of prejudice” over “the naked reason” makes “a man’s virtue his habit” and “his duty becomes part of his nature.” Phrases like “engraved...on our hearts,” “inbred sentiments,” “molded into civil society,” and “sublime

50 Ibid., p. 70.
51 Ibid., pp. 66-7.
52 Ibid., pp. 76-7.
principles...infused into persons” repeatedly describe this influence of the external on the internal.53 In the end what is natural and what is humanly constructed cannot be separated. Thus Burke states: “We fear God; we look up with awe to kings, with affection to parliaments, with duty to magistrates, with reverence to priests, and with respect to nobility. Why? Because when such ideas are brought before our minds, it is natural to be so affected.”54 Chris Jones notes the way the discourse of sensibility could therefore be used by Burke and others to uphold the status quo. “Apparently an appeal to unconditioned natural feelings, it was also a social construction which translated prevailing power-based relationships into loyalties upheld by ‘natural’ feelings.”55

Sentimental literature and attitudes had, by 1790, already come to be widely mocked for their perceived self-indulgence. Wollstonecraft is hardly radical in deriding sensibility as “the manie of the day.”56 But she uses the language of sensibility herself in depicting the injustices inflicted on the poor, “the distress of many industrious mothers, whose helpmates have been torn from them, and the hungry cry of helpless babes.”57 She does not, however, want to elicit simply the tears and alms through which the sentimental hero or heroine responds to human misery. In arguing that, while the property and liberty of the rich may be protected, pressing and unjust game laws encroach upon those of the poor, she calls for a political response. When she critiques Burke’s “pampered sensibility,” it is for the sympathy he exhibits for Marie

53Ibid., pp 18, 75, 31, 81.
54Ibid., p. 76.
56Wollstonecraft, p. 8.
57Ibid., p. 15.
Antoinette and his apparent comparative lack of interest in "inelegant distress" of the lower classes.  

She attacks the compassion valued by sensibility for its air of superiority, stating, "Charity is not a condescending distribution of alms, but an intercourse of good offices and mutual benefits, founded on respect for justice and humanity."  

She rejects the image of hierarchical relationships infused with social sentiment, characterizing the interactions of rank instead as "servility to superiors and tyranny to inferiors." Both, she argues, appear in men's attitudes toward women, where a specious gallantry masks a lack of any real respect. Just as hereditary honors degrade, she argues, the elevated position women seem to hold within chivalry in fact degrades them, by prizing and cultivating their "littleness and weakness" and not their status as rational beings. Burke, who writes in the Enquiry that "the objects of love are spoken of under diminutive epithets" and that "we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us" is to her mind one of the worst offenders.  

Whether between women and men or rich and poor, "among unequals there can be no society;—giving a manly meaning to the term." This "manly" meaning (Wollstonecraft gives the feminine few positive associations in this text) entails independence, dignity, and a sense of equality. In response to Burke's distress that, once chivalric sentiment is gone, "a king is but a man, a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order," Wollstonecraft replies: "all true, sir, if she

58Ibid., pp. 9, 11.  
59Ibid., pp. 10-11.  
60Ibid., p. 39.  
62Wollstonecraft, p. 39.  
63Burke, Reflections, p. 66.
is not more attentive to the duties of humanity than queens and fashionable ladies generally are.”

The language of sensibility did not, however, only have conservative applications. Influential early theorists of sensibility like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson expressed a belief that there was an innate moral sense, evidence of human goodness and perfectibility, that tended to expand the range of affections from the domestic and local to universal benevolence. The attainment of greater equality and individual freedom was an integral part of these goals. Throughout the dialogue of sensibility, a tension existed between the ideal of a benevolence that embraced all humankind and the celebration of “partial” familial affections. These two strands of sensibility were earlier mixed together, but the debate of the 1790s between Burke and the radicals polarized them. Burke had argued that attachment to “the little platoon we belong to in society” was the first link in the series of public affections. But this came as part of Burke’s attack on radical aristocrats as betrayers of their class. On this model, attachment to the “subdivision” must always remains stronger than the love of “mankind,” or else that “trust” is betrayed. William Godwin, Wollstonecraft, and their circle would instead paint domestic and local affections as simply selfish unless they are accompanied by a wider and strongly felt egalitarian benevolence.

Wollstonecraft responds to Burke that “the perpetuation of property in our families is one of the privileges you most warmly contend for; yet…the mind must have a very limited understanding that thus confines its benevolence to such a narrow circle, which…must be included in the sordid calculations of self-love.” Against such partial attachments, she argues, “in

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64 Wollstonecraft, p. 25.
65 Burke, Reflections, p. 41.
66 Wollstonecraft, p. 22.
my eye all feelings are false and spurious, that...are not centred by universal love.”67 But Burke’s notion of liberty is so entangled with his defense of aristocratic property that “to this selfish principle every nobler one is sacrificed.” When liberty and all other universal principles on which human dignity is based are thus entangled, she indicates, they in fact must correspondingly contract to the local and selfish until “the Briton takes the place of the man, and the image of God is lost in the citizen!”68

Wollstonecraft states that her purpose is to “shew you [Burke] to yourself, stripped of the gorgeous drapery in which you have wrapped your tyrannical principles.”69 That gorgeous drapery is his language, which, as Wollstonecraft and many others have noted, draws on the psychological techniques of the Enquiry. Depending on the emotional response he wants to stir, he paints his subject matter in the language of the sublime, the horrible, or the beautiful. For her his arguments thus rely on “the flowers of rhetoric” and “teeming fancy” rather than “the sober suggestions of reason.”70

In describing chivalric and sentimental attitudes, as in describing Burke’s rhetoric, Wollstonecraft uses terms of concealment and false display. Burke makes a “parade of sensibility” and puts on the “cloak of sanctity”; in polite society, “under the specious mask of refined manners,” there is “depravity of morals.”71 Versus Burke’s lament for “insulted nobility,” she sees the events of the French Revolution as an attack on hypocrisy and superstition: “the gorgeous robes were torn off the idol human weakness had set up.”72

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67Ibid., p. 34.
68Ibid., p. 15.
69Ibid., p. 37.
70Ibid., p. 9.
71Ibid., pp. 18, 26, 38.
72Ibid., p. 58.
If Burke deplores the loss of “the pleasing illusions...the decent drapery of life...necessary to cover the defects of our naked, shivering nature,” Wollstonecraft argues, “a surgeon would tell you that by skinning over a wound you spread disease throughout a whole frame.” The ideal of transparency, an inheritance from Rousseau, makes veiling and concealment not just artificiality but deceit to her. Civilization for Burke is covering nakedness, cloaking and ameliorating native human defects. Wollstonecraft, as part of her inheritance from Rousseau, celebrates rights of man predating the social contract and the idea of an essential human nature “undebauched” by the vices of society. As a result, “native” and “naked” are terms of praise for her—she speaks of “the native dignity of man” and “the naked dignity of virtue”—and the notion of a social exterior that does not conform to the natural interior is hypocrisy or debasement.

Correspondingly, she values social convention very differently than Burke does. He describes the naturalization of the artificial over time; she considers this impossible. While he commends the “cloak of prejudice,” she speaks of the “mind shackled by...prejudice” and “the rust of antiquity...the unnatural customs, which ignorance and mistaken self-interest have consolidated.” Given her emphasis on progress, she does not believe that no improvement can be made to the “native” state: she praises “civilization...the cultivation of the understanding, and refinement of the affections.” But these will only be advances if they take place in conformity to reason and nature. “When a man makes his spirit bend to any power but reason, his character is soon degraded.” This has happened to the minds of

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73 Ibid., p. 25.  
74 Ibid., pp. 14, 47.  
75 Ibid., pp. 39, 10.  
76 Ibid., p. 39.
the rich, which “instead of being cultivated, have been so warped by
education, that it may require some ages to bring them back to nature.”77
Reason here requires a mind independent from authority or tradition; nature
implies a sense of equality and common humanity with others. Wollstonecraft
imagines the benevolence and justice that would reign if, in “the rich
man…the heart was allowed to beat true to nature.”78

The idea of transparency also shapes Wollstonecraft’s language of
order and disorder. In response to Burke’s depiction of British liberties and
laws as a noble inheritance, she points to the “licentious, barbarous” and
“lawless” conditions of the early years in which “customs were established,”
and describes the British constitution as a “heterogeneous mass…settled in
the dark days of ignorance, when the minds of men were shackled with the
grossest prejudices and most immoral superstition.” She identifies a principle
of infinite regress in his thought: “is Magna Charta to rest for its chief support
on a former grant, which reverts to another, till chaos becomes the base of
the mighty structure—or we cannot tell what?—for coherence, without some
pervading principle of order, is a solecism.”79 For her, order must be founded
upon reason, and she describes both order and reason in terms of clarity,
simplicity, and light. Thus, to bring about order, opinions “must be simplified
and brought back to first principles,” and “enquiry must go deeper than the
surface, and beyond the local consequences that confound good and evil
together,” for “the business of the life of a good man should be, to separate
light from darkness.”80

77Ibid., pp. 38, 10.
78Ibid., p. 56.
79Ibid., pp. 11, 13.
80Ibid., pp. 19, 52.
For Burke, in contrast, “heterogeneous” and “mixed” are positive terms, as long as there is an overarching structure that can bring “unity in diversity.”\(^81\) He argues against the rhetoric of simplicity and clarity: “in the gross and complicated mass of human passions and concerns...these metaphysic rights...are by the laws of nature refracted from their straight line...the nature of man is intricate; the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity; and, therefore, no simple disposition...can be suitable either to man’s nature or to the quality of his affairs.”\(^82\)

The notion of remaking the social order or undoing existing institutions repels him: “Are all orders, ranks, and distinctions to be confounded” into “universal anarchy” with the hope that the resulting pieces “may all, by some sort of unknown attractive power, be organized into one?”\(^83\) In passage after passage he paints with the vocabulary of horror that resultant anarchy: “the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer”; “the commonwealth itself would, in a few generations, crumble away, be disconnected into the dust and powder of individuality, and at length dispersed to all the winds of heaven.” The members of the “great primeval contract of eternal society” are not “at liberty at their pleasure, and on their speculations of a contingent improvement, wholly to separate and tear asunder the bands of their subordinate community and to dissolve it into an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary principles.”\(^84\)

\(^81\)Burke, Reflections, p. 29.
\(^82\)Ibid., p. 54.
\(^83\)Ibid., p. 48.
\(^84\)Ibid., pp. 83-5.
The fragility of social order for Burke, and the threat of barbarism, are clear. In phrases like “the dust and powder of individuality,” he associates social breakdown with the individualism of liberal political theory, which by an overemphasis on the rights of the individual as well as on “speculations of a contingent improvement,” endangers the stable and ordered civilization that has been achieved. Such theorists consider “their speculative designs as of infinite value, and the actual arrangement of the state as of no estimation.”

But, he argues, a new order and new institutions cannot be created out of thin air. “Wisdom cannot create materials; they are the gifts of nature or chance; her pride is in their use.” Burke distrusts the abstract and invests the term “speculation” with the riskiness inherent in its financial sense. Speculation forgets what is natural, how “gross and complicated” are the “mass of human passions” and how “fallible and feeble” are the “contrivances of our reason.” It ignores the limitations of human nature and of the possible. He approvingly notes the way the British social order is bound up with landed property as an anchor. Of natural rights, he states, “Their abstract perfection is their practical defect. By having a right to everything they want everything,” an impossible and dangerous desire.

The problem with much of the traditional conception of the Great Chain of Being, Lovejoy wrote, was that “it left no room for hope, at least for the world in general or for mankind as a whole.” Wollstonecraft, in finding the existing state of things corrupt and unjust, insists on the possibility of boundless hope: “A conviction that there is much unavoidable

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85 Ibid., p. 56.
86 Ibid., pp. 138-9.
87 Ibid., p. 30.
88 Ibid., p. 52.
89 Lovejoy, p. 245. He was referring specifically to eighteenth-century “optimist” conceptions that attempted to reconcile humankind to the existence of evil by proving its necessity and irremedibility, but the observation is applicable more broadly.
wretchedness, appointed by the Grand Disposer of all events, should not slacken [the good man’s] exertions: the extent of what is possible can only be discerned by God.” 90 She prizes the abstract, that is, what has not yet been achieved, over the material, disparaging the kind of vain, worldly preoccupations that “immerge...the soul in matter, till it becomes unable to mount on the wing of contemplation.” 91 But this does not mean any lack of interest in material change. She angrily quotes Burke’s suggestion that the poor “must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice.” 92 Given the suffering of the oppressed, “why is our fancy to be appalled by terrific perspectives of a hell beyond the grave?—Hell stalks abroad.” Extant misery “demands more than tears.” 93 It demands reform.

For her real change is possible, because its achievement would be simply a return to nature: “the natural equality of man,” “the natural principles of justice.” 94 Similarly, “the sovereignty of reason” means a human capacity to achieve such ends, as does “the capacity of improvement, which gives us a natural sceptre on earth.” 95 On these principles, “the struggle for liberty” can mean real independence and not just “a choice of masters”; she sees all these possibilities being enacted in the French Revolution, “the glorious chance that is now given to human nature of attaining more virtue and happiness than has hitherto blessed our globe.” 96

From the distance of two centuries, Wollstonecraft’s democratic sentiments might seem, if utopian, nonetheless the force of the enlightened and new, rising to inevitable triumph over an outdated order. But this was not

90Wollstonecraft, p. 52.
91Ibid., p. 23.
92Ibid., p. 55.
93Ibid., p. 58.
94Ibid., pp. 48, 49.
95Ibid., pp. 27, 14.
96Ibid., p. 48.
how it appeared a few years after the *Vindication* was published or for a
generation thereafter. Burke’s reimagined conservative arguments and
rhetorical gifts had real political force as did, more significantly, the course of
the revolution, war with France, and the accompanying political reaction.
“Kind feelings and generous actions there always have been, and there
always will be, while the intercourse of mankind shall endure: but the hope,
that such feelings and such actions might become universal, rose and set with
the French Revolution,” Hazlitt wrote of his own disappointment.97

Wollstonecraft’s work and the other radical contributions to the revolution
debate are significant, not only for their dramatic articulation of a new vision
of society, but also because they remained its last articulation in Britain for a
long time.

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97Quoted in Jones, p. 14.
Second Essay

Nietzsche, the Genealogy of the Self, History

After reading *The Gay Science*, Jacob Burckhardt wrote Nietzsche: “Fundamentally, perhaps, you are always teaching history.”\(^9\) Nietzsche himself announces his reversal of “the age-old custom among philosophers” of thinking “unhistorically”\(^8\) and declares the importance of history for one of the most central elements of his thought, his critique of traditional religious and philosophical understandings of the self: “Self-understanding is more than just self-observation. We need to study history, because the stream of the past flows through us in a thousand waves; we ourselves are nothing but our constant experience of the motion of the stream.”\(^1\) Against the supposedly eternal and transcendent “truths” of the self generated by self-observation, his work puts forward a history or genealogy of those “truths,” delineating their constructed character and the impulses that generated their construction.

Nietzsche credits his education in history and philology, “together with a native fastidiousness in matters of psychology,” for his ability to question previous certitudes.\(^2\) That philological training reveals itself in his statement “Only that which has no history can be defined.”\(^3\) One might think of the experience of looking up a “definition” in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, to

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\(^8\)Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, I, 2, in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, Francis Golffing, trans. (New York: Anchor Books, 1956). [Note: quotes from Nietzsche are identified by passage or aphorism number, not by page number, unless otherwise noted.]


\(^2\)*The Genealogy of Morals*, preface, 3.

find that column after column of shifting and discarded significations manages
to complicate rather than simplify the issue of what a word "means."
Nietzsche similarly historicizes the self, in a way that goes far beyond the
tenets of nineteenth-century German historicism, all the way into
undefinability and an early and extreme version of the fin de siècle "crisis of
historicism." But having used history to this end, he wants to suggest a way
of understanding—and living—the self that goes beyond the constraints
historical consciousness can impose, one that makes more of it than just "our
constant experience of the motion of the stream."

"The danger of the direct questioning of the subject about the subject
and of all self-reflection of the spirit lies in this, that it could be useful and
important for one's activity to interpret the evidence falsely," Nietzsche
writes.103 Here he rejects Descartes' starting point, omne illud verum est,
quod clare and distincte percipitur.104 Instead, "we psychologists should
keep an alert and suspicious eye on ourselves" and exhibit "a great strictness
toward ourselves, a considerable distrust of immediate reactions."105 His
stance is what Paul Ricoeur famously called a hermeneutic of suspicion: "The
most strongly believed a priori 'truths,'" Nietzsche declares, "are for me—
provisional assumptions."106

He looks to the unconscious and the physical, the body and its drives,
for counterevidence that can be used to evaluate the conscious and mental.
"Essential: to start from the body and employ it as guide...Belief in the body
is better established than belief in the spirit."107 Further, "it is allowable, for
purposes of method, to employ the more easily studied, richer phenomena as

104"All that is true which is perceived clearly and distinctly." Quoted by Nietzsche in ibid., 533.
106The Will to Power, 497.
107Ibid., 532.
evidence for the understanding of the poorer.” In contrast to the unitary picture provided by consciousness, “the evidence of the body reveals a tremendous multiplicity.”\textsuperscript{108} He also looks for counterevidence within history, in a way deeply informed by his philological training, examining “the endless hieroglyphic record, so difficult to decipher, of our moral past.”\textsuperscript{109} At some moments this investigation does in fact involve straightforward philological analysis, as when he examines the etymology of the terms various languages use for “good” and “bad.”\textsuperscript{110} But his method of delving into history, while clearly informed by the lessons of philology, as clearly breaks with the university scholarship of his day. Nietzsche has a name for his new method: genealogy.

How had scholars so far approached, for example, the history of morals and of punishment? “Naïvely, as always. They would discover some kind of ‘purpose’ in punishment...and would then naively place this purpose at the origin of punishment as its \textit{causa fiendi},” cause of becoming. In doing so they repeat a pattern of thought so well ingrained as to seem self-evident: “From time immemorial, the demonstrable purpose of a thing has been considered its \textit{causa fiendi} — the eye is made for seeing, the hand for grasping.”\textsuperscript{111} But, Nietzsche declares:

The criterion of purpose is the last that should ever be applied to a study of legal evolution. There is no set of maxims more important for an historian than this: that the actual causes of a thing’s origin and its eventual uses, the manner of its incorporation into a system of purposes, are worlds apart; that everything that exists, no matter what its origin, is periodically reinterpreted by those in power in terms of fresh intentions; that all processes in the organic world are processes of outstripping and overcoming, and that, in turn, all outstripping and

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Ibid.}, 518.  
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{The Genealogy of Morals}, preface, 7.  
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid.}, I, 4.  
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ibid.}, II, 12.
overcoming means reinterpretation, rearrangement, in the course of which the earlier meaning and purpose are necessarily either obscured or lost.\textsuperscript{112} One of the things this process of reinterpretation can obscure is darkness and brutality at the origin; Nietzsche proposes instead that the beginnings of guilt, conscience, and duty “were liberally sprinkled with blood.”\textsuperscript{113} The reinterpretation he describes also creates the illusion of a single guiding purpose to evolution, when instead there is only the history of multiple competing purposes. Genealogy undermines the illusion, as well as the illusion that history is a story of progress, measured by some ahistorical yardstick perservering through the fluctuations of history.

All pragmatic purposes are simply symbols of the fact that a will to power has implanted its own sense of function in those less powerful. Thus the whole history of a thing, an organ, a custom, becomes a continuous chain of reinterpretations and rearrangements, which need not be causally connected among themselves, which need simply follow one another. The “evolution” of a thing, a custom, an organ is not its \textit{progressus} towards a goal...rather it is a sequence of more or less profound, more or less independent processes of appropriation, including the resistances used in each instance, the attempted transformations for purposes of defense or reaction, as well as the results of successful counterattacks.\textsuperscript{114}

The world “genealogy” suggests, not the endurance of a single transcendent form or purpose across history, but a process of generation, one physical form giving rise to and giving way to a successor. “While forms are fluid, their ‘meaning’ is even more so,” because in this series of attacks and counterattacks, “meaning” is part object of contestation, part means of contestation.\textsuperscript{115} Meanings have therefore varied so greatly that the declaration of a “meaning” can never be anything more than contingent or partial. Once

\textsuperscript{112}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{113}\textit{Ibid.}, I, 6.
\textsuperscript{114}\textit{Ibid.}, II, 12.
\textsuperscript{115}\textit{Ibid.}

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again, the example of philology is clear. Nietzsche states, “All terms which semiotically condense a whole process elude definition”; it is this recognition that leads him to declare “only that which has no history can be defined.”\textsuperscript{116}

But the idea of the will to power, and of history as a series of attacks and counterattacks, interpretations and counterinterpretations, itself provides an interpretative approach from which meaning can, in a certain sense, be recreated. With this approach, Nietzsche can take up his own project of assertion and attack, of reinterpretation, reimagining, and redefinition.

Perhaps it is in part this potential within genealogy that has made it an compelling model for postmodernism thinkers, most notably among them Michel Foucault. In his essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault’s summary of the project of genealogy makes clear his debt to Nietzsche: “The genealogist finds that there is ‘something altogether different’ behind things: not a timeless and essential secret but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.” Foucault also reveals that he, like Nietzsche, finds attractive one of the ends to which genealogy may be put: “The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of the self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events.”\textsuperscript{117}

One of the projects that spans the entire body of Nietzsche’s work is the contradiction and undermining of conventional, philosophical, and religious understandings of the self and of its relationship to the world. For example, he turns his hermeneutic of suspicion full force on the information consciousness seems to supply about its surroundings. Dreams, he claims, are “interpretations of nervous stimuli we receive when we are asleep, very free,

\textsuperscript{116}Ibid., II, 13.
very arbitrary interpretations.” But in waking life it is not different: “All our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text.”\textsuperscript{118}

The word “text” is of course not arbitrary here. “The simple man always says: this or that makes me feel unwell...I call that a lack of philology.”\textsuperscript{119} To impose a meaning upon nervous stimuli by the “fantastic” positing of outside forces generating those stimuli is, for Nietzsche, an extremely naive form of interpretation, one that does not even recognize itself as such. The intellect cannot serve as a trustworthy guide to either the outer or the inner world because it is a tool, not for perceiving truth, as Descartes wants it to be, but for interpreting, and interpreting from a particular perspective. The idea that we can know “things-in-themselves,” that there are “facts of consciousness,” or even facts at all, does not stand up to scrutiny. Interpretation and perspective, Nietzsche declares, are all there is to knowing, and any notion of abstract truth beyond them is a fiction.

Fittingly, his philological awareness of the problem of definability is most acute regarding the basis of meaning and truth in language. “When we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers, we believe we know something about the things themselves, although what we have are just metaphors of things, which do not correspond at all to the original entities,” he writes in the early essay “On Truth and Lying In An Extra-Moral Sense.” Nonetheless, on these shaky foundations “a uniformly valid and binding terminology for things is invented and the legislation of language also enacts the first laws of

\textsuperscript{118}Nietzsche, Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 119.

\textsuperscript{119}The Will to Power, 479.
truth.”\textsuperscript{120} For Nietzsche, these laws must lose their force once their foundation in untruth is revealed.

Consciousness, the starting point of philosophical reflection as well as everyday self-understanding, is built on those foundations as well. "Conscious thinking takes the form of words, which is to say signs of communication, and this fact uncovers the origin of consciousness... consciousness has developed only under the pressure of the need for communication...in brief, the development of language and the development of consciousness...go hand in hand." Consciousness thus exists at the same remove from reality as language: "The world of which we can become conscious is only a surface-and sign-world."\textsuperscript{121}

Hence the error in attempting to gain knowledge of ourselves through self-reflection. "Everything conscious remains on the surface," while it is "the inner processes and drives,"\textsuperscript{122} down below that surface, "which weave the web of our character and our destiny," so that "we are none of us that which we appear to be in accordance with the states for which alone we have consciousness and words."\textsuperscript{123} Further, despite our strong beliefs to the contrary, "consciousness does not really belong to man's individual existence but rather to his social or herd nature...Consequently, given the best will in the world to understand ourselves as individually as possible, 'to know ourselves,' each of us will always succeed in becoming conscious only of what is not individual but 'average.'"\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{122}The Will to Power, 676.
\textsuperscript{123}Daybreak, 115.
\textsuperscript{124}The Gay Science, 354.
Nietzsche argues elsewhere as well that what seem to be the highest faculties, the most profoundly individual elements of the self, have their origin in society’s requirement that its member become “calculable, regular, necessary, even in his own image of himself...uniform, like among like.”\textsuperscript{125} The soul or conscience turns out not to be some eternal or transcendent spark within the human but the product of animal instincts and drives that, after the formation of society, had to be suppressed. “All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly \textit{turn inward}—this is what I call the \textit{internalization} of man; thus it was that man first developed what was later called his ‘soul.’ The entire inner world...expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth, and height, in the same measure as outward discharge was \textit{inhibited}...all these instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward \textit{against man himself}...that is the origin of the ‘bad conscience.’”\textsuperscript{126}

But philosophers have refused to see what the foundations or origins of “soul,” “conscience,” and “consciousness” are. They have instead relied upon the dubious information consciousness provides and, in fact, have ingrained in it still further the patterns of error. The chief such pattern is the illusion of unity. “Everything of which we become conscious is arranged, simplified, schematized, interpreted through and through...‘Thinking’...is a quite arbitrary fiction, arrived at by selecting one element from the process and eliminating all the rest, an artificial arrangement for the purpose of intelligibility.”\textsuperscript{127} Through this kind of artificial selection and elimination, it is possible to “make cases identical and similar which are themselves dissimilar” and thereby to order the phenomena of the world into categories.\textsuperscript{128} These

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Ibid.}, II, 16.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{The Will to Power}, 477.
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Ibid.}, 532.
are the operations of logic, but Nietzsche argues that they in fact contain "no criterion of truth, but an imperative concerning that which should count as true." To put into doubt the most basic tenet of logic, he asks whether the law of contradiction must be true: "supposing there were no self-identical 'A'?" That is, what if "the atom," "the thing," were not in fact an in-itself, a unity, a hard little ball of stable identity?\(^{129}\)

The concept of "things," of "atoms," in short, the concept of "substance," is, Nietzsche argues, "a consequence of the concept of the subject" as unitary, constant, something over and above the flux of experience. "We believe so firmly in our belief that for its sake we imagine 'truth,' 'reality,' 'substantiality,' in general."\(^{130}\) But in fact "the 'subject' is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is."\(^{131}\) 'Truth,' 'reality,' 'substantiality' are all similarly "added and invented and projected behind what there is."

"Behind what there is"; what is there? "'There is thinking: therefore there is something that thinks': this is the upshot of all Descartes' argumentation." But Nietzsche wants to question this "therefore" and asks whether there are grounds for saying anything more about the matter than "there is thinking." "That when there is a thought there has to be something 'that thinks' is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed," he argues. What Descartes' argumentation reveals is not proof of the belief that the "doer" exists but only "the fact of a very strong belief."\(^{132}\)

\(^{129}\)Ibid., 516.
\(^{130}\)Ibid., 485.
\(^{131}\)Ibid., 481.
\(^{132}\)Ibid., 484.
Nietzsche describes the presuppositions about cause and effect inherent in this belief. “If I say ‘lightning flashes,’ I have posited the flash once as an activity and a second time as a subject, and thus added to the event a being that is not one with the event but is rather fixed, is, and does not ‘become.’”133 What is looked for, when this being is posited, is an ultimate cause, an unmoved mover, a hard little ball of constant substance than can generate an action or event with no alteration in its own nature or status. But lightning is precisely a flash and not anything apart from the flash. Nietzsche similarly critiques “the little word ‘I.’ To make a kind of perspective in seeing the cause of seeing: that was what happened in the invention of the ‘subject,’ the ‘I’!”134 On this account the “I” is the perspective from which seeing takes place but cannot be anything apart from, over and above, the seeing or the perspective.

This is not, of course, the understanding of the “I” that either philosophy or popular wisdom has favored. “The logical-metaphysical postulates, the belief in substance, accident, attribute, etc., derive their convincing force from our habit of regarding all our deeds as consequences of our will—so that our ego, as substance, does not vanish in the multiplicity of change.—But there is no such thing as will.”135 (This assertion, which might seem confusing in light of Nietzsche’s famous doctrine of the will to power, will be considered in conjunction with it later.) Again, to assert that there is no such thing as will apart from deed is to reject the notion of a “subject ‘atom’”136 distinguishable from its acts, sensations, or experiences; it is to allow the ego “as substance...to vanish in the multiplicity of change.”

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133 Ibid., 531.
134 Ibid., 548.
135 Ibid., 488.
136 Ibid.
This is precisely the new understanding of the self that Nietzsche proposes. "My hypotheses: The subject as multiplicity."\textsuperscript{137}

For what reason, as the expression of what will, did the old understanding of the self arise? One factor was the need for survival. Nietzsche speculates, "To what extent even our intellect is a consequence of conditions of existence—: we would not have it if we did not need to have it, and we would not have it as it is if we did not need to have it as it is, if we could live otherwise."\textsuperscript{138} For human life to flourish, it may simply have been necessary to impose categories of classification and understanding upon the world. The survival value of this system of "truth" would therefore have been what made conformity to it a moral issue. "Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value for life is decisive."\textsuperscript{139}

But Nietzsche wants to reconsider the value of "truth," precisely on these terms of value for life, to argue that it and its accompanying fictions in fact "are of no use."\textsuperscript{140} To understand why requires turning to the first section of The Will to Power, which opens with the question, "Nihilism stands at the door: whence comes this uncanniest of all guests?"\textsuperscript{141} Europeans are increasingly sharing his own disbelief in the "moral interpretation of the world," Nietzsche suggests. An accompanying movement is the spread of nihilism, the belief that "'everything lacks meaning'...the untenability of one interpretation of the world...awakens the suspicion that all interpretations of the world are false."\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{137}ibid., 490.
\textsuperscript{138}ibid., 498.
\textsuperscript{139}ibid., 493.
\textsuperscript{140}ibid., 480.
\textsuperscript{141}ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{142}ibid.
The word “uncanny” (umheimlich, or “unhomely”) is revealing and worth examining in some detail. It signifies the disquieting sensation that arises when the boundary between the familiar and the unfamiliar is breached. That boundary does not escape Nietzsche’s suspicious eye. He asks what the goal of knowledge, on the part of philosophers and common people alike, has always been, whether it has not been that “something strange is to be reduced to something familiar...What is familiar means...anything at all in which we feel at home. Look, isn’t our need for knowledge precisely this need for the familiar, the will to uncover under everything strange, unusual, and questionable something that no longer disturbs us? Is it not the instinct of fear that bids us to know?”\(^{143}\)

From the belief that “what is familiar is known” or “at least more easily knowable,” philosophy has begun its investigations with the “‘facts of consciousness,’ because this world is more familiar to us. Error of errors! What is familiar is what we are used to; and what we are used to is most difficult to ‘know’—that is, to see as a problem; that is, to see as strange, as distant, as ‘outside us.’”\(^{144}\) Nietzsche takes up the project of knowing in this second way, of making strange what seems familiar. The aspects of the self that seem the most intimate and individual turn out to be the most externally determined and alien or to have roots “liberally sprinkled with blood.” The most strongly held a priori truths prove instead to be fictions “implanted” by the more powerful in the less so.

Freud was also attracted to the word unheimlich and in his 1919 essay “The Uncanny” identifies it with the unconscious and the return of the repressed. “This uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something

\(^{143}\) *The Gay Science*, 355.
\(^{144}\) *Ibid.*
which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression...the uncanny [is] something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light."\(^{145}\) For Nietzsche too, the repressed history of familiar things, if it emerges into present consciousness, makes them suddenly dark and strange. His connection of the word “uncanny” with nihilism is especially significant. For the emergence of nihilism in the nineteenth century is, he argues, not the arrival of something new but the emergence into the light of something that had been there all along. “The end of the moral interpretation of the world” did not create nihilism; rather, the decline of that “Christian-moral...interpretation...[in which] nihilism is rooted” allowed it to break free and to stand out in relief.\(^{146}\)

By the “Christian-moral interpretation,” Nietzsche means a way of thinking, propagated, he argues, by Socrates and Plato and then taken up by Christianity, which differentiates between the “apparent” and the “real” or “true” world. On this account, reality and meaning exist not in the physical world but on an ideal plane or in the realm of the spiritual. The division has informed religious, philosophical, and even everyday thought ever since.

This interpretation of the world is, like any other interpretation for Nietzsche, the expression of a will to power. In this case, “‘truth’ is the will to be master over the multiplicity of sensations,”\(^{147}\) and it has mastered that multiplicity by denying it or by making it secondary to another, higher, order of reality, the order of unity. It has made “the ‘real’ world a world not of change and becoming, but one of being.”\(^{148}\) In Nietzsche’s eyes, it has

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\(^{146}\) The Will to Power, 1; emphasis added.

\(^{147}\) Ibid., 517.

\(^{148}\) Ibid., 507.
thereby denigrated life, which is precisely "change and becoming," "the multiplicity of sensations." Finally, in stripping life of meaning, projecting meaning instead off into a fictional realm, it has been nihilistic all along. It is to undo this system of preference that Nietzsche attacks what he considers its linchpin, the idea of the constant, unitary subject somehow existing apart from the flux of existence, an idea in which "we believe so firmly...that for its sake we imagine 'truth,' 'reality,' 'substantiality,' in general."\footnote{Ibid., 485.}

In a section of *Twilight of the Idols* called "How the 'Real World' At Last Became a Myth: History of an Error," Nietzsche identifies as the next-to-last stage: "The 'real world'—an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer—an idea grown useless, superfluous, consequently a refuted idea: let us abolish it!" The last is: "We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps?...But no! with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!"\footnote{Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, in *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990), pp. 50-51.} Charles Guignon and Derk Pereboom sum of the significance of this argument well: "To get rid of one of the terms of a binary opposition is not just to affirm the other term. It is to get rid of the binary opposition altogether...if we get rid of the idea of the 'true' world, that does not mean that there is now only appearance. It means that the entire philosophical distinction between the 'true' and the 'apparent' no longer makes any sense. In the end, there is only the world we find around us."\footnote{Charles Guignon and Derk Pereboom, "Introduction: Nietzsche," in *Existentialism: Basic Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), p. 109.}

Nietzsche often writes as if he were the first philosopher to break with the tradition of thinking "unhistorically." But in fact he had an important precursor in Hegel, of whom Karl Löwith remarks: "Not only does Hegel's
work contains a philosophy of history and a history of philosophy, but his entire system is historically oriented to an extent which is true of no previous philosophy."\textsuperscript{152} German thought of the nineteenth century as a whole was deeply informed by historical consciousness. Some of the roots but also some of the radical elements of Nietzsche's own historical consciousness stand out more sharply against this backdrop.

Hegel, like Nietzsche, conceives the human subject in historical terms. For him, the true universal essence of man is "spirit," but this spirit is understood historically. In Löwith's words, "the absolute, or spirit, not only has its external history, as a man has clothing, but is, in its deepest nature, as a movement of self-development, an entity which exists only by becoming." Hegel constructs a history of the world as the history of spirit, which aims at "an eschatological end, in which the history of the spirit is finally realized," an "ultimate fulfillment, in which everything which has taken place hitherto or has been conceived is comprehended in a unity."\textsuperscript{153}

Clearly there is much in this thought upon which Nietzsche draws, especially the emphasis on "becoming." He comments, "We Germans are Hegelians even if there had never been any Hegel, insofar as we (unlike all Latins) instinctively attribute a deeper meaning and greater value to becoming and development than to what "is"; we hardly believe in the justification of the concept of 'being.'"\textsuperscript{154} But Nietzsche just as strongly wants to move away from any idea of "an eschatological end" or "ultimate fulfillment," any final "unity" of history's multiplicities. For him this signals a return in the end to the "Christian-moral interpretation" and the long errors of philosophy, a prizing of being over becoming that is necessarily nihilistic. Hegel is "the


\textsuperscript{153}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{154}\textit{The Gay Science}, 357.
delayed par excellence” of the decline of belief in that interpretation of the world, who ultimately tried to use “our sixth sense, ‘the historical sense,’” as a means of delay.155 Nietzsche also argues, in Löwith’s words, that “this philosophical historicism had the most dangerous effect upon German civilization, for it would be ‘terrible and devastating’ if such a belief in the meaning of history were to lead to an idolization of the actual...a substitute for religion.”156 This danger does in fact play itself out, as do countervailing trends relevant to Nietzsche, within the historicist school that dominated German thought and scholarship for much of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth.157

German historicism shares the same scholarly roots Nietzsche cites for himself: the work of an earlier generation of classicists, philologists, historians, and Bible-scholars, who had established procedures of critical analysis of documents and a devotion to factual accuracy. It also rests on a turn in European thought, beginning with the late eighteenth century, in which thinkers looked less to ahistorical natural laws and universals of human nature than they had at the height of the Enlightenment and more to history (Hegel can be seen in this context). But despite the international nature of these developments, Georg Iggers argues, “historicism received its most radical expression in Germany” and there “from the beginning was permeated with political ideas.”158 This style of historical thought was, on Iggers’ account, the “child” of the political nationalism that arose from French occupation and the

155bid.
156Löwith, pp. 180-1.
157My discussion of German historicism draws heavily on Georg Iggers, The German Conception of History (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1968). Note: the word “historicism” has two often contradictory meanings. The first refers to the German scholarly tradition of the nineteenth century, the second to the way historical consciousness can act as a solvent of certainties (this is the sense in which at the outset of this paper I described Nietzsche as historicizing the self). Context should make clear throughout which sense of the word I am employing.
158Iggers, p. 6.
Wars of Liberation and to which the failed revolution of 1848 and German reunification in 1871 gave decisive turns.

Igers describes the anti-Enlightenment tendencies that characterized German historicist thought. Versus Enlightenment rationalism, it emphasized the dynamic, spontaneous qualities of life that could not be reduced to abstractions. It rejected the idea of normative evaluations, insisting instead that all historical phenomena could be judged only by their own inherent values, because they were all emanations of divine will. “Nothing can be immoral which comes from the innermost, individual character of a being,” Meinecke would declare. The idea of universal human values accordingly lost ground, and the strength and self-assertion of the state gained sanction. There was an accompanying aristocratic bias: Ranke stated, “No matter how we define state and society, there always remains the contrast between the authorities and the subject, between the mass of the governed and the small number of governors.” The study of history focused on great men and great powers.

For those who shared this perspective, “the year 1871 seemed...to be the culmination and justification of historical development,” the kind of “idolization of the actual” Löwith describes Nietzsche as fearing. Certainly, German historicism shares certain strong resemblances to Nietzsche’s thought: the refusal of abstraction and normative assessment, the emphasis on life as spontaneous and dynamic, the taste for the leaders over the lead. But the clear divergences also include what Igers calls historicism’s “deep faith in the ultimate unity of life in God” and its belief in the possibility of “objective knowledge of historical reality.”

159 Quoted by Igers, p. 9.
160 Quoted in Igers, p. 8.
161 Igers, p. 11.
162 Ibid., p. 10.
That assurance weakened with the *fin de siècle* "crisis of historicism." Allan Megill describes that crisis as a product of "the growing awareness of the flux and multiplicity of history, and a growing consciousness of the subjectivity of its apprehension...Nineteenth-century figures like Buckle and Spencer, and before them Hegel, could view history as a coherent process moving toward a rational end. But such a view was no longer possible, or at any rate no longer easy, for a Dilthey or a Weber or a Troeltsch."\(^{163}\)

Iggers stresses that the years between 1890 and 1914 were in fact the apex of modern optimism and faith in progress. This was especially true in Wilhelmine Germany, where a strong sense of special national mission prevailed. Dilthey and Troeltsch, if not Weber, did find ways to retain their belief in meaningfulness of history. But the time also saw a slowly spreading sense of doubt, a new pessimism that began to be visible among thinkers and artists, according to Iggers, as early as the 1870s.\(^ {164}\) The deepened historical sense created a sense of the contingency of all assertions of meaning and value. From the stance of "the problem of consciousness," all knowledge could seem hopelessly subjective and the only possible stance one of radical skepticism.\(^ {165}\) In H. Stuart Hughes’ description, there was among the thinkers of the turn of the century a "psychological malaise," a "sense of impending doom."\(^ {166}\)

This, in short, was the nihilism that Nietzsche saw on the horizon and that he in many ways strove to intensify. His diagnosis of its cause resembles that of some present-day writers. Manfred Frank refers to "the unintentional effect of the Enlightenment: namely, that by critically questioning unjustified

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164 Iggers, pp. 127-8.  
doctrines (e.g., dogmas), it simultaneously collapsed the foundation of its own legitimation. From this point onward philosophy—and bourgeois society as well—has been exposed to the problems arising from this loss of legitimation.”167

Nietzsche traces the cause even farther back (it is important to note that for him radical skepticism, the death of metaphysics, and his famous proclamation of the death of God are all tied together):

You see what it is that really triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously, the father confessor’s refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price. Looking into nature as if it were proof of the goodness and governance of a god; interpreting history in honor of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes...that is all over now, that has man’s conscience against it.

(He credits his own discipline’s “scientific conscience” as one of the agents, calling philologists “destroyers of every faith that rests on books.”168)

This is what the madman of The Gay Science means when he declares, “Whither is God?...I will tell you; We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers.”169 The death is not just that of Christian faith but of belief in the “true” world, in any transcendental system of meaning. The process of casting off such belief equals “Europe’s longest and most courageous self-overcoming.” But with the rejection of this interpretation, “Schopenhauer’s question immediately comes to us in a terrifying way: Has existence any meaning at all?”170

168The Gay Science, 358.
169Ibid., 125.
170Ibid., 357.
That terror haunts the madman: “What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space?”\textsuperscript{171} (The echoes of Pascal are strong.) Nietzsche rephrases the predicament in an accompanying passage:

> We have left the land and we have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us—indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean...hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more freedom—and there is no longer any ‘land.’\textsuperscript{172}

Both passages express explicitly what Allan Megill terms “modern man’s homelessness in the world.”\textsuperscript{173} It is worth noting again that the literal meaning of unheimlich, “uncanny,” is “unhomely” in German. In this sense too nihilism is uncanny: it reveals the homelessness, the endless abyss, waiting underneath the fictions of “being” and the “true” world that created a sense of home.\textsuperscript{174}

For Nietzsche, that sense of nihilism, homelessness, meaninglessness, is not, however, a final truth about the human condition but instead only a necessary stage. Throughout his work he attacks, on the grounds of life, the metaphysical-religious interpretation of the world. On those same grounds, in

\textsuperscript{171}Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{172}Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{173}Megill, p. xiii.
\textsuperscript{174}In this regard, the frequently used conceit of the house for Hegel’s philosophical system is relevant for understanding the predicament of post-Hegelian philosophy. Hegel, according to Manfred Frank, believed that the history of European humanity was the history of the long-thwarted search for the self; German idealism often represented this search with the figure of Odysseus wandering toward home. In Hegel this search is in the end rewarded; “Hegel succeeds—and I add: for the last time” in accommodating himself “as the last inhabitant of the completed house of the West...he shuts the door.” Frank, p. 15.
the early essay "History in the Service and Disservice of Life," he critiques
the historical consciousness on which nihilism—and that first critique—rest.

Of his age, Nietzsche says that "we are all suffering the ravages of
historical fever."175 He and his contemporaries have attempted to digest too
much historical knowledge. As a result, there is a "the gulf between the
inward and outward life," because the former is overdeveloped and cannot
express itself in terms of action or resolve. That way is blocked by the
awareness of the flux of history that too much historical consciousness brings,
by "the doctrines of sovereign Becoming" and of "the fluidity of all
concepts, types, and species...doctrines that I consider true but deadly."176

The problem is that the importance of forgetting as well as
remembering has been forgotten. "A man who totally lacks the power to
forget, who is doomed to see becoming everywhere...no longer believes in
his own being, no longer believes in himself; he sees everything disintegrating
into turbulent particles and becoming lost in this flux of becoming. Like a true
disciple of Heraclitus, he will end by scarcely daring to lift a finger. [Hayden
White compares this man to Roquentin in Sartre's Nausea.177] Forgetting is
necessary to all activity, just as dark, as well as light, is necessary to all
organisms."178 Nietzsche acknowledges that the creation of a horizon, the
boundary between what is forgotten and what is remembered, cannot help
but be arbitrary; this is the kind of awareness to which the historical sense
leads. But it is this very arbitrariness that makes that creation a creative act. In
the end, he wants to argue, as he will still be arguing a decade later in The

175 Nietzsche, "History in the Service and Disservice of Life," in William Arrowsmith, ed., Unmodern
176 Ibid., pp. 108, 135.
177 Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore:
178 "History in the Service and Disservice of Life," p. 89.
Will to Power, it is the value for life that is essential: "Only insofar as history
serves life do we wish to serve history." 179

In short, nihilism need not leave the self as no more than "our constant
experience of the motion of the stream," the poor bird that strikes the walls
of its cage. As Allan Megill points out, for Nietzsche "there are two kinds of
nihilism. On the one hand, there is a nihilism that fails to respond to what
Nietzsche sees as the opportunity offered by the world's nullity. This nihilism
views the devaluation of all present values as oppressive and
burdensome... we adopt a passive and anaesthetic attitude." But there is also
"an active, aesthetic nihilism... We become the artists of our own existence,
untrammeled by natural constraints and limitations." Recognizing that there is
no "true" world, "we see the necessity of lies; and accepting the necessity of
lies, we embark upon a divine—that is, a creative—way of thinking." 180

If "truth" and interpretation are accepted as one and the same, the
love of truth that has brought about this "self-overcoming" can be recast and
preserved. Nietzsche writes,

If the morality of 'thou shalt not lie' is rejected, the "sense
for truth" will have to legitimize itself before another
tribunal:—as a means of the preservation of man, as will
to power. Likewise our love of the beautiful: it is also our
shaping will. The two senses stand side-by-side; the sense
for the real is the means of acquiring the power to shape
things according to our wish. The joy in shaping and
reshaping—a primeval joy! We can comprehend only a
world that we ourselves have made. 181

He describes his own travel down this path. At first, in "my endeavor
to oppose decay and increasing weakness of personality. I sought a new
center... Impossibility of this endeavor recognized... Thereupon I advanced

179 Ibid., p. 87.
180 Megill, pp. 33-4.
181 The Will to Power, 495.
further down the road of disintegration—where I found new sources of strength for individuals. We have to be destroyers!" The creation of the new involved in shaping and reshaping is also destruction of the old. "The state of disintegration," for him, is one "in which individual natures can perfect themselves as never before."\textsuperscript{182} What is needed are free spirits who can play in the ruins, who feel themselves to be not the poor bird beating its wings against the cage but the other bird of \textit{The Gay Science}, the poet Prince Vogelfrei ("free bird").

"To the paralyzing sense of general disintegration and incompleteness I opposed the eternal recurrence," Nietzsche adds.\textsuperscript{183} The notion of the eternal recurrence may seem only confusing here, as a factor that would limit rather enhance the ability to interpret and create freely. It becomes comprehensible in this context if seen as a way of short-circuiting teleological interpretations of history and in fact history altogether, insofar as it has acted in the disservice of life, as a way of demanding upon the need for forgetting and for the \textit{amor fati} that must accompany the joy of shaping life.

Nietzsche is not the first philosopher to insist upon the role of interpretation, nor the first to attack the subject as substance. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe points out that beginning with Kant "what had heretofore ensured the philosophical itself disappears. As a result, all that remains of the subject is the ‘I’ as an ‘empty form’ (a purely logical necessity, said Kant; a grammatical exigency, Nietzsche will say) that ‘accompanies my representations.’ ...As is well known, the Kantian ‘cogito’ is empty."\textsuperscript{184}

Unlike Kant, however, Nietzsche gets rid of the division between the

\textsuperscript{182}Ibid., 517.
\textsuperscript{183}Ibid.
phenomenal and the noumenal world, so that there are no longer "things-in-themselves" but only "my representations."

In place of the subject, what Nietzsche provides is the will to power. This, he explains in *The Genealogy of Morals*, is the principle that interprets and reinterprets, rearranges, outstrips and overcomes, that allows for an active rather than passive self in the face of nihilism. He argues "that the will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it."\(^{185}\) For a moment this sounds as though it might be a return of the subject as substance after all, of an underlying element within the self that brings about thought or action. But, Nietzsche stresses, "there is no will: there are treaty drafts of will that are constantly increasing or losing their power."\(^{186}\) In a footnote, Walter Kaufmann suggests that the meaning of this statement may be that "the will is not a single entity but more like a constantly shifting federation or alliance of drives." Gilles Deleuze less tentatively identifies Nietzsche's will to power as "an essentially plastic principle that is no wider than its field of application; it metamorphoses itself within this field and determines itself, in each case, along with what it determines."\(^{187}\)

Alexander Nehamas, in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, argues that a central concern for Nietzsche is the creation of the self, in which a higher stylistic unity can be achieved out of the lower-level multiplicities of self and world.\(^{188}\) Christopher Janaway, accepting this reading, argues that in this case Nietzsche does not escape altogether from traditional and unitary conceptions of the subject, "the little word 'I.'" "Keen as he has been to do so, he cannot

\(^{185}\) *The Will to Power*, 688.

\(^{186}\) Ibid., 715.


relinquish [the terminology] of agency. For there must be something that gives style, imposes accord...I must own these actions or states, or acknowledge them as mine. I must be that which takes an attitude to them.\textsuperscript{189}

There is another consideration brought out by Nehamas' reading of Nietzsche with which I want to close. For Nehamas, and similarly for Deleuze and Foucault, Nietzsche appears as a liberating and creative force that can help us find new ways of creating the self. But to read Nietzsche in such uniformly positive terms is to ignore the strong political preferences that appear in his work, preferences convincingly drawn out by Bruce Detwiler.\textsuperscript{190} There is after all little coincidence that the "subject 'atom'" Nietzsche attacks at such length is the basic building block of classic liberal conceptions of society.\textsuperscript{191} Similarly, his recoil at the "idolization of the actual" is surely tied to his distaste for the democratic and "herd" tendencies of his time. And it is not clear that the possibility of individual natures perfecting themselves "as never before" against the general "state of disintegration" is a possibility open to all, rather than the few and strong. The will to power often appears as something to be exerted against and over the "herd" of ordinary people, in a world stripped of normative values. In short, it is worth at least asking, with Werner Dannhauser, whether "the antidotes to nihilism that Nietzsche prescribes, as physician of culture, are worse than the disease he diagnoses."\textsuperscript{192}

\textsuperscript{191}Ian Forbes, "Marx and Nietzsche: The Individual in History," in Ansell-Pearson, ed.
\textsuperscript{192}Werner Dannhauser, introduction to "History in the Service and Disservice of Life," p. 86.
Third Essay
“Never Forget,” “Never Again”: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Terms of Holocaust Memory in America

“If we were able to live within memory, we would not have needed to consecrate lieux de mémoire in its name,” Pierre Nora writes wistfully. “We buttress our identity upon such bastions, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them…Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name…History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.”¹⁹³

Nora has in mind the decay of organic collective memory that he associates with the transition from traditional to modern society. But the anxiety in this relationship between memory and memorialization also characterizes memory of the Holocaust and the lieux de mémoire that have been created in its name.

The “living societies” of Jewish life in Europe are almost entirely gone. Survivors of the Holocaust have dispersed from the countries where it took place. By now, they are aging; in the near future they too will be gone. Given the profound disruptions involved, in this case the preservation of individual memory and construction of collective memory must take place all the more consciously. The task has been taken up by a variety of forms of representation, including testimony, historical works, literature, film, museums, and memorials.

The last two categories have become increasingly significant. Worldwide, according to James Young, "it seems likely that as many people now visit Holocaust memorials each year as died during the Holocaust itself."\textsuperscript{194} In the United States alone, there are hundreds of such sites, many in synagogues, seminaries, or Jewish community centers, others occupying prominent places in public parks, downtowns, or museum districts. Construction of major museums and memorials has been especially marked since the mid-1980s and has included: in Los Angeles, two museums and a large memorial in Pan Pacific Park, all completed in the early 1990s; in Tucson, the country's largest memorial, unveiled in 1990; a 1984 George Segal installation on a prime spot in San Francisco's Lincoln Park, near the Palace of the Legion of Honor; Liberation, a 1985 sculpture by Nathan Rapoport, facing the Statue of Liberty across the Hudson; and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., which opened in April 1993. Also under consideration or recently completed are New York and Houston museums; a Boston memorial consisting of six 65-foot illuminated glass towers; and a similarly large site in Albuquerque.

Among these sites, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is pre-eminent. It is, as its name proclaims it to be, a national rather than local institution, established by an act of Congress in 1980 and receiving federal funds. Along with its 10,000 artifacts, it contains archives and a 100,000-volume library, making it the largest Holocaust repository and study center in America. It gains an additional level of significance by its popularity. The attendance figure for the museum's first year, 1.6 million, more than doubled expectations, and then-director Jeshajahu Weinberg found himself pleading

with the public to postpone visits in order to alleviate overcrowding and reduce wear and tear on the museum’s facilities. The crowds have continued, however. More than a quarter of visitors surveyed said they came to Washington specifically to see the museum. The average length of visit, three hours, is also considered unusual.195

_Schindler’s List_ and the 1970s television mini-series “Holocaust” are other representations of the Holocaust that have proven popular. But the special quality of a museum or monument, perhaps the reason that these forms have become so prized, is what Andreas Huyssen calls its “promise of permanence.”196 Further, there is the relationship between memory and place noted by Maurice Halbwachs. For Halbwachs memory obtains coherent meaning when it is mentally mapped onto concrete settings. This operation also combats forgetting, in the style of the “memory palaces” of Renaissance mnemonics. Commemoration translates the process into lasting physical reality and attempts to give lasting direction to the making of meaning. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum provides not only a permanent locus of this kind for Holocaust memory but also one mapped into a pre-existing “landscape of memory,” the sacred sites of American civic culture that mark the National Mall. The location gives symbolic physical shape to Edward Linenthal’s declaration that with the opening of the museum “the Holocaust became an event officially incorporated into American memory.”197 The museum and its governing body, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, stress


the importance of this incorporation repeatedly: the council titled the 1986 brochure on its work “A Nation Remembers” and the program for the museum groundbreaking ceremony “A National Commitment to Remembrance.” The titles of books on the museum carry similar messages: *Preserving Memory; The World Must Know; The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: America Keeps the Memory Alive.*

The significance of the world’s knowing and remembering stems from the nature of the Holocaust itself. As Jürgen Habermas writes, “Something took place here [in Auschwitz] which up until that time no one had even thought might be possible. A deep stratum of solidarity between all that bears a human countenance was touched here.”198 The Nazis strove to isolate the Jews, cutting off their bonds of communication and bonds of humanity with the rest of the world. Dominick LaCapra points out that “the Nazis wanted the destruction of the Jews to be total and to include their elimination from memory itself at least in the form of Jewish self-representation.”199 Simon Wiesenthal remembers S.S. troops telling concentration camp prisoners: “There will be no certainties, because we will destroy the evidence with you. And even if some proof should remain and some of you survive, people will say that the events that you describe are too monstrous to be believed; they will say that they are the exaggerations of Allied propaganda and will believe us, who will deny everything, and not you.”200 Given these circumstances, LaCapra states, “A concern for memorials as necessary acts of memory is quite understandable...In this specific context, a Jewish public act of memory might function as an act of resistance.” Elie Wiesel, who was chair of the

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memorial council in the 1980s, declared it so, reminding the crowd at the museum’s groundbreaking, “Even in this land the Jews were forgotten…To remember Auschwitz is to denounced the evil of Auschwitz. To remember Treblinka is to protest against Treblinka.” 201 Often cited is Milan Kundera’s statement: “The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.” 202

During the first decades after World War II, the word “Holocaust” did not yet differentiate the way Jews died during the war from the way millions of others did. Survivors report arriving in America to find assimilation, and not bad memories, encouraged. Historians generally point to the Eichmann trial and, in Peter Novick’s words, the “fears of a renewed Holocaust” brought by the 1967 Six-Day War as spurs to the last three decades’ increasing insistence on remembering the Holocaust. 203 But even with heightened awareness in both Europe and America, Alain Finkielkraut argues that Holocaust remembrance is still oppositional or counter-memory: given the world’s tendency to blame the victims or simply to forget, “Jewish memory is none other than the ceaseless combat we must carry out against majority memory.” 204

The need for such combat stems in part, of course, from the existence of Holocaust deniers (whom Pierre Vidal-Naquet calls “assassins of memory”). As a Newsweek commentator points out, “Nobody seems worried that, say, the survivors of Pearl Harbor are dying. But there aren’t ‘scholars’

203 Peter Novick, “Holocaust Memory in America,” in Young, The Art of Memory, p. 159.
popping up to deny that Pearl Harbor was bombed.”

At the time of the museum’s opening, the question had taken on a particular urgency. A late 1992 poll using a confusing double negative (“Does it seem possible, or does it seem impossible to you that the Nazi extermination of the Jews never happened?”) seemed to indicate that 22 percent of the American public thought it was possible that the Holocaust never took place and that 12 percent were unsure. When a new survey with a more clearly phrased question was taken, 96 percent of respondents stated they believed the Holocaust had happened. The fourteen months that elapsed between the two surveys allowed concern to spread that Holocaust denial was affecting a large portion of the American public.

What both surveys did reveal was a fairly low level of American public awareness about the events of the Holocaust. Each time, roughly one-third of the respondents could not identify Auschwitz as a Nazi concentration camp. Similarly, a reporter, asking a group of West Virginia high school students visiting the museum if they had studied the Holocaust in school, was told by one girl, “‘I just heard about it’…What does she mean? ‘Omigod,’ she says, blushing. She then repeats that, indeed, she had not heard of the Holocaust until the trip was announced. ‘When I heard we were coming today, I said, ‘What’s that?’”

One goal of the museum is to combat both ignorance and disbelief: according to Linenthal, “The building is a seal that the Holocaust happened.”

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208 Quoted in Kenneth Woodward, “We Are Witnesses,” *Newsweek*, April 26, 1993. Miles Lerman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council states that for these reasons the council’s major task is fulfilling requests for informational material: “And what is most important is that the requests come from small towns in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas—towns where Jews make up only a tiny percentage of the population.”
The museum thus has two intertwined tasks, to remember and to document, to answer the calls of memory and history. Michael Berenbaum, the museum’s former project director, opens *The World Must Know: The Story of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* with this story: according to one account of the historian Simon Dubnow’s death in the Riga ghetto, his last words were *screibt und farscreibt*, write and record. Berenbaum writes, “Survivors speak of one commandment that came from the lips of those who perished and sealed the souls of those who remained: Remember: Do not let the world forget.”

Many survivors see the museum as fulfillment of “the promise made to those who perished that they would not be forgotten.” Elie Wiesel states, “To forget would mean to kill the victims a second time. We could not prevent their first death; we cannot allow them to vanish again. Memory is not only a victory over time, it is also a triumph over injustice.” Nesse Godin, president of the Holocaust Survivors and Friends of Greater Washington, D.C., told a reporter, “I remember when I was a little girl during the Holocaust, in the ghettos, the concentration camps, and in the labor camps. And in all those horrible times, the women around me who were a little bit older, they always said, ‘You girls who are a little bit younger, who maybe will survive this—tell the world about this, don’t let us be forgotten.’ What better way to tell the world about them than this wonderful United States Holocaust Memorial Museum?”

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He cites educational programs as the museum’s most pressing need as well. "Building the museum was a major accomplishment," he says, "but we believe our work has just begun." (Joseph, “Struggling with Success.”)


212 Dan Joseph, “Struggling with Success.”
But, Peter Novick asks, “why here?...The United States has no special relationship to the Holocaust.”

Critics of the museum, and of other Holocaust commemoration projects, regularly raise the question. The answers, as James Young says, “are as mixed as the population at large, the reasons variously lofty and cynical, practical and aesthetic.” The most basic factor is the comparatively large Jewish community in America and the number of Holocaust survivors that settled in the U.S. after the war. The Carter administration decided to form the President’s Commission on the Holocaust, which proposed the museum, in part to mend relations with Jewish supporters upset by the sale of F-15 planes to Saudi Arabia. Some see, positively or negatively, the museum as a reflection of U.S. support for Israel. Perhaps another reason for building the museum is a desire to safeguard Holocaust memory by anchoring it somewhere outside Israel, given its troubled relations with its neighbors, and the European countries where the events of the Holocaust took place, who for that very reason are distrusted. Linenthal calls the museum “an insurance policy that Jews are welcome in America,” indicating that Holocaust commemoration can somehow prevent a similarly disastrous outcome for Jewish life in America. Finally, the museum comes out of the idea, shared by Jews and Gentiles alike, that that the Holocaust has a universal significance and universal lessons and that for an America conceived as the guardian of democracy these are especially significant.

Because of the complex set of goals and motives behind the museum, it faces two related sets of problems, problems of representation and of context.

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213 Novick, p. 159.
214 Young, The Texture of Memory, p. 284.
215 Linenthal, p. 17. The author recalls “a comment made to me that the museum was a way to remind congressmen how to vote on issues regarding the State of Israel” (p. 3).
216 Quoted in Woodward, “We Are Witnesses.”
It must represent the Holocaust, in architectural and exhibit form, in a way that carries out the charge to record and remember. As a national museum of the Holocaust in the United States, it also finds itself wrestling with issues regarding the specific versus the universal character of the Holocaust. A Holocaust site in Germany or Israel, whether it and its visitors evade or emphasize the fact (James Young's *The Texture of Memory* contains some interesting examples), points viscerally to the specific identity of either the perpetrators or the victims. Most Americans do not share the same sense of identity with either group. The museum must therefore make the story it tells relevant to its visitors in its own manner if it is to succeed in shaping a place for the Holocaust in American collective memory. Judging by the response in both the popular press and in specialized or scholarly publications, the techniques it has selected work well. A typical popular article on visiting the museum stresses the gravity and emotional power of the experience and ends by urging that the events documented never be forgotten. There have been negative reviews as well, of course. In responses that contrast with one another and with material put out by the museum, it is possible to trace these problems of representation and context, how the museum has engaged them, and in what ways they remain unresolved.

The museum follows what Linenthal describes as a canonical reading of the Holocaust...already...established in American culture, thanks largely to the eloquence of survivor and writer Elie Wiesel. For him, the Holocaust could never be understood but, for the sake of humankind, had to be remembered. It was an event that transcended history, almost incapable of being represented except through survivor testimony. When one was speaking of the Holocaust, it was unwritten etiquette to begin by saying that no one could understand the Holocaust, but it needed to be spoken of so "it" would not happen again, or be forgotten.217

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217 Linenthal, p. 4.
This stress on the inadequacy of representation and understanding shapes the way the museum presents the events of the Holocaust. According to its first director, Jeshajahu Weinberg, the museum “restricts itself meticulously to answering the question of how it happened...the museum does not undertake to explain why the Holocaust has happened.”

Elie Wiesel elaborates: the question “will remain forever unanswered. Indeed, if there is an answer to the Holocaust, it must—by definition—be the wrong answer. Nor is the museum an answer; it is but a question mark.” The strategy of exhibit designer Ralph Appelbaum, whose work won a gold medal from the Industrial Designers Society of America, was to “present information as if he were building a case like a lawyer: a step-by-step accumulation of facts and evidence...to build irrefutable proof of the Holocaust.” But the museum, Michael Berenbaum states, resists attributing redemptive meaning to the story it tells: “We learn of evil unredeemed, of death, of destruction...the Holocaust offers no happy ending, no transcendent meaning, no easy moralism.”

Architect James Ingo Freed’s building is spacious, solemn, at times suffused with light, but also tense, with warped, twisted, cracked elements and architectural references to the death camps. Few of these are overt; as critic Adrian Dannatt writes, “here the devil, not God, looms in the details.” Freed conceives the museum as “sacred ground” but not in a traditional way. At the heart of the Hall of Remembrance, the eternal flame-lit space for

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218 Jeshajahu Weinberg, “From the Director,” in Berenbaum, pp. xiv-xv.
219 Elie Wiesel, “For the Dead and the Living.” Primo Levi similarly recalls that in Auschwitz, a guard told him “hier ist kein warum” (“there is no ‘why’ here”).
221 Berenbaum, p. 2.
contemplation at the end of the museum, is simply “absence...absence, I think, is all you can have here.”

Dannett notes the building’s “deliberate ambiguity, its confusion of potential metaphors and its overlapping of signification...He [Freed] even went through the drawings of the architects on the design team removing anything that might have been considered a neat resolution, to keep difficulties intact, the space problematized.” Freed stresses that he does not want to impose any one interpretation and strives to keep the memory encapsulated in the building “sufficiently ambiguous and open-ended that others can inhabit the space, can imbue the forms with their own memories.”

James Young similarly argues that there is no one “collective memory” inherent in a memorial. The “many discrete memories” that viewers bring are “gathered into common memorial spaces and assigned common meaning. A society’s memory, in this context, might be regarded as an aggregate collection of its member’s many, often competing memories. If societies remember, it is only insofar as their institutions and rituals organize, shape, even inspire their constituents’ memories.” He acknowledges a more active, didactic role for memorial institutions that Freed does, a role borne out in many aspects of the U.S. museum, but ultimately one that is not simply an imposition of, but, in Freed’s phrase, “a dialogue with memory.”

Critical writing on historical museums often points to the way exhibits can, by creating a particular identity for visitors, link the experiences and memories on display and the visitor’s own experience and subsequent

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224 Dannatt, pp. 6, 13.
226 Young, The Texture of Memory, p. xi.
memories of them. Irit Rogoff suggests that display techniques can offer the visitor "entry into the historical narrative" and foster "a set of empathetic and participatory responses" so that "a structure of identification is set up." Daniel Sherman argues that museums seek "to channel visitor's memories along the lines of the institution's guiding narrative. Through their various display strategies, museum narratives offer visitors a collective identity to which their own memories of the museum will henceforth connect them."

In a journal article, Ralph Appelbaum discusses his goals in designing the museum exhibits. He considered it important to take a "puristic" approach, keeping design "very minimal, very transparent," focusing on "the artifactual and documentary evidence" and avoiding anything "that could possibly be perceived as emotionalistic." At the same time, the intent was to further a "sense of immersion in the story...a visceral encounter with the evidence," because "enforcing the emotional connection is really the only way of keeping the memory alive." Some of the effects used work "subliminally...visitors needn't notice these details to benefit emotionally from their resonance." He concludes, "What we have tried to achieve is an environment...so united with its subject, that memory of the museum experience and the sharing of memory through discussion would carry on in the lives of its visitors." The claim is, in other words, that if experience of the museum environment can be made so like experience of the subject (the experience that victims of the Holocaust did live but museum visitors in fact

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cannot) that the two blur together, the memory kept alive and spread by
visitors will somehow be, not just the memory of a visit to a museum, but the
very thing that the museum and all Holocaust memorialization attempt to
preserve: memory of the Holocaust itself. The goal is simultaneously an
illusion and the very definition of the kind of collective memory Halbwachs
discussed: the memory of things that one has not experienced oneself.

To create such an experience of the museum, architecture and exhibits
work together to bring vistors to identify with the victims of the Holocaust.
Visitors are given symbolic tastes of the victims’ experience and shown how
like themselves the victims were. One technique, the architectural, is made
explicit in a children’s book on the museum by Eleanor Ayer. The physical
settings “reflect the moods of anxiety, fear and despair that enveloped the
Jews of Europe during the Holocaust,” she writes, quoting Freed: “‘I wanted
to convey the sense of constantly being watched, of things closing in.’”
According to the book jacket, visitors to the museum “journey with the
victims through the hell of the Holocaust.” As Ayer takes her young readers
on this tour, she drives home the connections (with considerably less subtlety
than the museum itself): visitors “taken an elevator to the fourth floor to
begin their tour down through the museum, just as the Nazis’ victims
descended into their human-made hell.” “Suddenly your path is blocked by a
huge horizontal pole...It’s confusing, disorienting, almost frightening. In a
very small way, you are feeling the kind of fear that the hunted people of
Hitler’s Reich experienced.” “Visitors cross two bridges that connect the
museum towers, just as Jews crossed bridges from one part of the ghetto to
another.” As visitors step into the section of the museum on the ghettos, the
flooring changes to rough cobblestone and then narrow wooden planks.
Later, they can step into a boxcar like those used for transport to Treblinka
and step into actual barracks from another camp. Throughout, Ayers stresses to her readers: “The Holocaust...was the intentional murder of innocent people just like you...If you had been [there]...you would have been killed too.” 230

The I.D. cards visitors receive as they enter the museum also encourage identification with the victims. The card describes someone of the visitor’s sex and approximate age who was caught up in the events of the Holocaust; at various points in the museum there are machines that give an update on the fate of the person depicted. For children, there is a special exhibit called “Daniel’s Story,” which presents the experiences of a (fictional) small boy deported from Frankfurt to the Lodz Ghetto and from there to a concentration camp where his mother and sister were killed.

“Another strategy aimed at fostering emotional involvement and facilitating the visitor’s identification with the victims,” former museum director Jeshajahu Weinberg writes, “was stressing the human character of the individuals targeted by the Nazis.” 231 Commentators most often single out as especially moving exhibits that give a sense of Holocaust victims as individuals. These do so either by displaying photographs of the victims or by displaying some of their possessions (Rogoff points to the way “humble objects” can work to “anchor the viewer through simulacra of supposedly ‘personal’ memories” 232). One such exhibit is the famous pile of shoes taken from concentration camp prisoners. A group of high school students “struggle to explain why they found the shoes particularly moving: ‘I mean, people wore those’; ‘They made it real’; and ‘It smelled like death.’” 233

233 Rust, “Youth and the Truth.”
often cited is the Tower of Faces: on Rosh Hashanah, 1941, Nazis machine-
gunned all but a very few of the 3,500 residents of Ejszyszki, a Polish shtetl. One survivor was Yaffa Sonenson Eliach, later a professor of Judaic studies at Brooklyn College. In 1979, after visiting Auschwitz ("One didn’t get any sense of the beauty and vitality of the life that was taken"), she embarked on a world-wide search for photographs of life in Ejszyszki, eventually finding 6,000 that portrayed its residents "the way they wanted to be remembered." 

Photos of the soon-to-be-dead laughing, picnicking, swimming, kissing are reproduced on a tower-like structure that draws comments such as "Finally you see who died" and "Nothing is more haunting."

Fifteen-year-old Suparna Rajmane, visiting from Bombay, was "visibly shaken" by her visit to the museum. "It’s one thing to know that the Nazis murdered millions of people," she says. "It’s another to put yourself in their place." The museum’s techniques appear to work powerfully on most people. Descriptions of visits to the museum invariably note the silent, grave mood among the visitors, the horror and emotion they express, and the large number who cry (according to one article, among those who have been moved to tears is tele-evangelist Pat Robertson). But not everyone reacts in this manner; for New York writer Kay Larson, the museum goes to such "extraordinary lengths to re-create the experience of victimization" that its techniques edge over into "schmaltz" like the I.D. cards.

Clearly, representation of the Holocaust runs two opposing risks. To one end, there is Johanna Kaplan’s statement that "by now our response to

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the singular horrific barbarity of our time is—just the tiniest bit dutiful.”

Appelbaum’s strategies are intended to prevent this sort of dessication of feeling in order to “keep memory alive.” But there is also, at the opposite end, the danger of perversely aestheticizing the Holocaust or making it into entertainment, a danger described in its various degrees by Susan Sontag as the phenomenon of “fascinating fascism,” by Saul Friedlander as “kitsch,” and by Alvin Rosenfeld as “a pornography of the Holocaust.”

A few commentators have felt the museum slips in this direction. Of a group of teen-aged visitors interviewed by a reporter, “One speaks of a Jewish classmate who is not there because he feels the museum trivializes the nightmare. His friend agrees somewhat...‘It’s like, ‘OK, see lots of people die, let’s go to brunch.’” Writer Philip Gourevitch, looking over one of the guard walls that keeps particularly gruesome footage from children, jots down his reactions: “‘Peep show format. Snuff films.’...One is repeatedly forced into the role of a voyeur of the prurient.” He speaks of the “potential for excitement, for titillation, and even for seduction” involved in seeing within a few hours “images of hundred of dead bodies, many of them naked, and hundreds more people starving, beaten, and otherwise brutalized.” The material takes on “aesthetic” and “grotesque” qualities, he argues, because museums cannot divorce themselves from their status as “places of entertainment” and theme parks: “the horrifying quality of Holocaust material does not transform such a context; rather, it is transformed by the context.”

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242 Rust, “Youth and the Truth.”
Yet editing out the full horror would run its own risks of prettifying or avoiding the truth. This tension marked debate among museum officials and council members over whether to display hair shorn from women at Auschwitz, some of which was already on exhibit at the camp. The decision in the end was to use a photograph of the hair instead, given concerns that displaying the hair itself would be “‘an act of defilement’...‘a desecration’...‘that what is acceptable in the abnormal atmosphere of a death camp...is not acceptable in the antiseptic atmosphere of the nation’s capital.’” Those who wanted to include the hair felt that “‘in the end there are people so concerned about not upsetting people that they are actually willing to hold back on telling the truth of the Holocaust.’”

Unlike Gourevitch, I think that the museum has on the whole managed to balance the desire to preserve the sense of sacredness that surrounds memory of the victims and the desire to convey the victims’ experience with enough emotional power to keep memory vivid and painful. But such problems of representation operate, as Gourevitch’s comments suggest, within more general problems of representation in museum and memorial form.

Andreas Huyssen, in noting the “promise of permanence a monument in stone will suggest,” notes also that this promise “is always built on quicksand.” James Young quotes Robert Musil’s observation that “there is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument. They are no doubt erected to be seen—indeed, to attract attention. But at the same time they are impregnated with something that repels attention.” Young argues that this “something” is the way “a monument turns pliant memory to stone.”

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244 Linenthal, pp. 210-216.
245 Huyssen, p. 9.
is the danger, he writes, that “perhaps the more memory comes to rest in its exteriorized forms, the less it is experienced internally... Under the illusion that our memorial edifices will always be there to remind us, we take leave of them... To the extent that we encourage monuments to do our memory-work for us, we become that much more forgetful.” As their connection with active memory subsists, monuments can, Young and Huyssen both point out, simply fade into the landscape, standing only as monuments to the deadness of the past. Theodor Adorno made a similar point in using the term “museal” to refer to “objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying.” Two phrases that come up repeatedly to describe the museum’s mission are “preserving memory” and “keeping memory alive.” But is it the case here, as it is, for example, with preserved zoological or botanical specimens, that the two ends are mutually exclusive?

Leon Wieseltier finds the new abundance of Holocaust memorials in America “affecting and... revolting... It ensures that if the Holocaust is forgotten, or if it is pushed to the peripheries of consciousness and culture, then it will be partly owing to the memorials themselves, which will have made the horror familiar and thereby robbed it of its power to shock and disrupt.” But in the case of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, he argues that “the memorial will be saved from the fate of memorials by the museum, and the museum will be saved from the fate of museums by the memorial.” What he means, one pieces together from the rest of his comments, is that the memorial aspects of the museum are “stiffened [that is, strengthened] by history” and the museum’s historical narrative, because it ends in

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246 Young, *Texture of Memory*, p. 13, 5.
“silence...struck dumb” at the Hall of Remembrance, is kept from furthering an over-ready, “too noisy” and “morbid” familiarity with the facts.248

Thomas Laqueur argues instead that the “burden of remembering is too much for the Holocaust Memorial Museum, not because it fails as a museum, but because it fails as a memorial.” The “surfeit of objects” and “the sheer museumness of the place,” he found, robs the artifacts of their “aura of remembrance.” The museum fails as a “memorial space,” and cannot offer its holdings a context in which they can “speak,” most of all because of its location: the site, in America, near the National Mall, “is starkly meaningless” for the museum’s purposes.249

What would be more accurate is to say that the site poses problems of meaning for the museum. As James Young stresses throughout his work, what shapes the meaning and memories invested in any Holocaust memorial is its context and its relationship to that context. The shoe that once belonged to a woman killed at Auschwitz can still resonate in a public building in Washington, D.C., but it will do so differently than it does at Auschwitz or in Jerusalem. And it will not do so in the same way for each visitor. A National Review writer reports that his wife, the child of survivors, has “reservations about the very idea of making the Holocaust a kind of public entertainment for people who do not bear the remotest relation to its events.”250 But who does bear relation to those events, and in what way? The interpretations vary

248Wieseltier, “After Memory.”
249Thomas Laqueur, “The Holocaust Museum,” The Threepenny Review 56 (Winter 1994). While much of what Laqueur has to say is valuable, his experience of the museum was likely shaped by the fact that, as he notes, he completed his tour in three hours (fully half the people who set foot within the museum spend longer). My own experience of the museum is that a power accrues from the very length of time required to absorb the detail of information and the number of artifacts, from acquiescing to the museum’s demand that one not look away quickly but endure its steady, endless insistence that this, then this, then this happened.
widely, some particularistic, some universalizing; it is around this axis of interpretation that the problems of meaning revolve.

The extreme, and much decried, end of universalization is the way the Holocaust is used as metaphor. The Israeli scholar Yehuda Bauer argues that “in the public mind the term ‘Holocaust’ has become flattened,” so that “any evil that befalls anyone anywhere becomes a Holocaust.”²⁵¹ Alvin Rosenfeld cites contemptuously artist Judy Chicago’s Holocaust Project in which “one finds images of Nazi brutality side by side with images of slavery, atomic warfare, animal vivisection, and evil-looking gynecologists.” Chicago identifies the Holocaust, in her words, as one “victim experience” among many, all rooted in “the injustice inherent in the global structure of patriarchy and the result of power as it has been defined and enforced by male-dominated societies.”²⁵² Historian David Stannard has titled a book on the destruction of Native Americans American Holocaust. ²⁵³ There are anti-abortion activists who term abortion “the American holocaust” and compare doctors who perform abortions to Josef Mengele. AIDS is also a holocaust; a slaughterhouse or laboratory is an “Animal Auschwitz.”

Charles Krauthammer sees in this use of Holocaust as metaphor evidence that “in an age when victimhood carries high status, the Jews are much and grotesquely envied for having suffered the greatest crime in history. Hence the common attempt to universalize the Holocaust: ‘It was a war against the Jews, but it could have been against any other nation.’ Well, it wasn’t.”²⁵⁴ This insistence was central to debates over plans for the museum. On Holocaust Remembrance Day in 1979, Jimmy Carter made a speech in

²⁵³ Cited in Linenthal, p. 318.
which he referred eleven million victims of the Holocaust, of whom, he said, six million were Jews and five million were non-Jews. Yehuda Bauer and others objected to the formulation and found only slightly better his 1980 statement that the planned Holocaust memorial would honor “the six million Jews and the millions of other victims of Nazism.” Bauer expressed concern that the memorial would “submerge the specific Jewish tragedy in the general sea of suffering caused by the many atrocities committed by the Nazi regime” and the Holocaust would thereby be “de-Judaized.”

Linenthal recounts the arguments within the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council over “how Jewish” the museum was to be. Not all were happy with the decision to commemorate, along with the five to six million Jews killed in the Holocaust, the five million others—Poles, Roma (or gypsies), Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, political dissidents, people with disabilities, and Soviet prisoners of war—whom the Nazis also killed. Michael Berenbaum describes the final formulation: “At the center of the tragedy of the Holocaust is the murder of European Jews…Near that center is the murder of the Gypsies.” The museum includes “the totality of victims without de-Judaizing the Holocaust (and thus falsifying history) or overlooking any group victimized by the Third Reich.” Others express a different concern about “how Jewish” the museum is, worried about its effect on American Jewish identity and on the politics of ethnic identity in America. Melvin Julius Bukiet, fiction editor of Tikkan, argues that the museum is nothing more than a show of the wealth and power Holocaust survivors have attained in American society. Ori Soltes, director of the B’nai B’rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C., asserts, “Jewish children may come out of the museum

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255 Bauer, “Whose Holocaust?”
256 Berenbaum, p. 2
257 Cited in Joseph, “Struggling with Success.”
convinced that Judaism is a suffering fool’s path to follow. Non-Jewish children and adults alike may believe that martyrdom and victimization are all that Jews have offered to history.”

Philip Gourevitch argues, “It’s not a museum of Jewish history, it’s a museum of Jewish annihilation....I think everything else about Judaism will be lost.”

Jews, critics contend, are now memorialized on the Mall not by the millenia of their history but by six years of genocide.

The concern about ethnic polarization is voiced by Howard Hussock:

Unlike Yehuda Bauer [the reference is to an article by Bauer in a 1989 issue of Tikkun], I am not worried that an attempt to incorporate a Holocaust memorial into the civil religion will somehow trivialize the tragedy. On the contrary, I am concerned that introducing a particularized element to the panoply of American national monuments will threaten to splinter and thereby undermine...civil religion...By supporting an exclusively Jewish memorial ostensibly predicated on the need to confront universal evil, we send a message to other victims groups—Blacks clearly being the most important in the current political context—that we are not interested in the historic similarities that may unite us.”

Others have argued that if a story of racial oppression and violence is to be made into a museum, America can provide its own examples instead in the forms of Native American and African-American history (it should be pointed out that museums on both these subjects are planned for the Mall).

Contrasting concerns about the particularist message of the museum—not enough, too much so—come out in Kay Larson’s and Jonathan Rosen’s almost diametrically opposed reactions to the visitor I.D. cards. For Larson, they are a “bland falsehood,” serving to gloss over the specific nature of the Holocaust: “I drew Anna Pfeffer, a Jew born in Frankenthal, Germany, in 1885. Anna was gassed at Auschwitz on October 9, 1944, at the age of 58.

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259 Quoted in Joseph, “Struggling with Success.”
The implication: I could have been her. Not so, in fact. (I might have been gassed, but for other reasons.)”261 Rosen, on the other hand, argues that it is “as if everyone were expected to enter the museum an American and leave, in some fashion, a Jew.” James Young comments: “If this is true, then precisely the opposite effect of a unifying experience has been achieved: Americans enter whole, only to exit in their constituent parts.” But he suggests another model, or “ideal,” for the way Holocaust memory might interact with broader questions of ethnic identity in America: “Every group in America may eventually come to recall its past in light of another group’s historical memory, each coming to know more about their compatriots’ experiences in light of their own remembered past.”262 In short, one group’s memory of historical tragedy may generate divisiveness and competition among groups, or it may increase solidarity and understanding.

There are examples of both kinds of reactions to the Holocaust museum. Tee Williams, a young woman asked by a reporter, to describe her visit, said, “‘In the museum I saw signs that said ‘No Jews allowed’ and I thought, ‘Substitute the word black and you have the same thing that went on here’… The museum is a difficult thing to talk about. It was an overpowering experience. It hurt a lot.’”263

James Cameron takes the museum as a model of the commemoration of racial injustice. Cameron, who in 1930 was set upon by a crowd and almost lynched (his two companions did not escape), opened Milwaukee’s Black Holocaust Museum in 1988, inspired by a “tearful” visit to Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial nine years earlier.264 “It’s going to have all the

261 Larson, “Where Does It End?”
262 Young, The Texture of Memory, p. 344, 349.
263 Quoted in Joseph, “Struggling with Success.”
things you see in the [U.S.] Jewish Holocaust museum,” Cameron says, in discussing the photographs of lynchings and other artifacts of racism that will constitute the museum’s exhibits.265

Patricia Harty also seems to see the museum as a model but phrases her comparisons in terms of competition, not empathy. In an Irish America article entitled “Where’s Our Famine Movie?”, she states, “the Jews have their Holocaust museum to make sure that today’s children will remember, and they have…the movie Schindler’s List.” She calls for comparable commemoration of the million Irish who starved during the 1840s potato blight. “They deserve to be talked about as the Jews are talking about the Holocaust.” To those who think enough attention has been paid to the famine victims, she answers, “Try telling the Jews that the painful events of the Holocaust have often been over-emphasized in the past and see where you get…take a lesson from the Jews if told to shut up about it.”266

The museum has come up with its own approach to such issues. Former director Jeshajahu Weinberg writes, “To show the importance of the event for the totality of American society, the museum had to expose the universal implications hidden behind the appearance of ethnic specificity.”267 In Elie Wiesel’s formulation: “We have learned that though the Holocaust was principally a Jewish tragedy, its lessons are universal…We have learned that whatever happens to one community ultimately affects every community.”268 But the context for the Holocaust that the museum sets up is not only “universal” but also specifically American.

267Weinberg, p. 239.
268Elie Wiesel, “For the Dead and the Living.”
The museum's "Americanization" of the Holocaust, in Michael Berenbaum's term, appears especially clearly (given the simplistic nature of direct mail) in material sent out to potential donors. Enclosed in one direct mail packet is a message from Curtis Whiteway of Vermont, one of the American soldiers who liberated Dachau: "I've heard some say this is just a Jewish museum—that it's mostly about what happened to the Jews, and that it should be supported by the Jews. Well, I'm not Jewish, and I disagree...this is a memorial about man's inhumanity to man." The main body of the direct mail letter emphasizes:

This is an American museum. A museum of American values—of life, liberty, and the inalienable right to all people to live free from persecution—values we fought to defend in war, and which we fight to preserve today. A museum of American experiences—from the soldiers who liberated the concentration camps, to the survivors who re-settled here to heal. A museum of American history—how we failed to prevent catastrophe; how we rescued the world from Adolf Hitler and the scourge of Nazism. And a museum of American people—who created this national memorial to ensure that all who come after us understand that what happened in the Holocaust happened in their world to people just like them...No one who visits the Museum will be untouched. Having witnessed the nightmarish consequences of the triumph of evil, the monuments to democracy that surround each departing vistors will have new meaning, as will the ideals for which they stand. Not since the pennies of schoolchildren erected the Statue of Liberty has our nation built such a meaningful testament to its values and ideals.

Many commentators on the museum take up this perspective—the Holocaust and American ideals as intertwined—and accordingly make much of the site's proximity to other monuments and memorials. (This is valid, although it should be noted that it is near the Mall, not—as is commonly stated—on the Mall.) In a typical formulation, one writer contrasts the museum with "its tall neighbor, the Washington Monument; while the sleek,

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269 Linenthal, p. 255.
270 U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, direct mail letter.
white monument figuratively and literally celebrates the heights that humanity can reach, the austere, foreboding museum explores, in great detail, the lowest depths to which it can sink.”

Within the museum, the Declaration of Independence and quotes from American presidents are engraved upon the walls. The museum’s seal is the Great Seal of the United States—the familiar eagle clutching a sheaf of wheat and a cluster of arrows—surrounded by the words of Elie Wiesel, “For the dead and the living, we must bear witness.” On a visit to the museum, visitors step from the anteroom, the Hall of Witness, into an elevator that will take them up to the fourth floor of the building, where the exhibit begins. Played from a speaker within the elevator are the words of an American soldier recounting his initial reaction to the death camps: “We have come across something and we’re not sure what it is...sick, dying, starved people. You can’t imagine it...Things like that don’t happen.” The doors open to a photograph of American soldiers at Ohrdruf, the first of the concentration camps they would liberate, standing shocked before a long row of charred corpses stacked like firewood.

Ralph Appelbaum writes, “These views of and by Americans are there to create a primary identification for American visitors to the museum; we want them to enter armed with their American values, specifically the values and outlook of their soldier fathers or grandfathers who entered Europe in 1945 to discover the same evidence that the museum presents.” Along with identifying with the victims, visitors are meant to identify themselves as their liberators and defenders. One part of the exhibit strives to incorporate into this heroic American identity the duty of combatting Holocaust deniers.

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271 Joseph, “Struggling with Success.”
272 Appelbaum, p. 88.
It presents a quote from Eisenhower about the liberation of the camps: "The things I saw beggar description... The visual evidence and verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overwhelming... I made this visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever in the future there developed a tendency to charge these allegations merely to propaganda."

After the initial exhibit on the liberation of the camps, the museum steps out of this "Americanizing" context and goes on to chronicle Jewish life in Europe, the history of anti-Semitism, and the events of the Third Reich up to and including the Holocaust. When information on America reappears, it is far more critical, discussing America's failure to provide refuge for the victims or to bomb railway lines leading to the death camps. A third identification for visitors appears here, the bystander; this perspective is treated in more detail in the final section of the museum, which covers those who became rescuers and those who did not. Visitors are encouraged to ask themselves what they would have done under the same circumstances. "The understanding of the passive bystander's inadvertent guilt is probably the most important and most relevant moral lesson the museum can teach its visitors," Jeshajahu Weinberg writes. "Its importance lies in its broad applicability to contemporary historical and social phenomena as well as to occurrences in everybody's daily life."273 Here arises one of the most contested problems of the museum's meaning in the context of America, the question of "lessons" to be learned from the Holocaust. Speaking at the museum's dedication, President Clinton formulated the same claim the museum makes: "This museum is not for the dead alone nor even for the survivors. It is, perhaps, most of all for all of us who were not there at all, to

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273 Weinberg in Berenbaum, p. xv.
learn the lessons, to deepen our memories and our humanity, and to transmit
these lessons from generation to generation...if this museum can mobilize
morality, then those who have perished will thereby gain a measure of
immortality.”

But Philip Gourevitch argues, “There is something dangerously facile
about opposing evil fifty years after the fact...Denouncing evil is a far cry
from doing good.”274 This may be the problem of the Holocaust as moral
touchstone. If it is, in Martin Broszat’s words, a “negative standard...an anti-
model,”275 can affirmative standards be drawn from it? Gourevitch argues
that while the Holocaust is absolute evil, “the absolute, however, is a
treachery place to seek lessons. By definition, it does not yield.”276 Peter
Novick agrees: “If there are, in fact, lessons to be drawn from history, the
Holocaust would seem to be singularly lacking in them...because of its
extremity...The Holocaust, it is said, sensitzes us to oppression and atrocity.
In principle it may; no doubt it sometimes does. Making it the touchstone of
oppression and atrocity can as easily trivialize crimes of lesser magnitude.”277

Certainly the various and conflicting ways in which politicians and
political columnists apply the “lessons” of the Holocaust point to a serious
problem. If we are to make sure it “never again” happens, how do we know
what “it” does and does not look like? For Charles Krauthammer, the
answer is clear: “never again” means support for Israel against countries that
threaten it. The “lesson” of the Holocaust is that “Hitler’s singular project—
the destruction of the Jewish people—must not be permitted its final
success...It means nothing to oppose an enemy that is no more. It means

274 Gourevitch, “Behold Now Behemoth.”
275 Broszat and Friedländer in Baldwin, p. 77.
276 Gourevitch, “Behold Now Behemoth.”
277 Novick, p. 164.
everything to oppose a real set of enemies that would complete the Nazi project. The test of one’s solidarity with the people of the Holocaust is whether one is prepared to help defend that people against the destroyers of today, not the destroyers of yesterday.”

Ronald Reagan also connected the lessons of the Holocaust to support for Israel. Speaking to a group of Holocaust survivors in 1983, he stated, “Our most sacred task now is insuring that the memory of this greatest of human tragedies, the Holocaust, never fades—that its lessons are not forgotten...As President of a people you are now so much a part of, I promise you that the security of your safe havens, here and in Israel, will never be compromised.”

But a look at other ways in which Reagan applied those lessons shows how chameleon-like they can be. In a letter of greeting for the museum’s 1985 groundbreaking ceremony, Reagan stated:

Although some have questioned the wisdom of placing the memorial for a European catastrophe so close to the gleaming symbols of our democracy, the lessons of the Holocaust, the brutal, even diabolical perversion of power, unchecked by law and devoid of faith in God, do indeed belong here. When in the years to come our children emerge from this museum with the lessons of totalitarianism fresh in their minds, those soaring white monuments to democracy, justice and freedom under God will gleam all the more brightly in the sunlight of freedom. Today, much of the world still struggles to rid itself of the rule of godless tyrants and murderers. This memorial will stand always to remind us of the nobility of that struggle and the perils we face if we remain indifferent.

Some see the museum as encouraging American self-interrogation, a look at our own instances of injustice or brutality, but in this passage there is nothing but self-affirmation. The enemy has switched neatly from Nazism to

Communism, the same transference Reagan and Kohl had sought at Bitburg earlier in the year.

Eight years later at the museum’s dedication, Elie Wiesel told Clinton: “Mr. President, I cannot not tell you something. I have been in the former Yugoslavia last fall. I cannot sleep...since what I have seen. As a Jew I am saying that. We must do something to stop the bloodshed.” He was far from alone in drawing a parallel between the Holocaust and Bosnia. The museum itself has made the connection, in special events and exhibits on ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. An issue of U.S. News and World Report published just after the opening of the museum referred in a headline to “the holocaust in Bosnia.”

Margaret Thatcher stated, “I never thought I’d see another Holocaust in my life.” Four days after the dedication of the museum, the American Jewish Congress published a full-page open letter in The New York Times calling on President Clinton to intervene in Bosnia. “If the memory of those [Holocaust] victims does not move us to respond to suffering and persecution in our time, what conceivable purpose does memory serve?”

Art Buchwald wrote a column in which the narrator and a small boy visit the Holocaust museum in the year 2005, “only it turns out in the first paragraph that it’s not the Jewish Holocaust Museum, it’s the Bosnian Holocaust Museum...and all the kid keeps saying to me is why didn’t we do anything?” (One factor that delayed action was the concern that Bosnia was, instead, another Vietnam.)

Everyone appears to agree that the Holocaust should “never again” happen, but of course the Nazis will not again kill five to six million Jews in

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283 - Cited in Linenthal, p. 266.
the course of the Second World War. As the debate over Bosnia demonstrated, it is not clear what standards another event must meet to pass the “never again” test. Linenthal concludes, “Memory of the Holocaust does not necessarily lead to a clear case for a specific policy.”

In summary, if the museum is a site for the preservation of Holocaust memory, it is also a site for contestations over the meaning of Holocaust memory in America, contestations that reflect the tensions and questions that abide both within that memory and within American identity. No curatorial or architectural technique can guarantee that the museum will resonate with present or future generations or, if it does, on what grounds it will do so. Nor can any technique guarantee that memory of the Holocaust will be continually vivid and firmly placed within the American mind or, if it is, what the place and shape of memory will be. Whatever the outcome will be, it will be bound up with the museum’s context. “For public memory and its meanings depend not just on the the forms and figures in the monument itself,” Young writes; he stresses “the fundamentally interactive, dialogical quality” of memorial space. In the case of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the dialogue may seem like a cacophony and raise fears that Holocaust memory is being distorted or misused. But, Linenthal argues, “when the memory became a national trust,” it was also opened to “plural ownership.” Perhaps, Huyssen suggests, the “multiple fracturing of the memory of the Holocaust” may in fact help keep memory from freezing—that is, help keep it at once preserved and alive.

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286 Young, The Texture of Memory, p. xii.
287 Linenthal, p. 5.
288 Huyssen, p. 15.
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