Reconstructing Humanity: Philosophies of the Human in the German Cold War

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Abstract

Reconstructing Humanity: Philosophies of the Human in the German Cold War

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This dissertation examines the role played by conceptions of human being in the intellectual and cultural life of the two German states in the early decades of the Cold War. In the wake of the crimes of the National Socialist regime, one answer to the oft-posed question of how German (and European) culture had descended into a condition of abject barbarism was that the Nazis had prioritized one particular species of mankind over humanity as a whole. Scholars and journalists on the both sides of the Cold War divide employed philosophical analyses of human being, in part, as a means of raising their normative claims to the highest possible level of generality, thereby overcoming Nazism's radical particularism and working to reintegrate Germany (either East or West) into the community of civilized peoples. These efforts were shaped by the intensifying geopolitical conflict that characterized the decades immediately following the end of the Second World War. In both East and West Germany, intellectuals employed the language of humanism as an important tool in these projects. While this term was often used to make reference to the German and European cultural heritage, it was more often employed metonymically, as a place holder for values ideal for human flourishing. East German communists had an ambivalent relationship to humanism. On the one hand, they rejected the human as a standard of value outside of party orthodoxy. On the other, they sought to appropriate humanism for themselves, arguing that Marxism-

Leninism was creating an ideal social order for human beings. Dissident Marxists, such as Herbert Marcuse, Ernst Bloch, and Leo Kofler, integrated conceptions of humanity into critiques of Stalinism. The human being also formed an important element in sociological analyses of the postwar world by figures such as Alfred Weber and Arnold Gehlen, who used the condition of human beings in modernity as a basis for evaluating the political structures of modern civilizations.

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Introduction

Returning to the ruins of Berlin after a decade of enforced exile, the German Jewish writer Stephan Hermlin wrote in stark terms of the dreadful situation that he found there: "We search for the human being. But the human being eludes us. He flees through the phantasmagoric wasteland of horror; we glimpse him as he flees before our call, and soon he is engulfed by the horizon."[1] German cities lay in ruins in the wake of more than a decade of National Socialist rule. German culture, long celebrated as a paragon of civilization, lay in ruins as well. Germany had gone from being a land of "poets and thinkers" to one synonymous with militarism, imperialism, and genocide. The task confronting German intellectuals was the reconstruction of German culture. The concept of the human being was central to their efforts to do so.

A growing literature has shown the importance of efforts to reintegrate German culture into the community of civilized cultures. This regenerative work took place across a number of fronts, from international politics, to popular culture, race relations, and even industrial design.[2] This project seeks to contribute to this literature by examining the ways that concepts of the human were employed in German intellectual life in the first decades of the Cold War. Some used the concept of humanism as a means to align German values with those of the West. Others employed the concept of the human being in projects of social and

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[1] Stephan Hermlin, "Aus dem Land der großen Schuld," in *Vaterland, Muttersprache: Deutsche Schriftsteller und ihr Staat seit 1945* ed. Peter Rühmkorf (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 1994).

[2] For the area of politics, see William Glenn Gray, *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949-1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Important studies of the role of popular culture in this project include Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000); Axel Schildt, *Ankunft im Westen: ein Essay zur Erfolgsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1999). On questions of race, see in addition to Poiger, see Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005). On the role of design in the realignment of German with Western culture, see Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

economic reorganization guided by the principles of Marxist social theory. Still others approached human being as the object of an inductive analysis of human nature which, properly understood, could form the basis of a new social and political order. Although there was much divergence in terms approach and content, these human-centered attempts to reconstruct German culture shared a common political and historical context. The legacy of National Socialism loomed large, calling into question not only the values of German culture but those of the West as well. In addition to this, the project of rebuilding German culture, like that of rebuilding Germany itself, was undertaken in the context of an intensifying geopolitical conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, along with their respective allies and clients. Germany was a nexus point in this systemic conflict, lying astride the border of the nascent Cold War. The central task of this dissertation is to analyze the ways that these historical and political contexts shaped, and were shaped by, notions of human being.

The Origins of the Postwar Crisis

The concept of crisis is central to the account of German history in the postwar decades presented here. The late historian Detlev Peukert wrote of a "crisis of classical modernity" as the defining feature of the history of the Weimar Republic. Between 1918 and 1933, Peukert wrote, "virtually every social and intellectual initiative that we think of as modern was formulated or put into practice."[3] Yet, as Peukert noted, "[n]o sooner had modern ideas been put into effect then they came under attack, were revoked, or began to collapse." Peukert pointed to a process of destabilization of social norms and national mythologies resulting, in part, from an economically driven process of social fragmentation and polarization,

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[3] Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), 276.

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but also subject to its own internal dynamics. The result was "a deep-seated feeling of unease and disorientation, an awareness that the conditions underlying everyday life and experience were in flux, and a questioning of many inherited assumptions."[4] This project argues that the crisis described by Peukert was, in many important respects, carried over into the postwar period. Efforts to reconstruct German culture after 1945 were a continuation of attempts to resolve this crisis, undertaken against the background of the history of National Socialism and the outbreak of the Cold War.

The crisis that Peukert claimed was responsible for the collapse of the Weimar Republic involved a series of overlapping political, economic, and cultural trends that were common, in one form or another, to most of the major European states at the time. Peukert pointed to a thirty year long structural crisis comprising political and economic factors. Some were specific to Germany, such as the check to German economic development following in the wake of the First World War and the vexing question of political sovereignty in Germany after the abdication of the Kaiser. Others were on a European scale, as in the case of the depression that began in 1929 and the Second World War. At the level of culture, the displacement of religion by "social and technological utilitarianism" and the rise of the cult of Americanism led to countervailing tendencies of value atavism on the one hand, and critiques of modernity prefiguring postmodernism on the other. Peukert did not make reference to longer term intellectual trends such as Marxism and Nietzscheanism, but an appreciation of their influence only fortifies his argument. Marx's critique of capitalism shaped and intensified the class polarization of European societies in the 1920s and early 1930s. Nietzsche's legacy, particularly in Germany, played an important role in destabilizing the rationalist heritage of the Enlightenment that had dominated European intellectual life for much of the 19th century.

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[4] Ibid., 275.

Beginning in the 1890s, Nietzsche's demand for the revaluation of all values played an increasingly important role in critiques of the verities of European culture.[5] The aggregate effect of these economic, political, and intellectual factors was the destabilization of the verities that had governed European life for much of the 19th century.

An important consequence of the turbulence in European intellectual life was a progressively more acute problem regarding the concept of the human. Meditations on the nature of the human had a long provenance in the history of the West. In the period between the 5th and the 17th centuries the idea of the human was shaped by the Christian theological conception of the human being as an "imperfect creation of God."[6] Writing in the mid-17th century, Thomas Hobbes based his theory of politics on an inductive analysis of human nature. A century later, Rousseau employed a similar procedure, although he drew diametrically opposed conclusions. Where Hobbes had concluded that the human propensity to act as a wolf toward other human beings indicated the need for sovereignty to be vested in an absolute monarch, Rousseau claimed that human beings were fundamentally good but that life in society had degraded their natural condition. The Enlightenment bequeathed to the 19th century a model of the human as a free and rational individual, derived both from French rationalism and Kantian idealism. This comported well with the increasing influence of positivism in European thought. In Feuerbach's philosophy, the relationship between Christianity and the human was reversed, with Christian theology being an expression of that which was essentially human, rather than vice versa. Theology was, for Feuerbach, merely a species of anthropology. His conception of the human as fundamentally shaped longings of the heart that were ex-

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[5] Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[6] On the history of the concept of the human, see Karl Erich Bödeker, "Mensch, Humanität, Humanismus," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe; Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. Bd. 3 ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1972).

pressed in theological speculations was not, in and of itself, commensurate with positivist accounts of the human. However, his refocusing of philosophy away from post-Hegelian abstractions and toward the analysis of human being and human faculties set the stage for subsequent philosophical developments.

Among the most important of these was the critique of conceptions of human nature undertaken by major figures in European intellectual life in the years between 1840 and the first decade of the 20th century. Both Marx and Nietzsche attacked what they viewed as essentialistic accounts of the human as a universal concept. In his "Theses on Feuerbach" (1845), Marx argued that the human essence was "the ensemble of the social relations" in which human beings were enmeshed.[7] Nietzsche, a trenchant critic of philosophical essentialism, wrote in *Human, All Too Human* (1878) of what he termed "the family failing of philosophers," the belief that man was an eternal truth rather than a continuous process of becoming.[8] Although they shared little in terms of their political views, both Marx and Nietzsche argued for conceptions of the human that problematized the Enlightenment conception of the individual, reasoning subject.

By the first decades of the 20th century, the difficulties in conceiving of the human as such were becoming increasingly clear. In 1908, the sociologist Georg Simmel took note of these problems, writing, "[w]e are all of us fragments, not only of the human being in general, but also of ourselves."[9] The evacuation of positive content from the idea of the human created a space into which partisans of national and racial particularism could inject their views. The idea that ethnicity or nationality trumped humanity was by no means new. In

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[7] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), 616.
[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 12-13.
[9] Georg Simmel, *Soziologie: Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vegesellschaftung*, ed. Otthein Rammstedt, vol. 11, Georg Simmel: Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992), 49.

1796, the French conservative philosopher Joseph de Maistre had written dismissively of the idea of a human being divorced from a particular context:

> In my lifetime I have seen Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, etc.; thanks to Montesquieu, I even know that *one can be Persian*. But as for *man*, I declare that I have never in my life met him; if he exists, he is unknown to me.[10]

Moreover, European colonial expansion prompted some debate about the question of difference among human populations. The universalistic claims of Enlightenment thinkers coexisted only uncomfortably with justifications for the exploitation of non-European peoples.[11] In the last decades of the 19th century, a synergistic relationship developed between European conservatism and nationalist movements, which had originally been (at least predominantly) liberal in terms of political orientation. This synergy formed the basis for a critique of standards of value that purported to be supranational. In his inaugural lecture at the University of Freiburg in 1895, Max Weber (who was himself politically a liberal) argued for the nation-state as the ineluctable basis for human identity and politics. For Weber, any value judgments could only be based on the particular strain of humanity to which one belonged. "Often," Weber contended, "these ties are strongest precisely when we think we have escaped our personal limitations most completely."[12] For the most part, Weber's particular strains of humanity were defined by culture and nationality, rather than by race. But others, such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Arthur Gobineau promoted ideas of particularity specifically linked to the supposed biological difference between individual races. The mixture of conservative

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[10] Joseph Marie comte de Maistre, *Considerations on France*, trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), 54.

[11] William Max Nelson, "Making Men: Enlightenment Ideas of Racial Engineering," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 5 (2010). Extensive examples of racial differentiation by Enlightenment thinkers can be found in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed. *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2008). The case of opposition to colonialism and racial differentiation by Enlightenment thinkers is argued in Shankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[12] Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs, eds., *Weber: Political Writings* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15.

nationalism and biological racism formed the basis for the rise of fascism and other radical conservative movements in the turbulent decades after the First World War.

These movements played a particularly important role in the crisis of classical modernity described by Peukert. In Germany, where military defeat, hyperinflation, and a crisis of political sovereignty destabilized the foundations of the social order, the rhetoric of conservative ethno-nationalism found fertile ground. The National Socialists were only one of numerous such racial-nationalist movements that emerged in the wake of the war. Their ideology encompassed the idea of the human, but in a way shaped by the organicist and racial-biological motifs of their political ideology. The population of nominally human beings was divided into races of higher and lower value. The Nazi ideology of human perfection involved the physical elimination of those deemed to be sub-humans as a means of promoting the flourishing of those racial groups that qualified as fully human.[13] National Socialism, along with its fascist cognates throughout Europe, transformed the problematic position of the human that had formed a part of the crisis of classical modernity into a fully fledged crisis of the human.

The Crisis of the Human in Postwar Germany

At the end of the Second World War, German intellectuals and artists were confronted with the challenge of rebuilding German culture. Their attempts to do so were shaped by the legacy of National Socialism and the burgeoning geopolitical systemic conflict that would become the Cold War. The crisis of the human played an important role in their efforts. Analyses of the contemporary situation of humanity were a common feature of diag-

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[13] Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

noses of the time. In an article published in *Frankfurter Hefte* in 1946, the liberal Catholic physician Hermann Frühauf blamed the "philosophy of modernity" for "the degradation of human beings to mere objects of the total state, their misuse for demonic purposes, and finally the cold butchery of millions."[14] Frühauf, like many educated Germans, was horrified by the mass killing that had gone on over the previous decades, although he did not specify who in particular had been responsible for the crimes. Generally speaking, there was not a great deal of interest among Germans in coming to terms with, or taking responsibility for, the legacies of National Socialism. As the historian Jost Hermand has noted, "[m]ost Germans, who had themselves experienced much pain and who were concerned in the immediate postwar period only with trying to survive, were simply silent on the topic of German guilt. Above all, the threat of being put on trial led those who did bear some measure of guilt retrospectively to characterize themselves as harmless figures, or even as having been victims themselves."[15]

There was a widespread desire among Germans to shift the focus away from the particular culpability of the Germans themselves, either by claiming that the Nazis were an unrepresentative minority that had hijacked the nation and its traditions, or by locating guilt at some more general level. This latter impulse meshed with the ideas of those both inside and outside Germany who saw National Socialism and the Holocaust as elements of a civilizational malaise. Thus the German Jewish émigré Hannah Arendt wrote in 1945,

> For many years now we have met Germans who declare that they are ashamed of being Germans. I have often felt tempted to answer that I am ashamed of being human.[16]

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[14] Hermann Frühauf, "Das christliche Menschenbild," *Frankfurter Hefte* 3(June, 1946): 12.

[15] Jost Hermand, *Kultur im Wiederaufbau: die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945-1965* (München: Nymphenburger, 1986), 42.

[16] Hannah Arendt, "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1994), 131.

Here, and at greater length in her reportage on the Eichmann Trial, Arendt offered a socio-logical analysis of the transformation of human beings into cogs in a bureaucratically orga-nized process of mass killing. What was important was not the specific history or culture of Germany. Rather, the divorcement of human beings from moral responsibility for their ac-tions was a function of bureaucratized mass society, and specifically the effects of this social order on the middle class family man.

While apologists for Germany and more critical analysts such as Arendt differed on many important points, they shared an inclination to move the discourse away from one of the particular guilt of the Germans. Philosophies of the human provided many German intel-lectuals with an apt means of doing so. By speaking at the level of the human being, focus was shifted away from the immediate German past and toward a future prospect of societies that were ideal for human thriving. This was no less true in the portions of Germany under Soviet occupation, where the construction of a new, socialist order required both legitimation and an ideal for which to strive. Humanism, in the form of veneration of certain aspects of the German cultural heritage (such as the work of Goethe, Schiller, and Bach), quickly be-came an official project of the government of the Soviet Occupation Zone, ostensibly provid-ing a native German basis for socialist values, but allowing connections to be drawn between German values and universally valid human values. At the same time, many of those Marx-ists unwilling to toe the Stalinist line required by the authorities in the east employed a con-cept of the human drawn from Marx's own writings as a means of offering a critique of the official doctrine. Both shared the belief that there were values, the realization of which would make possible a social order in which human beings would thrive irrespective of contingen-

cies of birth, culture, or condition. Philosophies of the human in the German Cold War were, in the most important respects, grounded in the relationship of human beings to the universal.

Universalism and the Human

The importance of the concept of universality in this project stems from the extensive use of concepts of the human made by figures on both sides of the Cold War divide. To speak of the human as such is to advance a claim, whether implicit or explicit, that applies to the entirety (the universe) of human beings. Universalism has been a key element of the culture of the West, due in the first instance to its centrality in the Christian message. Early Christian doctrine explicitly advanced the claim that Christ's message applied to all human beings in contradistinction to Judaism, the reach of which was limited to the Jews. In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul wrote that the promise of salvation was open both Jews and Greeks (and by extension all other human beings), "For there is no respect of persons with God."[17] Christian doctrine accepted only one distinction among human beings: that between those who believed and those who did not. Nonetheless, Christianity was fundamentally universalist in that the laws of God applied to all human beings irrespective of whether or not they recognized these laws. Christian universalism implied an essentialism. The essence of the human being was the soul, created by God and actuated by the task of fulfilling His specific plan. Although God's plan was particular to each individual, all human beings possessed a God-given soul as an essential, defining characteristic.

Elements of Christian universalism were carried forward into the increasingly secularized philosophy that arose in Europe from the 17th century, finding their fullest expression in the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Kant recognized the differences among various groups

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[17] Rom. 2:16.

of actually existing humans in his anthropological writings, but maintained the universal dignity of humans, grounding on rational principles in the first instance, and only secondarily on the precepts of Christian doctrine. The era of the Enlightenment was also a time of expanding European colonial empires and the high point of the Atlantic slave trade. Christianity and rationalist philosophy shared commitments to the defense of the dignity of all human beings that should have implied explicit rejection of slavery and the brutal subjugation of non-European colonial subjects, but both managed to co-exist more or less comfortably with the brutalization of non-European peoples. As Susan Buck-Morss has recently noted, "[t]he exploitation of millions of colonial slave laborers was accepted as part of the given world by the very thinkers who proclaimed freedom to be man's natural state and inalienable right."[18] This slippage between universal values and the superiority in practice of Europeans is explained to a great extent by the superior power of capital and the requirements of capital accumulation over ideas in the era of primitive accumulation preceding the industrial revolution.[19]

The increasingly contested status of universalistic ideas was an important element of the crisis of classical modernity discussed above. Fascist political movements shared a rejection of universalistic ideas of the human being in favor of racially specific conceptions. In Germany, the National Socialist movement represented this particularism in its most extreme form, eventually undertaking the physical elimination of those who did not fall within its pseudo-scientific concept of "Aryan" racial purity. For Germans in the postwar decade, a key element of reconstruction was the rejection of racial and cultural particularism in favor of

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[18] Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 22. The contradictions in the history of liberalism's stands on freedom and race are analyzed at length in Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso Books, 2011).

[19] In the relationship between the Atlantic slave trade and the rise of industrialism in Europe, see Eric Eustace Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 178-92.

universalistic ideas of the human that were ostensibly consonant with those of the West or with some broader notion of the community of civilized peoples. The philosophies of the human that arose in the postwar decades shared this commitment to conceiving of the human being in universalistic terms. This mode of approaching the human, whether grounded on cultural, sociological, or natural scientific premises, was viewed by many (although by no means by everybody) as unproblematic in the two decades following the war. By the latter half of the 1960s this universalistic approach came under increasing criticism both from re-nascent political conservatism, and in the face of the rise of social movements based on par-ticular identities, such as race or gender.

Method

This project focuses on the ways that concepts of the human were employed in the decades immediately following the end of the Second World War. It does so by looking at examples of these employments in cultural, sociological, and philosophical literature. From a general perspective, this thesis takes methodological inspiration from so-called "linguistic turn" in philosophy and history since the late 1960s.[20] The approach taken here bears similar-ities to the project of *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history) associated with the work of the German historians Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and, most prominently, Reinhart Koselleck, the roots of which date back to the 1930s.[21] These scholars sought insight into particular his-

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[20] On the linguistic turn in general, see Richard Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). As this concept applies to history, see John Edward Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *The American Historical Review* 92, no. 4 (1984).

[21] From 1972 to 1997, Koselleck (with the assistance of Brunner and Conze) oversaw the compilation of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, an ambitious compendium of conceptual histories running, in its final version, to over nine thousand pages. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 8 vols. (Stuttgart: E. Klett,1972-1997).

torical moments by looking at the ways that the meanings of words changed over time. For instance, in his *Land und Herrschaft: Grundfragen der territorialen Verfassungsgeschichte Südostdeutschlands im Mittelalter* (originally published in 1939), Brunner analyzed concepts of authority in the Middle Ages by mapping the semantic field, the set of overlapping concepts used in texts of the period to denote domination.[22] Koselleck, by contrast, focused less on the systematic delineation of a particular semantic field. His project, beginning with his 1954 doctoral thesis *Kritik und Krise. Pathogenese der Bürgerlichen Welt,* was to examine changes in the meaning of a range of concepts traced across a period of radical historical change.[23]

The approach of this project takes as a premise that the way that concepts are used in particular historical moments can provide important insights into intellectual life and its role in broader historical processes. The argument pursued here is that, if we look at the ways that scholars and intellectuals talked about the human being in the decades following the Second World War, we can see a common task being undertaken. Conceptualizations of human being, which I am aggregating with the term philosophies of the human, advanced the claim that there were truths about human being that, because of their generality, ought to take precedence over truths derived from particular political, cultural, or ethnic conception. Argument at the level of the human formed the basis for universal normative claims. The role played by these claims varied widely, but they shared a common context: the need of Germans to overcome the heritage of National Socialism while at the same time negotiating the politics of the Cold War.

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[22] Otto Brunner, *Land und Herrschaft; Grundfragen der territorialen Verfassungsgeschichte Österreichs im Mittelalter* (Wien: R.M. Rohrer, 1959).

[23] Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise; ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1959).

The method of this project might appear to differ in an important way from that of Koselleck and his collaborators. Koselleck's work in particular stressed the diachronic dimension of conceptual and social history. On Koselleck's account, the goal of the historical project that he undertook was the analysis of changes in the meanings of words over the course of historical time. As Koselleck noted in the general introduction to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, "[s]ocial history and conceptual history cannot manage without…individual cases, but it is not their primary interest to investigate them."[24] The main focus of conceptual history was aggregated data used as the basis for diachronic analyses. However, Koselleck also recognized that there was an important role to be played by synchronic analyses of the use of concepts in particular historical moments: "[l]aborious preparatory work must be done to render source statement comparable in order to aggregate series of numbers from them." Although Koselleck did not view this synchronic work as, strictly speaking, part of the purview of conceptual history, it was nonetheless the case that they formed an indispensible precursor. This project has some diachronic elements. Each chapter contains background material on the intellectual traditions discussed therein, linking these traditions to the prewar period in order to provide context. Yet the primary task undertaken by each chapter is to look at the ways that these intellectual traditions function within a particular time period rather than focusing on changes between the pre- and postwar periods.

This project bears a close relationship to the work of two more recent contributors to German intellectual history. The first of these is Anson Rabinbach. It was an observation by Rabinbach that provided the original investigative impulse for this undertaking. In an article

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[24] Reinhart Koselleck, "Conceptual History and Social History," in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Standford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 30.

published in 2003, Rabinbach points out an interesting facet of the language in the political

public sphere of Germany in the immediate postwar years:

> With the radical conservatives and the radical left missing from the intellec-
> tual horizon, the vocabulary of the post-war years was decisively unpolitical
> and heavily weighted toward moral and theological concepts. Four keywords
> appear with astonishing regularity in all the intellectual reviews founded in the
> Western zones in immediate post-war Germany. Those words are "guilt,"
> "spirit," "Europe," and "humanism."[25]

Rabinbach then analyzed the role that these terms played in highbrow political and cultural

periodical literature that emerged in all four zones of occupied Germany in the years imme-

diately following the war. This project began as an attempt to expand on the investigative

project advanced by Rabinbach's article by examining the meaning of humanism in postwar

German political and cultural literature.

Rabinbach's *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apoca-
lypse and Enlightenment* also provides an important point of orientation.[26] Rabinbach's es-

says analyze attempts by prominent German intellectuals to come to terms with the trauma's

of German and European history in the twentieth century cut loose from the moorings of En-

lightenment and untarnished faith in the connection between reason and justice. For the fig-

ures discussed by Rabinbach (Hugo Ball, Ernst Bloch, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Max

Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno), the shared context is an apocalyptic caesura separating

them from the verities of preceding cultural traditions. This catastrophic break plays a central

role in the current project. Instead of following out the projects of individual figures as Ra-

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[25] Anson Rabinbach, "Restoring the German Spirit: Humanism and Guilt in Post-War Germany," in *German Ideologies since 1945: Studies in the Political Thought and Culture of the Bonn Republic* ed. Jan-Werner Müller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 29.
[26] Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2001).

binbach does, this project focuses on the way that concepts comprised by the semantic field of the human were employed in attempts to reconstruct German culture.

The work of A. Dirk Moses also constitutes a further important point of reference. In his *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*, Moses analyses the ways that German intellectuals employed conceptual languages in attempts to come to terms with the implications of National Socialism and the Holocaust for German and Western culture.[27] The current project differs from Moses's in two important ways. First, Moses limits himself to discussions of figures in West Germany. Moses explains that his book is meant "to demonstrate how a political consensus developed." As such, he is not interested in East Germany, where political ideas were promulgated from the top and disseminated by official personages and agencies. "Because the texts and debates were played out in a public sphere," Moses explains, "the book discusses the Federal Republic of Germany and not its East German counterpart."[28] By contrast, this project follows the approach of much recent scholarship by looking at both sides of the Cold War divide.[29] The use of philosophies of the human as tools for regenerating German culture was a feature of intellectual and cultural life in both Cold War German states. The character of intellectuals and ideas was very different in East and West Germany, but the role of ideological competition and the employment of similar ideas in dissimilar intellectual contexts illustrate what can be learned by viewing including both German states in the narrative of Germany's postwar history.

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[27] A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[28] Ibid., 12.
[29] See for instance Christoph Kleßmann, *Doppelte Staatsgründung: Deutsche Geschicht, 1945-1955* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1991); Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). More recently, see Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*.

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A second difference between the approach of this project and that taken by Moses relates to political language itself. Central to Moses's account is a distinction between two varieties of republican language. Redemptive republican language, "entails a cathartic break with a deemed evil past."[30] In contrast, integrationist republican language is about the formation of a value consensus that develops over time, integrating ideas and personalities from the previous order rather than depending on a catastrophic break. One interesting thing about the language of humanism, to take a particularly important example from the present project, is that it was employed by figures on both side of the redemptive/integrationist divide. Humanism was used by figures in the classicist community as a means of reintegrating prewar German culture with the postwar culture of the West. But the humanist language was also employed by figures like Karl Jaspers and young intellectuals such as Alfred Andersch and Hans-Werner Richter (the co-founders of the journal *Der Ruf*) as part of demands for a complete break with the past tainted by imperialism and mass murder. Moreover, the language of humanism was also used by East German communists in ways that were redemptive, yet not republican in terms of Moses account. Thus, this project seeks to add to the literature on postwar German intellectual history by emphasizing the ways in which a common terminology could be used in political projects with widely differing goals and orientations.

Chapter Outlines

The first chapter looks at attempts by figures on both sides of the Cold War to make explicit use of humanistic traditions in the cultural and political struggles of the day. Scholars in West Germany (as well as in Austria and the German-speaking regions of Switzerland) drew accounts of humanism from the cultures of classical Greece and Rome, as well as from

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[30] A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*, 40.

the heritage of Christian scholarship, to address the cultural crisis that they perceived as having engulfed Germany in the wake of World War II. Humanistic projects were also undertaken on the basis of the traditions of Weimar classicism. Figures and institutions on both sides of the German Cold War divide sought to build the work of figures such as Goethe and Schiller into competing accounts of the appropriate political order for human beings. A wide range of scholars and theologians in West Germany worked to appropriate humanism for similar purposes in the context of the construction of a post-Nazi political and cultural order. West German humanism functioned predominantly outside of the political establishment. Humanist thinkers from a wide range of political backgrounds sought to mobilize a range of cultural traditions, from Weimar classicism, to the culture of classical Greece, and the traditions of occidental Christianity. Writing in intellectual journals of the early postwar period (such *Die Wandlung*, *Merkur, Die Frankfurter Hefte,* and *Der Ruf*), as well as in public sermons and lectures, West German intellectuals employed humanism as a means to construct a political third way between Soviet state socialism and the unbridled capitalism and philistinism of American culture. Both sides used humanism as a vessel into which they poured value content meant to ground their claims to have transcended the homicidal particularism of Nazi racial politics and their claims to renewed membership in the comity of civilized peoples.

Chapter two looks at the approach of orthodox Marxism in East Germany to questions of humanism and human being. In culturally oriented journals such as *Aufbau* and *Sonntag*, as well as in the flagship organs of the party such as *Neues Deutschland*, the East German communists (the Socialist Unity Party or SED) promoted the idea that cultural struggle could be a means of transcending the Nazi past and of claiming that the German Democratic Republic was the German state that truly cared about and realized humanistic

values. The East German authorities viewed humanism as a key issue in the reconstruction of philosophy in their nascent socialist state. On the one hand, they sought to construct a specifically Marxist-Leninist account of humanism, one which could assist in the definition of East Germany as the definitively humanist political order while not challenging the scientific claims of Marxism-Leninism, with its heavy Stalinist coloring. A large part of this effort was directed at rebutting humanistic claims by the "late bourgeois" philosophers in West Germany, as well as attempts by dissident Marxists (in West Germany and elsewhere) to propound dissident versions of Marxism based on supposedly humanistic early and non-canonical writings of Marx.

The third chapter analyses the role played by philosophies of the human in dissident versions of Marxism. Beginning in the 1930s, dissident Marxist thinkers such as Leo Kofler, Herbert Marcuse and Ernst Bloch had pursued attempts to move Marxist theory away from the rigid scientism of the Second International and its further degeneration in Stalinist orthodoxy. These efforts were buoyed in the period following the Second World War by the integration of previously little known or unknown writings by Karl Marx into the corpus of Marxist thought. In the first decades of the cold war, humanist Marxists fought a struggle on multiple fronts: against East German and Soviet Stalinism, against a nascent structuralist Marxism in France with strongly Leninist overtones, and against the culture of West German and American liberal capitalism. This chapter traces attempts by Kofler, Marcuse, and Bloch to develop a Marxist theory that remained true to the humanistic impulses of Marx's early writings.

The fourth chapter looks at the concept of philosophical anthropology in East and West Germany. In the postwar period, West German sociologists such as the conservative

Arnold Gehlen and the liberal Alfred Weber pursued an approach to human nature grounded in the history of German idealism. Therein they sought a basis of a politics that would redeem German (and Western) civilization from the dangers posed by nihilistic, technological society. This mode of philosophizing was most immediately concerned with the maintenance of the non-communist political order of the West, but it also found resonance with the East German philosopher Wolfgang Harich who saw the potential to use Gehlen's state-centered conservatism to defend an East German political order challenged by anarchistic forces in the late 1960s.

This dissertation presents a narrative which could be characterized as the rise and decline of humanism. In the wake of National Socialism, and in the context of a perceived crisis of civilization whose roots stretched back into the 19th century, German intellectuals working in a range of intellectual traditions turned to discussions of human being. These attempts, variously to revive earlier conceptions of humanism or to build new political and social theories on the basis of analyses of human being, were undertaken in the context of a rapidly intensifying systemic conflict between liberal capitalism and communism, a conflict felt particularly acutely in Germany because of its geographical position astride the front lines of the European theater of the global conflict. In the context of this struggle, analyses of human being became enmeshed in political and cultural projects on both sides of the Cold War boundary. Scholars, artists, and political figures in both German states sought to appropriate universalistic conceptions of humanism and of human being as a means of overcoming the historical burden of Nazi racial particularism, to stake a claim to renewed membership in the civilized world, and to critique their opponents in the political and cultural struggles of the cold war. In the 1950s and 1960s, intellectuals from a wide range of political and philosophical tradi-

tions engaged in struggles to define human being and to establish its place in the reconstruction of German cultural and political life. Toward the end of the 1960s the intellectual strategy of arguing at the level of the human came under increasing criticism. Post-structuralist (and structuralist Marxists) saw discussions at the level of the human as an oversimplification of being, as an attempt to cling to aspects of a Cartesian account of subjectivity which they rejected. Feminists, on the other hand, viewed humanism as an elision of gender differences and as an attempt to avoid coming to terms with the underlying patriarchal structures implicit even in critical accounts of humanism. More recently, an extensive literature has arisen around the theme of cosmopolitanism as another means by which the dichotomy between ostensibly universal values can be reconciled with the situation and experiences of individual human beings. In the wake of these new modes of theorizing, the role of humanism in the conceptual vocabulary of German (and European) social theory has been much diminished. Cold War theorizations of human being are a key element of the prehistory of modern day discourses of ethics and transnationalism, but they also highlight the way that intellectuals tried to come to terms with the traumatic consequences of National Socialism and with the systemic divisions of the postwar decades.

Chapter 1. Humanism in Postwar West Germany

The year 1949 was one of the most pivotal in the history of Germany in the postwar era. From January through May, the Soviet Union and the Western allies continued the struggle over Berlin that had begun in June of the previous year, one of the first open crises of the nascent Cold War. By the end of the year, Germany would be partitioned into two rival states, each an expression of the political and economic ideologies of their respective superpower guarantors. 1949 was also the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, widely acclaimed as the brightest star in the German cultural firmament. Celebrations marking Goethe's birth took place throughout Germany. Goethe's name had been invoked with great frequency in the years since the end of the war as a figure untarnished by associations with Nazism, one whose humanism could form the basis for a regeneration of German culture. In 1949, with geopolitical tensions on the rise, Goethe was celebrated and invoked on both sides of the Cold War divide. In the summer of that year, these celebrations precipitated a remarkable and unheralded event: the return of Thomas Mann to Germany.

The winner of the 1929 Nobel Prize in Literature, Mann had departed Germany in the wake of the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. He had spoken openly against the Nazis, for whom he harbored an intense loathing, and feared persecution both for this and because his wife was Jewish. In an open letter published in August 1945, the writer Walter von Molo had asked Mann to return to Germany, "like a good doctor" to assist in the task of reintegrating the values of humanity into German culture.[1] Mann rejected the suggestion in an open letter

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[1] Walter von Molo, "Offener Breif an Thomas Mann," in Johannes Franz Gottlieb Grosser, *Die grosse Kontroverse; ein Briefwechsel um Deutschland* (Hamburg: Nagel, 1963), 20.

of his own. "I do not see," Mann wrote, "that there is any service that I could render the German people that I could not also render to them from California."[2] In April 1949, Mann learned that he had been awarded the Goethe Prize, Germany's most prestigious literary award. He resolved to go to Frankfurt to receive it, but also accepted an invitation to receive a similar prize in Weimar in the Soviet Occupation Zone.

Mann took the occasion of his acceptance speeches to meditate on the crises facing Germany and Europe. Speaking in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt am Main on 25 July 1949, he urged in Goethe's name that the Germans embrace a commitment to an all-encompassing view of humanity, a "supreme humanism," as the salvation of their culture.[3] Speaking in Weimar on 1 August, Mann expanded on this theme:

> It is very difficult to say how humanity will discover a path leading away from the profound and bewildering crisis in which it finds itself, a path toward a new recovery and to a new, firm moral foundation for its existence. My belief and my hope is that directly out of the sufferings and difficulties of this transitional period may arise a new feeling of human solidarity, a new humanism, a deep and religion-tinted sense of the highly intricate, unique, and extraordinary position of human beings in the universe between the worlds of nature and spirit, of the secret of human existence which is simultaneously a doom and a distinction.[4]

Germany confronted two interrelated crises that, for Mann, were a microcosm of those faced by humanity in general. The first was that of overcoming the heritage of National Socialism, the brutality and barbarism of which posed a challenge to the notions of value and reason that had underpinned European culture since the Enlightenment. The second was the nascent geopolitical struggle between the Atlantic and communist worlds. For Mann, as for many

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[2] Thomas Mann, "Warum ich nicht nach Deutschland zurückgehe!" in ibid., 30.
[3] Thomas Mann, "Ansprache im Goethejahr 1949," in *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, vol. 11 (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1960), 496-97.
[4] Thomas Mann, "Ansprache in Weimar," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 13 (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1960), 794.

German intellectuals, the solution would be a new humanism grounded in the redemption of the highest aspects of European culture.

Humanism, whether explicitly invoked as a free-standing concept or illustrated via the work of figures seen as "humanistic," played an important role in the project for the regeneration German cultural life. The broader aim of this project was Germany's reintegration into the community of civilized nations. The substantive content and political coloration of these invocations of humanism varied widely. Conservatives and liberals, Christians and communists, all appropriated humanism as an element of their respective programs for rebuilding German culture and Germany's reputation as a bastion of civilization. Humanism was particularly well suited to such purposes. Historically it had been a protean concept, one that had been filled with various contents in the course of its history.[5] In the era of the Cold War, and particularly in the first two decades after the Second World War, humanism was constituted by reference to a series of cultural-historical formations: classical Greece and Rome, the Renaissance, and the literary culture of late 18th century Weimar. These formations in turn comprised shifting constellations of figures and ideas the precise shape of which varied with each modern appropriator. Yet, among all of the manifold invocations of humanism, a common thread can be identified: the need to realign German culture with universal (which in practice meant Western) standards of value.

In this chapter I will examine appropriations of the traditions of European humanism in the western occupation zones of Germany and in the Federal Republic into which they were united in 1949. After a brief discussion of the history of humanism in Germany before the Second World War, I look at the upsurge in the use of humanism as a part of projects of

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[5] On the conceptual history of humanism from classical antiquity through the end of the 19th century see Karl Erich Bödeker, "Mensch, Humanität, Humanismus."

cultural and political renewal in West Germany. In the years from 1945 to 1950, German intellectuals responded to a perceived crisis of Western civilization by using concepts of humanism in attempts to synchronize German culture with the enduring and ostensibly universal values of the West. Some, like the philosopher Karl Jaspers and the economist Wilhelm Röpke, employed humanism as a metonym to stand in for an ecumenical universalism. This approach was rejected by others, most explicitly by the philosophy Martin Heidegger, who viewed the modern conception of humanism as empty and as an obstruction to the proper understanding of human being. Still others viewed humanism as the expression of discrete cultural traditions, the embracing of which would facilitate the reintegration of Germany into the civilized West. Some looked back to the traditions of Weimar classicism in the works of German authors of the late 18th century, in particular those of Goethe. Still others, such as the classicists Walter Rüegg and Heinrich Weinstock, saw humanism as an expression of the continuing relevance of the cultures of the classical past. They drew on already existing scholarly discourses in order to rebuild the culture of Germany and of Europe more generally. Christian theologians, most prominently Karl Barth, propounded explicitly Christian accounts of humanism, in which an understanding of the contemporary situation of humanity was a path to the regeneration of spread of the fundamental values of Christianity.

Section I. Humanisms in Germany before 1945

The heritage of National Socialism and the Holocaust raised a series of difficult questions for German culture. How could such brutality and inhumanity have emerged from a culture that had produced philosophy and art at the highest levels? Was it possible to separate German culture from National Socialism? If it was possible to separate the two (and most

educated Germans assumed that it was), how could German culture be reconciled with the cultures of the West and reintegrated into the community of civilized peoples? As is often the case in times of profound crisis, German intellectuals sought to answer the questions posed by the present with models drawn from the past. In both the eastern and western zones, the reconstruction of German culture was effected using humanistic models from 18th and 19th century German culture, inflected by the cultural traditions of Christianity and Greek and Roman antiquity. Particular individuals employed these materials in ways shaped by their political and philosophical predilections, but the general pattern of appropriation shared the universal as a common theme.

There is an important sense in which humanism was a creation of the 19th century. The historical moments to which it looked back spanned the history of the West from ancient Greece and Rome, through the Italian and northern European Renaissances, to the Enlightenment and the literary culture of classical revival in later 18th century Germany. But it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that humanism came to be designated as such. The term entered the German cultural vocabulary through the work of the Bavarian pedagogue Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer, whose *Der Streit des Philanthropinismus und Humanismus in der Theorie des Erziehungsunterrichts unser Zeit* (*The Struggle of Philanthropism and Humanism in the Pedagogical Theory of Our Time*) was published in 1808, during the wave of educational reform in Germany that accompanied the Napoleonic wars.[6] Niethammer presented a theory of pedagogy based on the concept of *Bildung*. This ideal of personal intellectual cultivation was promoted, in one form or another, by prominent German intellectuals such as Goethe, Herder, Schiller, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, as well as a host of lesser fig-

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[6] Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer, *Der Streit des Philanthropinismus und Humanismus in der Theorie des Erziehungsunterrichts unser Zeit* (Jena: Frommann und Wesselhöft, 1808).

ures, in the decades straddling the end of the eighteenth century.[7] The ideal of this approach to pedagogy was the formation of a whole human being, rather than the churning out collectors of facts educated so as to be equipped for the pursuit of concrete and profitable vocations. It was believed that the study of the Greek and Latin classics would result in "the perfected, all-around, harmonious formation of a totality which is the ideal of the human (*Menschheit*), to which we justly affix the old, oft underestimated, venerable name humanity (*Humanität*)."[8] For Niethammer, as well as for other promoters of *Bildung* as an educational ideal, the construction of the whole person was centered on the particular capacity of the art and culture of the classical world to embody values that were definitive for human beings irrespective of time or place.

This project was heavily indebted to the fascination with the classical world that was widespread in German intellectual culture in the second half of the eighteenth century in the wake of the pioneering work on Greek and Roman art by Johann Joachim Winckelmann.[9] Winckelmann's work formed the basis of an influential culture of philhellenism German intellectual and political life that would last into the 1970s.[10] One important outgrowth of this philhellenism was the emergence of the humanistic *Gymnasium*, first instituted in the context of Wilhelm von Humboldt's restructuring of Prussian educational institutions during the era of reform from 1807 to 1813, and then spreading throughout Germany in the course of the 19th century. In the wake of defeat at the hands of Napoleon's armies, reforms were underta-

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[7] Karl Erich Bödeker, "Mensch, Humanität, Humanismus," 1090-100.
[8] Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer, *Der Streit des Philanthropinismus und Humanismus in der Theorie des Erziehungsunterrichts unser Zeit* 190.
[9] Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3-35.
[10] Ibid.

ken in Prussia, as well as in other German states, conceived of as part of the project of German liberation.[11] As Manfred Landfester has written,

> The goal of modernization was…the overcoming of the old society of estates with their individual powers and the establishment of a society of citizens with equal rights. Attainment of this goal seemed possible not only via the promulgation of new laws but also, perhaps most importantly, through education of citizens as 'new' men. Political and social reform therefore required also a reform of human cultivation (*Bildung*).[12]

The educational program on offer in the *Gymnasien* focused on the study of Greek and Latin and on the study of the works and forms of the ancient world. The development and spread of the *Gymnasium* was paralleled by a reduction of organized religious influence over education. The struggle between the humanistic-classical and the religious approach to education continued throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.[13] The result of this struggle was not the victory of one side over the other, but a fusion of the two. The knowledge and civilization of the ancient world was built into the intellectual traditions of Christianity in the formation of a historical narrative culminating in the idea of the West (rendered in German as the *Abendland*), a cultural political entity which embodied the highest values of human kind.

Further support for the role of humanism in 19th century German intellectual culture was to be found in the work of the Swiss-German historian Jakob Burckhardt. In *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), Burckhardt argued that among the greatest achievements of the thinkers of the Italian Renaissance had been "first discerning and bring-

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[11] James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866* (Oxford, UK; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 358-88. Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1800-1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (München: C.H. Beck, 1983), 31ff.

[12] Manfred Landfester, *Humanismus und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen zur politischen und gesellschaftlichen Bedeutung der humanistischen Bildung in Deutschland* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 30.

[13] Ibid., 30-55.

ing to light the full, whole nature of man."[14] Burckhardt's studies of the Renaissance were shaped by a particular agenda: the explanation of the roots of the dynamic individualism of the West. The image of the human being discerned by Burckhardt in the Renaissance was shaped by a culture of secular individualism that, in his view, made possible the vibrant liberal capitalist society of 19th century Europe and North America.[15] The Renaissance, Burckhardt noted, "first gave the highest development to individuality, and then led the individual to the most zealous and thorough study of himself in all forms and under all conditions."[16] The conduct of the leading figures of Italian political life in the period, such as Jacopo Sforza and Giuseppe Medici, evinced a heroic individualism that Burckhardt regarded as exemplary, both in their time and his own. Burkhardt's humanism, like that of Winckelmann and Humboldt, was grounded in the culture of classical antiquity. But unlike the progenitors of the humanistic gymnasium, Burckhardt viewed these cultures at a step removed, through the optic of the Renaissance. This particular social order had the characteristic of engendering a certain kind of human being. In Burckhardt's aristocratic liberalism, it was important to determine the sources of this personality type so that it could be preserved and transmitted into the modern world. This conception shared a focus on human development with the pedagogical project of the humanistic gymnasium, although the *uomini universale* of Burckhardt's study evince little of the harmony and balance implicit in the concept of *Bildung*.

Beginning in the late 1920s, a renewed attempt arose in Germany to employ the culture of classical Greece as the basis for a program of cultural and political regeneration. The Berlin classicist Werner Jaeger was the leading figure in what would come to be called "third humanism." Jaeger developed his approach to humanism in a speech delivered at the opening

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[14] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 308.
[15] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 9-11.
[16] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 308.

ceremony of a conference on the German G*ymnasium* in Berlin on 6 April 1925.[17] After a rebirth of German culture in the late 18th century, Jaeger told his audience, the 19th century was the century of Americanization. Factory production, popular science, the rise of movie theaters, radio, and the portable microscope had taken over the schools, displacing engagement with the German and European spiritual patrimony. The two leading powers in Germany were the laboring masses and great capital to which, "a few well known exceptions" aside, the foundations of "our human culture" were essentially foreign. The middle classes, among whom interest in this human culture was secretly preserved, were being ground between the millstones of labor and capital. The middle classes dreamed of becoming the new spiritual nobility of the nation but were now dissipating their powers in daily trivialities.

Materialism and spiritualism were the indivisible twin growths characteristic of periods of spiritual exhaustion. The peoples of the West looked on passively, exhausted by world war and culture crisis, as popular theories of the decline were enunciated. The future of humanism would be shaped by the increasing technicization of human life and by the attractive power of transcendental religiosity. The former was driven by the requirements of an ever more technically complex economy. The preparation of human beings for working life under these conditions had the effect of reducing them to useful cogs in the mechanism of civilization. The modern social order "necessarily leads rationalistic depletion and flattening of life, to brutal reactions of violated nature, to the unhealthy hypertrophy of acquisitiveness and voluptuary attitudes, to the annulment of the spiritual autonomy of state and culture."[18] Both technicization and transcendental religion were destructive of culture and intellectual life. Jaeger's defense of culture centered on the project of forming human beings:

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[17] Werner Jaeger, "Antike und Humanismus," in *Das Gymnasium. Im Auftrag des Zentralinstituts für Erziehung und Unterricht* ed. Otto Morgenstern (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1925).
[18] Ibid., 19.

> All true *Bildung* is therefore humanistic, the *Bildung* of human beings into human beings. Everything else is merely training, design, preparation, skill enhancement not *Bildung*, formation, shaping of that which stands as an 'idea' above human beings, as an 'entelechy' in its own form. To be a humanist is to feel and to affirm the value of spiritual being, the inner form of human beings, in the way that we feel and affirm the value of a work of art. [19]

The project of *Bildung* was, then, associated with the Aristotelian view of an inner purpose or *telos*, the specific form of which was different for each individual human being. What was universal was the project of developing the potentialities of human beings to their fullest extent. The artistic and intellectual products of the classical world were indispensible elements of this process.

Jaeger held that humanism was a principle that was simultaneously historical and suprahistorical. It was historical in the sense of the Greek and Roman cultures to which it referred as its normative basis, but suprahistorical in the sense that the values that it promoted were not particular to any period. Rather they were relevant to human beings at all points in history. Humanism understood the past in a living way rather than as a point in history viewed in a purely historical scholarly discipline. "Erudition," Jaeger declared, "is not humanism."[20] What was called for was not merely reading the texts of Greek and Roman authors, even if this was done in the original language. Rather, a living engagement with classical culture was required, one in which the values and modes of life of which the texts were an expression were integrated into an active and self-conscious program of human development. It was not enough to read the words. It was necessary to live the values that they expressed.

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[19] Ibid., 20.
[20] Ibid., 21.

Jaeger pursued this agenda further in his magnum opus *Paideia*, the first volume of which was published in 1934. In it, Jaeger presented an account of the educational idea of classical Athens clearly meant as a model for the contemporary era. Classical Greek culture represented an advance on earlier "Oriental" cultures. "However highly we may value the artistic, religious and political achievements of earlier nations, the history of what we can truly call civilization – the deliberate pursuit of an ideal – does not begin until Greece."[21] Jaeger did not simplistically assume that this "civilization" was the only valid form of human organization. Rather, he conceived of Europe, the precise borders of which were not specified, as "Hellenocentric." Civilization began with the Greeks not only in the temporal sense but also in the sense of being "the spiritual source to which, as we reach every new stage of development, we must constantly revert to in order to reorient ourselves."[22] The values embodied in Greek civilization were models that could be applied to each new historical moment in which Europeans found themselves. They had, Jaeger held, discovered "universal laws of human nature."[23]

The question of universality revealed an element of instability in the Jaeger's project, one that became more pronounced with the rise of National Socialism. The Nazis were always ambivalent about the classical past. One the one hand, they found in the racial organization of classical states an order homologous with their own ideology.[24] On the other, it was not entirely clear that the Greeks were racially commensurate with true "Aryans," and the Athenian political order could not be straightforwardly mapped onto the leadership politics of

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[21] Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet, vol. 1 (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1939), xiv.

[22] Ibid., xv.

[23] Ibid., xxiii.

[24] Hitler's particular penchant was for Sparta, seeing in the Spartan society a model for the racial ethic that he hoped to develop among the Germans. See Hans-Werner Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie: Von der Verhütung zur Vernichtung "lebensunwerten Lebens," 1890-1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1987).

National Socialism. Jaeger himself was extremely conservative and was not put off by the politics of National Socialism in the early 1930s.[25] In 1933 he published an article in the Nazi pedagogical journal *Volk im Werden* in which he tried to show that *paideia* could be a model for the education of citizens of the National Socialist state.[26] The article responded to Nazi critics of Jaeger's humanism (often referred to as third humanism) who argued that it implied a cosmopolitan worldview, one that was incompatible with the nationalistic and racist particularisms central the Nazi ideology.[27]

The debates during the National Socialist period in German over Jaeger's classically influenced humanism highlight some of the important ways in which universalism based on the Greek and Roman past would be problematic for the situation of German culture in the postwar years. The attempt to glean values relevant to all human beings from the philosophy of classical Athens was destabilized by the intensely particularistic nature of Athenian society. Athenian society (as was the case with all of the city-states of the Greek peninsula) was rigidly paternalistic, deeply xenophobic, and dependent in economic terms on the extensive use of slave labor. Much the same could be said of Rome. Neither society could be used unproblematically as the basis for an ethic that would connect effectively with the egalitarian ethos of the Western European and North American liberal democracies. This, however, did not prevent numerous scholars from trying to square the circle.

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[25] At least one scholar has argued that Jaeger's use of racial language in the first volume of *Paideia,* the only one published before he immigrated to the United States in 1936, was commensurate with National Socialist usage. See Gisela Müller, "Die Kulterprogrammatik des dritten Humanismus als Teil imperialistischer Ideologie in Deutschland zwischen ersten Weltkrieg und Faschismus" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 1978).

[26] Werner Jaeger, "Die Erziehung des politischen Menschen und die Antike," *Volk im Werden* 1, no. 3 (1933).

[27] Hans Drexler, *Der dritte Humanismus: Ein kritischer Epilog* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 1942), 59-63. The term "third humanism" was frequently used to describe Jaeger's project (although not by Jaeger himself). It was meant to distinguish is from the humanism of the Italian Renaissance and Weimar classicism.

The rise of National Socialism, and of radically nationalistic cognate movements across Europe in the 1930s, posed a severe challenge to humanistic thinking. Nazi philosophy claimed to have put paid to the notion of universal humanism, viewing the world as a Hobbesian struggle of race against race. The Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg wrote in 1935:

> For many decades it was considered particularly progressive only to speak of "humanity," to be a cosmopolitan, and to view the question of race as backward. Now all of these illusions are not only finished politically, but also the world views on which they were based are crumbling, and it will not be long before they collapse in the souls of those disciples or victims of delusion who are still halfway healthy.[28]

In the Nazi worldview it was one particular racial group (so-called "Aryans") that had value. Members of other racial groups might feel differently, but this was of no consequence. History was a zero sum game of racial conflict.

Domenico Losurdo has described an "ideology of war" that was widespread among German intellectuals beginning around the time of the First World War.[29] Among its partisans were numbered such prominent intellectual mandarins as Max Weber, Max Scheler, Edmund Husserl, Werner Sombart, Ernst Troeltsch, Karl Jaspers, Carl Schmitt, and Martin Heidegger, as well as more marginal figures such as Oswald Spengler and the future Nazi ideologues Alfred Rosenberg and Alfred Bäumler. The central tenets of this ideology were the rejection of universalism and the rationalism of the Enlightenment in favor of a historicist metaphysics of the national community. A reason-based and individualistic *Zivilization* was contrasted with *Gemeinschaft* (community), an order grounded in connections based on

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[28] Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts: eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (München: Hoheneichen-Verlag, 1935), 16.

[29] Domenico Losurdo, *Heidegger and the Ideology of War: Community, Death, and the West* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2001).

blood and soil, race and place. These ideas were closely linked with the experience of military service at the front, which none of the mandarin ideologues of war had actually experienced, but which they put forth as a model for relationships of transparent community suitable to be generalized to the population at large. Some, like the liberal Max Weber, were relatively less suspicious of the capacity of reason to attain to truth, or of the meaningfulness of the distinction between facts and values. But even Weber attributed fundamental importance to the national community, making it the final arbiter of political right and the determinant of the personalities of its members. As he noted in his inaugural lecture at the University of Freiburg, value judgments were always connected to "a particular strain of humankind (*Menschentum*) we find within our own nature. Often these ties are strongest when we think we have escaped our personal limitations most completely."[30] The particularity of the strain of humankind of which one was a part was defined by the nation. Weber viewed this in existential terms: the historical mission of Germany as a nation was to protect Germans in a cold blooded struggle with other nationalities for a limited fund of earthly resources. Werner Sombart, Weber's colleague on the editorial board of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, took a more positive view of national distinctions, contrasting Anglo-Saxon mercantile spirit with the heroism of German culture.

The partisans of the ideology of war identified numerous enemies. Germany individually, and the West more generally, were engaged in a two front struggle between Asiatic Russian bolshevism on the one hand, and Anglo-American rationalism on the other. Germany's destiny was to defend the specific values of the West against these malignant influences. There were also enemies within. These included intellectuals committed to the powers of reason and universalism who did not recognize the preeminent normative force of the national

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[30] Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs, eds., *Weber: Political Writings*, 15.

community. A frequently named example of this was the sociologist Karl Mannheim, whose conception of free-floating intellectuals suggested that there was a standard or realm of value outside of that defined by the historically formed national community. This rootlessness was seen as being even more pronounced in the case of the Jews. The critique of Jews as alien to the German national community that was one of the pillars of the National Socialist worldview was extensively prefigured in the discourse of warlike struggles between histori-cally constituted national communities which had wide currency among German intellectuals across a political spectrum from moderate liberalism to the radical right.

Nazi ideologists were deeply suspicious of humanism, both because of the origins of the humanistic project outside of the German cultural sphere and because of claims of some humanists that there existed a sphere of value which transcended that of the racially grounded national community. But although it had been the subject of explicit criticism by Nazi ideo-logues such as Alfred Rosenberg, humanism retained significant cultural power which could not be overcome by mere rejection. Werner Jaeger's attempt to defend his "third humanism" against the attacks in the journal *Volk im Werden* was one example of this. Another was the case of the Italian scholar Ernest Grassi.[31] Grassi had come to Germany in the late 1920s to study philosophy and had become an avid devotee of Heideggerian phenomenology. In the 1930s, Grassi worked in Berlin as an agent of the Italian government, promoting collabora-tive projects between German and Italian scholars working in the humanities. With the clas-sicists Karl Reinhard and Walter Otto, Grassi founded the journal *Geistige Überlieferung* (*Spiritual Tradition*), the goal of which was "to explain the nature and character of humanism

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[31] Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 1993), 284-85.

and the Renaissance" in the context of the National Socialist state.[32] The efforts of Jaeger and Grassi to integrate humanism into National Socialist ideology eventually attracted the attention of the *Amt Rosenberg*, the office of the Nazi government charged with supervising cultural policy. In an article published in the journal *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, which was closely associated with the *Amt Rosenberg*, Wilhelm Brachmann attempted to define a specifically National Socialist version of humanism. Brachmann distinguished between contemporary and political humanism. The former, represented by Grassi and his collaborators, amounted to the use of the values of antiquity as represented in the culture of the Italian Renaissance as models for human self-development. Brachmann's political humanism, by contrast, saw the cultures of Greek and Roman antiquity as self-conscious examples of the unfolding of a racially defined mode of human being: "Classical antiquity, as a great, world historical, convincing example of what Indo-Germanic people might be – that is the defining idea of political humanism."[33] For Brachmann, the key to humanism was that it illustrated an ideal of human perfection, not some quality inhering in every human irrespective of race. Race was the decisive element of the human ideal, and political humanism recognized this truth rather than getting caught up in superficial analyses of art and poetry. "Where contemporary humanism says 'word,' political humanism says 'blood' or also 'people' (*Volk*)."[34] Ultimately, the important questions were not those of literature. Contemporary humanism was insufficient as a basis for political humanism. Political humanism was an important part of Indo-German racial civilization, but it was only a part. It followed that,

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[32] Ernesto Grassi and Walter F. Otto, "Die Frage der geistigen Überlieferung," *Geistige Überlieferung. Ein Jahrbuch* 1(1940): 11.
[33] Wilhelm Brachmann, "Antike und Gegenwart: ein Beitrag zum Problem des gegenwärtigen Humanismus in Deutschland und Italien," *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* 140(1941): 926.
[34] Ibid., 932.

> …the discourse of "humanism" will have to give way to "Indo-Germanic spi-
> ritual history." It gives better expression than any other discourse to the con-
> cerns of German political humanism. It stands watch for the spiritual heritage
> of Indo-Germanic blood, and thereby most certainly does so for the heritage
> of classical antiquity.[35]

Contemporary humanism could point the way to political humanism, which was itself, in turn, a part of the culture of Indo-Germans. Yet it was blood that was decisive.

The crucial recurring feature of the National Socialist engagement with humanism was the problem of relating the Nazi racial ideology to a mode of thought predicated on human (as opposed to racial) perfection.[36] Neither Jaeger's third humanism nor the contemporary humanism of *Geistige Überlieferung* was acceptable to mainline National Socialist ideology as defined by Alfred Rosenberg and his associates. Nazism was an ideology of human perfection, but this did not make Nazism a form of humanism. Humanism of the classical sort was predicated on unfolding potentials for reason and aesthetic faculties that were implicit in all human beings. Nazism, by contrast distinguished between particular subsets of humans, designating some as valuable, others as without value. Their model of perfection was the purification of an organically conceived racial community by the physical elimination of those lacking both a blood-based and a spiritual connection to the Indo-Germanic race. Humanism was defined by an underlying commitment to universal human improvement. Nazism, by contrast, offered perfection by subtraction, the latter implying the physical elimination of those who did not fit in.

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe argued that even National Socialism could be considered, in some sense, humanism, because it claims to identify a variety of human being superior to all others. Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art, and Politics: The Fiction of the Political*, trans. Chris Turner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 95.

Section II. Cold War Humanisms

The classicist Ernst Robert Curtius, writing in 1947, viewed Germany's postwar condition as an expression of a "destructive nationalism" that was one of the key problems facing the West.[37] The new nationalism treated the nation as if it was nothing other than a movement, unconnected from the political and cultural traditions that had shaped it. Curtius wrote, "The new national mythology, whether it knows it or not, bears the visage of nihilism. For before everything can become pure movement, there is much that must be destroyed."[38] The attempt to destroy elements of society viewed as hostile to the national community must also necessarily result in the destruction of the historical culture on which the identity of the nation was based:

> He who may think that the resolute will to destruction of all traditions, world-views, and social ties could be stopped short of the goods of our intellectual culture may be sorely disappointed. A reservation of this kind will not be made and cannot be made. Without access to the past as the basis of lived experience there can be no national ethos. This new nationalism seeks to dispense with the much-maligned 19th century, but with all historical traditions in general. It is revolutionary and *must* be pernicious to culture.[39]

National Socialism was an instance of a destructive irrationalism. It had been predicated on the reduction of national traditions to the fragmentary materials from which a political program could be constructed for the needs of the present moment, rather than a conscientious engagement with such traditions. It was the latter, so Curtius thought, that could form the basis for a regeneration of the culture of Germany and the West. The cultural history of the West could not simply be revised to fit current geopolitical conditions. It had to be experienced as the "common possession" of the peoples of Europe. Humanism was the key to this

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[37] Ernst Robert Curtius, "Der destruktive Nationalismus," *Deutsche Beiträge* 1, no. 5 (1947).
[38] Ibid., 466.
[39] Ibid., 466-67.

supra-national conception of the culture of the West, but recent events had called into question the capacity of humanism to play this role. Humanism was under threat, not only in Germany, but there most severely. There was talk, Curtius wrote, that humanism was "on its last legs." Curtius himself did not believe that this was the case. People put too much stock in prophecies of doom. "The contemporary situation of humanism is grievous and obscure. But properly understood, this affliction can mean a rebirth."[40]

What was this humanism to which Curtius referred? Earlier in the article Curtius had used the term in its narrow meaning, as a reference to the pedagogical projects of the Renaissance, but his invocations of the term later in the article suggest a more overarching intellectual tradition, one with direct connection to values valid for all human beings. This implication existed side by side with another: that the traditions of humanism were coterminous with those of the West. Rather than fully pursuing the universalistic implications of humanism, Curtius used humanism to reintegrate German culture into that of the West, and to insinuate that National Socialism's deviations from Western values were manifestations of a generalized crisis of the West. Humanism was often used in postwar German public culture as a metonym for universal values applicable to all human beings. In some cases this involved the claim that these values were by nature integral to human beings, while in other cases these "human" values were embodied in the civilization of the West. Humanism was also used with greater precision, sometimes invoking the heritage of classical Greece, but more frequently making reference to the figures in the German cultural past. The following sections will examine these usages of humanism in the decades following the end of the war in greater detail.

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[40] Ibid., 469.

A. Humanism as Metonym for Universal Values

Perceptions of crisis were widespread in German intellectual life in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the prominence of humanism in the vocabulary of German intellectual culture was a marker for one important way of confronting this problem. Humanism was a means of forging connections to universal human values. At the most general level, humanism was a conceptual shorthand for an amorphous concern for the wellbeing of humans. This type of usage has been described above as metonymic. This is meant to highlight the frequent use of the term humanism to stand in for those values most felicitous for human beings, and often as a substitute for an actual enumeration of those values. Thus, for instance, in an article published in the journal *Bildende Kunst* (*Visual Arts*) in 1948, the painter Heinrich Ehmsen wrote of his approach to art, "My goal is tirelessly to serve humanity, by means of my use of figuration in color and form to preach humanism." Ehmsen's claim was that color and form allowed him to achieve certain aesthetic effects and that these would contribute to human flourishing. For Ehmsen, it was the task of artists to contribute to progress and the new social order, both in Germany and among humanity generally, not directly in terms of construction of the new political state, but in terms of "spiritual and cultural underpinning."[41] Humanism stood in for an enumeration of the values appropriate to ideal human life, allowing the assertion of a positive norm to which people could assent without working out the substantive details.

Humanism was a commonly employed in this way in the political literature of the immediate postwar period. Although instances can be found in the literature of all the major German political parties in the months following the end of the war, it was the Social Democrats who most often employed the term. In an article published in a regional newspaper from

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[41] Quoted in Jost Hermand, *Kultur im Wiederaufbau: die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945-1965*, 111.

the Rhineland in early March 1946 under the title "What We Social Democrats Want," the author wrote, "We represent the idea of humanism, which leads human beings out of the muddle of their entangled situation to a happy future."[42] To what precisely this humanism amounted, or for what substantive actions or policies it might have called (outside of electoral support for the SPD), were not clearly defined. The SPD were "champions of the grandeur of spirit and for the sacred feeling of true and real love of human beings," but no clear link was established between these values and programs or institutions that could embody them. Four months earlier, in a speech at an SPD party conference in Frankfurt am Main in December 1945, the Hessian SPD politician Wilhelm Knothe told his audience, "We do not just pay lip service to democracy, or adopt it as a temporary tactic. Democracy means humanism and toleration, although without giving our opponents the opportunity to be able to stall it once again."[43] Knothe's speech came at a time when the SPD in Berlin and the Soviet Occupation Zone was under heavy pressure to unify with the Communist Party (KPD). Knothe argued for a policy of resistance to KPD pressure, making the point that the SPD was committed to democratic values and implicitly casting blame on the communists for the collapse of the Weimar system. The humanism to which Knothe referred was a general concern for well-being defined negatively against the totalitarian politics of both the left and the right. Communists might talk about democracy and their solicitude for humanity, but it was the SPD that was actually committed to these values, rather than just making them a tactical matter. When Knothe invoked humanism he was not making a specific substantive claim about the politics of the SPD. Rather, he used the term as the bearer of a negative implication about

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[42] K. Nord, "Was wir Sozialdemokraten wollen," *Die Rheinpfalz*, 6 April 1946. Cited in Dieter Felbick, *Schlagwörter der Nachkriegszeit 1945-1949* (Berlin ; New York: De Gruyter,, 2003), 346.
[43] Knothe's speech was excerpted in "Befehlsempfang in Berlin? Zur Einheitserklärung der SPD und KPD," *Der Tagesspiegel*, 28 December 1945.

the politics of the KPD: that it was beholden to the Soviets and that one thus had to be suspicious about the Stalinist underpinnings of its policy. A humanistic politics was to be seen in the negative image of Stalinism.

Such imprecise invocations of humanism were characteristic of its role in SPD political discourse in the eighteen months immediately following the end of the war. Thereafter, humanism appears only infrequently. Humanism did not feature in SPD party programs of the late 1940s and 1950s. There, talk was more often of economic development and justice rather than of unquantifiable values such as the purely human.[44] It is not entirely clear either why the SPD invoked humanism more frequently than other parties in the weeks and months following the end of the war. Perhaps it was the perceived need to find a normative basis distinct from the assertion of the class politics on which the party's programs had previously relied. The metonymic use of humanism allowed the assertion of socialist political claims without the sectarian overtones that might have linked the SPD in the popular consciousness with the overt and unapologetic Marxism of the communists.

This might also explain the frequency with which humanism appeared in calls for ecumenical, that is to say non-party, socialism that proliferated in Germany in the months following the end of the war. In the opening issue of *Der Ruf* (*The Call*), Alfred Andersch wrote of the strivings of the young in Germany and across Europe to build a new culture to replace that shown to be bankrupt by catastrophe of war and Nazism: "In spite of all pessimistic forecasts," Andersch wrote, "new centers of power and will are forming. New thinking

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[44] One of the few places where humanism as a concept appears in official SPD literature was in a speech given by Waldemar von Knoeringen, a leading party official and specialist in education policy, at the party congress in Stuttgart in 1958. Vorstand der SPD, ed. *Sozialismus -- Gelebter Humanismus* (Bonn: Druckhaus Deutz,1958). Von Knoeringen's speech dealt with cultural policy, an important issue for the SPD in 1958 as the party looked for ways to break down the electoral hegemony of Adenauer's CDU/CSU. The CDU/CSU had won an absolute parliamentary majority in the elections of 1957 and the SPD had begun the process of self-criticism that would lead to the party explicitly renouncing Marxism in the Bad Godesberg Program adopted in 1959.

is spreading across Europe."[45] The bearers of this European "reawakening" were mostly young unknowns who had not spent the preceding years sequestered in lecture halls but rather in the midst of the "armed struggle for Europe." This was particularly true of Andersch who, after renouncing communism in the wake of a stretch in Dachau in the mid-1930s, had fought with the Wehrmacht in Italy.[46] In 1946, he founded *Der Ruf* in the American zone, in partnership with the novelist Hans Werner Richter, as a vehicle to argue for a renewal of European culture. Andersch saw this renewal as a Europe-wide project, one not connected to any specific political party. As examples of this movement he pointed to the work of Beauvoir, Sartre, and Camus, but also to Emmanuel Mounier and his journal *Esprit*, and to the work of Louis Aragon in connection with the Communist Party in France. He also referenced the efforts of Ignazio Silone to unite socialistic and religious thought, the work of Ferruccio Parri of the Italian Action Party, and the victory of the Labour Party in Great Britain as evidence of the progress of forms of thinking that sought to address the cultural and political problems of Europe outside the frameworks of outmoded prewar ideologies. The central issue uniting them was the demand for European unity. The tool with which this was to be achieved was "a new humanism, dissenting from all traditions, a belief that makes demands on human beings and believes in them, a socialist humanism."[47]

Why was socialist humanism necessary for the renovation of European culture? Andersch broke the question down into its components. Socialism meant justice in the field of economic life, which would be necessary to avoid the class divisions that had characterized

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[45] Alfred Andersch, "Das junge Europa formt sein Gesicht," *Der Ruf* 1(1946).

[46] Andersch had worked as a communist activist in Bavaria in the 1930s and had been among the first deported to the concentration camp at Dachau. Released, but threatened with immanent re-arrest, Andersch renounced communism and eventually fighting with the Wehrmacht in Italy. After deserting to the American lines on the Arno in 1944, he was interned at Camp Ruston in Louisiana. There he and other POWs published a newspaper called *Der Ruf* (The Call) in which they tried to recruit their young fellow prisoners into a project of renewing European culture.

[47] Alfred Andersch, "Das junge Europa formt sein Gesicht."

prewar Europe, as well as for the construction of a society fit for human beings to live in. Human beings had reached a level of development at which the private ownership of the means of production was absurd. A planned economy was necessary in order to insure just conditions of life for all Europeans. This socialism must come from the political left, for the left embodied the new European spirit in its cultural broad-mindedness (*Aufgeschlossenheit*) in contrast to the "national and racist prejudices" and "provincial conservatism" of the right. What humanism meant, in substantive terms, was freedom.

> The youth of Europe is humanistic in its inexhaustible hunger for freedom. Humanism means the recognition of the dignity and freedom of human beings – no more and no less. They were prepared to leave the camp of socialism whenever they saw the freedom of human beings given up in favor of the old orthodox Marxism, which postulated the determination of human beings by the economy and denied human free will. Fanaticism for the right of human beings to freedom is no contradiction in itself, but rather the great doctrine that the youth of Europe has taken from the experience of dictatorship. They will pursue the struggle against all enemies of freedom fanatically.[48]

The search for freedom and economic justice was grounded in a religious feeling that Europe's youth had brought with them out of their experiences during the war. This religiosity, paired with the commitment to justice and freedom, was part of an ethic that was universalistic in that it applied to all Europeans and, at least by implication, to human beings in general. "True religiosity" Andersch wrote, "is not possible where unbreakable laws of blood or class are imputed to human beings."[49] Postwar Europe was riven by the systemic conflict of the Cold War as the alliances built during the common struggle against fascism began to breakdown. For Andersch, socialist humanism was a way of overcoming the forces impelling Eu-

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

rope to division. It was the task of European youth to reeducate their elders in the service of building a new culture and a new politics in Europe.

The humanistic, non-party socialism promoted by Andersch was an element of a broad political tendency in postwar Germany seeking a third way between the political programs of the United States and Soviet Union and their respective clients. On the left of the political spectrum, a number of figures previously associated with liberalism, such as the sociologist Alfred Weber and the psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich styled themselves as "free socialists."[50] Similar to conservative third way thinkers, these free socialists sought the formation of a political order that avoided the failings of both eastern and western blocs. But rather than using the Christian West as the normative foundation for their efforts, they wanted a society based on the social and individual needs of human beings. There was much that the conservatives and the socialists had in common. Both saw the system in the USSR as repressive and unjust, both viewed American culture as a malign influence on Europe, and both were critical of the influence of technology on human beings. Where they differed fundamentally was on the normative bases of their critical projects and on the forms of society that grew out of them. Conservatives sought to reconstruct the Christian West as an embodiment of traditional European values, and thereby to transcend both fascist and communist totalitarianism as well as American cultural barbarism. Alfred Weber called for a socialism that recognized that, "the totality and individual human beings are two sides of the same coin."[51] This was a socialism that eschewed liberal capitalism and communism as the polar ends of a continuum from the solitary individual to all-encompassing collectivism.

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[50] Rainer Dohse, *Der dritte Weg: Neutralitätsbestrebungen in Westdeutschland zwischen 1945 und 1955* (Hamburg: Holsten Verlag, 1974).

[51] Alfred Weber, "Freier Sozialismus. Ein Aktionsprogramm," in *Freier Sozialismus* ed. Alexander Mitscherlich and Alfred Weber (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1946).

For many Germans, America was a model of Western values. This was the case not least because the US government took measures to make it so. So-called America Houses (*Amerikahäuser*) were established in major German cities (including Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, and Frankfurt am Main) in the years immediately following the end of the war. Their purpose was to promote American culture and American values through the staging of conferences and lecture series and maintaining lending libraries for the use of the local population. The position of America as bearer of Western values was presented in highbrow cultural periodicals such as *Der Monat*, which was linked to the CIA-backed Congress for Cultural Freedom, and *Die Amerikanische Rundschau*, published by the Information Control Division of the US Army. Both journals presented translations of foreign writers with a pro-Western orientation. In the case of *Der Monat*, French liberals such as Denis de Rougemont and Raymond Aron. *Die Amerikanische Rundschau*, as its title suggests, presented translations of American writings viewed as salutary cultural examples for the Germans.

The first number of *Die Amerikanische Rundschau* led off with a translation of an article by the American poet and essayist Archibald MacLeish, entitled "Humanism and the Belief in Man."[52] MacLeish sought to answer the question of what role humanism would play in the postwar world that was just coming into view at time of the article's original publication in 1944. The war had shown that the era of local conflicts was over. Military technology had progressed to a degree that no human community fell outside its reach, and no generalized conflict could ever again be fought without reducing human civilization to rubble. Humanism, MacLeish argued, could no longer remain a matter for the ivory tower. Humanists had a contribution to make to the two most pressing questions of postwar civiliza-

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[52] Archibald MacLeish, "Humanismus und Glauben an den Menschen," *Amerikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 1 (1945).

tion: that of how men should be governed and of how they should be educated. In both cases the most important contribution that humanists could make was to focus attention on the value of individual human beings as such, irrespective of any other particular quality they might possess. Humanism had come to be seen as an aristocratic pursuit in which people strove via education to create "a man freed of all commitments, including the commitment to freedom itself."[53] What was needed was a positive commitment to an ideal of human value. "If the world can be governed in the belief in the worth of man," MacLeish argued, "it can be governed in peace."[54] The human being, irrespective of all particular qualities, was to be placed once again at the apex of value from which he had been driven by Nazi racist and nationalist ideologies.

It was of particular importance that the humanist ideal be recognized as inhering in humans irrespective of condition or achievement. On the traditional view, humanism was a program of education in which human capacities were unfolded through study of the intellectual and cultural products of Greek and Roman antiquity. But this created a value order among human beings in which those with the leisure and opportunity to undertake this program of study became the bearers of more fully developed humanity than those who could not. For MacLeish, this amounted to the creation of an aristocracy of human dignity:

> Some men will develop their manlike qualities farther than others. Some will be more learned, have surer taste, livelier imagination, greater gentility – will be, in brief, more civilized than others. But whatever the degree of their development, the qualities with which the true humanist is concerned are the manlike qualities – the qualities which men possess because they are men; the qualities, therefore, which all men possess to one degree or another. It is man whom the humanist values, and man is in all men – *is* all men.[55]

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[53] Ibid., 8.
[54] Ibid., 11.
[55] Ibid., 16.

The war was a war against "the philosophy of contempt for man" which National Socialism had taken to its furthest extreme. For MacLeish, humanism was defined by its universality, not by the pedagogical mission in the context of which it had arisen.

The publication of MacLeish's article drew a response from the liberal sociologist Alfred von Martin. Von Martin had spent the years of the Third Reich in internal emigration, writing on Nietzsche and Burckhardt in ways critical of National Socialist interpretations, and was thus by and large prevented from publishing. With the end of the war, von Martin resumed his contributions to the intellectual public sphere, writing articles in which he analyzed the cultural implications of National Socialism and of the Cold War. Von Martin's response to MacLeish appeared in the first issue of *Deutsche Beiträge*, a journal of cultural and political affairs launched in Munich in mid-1946. Under the title "Humanismus und Demokratie: eine kleine Diskussion mit Amerika," Von Martin agreed with MacLeish, both in noting the aristocratic origins of humanism and in perceiving that humanism had an important role to play in the current crisis. For Von Martin, MacLeish's approach to humanism was emblematic of that of democracy more generally. This democratic spirit was intrinsically suspicious of anything claiming the status of that which was highest and best. Much as MacLeish and other culturally active proponents of democratic culture might claim to see value in humanism, their mode of thinking was always inclined to see humanism as merely ornamental. Von Martin disagreed fundamentally:

> Does not all culture – in contrast to civilization – live in precisely that which is "superfluous" in a material and rational sense? Does not its domain always begin beyond the borders of crude and generic utility? Certainly to think thus is out of step with this time of need, a time of destitution and scarcity of the basic necessities. But one must always have thoughts that transcend this historical moment and are thus out of step with the times; thoughts which go beyond one's own time and its hardship. And this contemporary hardship –

> does it really stem from our lack of material things that are indispensible?
> That man does not live by bread alone holds not only in a religious but also in
> a cultural sense.[56]

Humanism was not merely an aspect of high culture that could be dispensed with until the deficiencies of the current material situation had been remedied. Humanism, and by extension higher culture more generally, were for Von Martin integral to the recovery of the human. It was an error, Von Martin argued, to reduce humanism to a concern with form or to an empty eloquence. Form was a container for "a great and noble wisdom that is more than mere knowledge."[57] The concern of humanism with form was, if anything, to be seen as fending off that formlessness which was the greatest danger presented by democracy to human culture.

Von Martin's positive account of humanism distinguished between a "decadent humanism" (*entartete Humanismus*) that called everything into question merely as an action of cultural playfulness and a properly understood humanism, aware of the duties and responsibilities of preserving the European cultural tradition. True humanism implied at all points a defense of the *dignitas hominis*, "the true dignity of 'the veritably human' human being" (*der wahren Würde des 'wahrhaft menschlichen' Menschen*).[58] An aristocratic element was indispensible to this humanism, but one that never forgot its *noblesse oblige* toward all men. Moreover, humanism was not to be equated with the fetishistic fascination with the past that was fostered by the educational program of the humanistic gymnasium. On Von Martin's account, humanism's engagement with the classical past was a means of gleaning what was eternally meaningful from the past, rather than merely imitating its forms. The study of the

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[56] Alfred von Martin, "Humanismus und Demokratie: eine kleine Diskussion mit Amerika," *Deutsche Beiträge* 1, no. 1 (1946): 67.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 68.

classical past could be a means of recognizing truths that were valid for contemporary human life, but it could also act as a substitute for such recognition, fomenting a culture of the educated and lettered rather than actual engagement with enduring values.

Von Martin's assessment of conditions in Germany also differed in important ways from that of MacLeish. Von Martin noted that MacLeish had criticized the governments in the European reconstruction of relegating the situation of human beings to a second level of precedence beneath that of oil, or power, or gold. "We would be satisfied," Von Martin noted acerbically, "if the value and importance possessed by human beings in and of themselves was recognized or respected at all."[59] Von Martin was not optimistic about the prospects for such recognition. Perhaps governments could be persuaded to respect the most basic requirements of human beings and of Christian civilization, but even this seemed unlikely. Ideally, the state would fulfill its responsibility to the individual by realizing true humanism in through a cultural politics that would promote human self development on the model propounded by Wilhelm von Humboldt. The problem with MacLeish's humanism, and by extension that promoted by American culture, stemmed from an excessively general approach to the topic. MacLeish's American humanism held that the idea of humanity had to be the basis of a democratic culture, but then failed to recognize that simply being human did not also imply being intellectually or spiritually fit to rule. All human beings had value, but in America culture it was assumed that all human beings had dignity given them by God. To have dignity, Von Martin countered, really meant to have "correctly used freedom that God has given men (for He does not want automatons)."[60] The proper use of freedom was to strive after self-development in order to become a member of an intellectual and spiritual

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[59] Ibid., 69.
[60] Ibid., 70.

elite. Human beings had an inborn value, but that value was not something static, enduring within each individual, but something that had to be developed. What was most important about human beings was not what they were but what they could become through proper education and through the lifelong pursuit of excellence.

The freedom for individuals to pursue the development of their own unique humanity was a defining premise of postwar German liberalism. In Von Martin's account, this process of upbuilding was to be accomplished in intellectual terms. Spiritual development would form the basis of a well-rounded individual. There was an element of commonality to this individualism that was achieved via the medium of Western culture. "The individual is the starting point of all humanism," Von Martin argued, "but it does not terminate in subjectivism but rather in the objectivism of classical belief in the true, the good, the beautiful." The verities of a European culture based on the values embodied in classical antiquity provided a basis for common understanding and common action amongst those who had been shaped by classical influences.

Von Martin's cultured liberalism was, by no means the only version of the doctrine. The economist Wilhelm Röpke argued for a humanism, but one that was limited in content to the promotion of human flourishing through economic freedom.[61] Röpke, like Von Martin, saw some aspects of American culture as attractive, but did not think it best to imbibe it wholesale. At the same time, he perceived an even greater threat in the form of the collectivism that the Soviet Union and its partisans were likely to impose on Western Europe if they could. Röpke's opposition to collectivism was twofold. First, as a technical matter, Röpke did not believe that collectivism could function as an economic system without a repressive

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[61] Wilhelm Röpke, *Civitas Humana: Grundfragen der Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsreform* (Erlenbach-Zürich: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1946). Röpke actually wrote the book in 1943, publishing it in Switzerland where he was living in exile. The second edition, published 1946, was the first to be widely distributed in Germany.

political system to resolve the contradictions caused by the deformation of market relationships. Second, the political order that must necessarily be called into being by the command economy. Such a political order must necessarily have a deleterious effect on the human beings compelled to endure it. Paraphrasing the 19th century poet Franz Grillparzer, Röpke summed up his opposition to collectivism with the motto, "From humanity, through collectivity, to bestiality."[62]

Röpke's solution was to propose a mode of social and economic organization that forged a path between the two extremes of Soviet collectivism and unrestrained American liberal capitalism. In its unmediated form, liberal capitalism reduced human beings to individuals disconnected from their fellows and from the historical cultural formations that could give their lives meaning. Collectivism, at the opposite pole, reduced human beings to a proletarianized mass, incapable of forming a well-rounded individual personality. Röpke proposed the idea of an "economic humanism" (*Wirtschaftshumanismus*) that would preserve the best aspects of the free market without allowing it to reduce human beings to a mass of isolated individuals. In place of laissez faire as an organizing principle, Röpke proposed what he termed a "positive economic policy." This policy had three elements. The first was a framework policy (*Rahmenpolitik*), which for Röpke designated neutral state institutions that would limit the actions of the market by promulgating juridical-moral norms. Second, Röpke argued for a "liberal interventionism." Here he argued for adjustment intervention (*Anpassungsintervention*) in which the state would intervene "in order to alleviate the hardships and attritions of the restructurings and disturbances of economic life, to help weaker groups in their struggles for existence in such a way that we do justice equally to the meaning of the

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[62] Ibid., 72.

market economy and to the simple demands of reason and humanity."[63] This interventionism also included the maintenance via institutional means of the basic level of conformity necessary both to keep the social order from slipping into anarchy and to prevent the domination of society by economic units of excessive size. Röpke's ideal was an economy composed primarily of small and medium sized units that would allow for healthy, market-based competition and preclude the formation of monopolies.

The third element of Röpke's program, termed economic humanism, combined the implications of the propositions mentioned above:

> We thus turn to a policy which one could describe as a structural politics, which no longer assumes the social preconditions of the market economy – the division of income and property, the magnitude of enterprises, the division of population between town and country, between industry and agriculture and between individual estates – as given, but rather wishes to modify them with a particular aim. If we acknowledge that such a policy occupies an important, even a preeminent role in our program, so one could say that the expression "economic humanism" is not a bad one for our efforts.[64]

For Röpke, this economic humanism implied knocking off capitalism's hard edges in such a way as to "erect a dam" against the influence of collectivism. Röpke had seen the way that unrestrained capitalism had inspired widespread disaffection among Germans in the interwar period. This, in turn, had led to the expansion of the influence of anti-capitalist parties such as the Social Democrats and the Communists, which had crucially weakened the social and political order of the Weimar Republic. As examples, Röpke cited the policies of the Chinese nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek and of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Röpke's attempt to find a third way between *laissez-faire* and collectivism bore structural similarities to both the free socialism of Weber and Mitscherlich and the program of the

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[63] Ibid., 76.
[64] Ibid., 77-78.

moderate conservatives who would form the *Abendländische Aktion* group two years later. His ideas on the proper political and economic reconstruction of Germany found resonance with many German economists.[65] These ideas played an important role in the thinking behind Ludwig Erhard's social market economy, which would lay the basis for the economic boom that carried Germany through the 1950s. For Röpke, this economic humanism was a universalism in the sense that, as he saw it, it was a mode of political and economic organization that was demonstrably best for all human beings across the globe, as his remarks in favor of Chiang Kai-shek and Franklin Delano Roosevelt indicated. Economic humanism was a program that would be as equally suited to Chinese people and Americans as it would be to Germans and other Europeans. Underlying it was the idea that the possibility for human beings to engage freely in processes of self-development was the defining value against which all economic and political programs could be judged.

Perhaps the most thoroughgoing elaboration of the universalist humanism of the early postwar years was provided by the philosopher Karl Jaspers at the 1949 meeting of the *Rencontres Internationales*. Jaspers was an important but divisive figure in the intellectual culture of early postwar Germany. He had been a prominent philosopher in the decades between the wars, promulgating a version of existentialism with strong similarities to that of Martin Heidegger.[66] Although he was politically conservative and initially felt some sympathy for the Hitler movement, this soon gave way to fear and revulsion, in particular because of the threat posed by National Socialism to his wife, who was a Jew. Jaspers and his wife spent the

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[65] On Röpke's influence, see Anthony James Nicholls, *Freedom with Responsibility: The Social Market Economy in Germany, 1918-1963* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 273-74. On Röpke's economic humanism more generally, see Samuel Gregg, *Wilhelm Röpke's Political Economy* (Northampton, Mass.: Edward Elgar Pub., 2010), 165-82.

[66] On Jaspers' career during the Weimar Republic, see Suzanne Kirkbright, *Karl Jaspers: Navigations in Truth* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2004), 129-40.

war in internal exile, living in fear that his wife might be arrested at any moment. At war's end, Jaspers emerged into a new intellectual and political environment, determined to exert his influence in the service of reconstructing German culture and realigning it with the civilization of the West.[67]

In the course of 1945, Jaspers delivered a series of lectures in which he sought to clarify the nature of German responsibility for the horrors wrought by the National Socialists and their collaborators.[68] In the course of the lectures, Jaspers warned against a merely superficial engagement with the question of guilt of the kind that was becoming ever more common in Germany in the days following the end of war. In doing so, Jaspers transformed himself into a figure of controversy, an instantiation of Christ's assertion that "a prophet is not without honor, but in his own country."[69] While many were apathetic to Jaspers' calls for a full and thorough questioning of the national consciousness, others argued that to focus on German guilt was one-sided, ignoring the all encompassing inhumanities of the war, inhumanities that continued in the areas now under the control of the Soviet Union.[70] In an article published in 1949, the Germanist Ernst Robert Curtius wrote: "Since 1945 Jaspers has striven conspicuously to take up the much desired position of *praeceptor Germaniae*. He has made our collective guilt so blatantly obvious that we can only live on with bad conscience."[71]

Although his writings were the subject of fierce criticism at home, Jaspers international reputation was excellent. He was invited to speak at the inaugural *Rencontres Internationales* conference held in Geneva in 1946, at which he spoke on themes of general human,

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[67] Mark W. Clark, "A Prophet without Honor: Karl Jaspers in Germany, 1945-48," *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 2 (2002): 201.
[68] These lectures were later published under the title *Die Schuldfrage* (translated as *The Question of German Guilt*).
[69] Mark 6:4.
[70] Mark W. Clark, "A Prophet without Honor: Karl Jaspers in Germany, 1945-48," 212-13.
[71] Ernst Robert Curtius, "Goethe oder Jaspers?," *Die Zeit*, 28 April 1949.

as opposed to particular German, relevance. The talk marked a turn to the universal that would characterize Jaspers' work for the remainder of his life. The *Rencontres Internationales* were a series of annual conferences organized in Geneva and devoted to what were perceived to be the most pressing intellectual issues of the day. The meetings brought together intellectuals from a wide variety of political and philosophical traditions: from communists (Georg Lukács, Henri Lefebvre) to liberals (Julien Benda, Denis de Rougemont) to conservatives (Georges Bernanos, José Ortega y Gasset).

In 1949, the fourth iteration of the conference was held under the title, "For a New Humanism."[72] By this point, Jaspers had left Germany, taking up a position at the University of Basel, largely because of his disillusionment with German culture. In a talk titled "On the Conditions and Possibilities of a New Humanism," Jaspers developed perhaps the most wide ranging positive account of humanism of the early postwar period. Consonant with the existentialist strain in his philosophical thought more generally, Jaspers argued that, since the time of Nietzsche's intervention in philosophy and philology, the "magnificent humanity" of the classically grounded project of humanistic *Bildung* had been called into question. From a cultural theme with broad powers of influence, humanism had become a matter for "ever smaller circles" in which humanistic development was reduced to "a mode of truncated *humanitas*."[73] Since the end of the 19th century, a second element had been introduced into humanism, standing beside the idea of *Bildung* through linguistic and literary education. This second humanism revolved around the idea of the human being per se. But for Jaspers the

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[72] Rencontres Internationales, *Pour un nouvel humanism: texts des conference et des entretiens organizes par les Rencontres Internationales de Genève* Les Editions de la Baconnière: Neuchâtel, 1949.
[73] Karl Jaspers, *Über die Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten eines neuen Humanismus: Drei Vorträge* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1951), 22.

question at hand was not what humanism had become, but what it would become in the future.

The problem that the coming humanism would have to solve was that the human being was disintegrating. Modern humanity had burned the bridges to the past. Human beings had abandoned themselves to "pure instantaneousness" rather than living out the scenes and narratives of the past that had given human life structure and meaning. "The human being," Jaspers warned, "appears to dissolve into nothing. He grasps this nullity in despair or in the triumph of destruction. Since Nietzsche the words ring ever louder: God is dead."[74] Individuality was in the process of disappearing, overtaken by reduction to types drawn from literature, from newspapers, and from popular culture more generally. Rather than creatively ordering their own lives and working through processes of self-development, modern human beings could only comprehend themselves through participation in violence-prone mass existence. Some still clung to Christian belief as a means of combating the reduction of human beings to empty mass subjects, but modern Christianity had become reduced to competing strains: one of bourgeois conventionality, the other of an oppressive belief for the sake of belief.

Human life was in chaos. The future humanism toward which Jaspers aimed needed to answer three questions. What is the human being? Under what factical conditions do human beings exist today? How do we find a way to humanism, knowing full well that it is not the only way available? The answer to the first question was complex, since it had to be recognized that there was not one single human being, but a multiplicity of human forms, each subject to its own mode of comprehension. Every attempt to specify what the human being was at the same time narrowed the scope of the human. The answer was to distinguish be-

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[74] Ibid., 23.

tween the human being as an object that could be studied in the unending process of outward development on the one hand, and as an internal expression of freedom on the other. The human being was the result of a dialectical relation of external objective development, constrained by the historically mediated world in institutions and materials, and internal freedom, characterized by an unconstrained self-consciousness. The most important element of this self-consciousness was the knowledge of human finitude. What was key in all of this was to understand the human being as dynamic. Human beings were not one thing or another but a process of development. As such, the humanism of the future would have to structure its ideals not with respect to some definable, obtainable goal but in accordance with the process of becoming that which defined the human being.

The factical existence of human beings was shaped in the most profound ways by the influence of technology on modern society. The old modes of work and social organization had disappeared irrevocably, replaced by technical modes of organization the impetus of which was towards mass modes of social organization on a planetary scale.

> Technology is inevitable. Before, it was the sleep of the world from which technology cruelly awoke the masses. In the future its collapse may call forth catastrophes undreamt of, first mass death, the disintegration of global circuits of commerce, the devastation of the planet, then new dispersions of the surviving human populations, finally the remaining few return to autochthonous existence, with consciousness stripped of all contents still living under the aftereffects of the technological age, but without the ancient, historical beliefs based in immemorial transcendence.[75]

Here, Jaspers presented a vision of a technological dystopia in which the human being was made completely subject to a historical logic emanating from self-reinforcing processes of technological development. It was one which was common to both parties to the Cold War

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[75] Ibid., 31.

conflict, a point pressed home by Jaspers when he equated Taylorism and Stakhanovism as "methods for the expropriation of human labor power."[76] The coming humanisms could not remain neutral on the question of technology and its role in human life, in particular because technology clearly had the capacity to eliminate human life altogether.[77]

Technology was not merely important in terms of the outcomes of its internal logics of development. It was also important to recognize the role of technology in modern politics. Political life among human beings involved the circumscription of that freedom that arose from their unconstrained internal being. Technology exerted a strong influence on politics in that it facilitated the ability of those in power to torture, to deport, and to exterminate popula-tions. Given Jaspers' recent writings on German guilt, it was clear that the reference to ex-termination (*Ausrottung*) was in part a reference to National Socialism. At the same time, Jaspers talk took place barely four months after the establishment of the German Democratic Republic, and the existence of a communist state in the divided Germany cannot have been far from the minds of his listeners. But this was not merely a question of communism versus liberal capitalism. Because of technology, Jaspers argued, true solitude was no longer possi-ble. There was nowhere that human beings could go to escape the reach of technology. Moreover, it was the case that each human being was co-responsible for his fellows. Al-though one individual might not be subject to technologically mediated political domination, it was nonetheless the case, Jaspers noted, that "every individual is free only to the degree that the others are."[78] It was thus necessary that the coming humanism be explicitly con-ceived as a universalism, rather than as the purview of a select minority. "This living human-

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[76] Ibid., 32.
[77] Jaspers would later make this point with greater force in his book on the significance of the atom bomb for the future of mankind. Karl Jaspers, *Die Atombombe und die Zukunft des Menschen; politisches Bewusstsein in unserer Zeit* (München: R. Piper, 1958).
[78] Jaspers, 34.

ism will be in league with those forces that promote the fate and the chances of all. Human rights are the presupposition of the human, not bestial politics."[79] Humanity lay at the crossroads, a choice between despotism and freedom. It was by no means clear that either of the parties to the systemic conflict that in those days seemed to be coming to a head could advance an irreproachable claim to be a defender of the latter, although both asserted that they were.

Finally, Jaspers turned to a positive description of the coming humanism. It would have two mutually supporting dimensions: the appropriation of the traditions of Western humanism, and the struggle for the independence of human beings. "Our humanism," Jaspers announced, "is Western humanism (*abendländischer Humanismus*). It comprises two moments: the reference to Greco-Roman antiquity and the will to actual humanity, and in fact the one through the other."[80] Human beings had lost touch with the cultural formations which had defined the civilization of the West. It was crucial to the process of creating a truly human mode of modern life that these cultural roots be reclaimed and reintegrated into the moral order of humanity. Humanism was, as it has been for the scholars of the Italian and Northern European Renaissances, a matter of education. It was crucial that young people be encouraged to engage with the art and scholarship that had shaped the European mind over the long centuries since the decline of Greece and the fall of Rome. It was not enough merely to learn the ancient languages. If that were the case then humanism would be merely a matter of philological minutiae. The result of this would be to relapse into the nihilism which already threatened the modern age. Moreover, it was necessary that the new humanism would take into itself the wisdom of Indian and Chinese civilization, all the more so, Jaspers argued, be-

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[79] Jaspers, 34.
[80] Jaspers, 41.

cause their wisdom and their values had been taken into Western humanism in its early stages (although he did not provide further specifics about this process).

The second element of the new humanism was the recognition that humanism itself was not a goal. "It only creates the spiritual space in which each can and must struggle for his independence."[81] The great figures of human history, from Jesus to the Stoics, from Bruno to Spinoza to Kant, all presented models of independent human conduct. It was through engagement with the intellectual products of these great figures that each individual human could fortify himself for the constant struggle to establish and maintain the independence on which his humanity depended. This independence had to be undertaken within the bounds of cultural traditions. Otherwise it too would revert to nihilism. Freedom without unifying cultural traditions would merely be the pseudo-freedom offered by liberalism. Like many moderate European conservatives in the years following the Second World War, Jaspers sought a third way between Soviet repression on the one hand, and Americanism on the other. Philosophy and revealed religion could assist modern individuals in finding a way between these two cultural political entities. Philosophy and revealed religion (by which Jaspers meant Christianity) could provide the antidote to naturalistic modes of thought that reduced the human being to the status of an object like any other.

"Does it not sound," Jaspers asked in conclusion, "as if the individual is all? Just the contrary is true: the individual is, in the progress of things, the evanescent individuum, and the individual is this only to the degree that he is in communication with other selves and with the world."[82] The humanism for which Jaspers was calling was twofold. First, what was needed was the formation of well-rounded individual selves via engagement with the philos-

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[81] Jaspers, 43.
[82] Jaspers, 52

ophy and culture of the West, including the truths of revealed religion. Second, it required, but also facilitated, interactions with other selves. The new humanism could not lose itself in inwardness without conceding its most important features. It required interaction among subjects in order for each individual subject to achieve the full breadth of its development. Likewise, there was a necessary element of public, worldly action which was indispensible if the individual was to unfold his capacities to the fullest. Such interactions would not only develop the individual, but would also lead to the formation and persistence of the sort of world in which ideals of human development could be realized. It was easy to be pessimistic in the current situation in Europe, much of which was still in ruins and had now become the scene for the nascent Cold War. But, in closing, Jaspers offered a different perspective. If human beings could unite to make the substance of their common culture present they could overcome the nihilism of the present moment.

B. Heidegger and Antihumanism

The significance of humanism for European culture was recognized even by those who questioned its capacity to act as rescuer. In December of 1946, the philosopher Martin Heidegger composed arguably the most influential contribution to European philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century. Responding to a query from a young French philosopher, Jean Beaufret, Heidegger wrote his "Letter on Humanism," a searching critique of the concept of humanism as it had developed in Western culture. Before the war, Heidegger had been one of the up and coming figures in European philosophy. In the 1920s he had been mentored by the Freiburg philosopher Edmund Husserl, but had broken with the latter's project of a rigorous, scientific analysis of the structures of consciousness. In its place, Hei-

degger substituted the existential analytic of the specifically human form of being. In his *Being and Time*, first published in 1927, Heidegger presented an extensive analysis of the ways that human beings relate to their environment (their "world" as he termed it). Heidegger rejected Cartesian accounts of human subjectivity that posited a unitary, isolated subject taking elements of the surrounding world into an isolating, analytical mode of perception. While he did not reject the human capacity for rational, scientific analysis, Heidegger contended that this was a marginal mode of consciousness which did not represent the normal way in which human beings related to their surroundings. For Heidegger, *Dasein* (literally "being there," his term for the specifically human form of existence) related to its surrounding world immediately without the need for the sort of dissecting, rational analysis of its environment that Cartesian and analytic philosophers viewed as primary.

By the 1930s, Heidegger began to move away from the focus on *Dasein*, which he had come to view as insufficiently distinguished from the Cartesian view of subjectivity. Thus, in his *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, composed in 1936 and 1938 but not published until after his death, Heidegger refocused his analysis, shifting to the concept of "being" as such. He wrote of *Seyn*, the German word for being but rendered in an archaic spelling, to emphasize the distinction that he wished to make from accepted conceptions of being, which he viewed as enmeshed in the metaphysics of Western philosophy. But another momentous turn was also taking place in Heidegger's philosophical views in the 1930s: that toward the National Socialist movement. Heidegger joined the National Socialist Party on 1 May 1933, one month after being elected university rector and four months after Adolf Hitler's seizure of power. Heidegger's relationship to the ideology of National Socialism was complex. During his year-long tenure as rector he gave speeches lauding the role of Hitler as

national leader and savior and instituted the Hitler salute and the singing of party anthems at faculty meetings. On the other hand, he prevented Nazi students from mounting an antisemitic poster at the university entrance and forbade the staging of book burnings. Historians have debated to what degree Heidegger partook of Nazi racial ideology, but what is clear is that Heidegger fancied himself as a candidate for the position of leading philosopher of the movement.[83] Heidegger's fawning after party influence ultimately proved a failure. His unwillingness to deform his philosophy to fit the National Socialist mold or to prostrate himself before official party ideologues such as Alfred Rosenberg eventually led to Heidegger's resignation from his position as rector in May 1934. Although no longer a member of the Nazi intellectual firmament, Heidegger was still permitted to lecture throughout the years of the regime. In the opening passages of his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), Heidegger spoke of "the inner truth and greatness" of the National Socialist movement, a phrase he retained when the book was republished in 1953.

The period following the end of the war was a difficult one for Heidegger. He was identified as a strong supporter of the regime and subjected to denazification by the French occupation authorities. His teaching credential was withdrawn, his house was occupied, and he was threatened with the permanent loss of his personal library. Heidegger sought to defend himself by arguing that he had joined the party solely to assist in the defense of the university, and that he had himself subsequently become a victim of the malign attentions of Alfred Rosenberg and other Nazi ideologues.[84] Heidegger's attempts at self-exoneration were

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[83] While some historians, such as Victor Farias and more recently Emmanuel Faye, have argued that Heidegger embraced Nazi antisemitism, others such as Rüdiger Safranski, Hans Sluga, and Hugo Ott have contended that Heidegger's negative utterances and actions with respect to Jews were opportunistic in nature. This leaves open the question of whether injustice based on cynicism is somehow less reprehensible than injustice based on actual racism.

[84] Martin Heidegger, "Letter to the Rector of Freiburg University, November 4, 1945 in Richard Wolin, ed. *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press,1991), 62-63.

met with skepticism by the authorities, particular after they received a letter from Karl Jaspers, whose help Heidegger had solicited. In his letter, Jaspers detailed the ways that Heidegger had worked to achieve the National Socialists goal of removing Jews from the university. Although Jaspers described Heidegger as a uniquely brilliant philosopher, he concluded that the latter's manner of thinking was dictatorial and did not reflect that concern for freedom that was now so important in the reconstruction of German culture: "As long as in his case an authentic rebirth does not come to pass, one that would be evident in his work, such a teacher cannot in my opinion be placed before the youth of today, which, from a spiritual standpoint, is almost defenseless."[85] Jaspers recommended that Heidegger receive a pension, but be forbidden to teach for several years, with this situation subject to a review of his subsequent writings.

Heidegger felt intense bitterness toward what he saw as a betrayal by a former friend. His attitude became clearer in an exchange of letters with his former student Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse demanded an explanation for Heidegger's conduct during the Nazi period, writing: "Is this really the way you would like to be remembered in the history of ideas? Every attempt to combat this cosmic misunderstanding founders on the generally shared resistance to taking seriously a Nazi ideologue."[86] In his response, Heidegger argued that he had expected that National Socialism would lead to "a spiritual renewal of life in its entirety." When he realized his mistake he had left the party but had been unable to undertake overt criticisms because he feared for the safety of himself and his family. He had, so he claimed, offered a covert challenge to Nazi ideology in his lecture courses. Heidegger wanted nothing to do with those who had obsequiously renounced their allegiance to National So-

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[85] Karl Jaspers, "Letter to the Freiburg University Denazification Committee (December 22, 1945) in ibid., 149.
[86] Herbert Marcuse to Martin Heidegger, 28 August 1947, reprinted in ibid., 161.

cialism in the wake of the war. Then Heidegger struck a more disturbing note. While it was true that the Nazi regime had murdered millions of Jews and turned terror into an everyday phenomenon, "I can merely add that if instead of 'Jews' you had written 'East Germans', then the same holds true for one of the allies, with the difference that everything that has occurred since 1945 has become public knowledge, while the bloody terror of the Nazis in point of fact had been kept a secret from the German people."[87] Here, Heidegger staked out a position shaped by the emerging Cold War while simultaneously seeking to overcome the Nazi past. Like many decent Germans, Heidegger argued, he had been deceived by the National Socialists, realizing his error only after it was too late. More importantly, National Socialism and communism were fundamentally comparable systems based on terror and the annihilation of human beings. It was inappropriate to criticize the one without extending that criticism to the other.

Against the background of these events, living in seclusion after the final withdrawal of his teaching credential, Heidegger undertook to answer the question of humanism directed to him by the young *lycée* instructor Jean Beaufret. Beaufret had asked for Heidegger's opinion on the question of whether it was possible to restore meaning to the term humanism. In his response, Heidegger took the view that humanism was a hindrance to authentic philosophizing, in the process calling into question not only many key concepts in European philosophy (logic, ethics, physics), but its approach to philosophical concepts in general. The promulgation of philosophical concepts occurs "only when originary thinking comes to an end."[88] The employment of concepts such as humanism was symptomatic of philosophy slipping out of its element. The fundamental problem with humanism as a concept was that it

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[87] Martin Heidegger to Herbert Marcuse, 20 January 1948, in ibid., 163.

[88] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'," in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 241.

made it seem as if the human was something self-evident, something that could simply be illuminated with the tools of Western science. "The fact that physiology and physiological chemistry can scientifically investigate the human being as an organism is no proof that in this 'organic' thing, that is, in the body scientifically explained, the essence of the human being consists."[89] Simply to have a mechanical understanding of how the organism of the human being functioned did not amount to understanding the essence of the human being. Humanism was predicated on the claim that some such essential understanding was possible. The essence of the human was not to be found in the facts of biological chemistry but in existence.

Western philosophy had similarly failed to grasp the essence of the human. Interpretations of the human "as *animal rationale*, as 'person,' as spiritual-ensouled-bodily being" were not so much wrong, as insufficient to the dignity of *Dasein*. "To that extent," Heidegger wrote, "the thinking in *Being and Time* is against humanism."[90] Yet it was also crucial to realize that this opposition to humanism should not be taken as a justification for brutality towards human beings. "This opposition does not mean that such thinking aligns itself against the humane and advocates the inhuman, that it promotes the inhumane and deprecates the dignity of the human being. Humanism is opposed because it does not set the *humanitas* of the human being high enough." This was a key point. The pall of National Socialism still hung over Heidegger's work, perhaps even more so in France where there was still much enthusiasm for his project. On Heidegger's view, the human being was thrown into a threatening world in which it had to try to find a home. In the modern world the human capacity to do so was increasingly under threat. Marx, building on the work of Hegel, had conceived of

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[89] Ibid., 247.
[90] Ibid., 251.

an important aspect of this threat in his concept of estrangement, which "had its roots in the homelessness of modern human beings."[91] Where Marx's approach failed was in its materialism, which concealed the essence of technology, a mode of approaching the world inimical to the defense of the dignity of human beings. The human being had to be viewed historically, as a member of, and at home in, a linguistically mediated community.

Heidegger's diagnosis of the times was most crucially shaped by the threats that he perceived to German culture posed by American liberal capitalism and Soviet communism. For Heidegger both of these forces shared an underlying technological approach to the world that was destructive of human being: "Whoever takes 'communism' only as a 'party' or a 'Weltanschauung' is thinking too shallowly, just as those who by the term 'Americanism' mean, and mean derogatorily, nothing more than a particular lifestyle."[92] What was important was not merely the superficial threat to German culture posed by Americanization or by communism, but rather that transformation of Western thought into a purely technical mode which reconfigured everything that it touched to make it fit into systems subject to scientific manipulation. Heidegger's critique of technology was shared by many conservatives, but for him it ran deeper than just the immediate dilution of German or Western culture. The danger ran to the roots of the Western civilization and threatened to eliminate any capacity to truly understand the human.

As a means of combating this threat, Heidegger proposed to replace the metaphysically shrouded concept of humanism with a historically mediated view of the human that would be true to its primordial essence. The human being had to exist in a dynamic relationship to being. The modern, metaphysical conception of the human being was unable to fend off the

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[91] Ibid., 258.
[92] Ibid., 259.

technological framing of the world implicit in scientistic modes of thinking and promoted by both of the leading forces in the Cold War systemic conflict. What was needed was to look back to a pre-metaphysical concept of the human. This premetaphysical mode of human being was at home in the world, rather than relating to the world through technology, that is, as if the world was merely a means. Heidegger's humanism, if such it could be called (and even he doubted that this was the case), was in a certain sense an intensification of the extant traditions of European humanism. He shared the fascination with classical culture that had motivated humanists since the 15th century. Unlike those who saw the redemption of human culture in the study of Athenian philosophy or Ciceronian rhetoric, Heidegger saw the salvation of Western culture in pre-Socratic philosophy in which the fundamental separation of human being and world had not yet become fully entrenched. Human beings could, and ought to, engage in processes of self-development facilitated by the wisdom of the ancient world, but the goal was not the creation of independently subsisting individuals but the creation of human beings at home in common linguistically mediated cultural formations. The goal was not universal values relevant to every human being, but a universal approach to human being resulting in culturally differentiated modes of being in the world.

Taken together, the examples presented in this section illustrate some of the important ways that humanism was employed in the first decade after the war as a means of defending European culture. What unites these usages is the use of humanism as a metonym for the highest human values. The use of the metonymic construction is important for two reasons. First, it allowed the invocation of a value or set of values presumed to apply to all human beings, while setting aside the need to specify exactly what the values in question were or why it was that they should apply to every human being regardless of particularities of ethnicity,

class, creed, or gender. At the same time, by adopting a universalistic standpoint, Germans making use of the terminology of humanism stressed the point that German values were Western values. The presumption that these latter were, in fact, universal values was a point seldom addressed. Some, like Wilhelm Röpke, explicitly took the position that the values of the West could be held up as relevant for all human beings in that they defended the universal human aspiration to individual self-development. This goal was also shared by non-party socialists like Andersch and Alfred Weber, although they differed starkly from Röpke in terms of the political organization that they believed necessary to achieve that goal. Karl Jaspers' construction of humanism was more subtle in the respect that he claimed that the values of the West had somehow incorporated those of other cultural regions, although he signally did not specify how this might have happened. Heidegger was dismissive of all these modes of humanism. Yet, although he was dubious about the continued usefulness of the term because of all of the metaphysical baggage that it carried with it, he rejected humanism in favor of what he viewed as a more essential version of the same idea.

These general employments of humanism do not exhaust the important usages of the term found in postwar German intellectual culture. They highlight the ways that humanism was used to assert a connection between German values and those of the West, which were implicitly the highest and most felicitous values for all human beings. The following sections of this chapter will explore the uses of humanism as it functioned within specific intellectual traditions. Christian thinkers, scholars of the classical period, and proponents of Weimar classicism all invoked humanism in ways that were meant to highlight the universalistic claims to which their respective disciplines laid hold.

Section III. Weimar Classicism

In the last week of August 1946, a festival was held in the city of Bremen to mark the 197th birthday of Germany's most renowned literary figure, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Organized by the local branch of the Goethe Society in Weimar, the festival featured recitations of Goethe's poetry and prose, musical performances, and a series of scholarly lectures.[93] Some of the lecturers restricted themselves narrowly to the artistic content of Goethe's work. The Heidelberg literary scholar Richard Benz, gave a talk entitled "Goethe the Creator" dealing with purely aesthetic issues. Others struck a more contemporary note. Johannes Reinhard, a Lutheran minister from Hamburg-Harvestehude and a member of the consistory for the city, delivered a talk on the penultimate evening of the festival entitled "Goethe Experiences the Times" which dealt with the implications of Goethean humanism for the period of postwar crisis in which Germany and Western civilization were embroiled. Reinhard had been a fervent German nationalist during the First World War.[94] In the interwar years he had been an active member of the Pan-German League, as well as of Alfred Hugenberg's far-right German National People's Party. In an article entitled "On the Decisive Struggle," published in the *Hamburger Kirchenzeitung* in 1940, Reinhard had suggested that Hitler was merely playing out his appointed fate and described English foreign policy as "practical Jewishness."[95] Now, in the wake of a devastating war, Reinhard seemed to see things differently.

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[93]Goethe Gesellschaft in Weimar, *Goethe-Festwoche 1946 in Bremen; Veranstaltet von der Bremer Ortsvereinigung der Goethe-Gesellschaft in Weimar vom 25. August bis 31. August 1946* (Bremen: Friedrich Trüjen Verlag, 1947), 39.

[94] Johannes Reinhard, *Gottes Reich kommt durch die Nöte des Weltkriegs: Predigt am 6. Dez. 1914 in d. St. Johanniskirche zu Hamburg-Harvestehude gehalten* (Hamburg: Rauhes Haus, 1914).

[95] Johannes Reinhard, "Zum Entscheidungskampf," *Hamburgische Kirchenzeitung* 16(1940).

He began by speaking of Germany's shame (*Scham*). An hour's journey from Weimar stood the Ettersberg, with its forests, its modest castle and gardens. It had once been the scene of princely hunting parties and the "fair and brilliant musical affairs" of the circle around the Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach.[96] But in recent times the scene on the Ettersberg had changed. "In the years just past this selfsame forested mountain has had to hear in its vicinity the cries of fear and pain of tortured human beings."[97] Although Reinhard neglected to mention that the source of the cries was the notorious Buchenwald concentration camp, the subject of his reference would have been clear to his audience. The unnamed shame on the Ettersberg prompted Reinhard to note the degree to which German culture had strayed from Goethe's exemplary humanism. "How far have we distanced ourselves from that which the German people once possessed through one of the best Germans?"[98]

The location of a concentration camp in one of the most renowned precincts of the German classical tradition had been a mark of the contempt in which the Nazis held the humanistic traditions of German culture. It was at the same time a sign that Nazi ideologists understood the symbolic power associated with these cultural traditions and their capacity to act as a basis for the assertion of normative claims in opposition to those of the National Socialist movement.[99] This was clearly how Reinhard, the inveterate cultural and religious conservative, saw matters. Reinhard did not discuss the camp itself. He mentioned neither the inmates, nor the reasons for their suffering. For him this oblique reference to "cries of fear

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[96] Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach (1739-1807) was a noted eighteenth century patron of the arts.

[97] Johannes Reinhard, "Goethe erlebt Zeitgeschichte," in *Goethe-Festwoche 1946 in Bremen; Veranstaltet von der Bremer Ortsvereinigung der Goethe-Gesellschaft in Weimar vom 25. August bis 31. August 1946* ed. Die Goethe Gesellschaft in Weimar (Bremen: Friedrich Trüjen Verlag, 1946), 67.

[98] Ibid., 68.

[99] Gerhard Finn, *Buchenwald 1936-1950: Geschichte eines Lagers* (Bonn: Urheber, 1985).

and pain" was merely background material for two more important issues: the ways in which Germany's current conditions illustrated a failure to appreciate German cultural traditions and the role that these traditions could play in the project of national renewal.

Reinhard's lecture analyzed Goethe's political and cultural views in the period between Napoleon's victories at Jena and Auerstädt in 1806 and the liberation of Germany from French rule in 1813, with the clear implication that this should be viewed as analogous to contemporary conditions. Goethe, Reinhard argued, regarded French domination as something to be combated, eventually on the military front, immediately in terms of culture. Goethe had found his "personal task" amid the confusions of the time. This task was that of "shaping German humanism, the spiritual movement of Weimar and Jena, of which Goethe himself was the center point, and of deploying it as a political force against the influences from the west."[100] Reinhard presented Goethe as the promoter of a humanism that was the expression of a specifically German national consciousness, one which would facilitate the task of combating external cultural and political influences. Goethe could stand as a model of free individual personhood, one which recognized the value of the nation but did not take it to the kind of excesses that had lately seen Germany brought low.[101] He claimed that Goethe's influence was not merely literary, but also political. The Prussia of Frederick the Great created a spiritual environment in which German cultural life and the garrison state had been welded together via "a humanism grounded in antiquity and in Christianity."[102] Goethe's experience could serve as a model for modern Germans, who were also living in a time of turmoil. Germans in Goethe's time had freed themselves from foreign domination,

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[100] Johannes Reinhard, "Goethe erlebt Zeitgeschichte," 75-76; ibid.

[101] In support of his argument, Reinhard cited Erich Weniger's *Goethe und die Generale*, a text, published during the Nazi era in which the author claimed that Goethe had been sympathetic to the militaristic aspects of Fredercian Prussia.

[102] Johannes Reinhard, "Goethe erlebt Zeitgeschichte," 77.

but Reinhard did not mention the fact that Germany's most recent catastrophe had been a domestic project, thus seemingly implying that National Socialism was, like Napoleon, foreign to German culture. It was this German culture, illustrated by Goethe's construction of his own humanity, which would provide a path out of current circumstances. In closing, Reinhard asked rhetorically, "Is there a more effective remedy than the example of a great man in the experience of his times, as he bore holy fire through the storms to bring light to the darkness for future generations? And today is not German humanism once again called upon to be the power that lights the way for us through the darkness?"[103]

The appropriation of the German cultural past was a project undertaken with vigor throughout the zones of occupied Germany and on either side of the Cold War divide established in 1949. In the particular, engagement with Goethe, whose work was seen as definitive of humanism, formed an important part of the project of reconstructing German culture and of associating German values with Western civilization. The historian Anselm Doering-Manteuffel has argued that the turn to Weimar classicism was undertaken by German intellectuals specifically as a means of rejecting connections to National Socialist ideas of culture.[104] This was certainly the case with the metonymic usages of humanism, the content of which was often simply the antithesis of National Socialism. Along with the purely (or predominantly) metonymic deployments, humanism was also frequently used as term to designate the values embodied in the tradition of Weimar classicism, particularly as embodied in the work of Goethe. For intellectuals writing in this tradition, humanism implied a commitment to *Bildung*, the development of human potential into a balanced individual totality.

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[103] Ibid., 82.

[104] Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, "Die Kultur der 50er Jahre im Spannungsfeld vom 'Wiederaufbau' und 'Modernisierung'," in *Modernisierung und Wiederaufbau. Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre* ed. Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek (Bonn: Dietz, 1998). See also Karl Robert Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland: Rezeptionsgeschichte eines Klassikers* (Munich: Beck, 1980).

Goethe's name was invoked incessantly in the period immediately following the end of the war. Reinhard's speech was replicated many times over at Goethe festivals, in ceremonies at schools and universities, and at public events. Goethe was generally viewed as untainted because the Nazis had never fully appropriated his work into their view of culture. His work was seen by many as having the power to regenerate German culture and to reconnect it with the values of humanity in general. In the final chapter of the historian Friedrich Meinecke's *The German Catastrophe* (1946), the author claimed that, "the work of Bismarck's era has been destroyed through our own fault, and we must go back beyond its ruins to seek out the ways of Goethe's era."[105] In Goethe's time, small circles of friends gathered together to realize cultural ideals having "a universal human meaning."[106] Meinecke proposed the regeneration of the culture of Germany and the West through the reappropriation of the humanism of Weimar classicism. "In every German city and larger village," Meinecke wrote, "we would like to see in the future a community of like-minded friends of culture which I should like best to call Goethe Communities."[107] These communities were to be tasked with conveying "the great German spirit" through music and poetry as a way of redeeming German culture. By creating a living community dedicated to the works of Goethe and Schiller, Hölderlin and Mörike, Bach and Beethoven, the Christian culture of Germany could be rebuilt from the ashes. Meinecke's call for the formation of Goethe Communities was not taken up, but his instinctive turn to German classicism as a means of renovating German culture and of making it once again a leading culture of the West had a wide resonance. The invocation of Goethe's work had much in common with more purely metonymic

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[105] Friedrich Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe; Reflections and Recollections* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 115.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid., 120.

conceptions of human. The reference to Goethe's work provided a mooring point and a source of texts for interpretation out of which could be read a positive account of the ideal conditions for human flourishing. Yet even here, humanism functioned as a metonym. The connection of this ideal with ideals of human being found in Goethe's work remained, generally speaking, at the level of implication.

In the period immediately following the end of the war there was a proliferation of books and articles that offered up Goethe as a nostrum for the contemporary crisis while studiously avoiding the question of what degree German culture itself (of which Goethe was an integral part) bore responsibility for the said crisis. The Germanist Hermann Uhde-Bernays wrote in the first number of the journal *Deutsche Beiträge* of a turn to Goethe by German youth in search of redemption. "Like a helpful constellation that brings solace and salvation to a perplexed and erratic wanderer in the dark of night, Goethe's brilliant gaze shines from his poetry upon a German people left flailing in fear and disquiet about the future by an unfortunate conflict."[108] Uhde-Bernays took no note of the degree to which the "conflict" had been more "unfortunate" for the victims of National Socialism than it had been for the Germans themselves. Rather, he focused on the capacity of Goethe's humanism to free German youth from "the chaos of the present" by leading them to "a cosmos of inner immersion." What was important for German youth was not engagement with the current political situation of Germany or the recent past, characterized as it was by genocidal violence, but rather a retreat into an inner world where they could fully experience their own humanity.

Some did question whether Goethe could actually fill the role that so many seem ready to foist upon him. Writing pseudonymously (as Jens Daniel) in *Der Spiegel* in 1949, the liberal journalist Rudolf Augstein argued that the fixation on Goethe's curative powers

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[108] Herman Uhde-Bernays, "Wendung der Jugend zu Goethe," *Deutsche Beiträge* 1(1946): 3.

was one of those illusions to which it was now the duty of Europeans to pay attention. Europe was in search of a new conception of human being, but perhaps it was the case, Augstein claimed, that this new human being would not be of the Goethean type, assuming it appeared at all. [109] Perhaps Goethe's account of human flourishing was merely a milestone in the development of human beings in the West, its guiding ideal of harmonious self-formation having later irrevocably collapsed. Germany's problems in the postwar years were different and incomparably more severe than those of Goethe's time. For modern Germans (and for Europeans generally), Goethe's model of personality formation was no longer in step with the needs of the time. Goethe's ethic had been one of completion of self and world. In the modern era what was necessary was an ideal through which self could be conserved. Those who promoted a return to Goethe's ideals, who sought redemption in a pure return to the ideals and ideas of the past failed to understand that Goethe had lived in another time and could not merely be transported into the modern era. "Goethe among us – the idea is absurd," Augstein wrote acerbically. The heritage of the culture of the West, Goethe included, had failed to prevent the construction of concentration camps in Goethe's native land. "Goethe's light shines as bright as ever, but it does not illuminate our future."[110]

The Germanist Richard Alewyn took matters a step further in an article published in the *Hamburger Akademische Rundschau* in 1949. Not only was it questionable whether Goethe's ideals could form the basis of a regeneration of German and European culture, it was also the case that these ideals were being used to deflect attention from the crimes of National Socialists and their connection to precisely these cultural formations. In a scathing critique of the use of Goethe as an alibi for German misdeeds, Alewyn contended that the two

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[109] Jens Daniel, "Goethe unter uns," *Der Spiegel* 3, no. 36 (1949): 25.
[110] Ibid.

could not be considered separately: "Buchenwald lies between us and Weimar."[111] Alewyn noted that the recognition of Goethe's singularity within German culture was not new. Already in the 19th century, in an era "on which the warm evening light of German humanism still rested," Nietzsche had written that Goethe was "an accident with no consequences." Perhaps Nietzsche was not quite right in suggesting that Goethe's work had failed to leave lasting impressions on German culture, but it could not be denied that this culture had other aspects that shaped it just as deeply. To honor Goethe while denying Hitler was simply to fail to understand the degree to which both were integral to German culture. "There is only Goethe *and* Hitler, humanity *and* bestiality. For the generation living today there cannot be two Germanys. There is either one or none."[112] Those Germans and Europeans who had lived in the humanistic era of the 19th century had been spared the look into the abyss of National Socialism. Those who had lived through it were like Orestes pursued by the Fates after the murder of Clytemnestra, but lacking the sanctuary of the Acropolis, the "temple of cleansing humanity." There was no "back to Goethe" because there was simply no going back.

The attempt to find a basis for the reconstruction of German culture in Goethe's humanism was, in many respects, similar to the metonymy of more general appeals to humanism. In its various incarnations it did not specify that which was intrinsically and universally human but rather, and in line with the ideals of *Bildung* promoted in the humanistic gymnasium, offered a model of human flourishing based on the ideal of harmonious individual self-development. Goethe was a particularly attractive figure in this respect because of his veneration among wide circles of the educated population of Germany and because he was not bur-

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[111] Georg Alewyn, "Goethe als Alibi?," in *Goethe im Urteil seiner Kritiker: Dokumente zur Wirkungsgeschichte Goethes in Deutschland, Teil IV, 1918-1982* ed. Karl Robert Mandelkow (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1984), 335.
[112] Ibid.

dened by extensive attempts at positive appropriation by the ideologists of National Social-
ism. Goethe was a homegrown figure whose humanistic ethos was seen by many as a means
to reintegrate German values with those of the West and to expunge the poisonous heritage
of racism and genocide. While some, like Augstein and Alewyn, were conscious of the dan-
gers of merely employing Goethe as a means to distract attention from the unpalatable facts
the confronted Germans in the postwar era, the Goethe cult in West Germany would retain
considerable cultural power and cachet until the rising tide of the economic miracle displaced
the need for alibis from popular consciousness. With the improvement of the material condi-
tions of life resulting from rapid economic growth of the early 1950s and integration of Ger-
many into the structures of the Atlantic world made a *fait accompli* by the formation of Cold
War blocs, the need to look back to the history of German culture receded from the forefront
of intellectual and public consciousness in West Germany.

Section IV. The Humanism of Classical Antiquity

  Writers who in their prewar careers had dealt professionally with questions relating to
the humanism of classical antiquity or 18th century Germany turned their attention to the con-
tributions that these cultural formations could offer to postwar Germany. In 1947, the Catho-
lic philologist Richard Newald published a pamphlet entitled *Humanitas, Humanismus, Hu-
manität*, in which he analyzed humanism in the context of the terminology of the human in
the intellectual history of the West. Newald's prewar work had focused on connections be-
tween the cultures of classical antiquity and Weimar classicism. Newald made these connec-
tions the basis for prognostications about the situation of the modern world. Although the
three terms of the title suggested a common point of reference in timeless conceptions of

humanity, in fact these terms referred to "three different situations in the history of human development (*Bildungsgeschichte*) in the West."[113] This developmental history had taken place in a series of stages, first of the culture of Greek antiquity being taken up by that of Rome, and then this culture itself being successively regenerated in idealism in Weimar classicism. As a concept, humanism represented repeated attempts to integrate the values of classical *humanitas* into the value order of later periods. Humanism had long since lost its original connection with the educational ideals of Petrarch and his followers in the Renaissance. In the current parlance, being a humanist had come to mean being an adherent of an educational establishment dedicated to the realization of values drawn from this historical culture. The ideal in question was *Bildung*, the ideal of balanced development of the totality of human capacities that stood in contrast to the focus on particular subject areas characteristic of the technically oriented education offered by the modern school system. Humanism as a concept distinguished not between man and God, or between man and animals, but between man and man. Human beings were originally equal but were distinguished by differing levels of developmental achievement (*Bildungsgrade*) which had nothing to do with political, military, or economic orders. Humanism promoted a value (*Bildung*) that was universal, in the sense of being best for all human beings, but which also provided a means of measurement and evaluation of individual humans. Thus, in the first instance, humanism integrated the values of antiquity into modernity through the ideal of self-development.

Language also played a role in this process of formation. "The undeveloped person (d*er Ungebildete*) babbles, employs arduously learned words in his daily interactions in the same forms without being clear about the fact that he possesses the ability to express the oth-

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[113] Richard Newald, *Humanitas, Humanismus, Humanität* (Essen: Hans v. Charmier, 1947), 7.

er, the foreign, the spiritual, the esoteric in language."[114] The learning of the languages of classical antiquity in the process of *Bildung* implied a more intensive engagement with language generally. Those who did not do so remained unable to attain higher levels of intellectual achievement. "Spiritually, he remains a mute who has nothing to say to his fellow men because they do not touch upon his circle of life and influence; a babbler for whom neither the beauty of a poem nor a linguistically formed thought is comprehensible."[115] Language provided a pathway to the higher realms of human development. It also provided a medium through which more fully developed human beings could recognize each other, thus defining a society of human excellence. Language defined human beings because they alone possessed it, but it also provided a metric by which the levels of human development could be evaluated.

The classicist Karl Kerényi noted in 1945 that humanism had gone from denoting the study of Greek and Roman antiquity to "thinking of everything in the world from the standpoint of the human being and discerning the human part in everything that has ever been thought." From a well-defined field of scholarly investigation, humanism had become "a philosophical worldview."[116] The Hamburg philologist Bruno Snell wrote of the change in meaning: "Humanism once meant the belief that classical antiquity was exemplary for Western thought, poetry, and plastic arts; thus the works of the ancients, their accomplishments in visual arts, poetry, and philosophy were ideal. These achievements possessed transhistorical validity and rendered examples worthy of emulation for the production of the self."[117] But for Snell, the important change had been wrought by students of the history of antiquity them-

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[114] Ibid., 10.
[115] Ibid., 10-11.
[116] Karl Kerényi, "Grundbegriffe und Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Humanismus," *Schweizer Monatshefte* 25(1945): 104.
[117] Bruno Snell, "Humanismus Heute?," *Die Zeit*, 21 February 1946.

selves, who had stressed the intimate connections between the works of antiquity and the historical moments in which they were produced. Historical scholarship had shown that the achievements of the ancient world "sprang from preconditions that are deeply foreign to us."[118] To the extent that a work of art or philosophy was great, Snell argued, it was to that degree an expression of "the spirit of the times."

Snell was a skeptic about the conversion of the thought of classical antiquity into a doctrine of humanism. In a text written in the mid-1950s, Snell argued that proponents of this equation failed to realize that it did not do justice to the original materials that were claimed as the bases of humanism. Humanism had become a means of talking about "the" human being as an abstract, universal concept. Whatever else might be said about this concept, it was "completely un-Greek," Snell noted acerbically. "A Greek never seriously spoke of the idea of the human being," Snell argued.[119] Human beings in ancient Greece were divided into two kinds: those that spoke Greek and those that didn't. Discussions of the human being that transcended this distinction were simply not to be found in the existing store of texts that had come down to us from this period. To attempt to ground humanism in the concept of *paideia* that had arisen in Athens in the 5th century, as Werner Jaeger had sought to do in the 1930s, involved a failure to recognize that the human virtues supposedly promoted by the Greek writers were fundamentally bound to a particular civic context. It was not human beings that the program of *paideia* was meant to produce, but Athenians. But for Snell, even recognizing this fact did not get to the heart of the matter. Jaeger's conception of *paideia*, which was the main target of Snell's criticism, was so general as to be amenable to any political or social view whatsoever. As such, Snell argued, "this humanism must go the way of every other ni-

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[118] Ibid.
[119] Bruno Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes. Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Greichen* (Hamburg: Claassen Verlag, 1955), 334.

hilism that hides itself behind some 'deportment,' be it 'heroic' or 'religious' and it could be seen from the outset that this political humanism was in fact unpolitical – or could serve any politics."[120]

Snell's critique was primarily directed at so-called "political humanisms" of which Jaeger's third humanism was the prime example. It remained to be seen what positive role classically based versions of humanism could play in the postwar period. For Snell, classically based humanism had a role to play, but one that was rather less politically engaged and ambitious than that prescribed by Jaeger and his followers: "What promise does humanism hold for us? What do the Greeks mean to us? It is unnecessary to draft more programs and once again to promulgate a new humanism, rather we must confidently trust in the old truths."[121] It was unlikely that the Germans could effect a real alteration in their own culture, or that they could take on the characteristics of Athenian society in the wake of defeat in the Peloponnesian War. In light of this it was best to focus on the "*divinum*" of the Greeks rather than their "*humanum*". This did not mean that Snell was calling for a new heathenism based on the worship of the Greek gods. Rather the Germans should "remember that which was brought into the world by the Greek gods and what remains undying." By focusing on the values of Greek religion, rather than on the gods themselves, it might be possible for Germans to erect some sort of defense against bestiality and barbarism.

Classical studies had been one of the most influential of the prewar academic disciplines. In the years following the war, this influence was somewhat diminished as the mandarin scholarly culture that had dominated German academia since the 19th century came into question, in part for active complicity with National Socialism, but more generally for failing

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[120] Ibid., 346-47.
[121] Ibid., 347.

to provide society with adequate intellectual resources with which to resist it. The question was frequently asked as to how Madame de Stäel's nation of thinkers and poets could have generated National Socialism, a movement the defining qualities of which were inhumanity and utter disrespect for high culture. National Socialist ideologues had appropriated the products of classical studies for its own purposes, sometimes (as in the case of Werner Jaeger) with positive assistance from the scholars themselves. National Socialism's relationship to the classical past was always uneasy. National Socialist racial ideology was committed to the idea of Aryan racial superiority, and thus it was difficult to build the southern and southeastern European peoples into this racial history. Moreover, as a movement National Socialism was implacably opposed to the establishment of any sort of normative basis outside of its own immediate needs. As the historian Susan Marchand has noted, even in the context of National Socialist studies of antiquity, "attacks on humanism's attachment to Rome and its disdainful treatment of *Germania libera* continued unabated. Even those obsessed with proving the nation's Ur-historical Aryan racial purity were equally, if not rather more, intent on establishing Germanic cultural autonomy – and equal validity – as if frantically seeking final absolution and vindication for having sacked Rome in the fifth century."[122]

In the wake of the war, German classicists sought to absolve themselves from any sort of complicity with National Socialism. They participated enthusiastically in efforts to cast the true German culture as part and parcel with the culture of the West. Many, such as the classicist Ludwig Curtius, claimed that it was the scholars of German antiquity who had been the true collaborators, while scholars of Greek and Roman antiquity had been subject to

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[122] Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970*, 347.

attacks by National Socialist pseudo-scholars.[123] Rather than focus on the past, postwar German classical scholars looked forward, arguing that the wisdom of the classical Greek and Roman civilizations could be turned to the project of establishing universal values. In a talk given in 1957, the classicist Joseph Vogt noted that, "It is a singular characteristic of the course of ancient history itself that it tended toward universality and now can be conceived in connection with the whole; it is the uninterrupted process of archaeological discovery and the expansion of our sources that has broken down the barriers between classical antiquity and the ancient Orient, as well as the barriers between these civilized peoples and the nomads and half-nomads of prehistory."[124] For Vogt, as for many in the community of postwar classical scholars, what was important was the role that classical studies could play in overcoming the recent "political tragedies and spiritual catastrophes." The cultures of classical antiquity were well placed to do this because of their inherent tendency toward universality.

The classically based humanism of the postwar period in Germany took two interconnected forms. The first was in the institution of the humanistic gymnasia, the elite schools in which students were educated according to the classically based principles of *Bildung* through learning ancient languages and engagement with classical art and literature. The second was the promotion of classically based humanism as a key element in the project of reconstructing the intellectual and cultural life of Germany, and of realigning it with the values of the West. Among the most avid promoters of this idea was the Frankfurt classicism Heinrich Weinstock. In a series of works published in the decade after the end of the war, Weinstock argued that what he termed a "real humanism" could be read out of the works of

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[123] Ludwig Curtius, *Deutsche und antike Welt; Lebenserinnerungen* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1950), 489ff. This topic is discussed at length in Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970*, 354-57.
[124] Quoted in Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970*, 359.

classical antiquity, and that this humanism had an important and salutary contribution to make to the cultures of the modern West.

In an article published in 1947, Weinstock began by addressing the question of the coming of socialism, which he associated with the mechanization of society.[125] Traditionally oriented critics of socialism, from Goethe through modern cultural conservatives like Spengler and Ortega y Gasset, feared the advent of socialism because of the negative consequences that it would have in terms of human freedom. "They all fear socialism as humanists," Weinstock wrote, "because for them its victory would seal the doom of the humanistic West."[126] In 1947, with socialism extending over a large portion of the Earth's surface, it appeared to many that these predictions were coming true and that humanism was on its deathbed.

Weinstock rejected this idea. It was a mistake to think that humanism and socialism were necessarily deadly enemies. Looked at in the clear light of day, apart from the ideological trappings that colored common understandings of both humanism and socialism, there was much that the socialism of Marx and a humanism based on the philosophy of Plato had to say to each other. The key to this connection was the anthropological dimension of original Marxism, which could be read with particular clarity from the early works of Marx made available around the turn of the century by Franz Mehring.[127] The true socialism of Marx was a humanism in the sense that the human being was central to the normative thrust of his project. That the centrality of this anthropology had become obscured was due to ideological factors. Weinstock then asserted that the misunderstanding of Marx that had prevailed lately was analogous to a misreading of Plato's philosophy that had long been prevalent in the

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[125] Heinrich Weinstock, "Platon und Marx, oder Humanismus und Sozialismus," *Der Bund Jahrbuch* (1947).
[126] Ibid., 56.
[127] The significance of Marx's early works for postwar German humanism will be discussed in Chapter 3.

West. Rather than implacable enemies, Marxian socialism and Platonism were mutually dependent partners. At first glance this might not seem clear, since Plato's idealism seemed to be the sort of idea that Marx had rejected in his critique of Hegelianism. Weinstock explained that the political theories of Marx and Plato had the same basic conception: "philosophy cannot realize itself without the abolition of tyranny; tyranny cannot be abolished without the realization of philosophy."[128] If this homology was accepted, Weinstock noted, then it would be possible "to bring about the encounter between true humanism and pure socialism and in fact to initiate with great promise a new humanism from the contemporary necessities of socialism and a real socialism out of the eternal needs of humanism; thus to realize what Marx himself so passionately termed 'real humanism'."[129]

Weinstock's ideas were particularly interesting because they were out of step with much of the feeling in the western zones of occupation. There was, in general, more fear of socialism than inclination towards it, particularly among the educated mandarinate of which Weinstock was a member. Weinstock, for his part, argued that it was a mistake to think, as liberals like Herbert Spencer had done, that Marxian socialism implied the choking off of human personality. Weinstock's counterargument was the role played in Marx's thought by love of one's fellow man, and exemplified in his love for Jenny von Westfalen, which qualified as one of the highest forms of humanism. In the cases of both Marx and Plato, later interpreters had allowed themselves to be distracted by the fact that each spent a great deal of energy discussing non-human matters: the economy in the case of Marx, the state and the laws in the case of Plato. For Weinstock, both charges could be answered at the same time:

> They [Plato and Marx] argue thus because both the state renovator Plato and
> the social revolutionary Marx are humanists but, as Marx explicitly empha-

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[128] Heinrich Weinstock, "Platon und Marx, oder Humanismus und Sozialismus," 62.
[129] Ibid., 58.

sized, real humanists can be classified as idealist in one case, as materialist in the other. For both it is a question of true human being, but of the realization of this mode of being in actual human beings. However, for them the reality of human beings is historical reality, conditioned and determined by the relations in which human beings live. If these relations are inverted, depraved, disordered, then the human being cannot become a human being.[130]

Weinstock proceeded to argue that in his later doctrines of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the expropriation of capitalists, Marx had deviated from the normative core of his own doctrine. To get back to a true humanism it was necessary to offer the correction of what Weinstock termed Christian and "tragic" humanism. By the first he simply meant the values of the Christian religion as they related to human beings. Tragic humanism was a phenomenon of the modern era, one which Weinstock did not immediately elaborate. For him it was enough to stress that modern socialism could only return to its roots as a true humanism by engaging with the values of the Greeks and of Christianity.

Approaches to humanism based on readings of the cultures of classical antiquity had a long provenance reaching back to the Enlightenment, the writings of Winkelmann and the Weimar classicists, and running up through Jaeger's third humanism of the 1930s.[131] Scholars like Snell and Weinstock viewed the classical past as a reservoir of cultural capital which could be drawn upon to relieve the cultural pressures facing modern Germans. Implicit in this approach was that these values were valid for all people and thus could be effective in drawing Germans back into the fold of the civilized West (itself conceived of as the bearer of universal values). Unlike Heidegger, who viewed much of the culture of classical antiquity as suffering from the same metaphysical deficiencies as the rest of Western culture, postwar

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[130] Ibid., 63.

[131] The humanism of the Italian renaissance is excluded here because although it was the source of humanism as a concept, the writers of that period did not employ humanism in their conceptual vocabulary.

German classicists remained confident that the values of the cultures of antiquity unproblematically provided the key to the regeneration of modern human culture.

Section V. Christian Humanism

On 15 March 1946, an unsigned editorial appeared in the pages of the first number of the *Rheinischer Merkur*, a conservative Christian weekly based in Koblenz in the French occupation zone. Under the title "Christlicher Humanismus: Seine Möglichkeiten im Aufbau einer neuen Gesellschaft" ("Christian Humanism: Its Possibilities in the Construction of a New Society"), the author began by highlighting the cultural crisis which the events of the preceding era had wrought on Germany. "The epoch of the National Socialist regime and of the Second World War has strongly advanced the idea that we live in a world that has become both de-Christianized and irrational, and that the question of the relationship of Christianity to the future social order must be reconfigured from the ground up."[132] This process of rebuilding would be undertaken despite the fact that many who might have made important contributions to the process had not survived the events of the recent war.[133] What was called for was a return to the roots of Christianity. In the period of its transition from a sect among Jews in the Holy Land to diffusion through the Roman Empire, Christianity had overcome the philosophy of classical Greece, but had also taken the knowledge that this philosophy had generated into the Christian project. It was the apostle Paul who had first recognized the importance of this:

> In contrast to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, Paul was open to the fact
> that the intellectual world (*Bildungswelt*) of Hellenism already contained

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[132] "Christlicher Humanismus: seine Möglichkeiten im Aufbau einer neuen Gesellchaft," *Rheinischer Merkur*, 15 March 1946..

[133] The article discussed in depth a book entitled *Gestalt eines christlichen Humanismus*, which had been published in 1940. The author, Herbert Rüssel, a former student of Max Scheler, had died in a concentration camp.

within it the preliminaries of the Christian message. Only through the assimilation of the ancient learning, which in the Roman Empire spanned the face of the known world, could Christianity become an ecumenical religion.[134]

Taking the term humanism to designate the philosophy of the ancient world, as was the common practice, the author then argued that this Christian humanism, the fusion of Christian theology with the philosophy of pre-Christian antiquity, existed in one form or another from the fall of Rome to its rebirth in the 15th century. The rise of Protestantism had severely weakened the cultural power of Christian humanism, which required "a culturally closed, spiritually unified Europe" to maintain its centrifugal tendencies.

Now, in a modern age beset by crises, some wanted to try to leap over the Christian epoch to recover the power of the philosophy and culture of antiquity in its unmediated form. After two thousand years of Christianity, such a naïve and unselfconscious heathenism was no longer possible, "because it represents a denial of the actual course of history."[135] The appearance of Christ was a step forward, a transition in historical time which precluded the reconstitution of prior moments. This heathendom, and here National Socialism was clearly a reference point, had unleashed "demonic tendencies" upon the modern world. The myth of vitalism in nature which was an underlying philosophical premise of this heathenism, had transformed the dignity of God into the veneration of technology. The result was a new kind of human being, one with little similarity to the "humanistic men" who had populated Europe for millennia. The new human being was mechanized, merely "a unit of a colossal apparatus of mass welfare that threatens to destroy the world of his specifically human existence."[136] The positive program that the author suggested as a response was closer collaboration be-

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[134] "Christlicher Humanismus: seine Möglichkeiten im Aufbau einer neuen Gesellschaft."
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.

tween the Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox branches of Christianity. It was only by con-

forming to authentic Christian doctrine and by strengthening the influence of the churches in

modern society that Christian humanism could persist. This humanism was the defense of the

human individual's freely developing relation to God against the demonic forces of mass so-

ciety and technology: "social relations must be effectively formed so that a Christian and

human life is possible within them, if the Western tradition wants to save its basis."[137] The

human mode of existence was threatened by mass society and by technologically structured

labor processes. To combat this it was necessary to organize society in such a way that hu-

manity and Christianity were permitted to thrive.

Christian humanism would seem to be a problematic concept, particularly given the

secularist connotations with which humanism was freighted in the last third of the 20th cen-

tury. It is less so if it is remembered that the original humanists such as Petrarch, Salutati, and

Bruni saw no contradiction between their interest in questions of human being and human

values with Christian faith (and in Petrarch's case holy orders). In the years between the

world wars, the idea of a specifically Christian humanism arose within French Catholicism in

the work of Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques Maritain, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. What

links the otherwise disparate projects of these thinkers is the central role of the human being

in their respective understanding of the Christian message.[138] The Christian humanism that

achieved prominence in German intellectual life after the Second World War took up this

issue. Christian humanism in the interwar period had been a response to perceived crises of

modernity stemming from the rise of mass society and the spreading economic and social

influence of technology. For Christian humanists, unlike for those engaged with the classical

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[137] Ibid.

[138] On French theology in this period, see Jean-Yves Calvez, *Chrétiens, penseurs du social*, vol. 1 (Paris: Cerf, 2002).

or Weimar classical traditions, a direct connection to the universal was an explicit part of their worldview needing no further justification than belief in an all-powerful deity. The scope of Christianity's claims was universal. It was, in the words of the 5th century theologian St. Vincent of Lérins "quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est."[139] In terms of the general contention that the humanisms of postwar German culture sought a universalistic standpoint in order to realign German values with those of the West, it was not Christianity that required explanation but humanism. Christian thinkers of all confessional and philosophical orientations worked in the wake of the war to reasssociate Christianity in Germany with the broader Christian world. A focus on the human being (which use of the term humanism indicated) was not a strategy employed by all. Thus the question remains as to what those who promoted Christian humanism sought to achieve through this approach.

The peculiarity of the pairing was not lost on contemporary commentators. One writer for the *Frankfurter Hefte* noted that there had been tension between Christianity and the idea of the human ever since the arrival of Christ's message in the world.[140] Humanism was associated with the pursuit of "pure humanity" (*reine Meschlichkeit*) which implied a conflict with the preeminence of God over man in Christian theology. Yet in the figure of Christ, simultaneously man and God, Christianity and humanism found the common ground of a model and a goal toward which human beings could strive. As the author noted, "For both [Christianity and humanism] it is a matter of the truth and dignity of human beings."[141] It was therefore hardly surprising that some would see a natural connection between the two. It was for similar reasons that many were claiming a fundamental homology between Christianity and socialism. Nonetheless, the author argued, "the simple synthesis of 'Christian humanism'

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[139] "That which has been believed everywhere, always, by everyone."
[140] "Humanismus und Christentum," *Frankfurter Hefte* 3, no. 4 (1948).
[141] Ibid., 376.

remains almost as questionable as that of a 'Christian socialism'. A simple amalgamation seems not to be possible."[142]

At the second session of the 1949 Rencontres Internationales, held on 1 September, the Swiss protestant theologian Karl Barth delivered a lecture on the topic of the actuality of the Christian message. Although not of German nationality, Barth had played an important role in German theology since the era of the Weimar republic. He had come to prominence in 1919 with the publication of an extensive commentary on St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. There he warned against the attempt to associate the will of God with particular human cultures and institutions. He would continue to develop this position throughout the interwar years, even in the face of the National Socialist seizure of power. In the latter period, Barth struggled against the attempts by the Nazis to establish a politicized form of Christianity through the promotion of the so-called Deutsche Christen.[143] The theology of the Deutsche Christen was highly convoluted, attempting as it did to shoehorn the universalistic normative premises of mainline Christian theology into a form commensurate with the racial particularism of National Socialist ideology. While a large proportion of practicing Christians in Germany remained aloof from the German Christian movement itself, it was nonetheless the case that Christians in Germany had, by and large, come to an accommodation between their theological beliefs and the politics of the National Socialist regime.[144] Barth was among the most prominent theologians to reject this compromise. Barth associated himself with a splinter movement in German Protestantism calling itself the *Bekennende Kirche* (Confessing

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[142] Ibid.

[143] On the history of the Deutsche Christen see Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[144] The conflicts between Protestant theology and National Socialism are detailed in Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), Chapter 1.

Church) which refused to prioritize the demands of National Socialism over what they viewed as the truths of Christian doctrine.[145] In 1934, the Confessing Church issued the *Barmer Erklärung* (Barmen Declaration), in part as a response to the promulgation of the so-called Aryan Paragraph by which the National Socialist regime sought to exclude people of Jewish ethnicity from, among other things, administrative positions in the German churches. The document, predominantly composed by Barth, rejected the idea that the state should have a determining role in running the churches or in determining doctrine. The document asserted, "We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well."[146] Barth's position, and that of the *Bekennende Kirche* more generally, was characteristic of modern Christian theology in the sense that it sought to preserve the authority of the churches over their own doctrines and administration, without explicitly challenging the claim of the state to control temporal matters. Barth's opposition to the Aryan Paragraph indicates the practical limits of the universality of the Christian message in his theology. His objections, in contrast to those of his fellow *Bekennende Kirche* leader Dietrich Bonhoeffer, related primarily to preserving the administrative prerogatives of the churches rather than to preserving the rights and dignity of church members of Jewish ethnicity.[147]

In the years following the war, Barth sought to rebuild the credibility of the German Protestant churches as defenders of human beings per se, irrespective of race or other tem-

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[145] On the history of the Bekennende Kirche, see Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Prostestant Protest against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[146] Barmer Erklärung, para. 23

[147] For the debate between Barth and Bonhoeffer, see Jordan J. Ballor, "The Aryan Clause, the Confessing Church, and the Ecumenical Movement: Barth and Bonhoeffer on Natural Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 59(2006).

poral considerations. In 1945 he joined the Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland, an antifasc-

ist grouping of social democrats and exiled communists that promoted socialism for postwar

Germany.[148] In the context of the German churches, Barth sought reconciliation between

German Protestantism and Christian churches elsewhere in Western Europe and North Amer-

ica. The Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), the governing body comprising the

bulk of mainline Protestant sects in Germany, had issued the *Stuttgarter Schuldbekenntnis*

(Stuttgart Statement of Guilt) in 1945. In this document, the leadership of the EKD sought to

excuse the German churches for their failure to oppose National Socialism with sufficient

vigor. For Barth, this statement was insufficient. In 1947, Barth was instrumental in the is-

suing of the Darmstadt Statement (*Darmstädter Wort*), seeking to engage more fully with the

guilt of German Protestantism.[149] Barth's role in German Protestantism in the immediate

postwar years illustrates the attempts of German Protestants to reintegrate German churches

within the broader European and North American Christian institutions. As was the case with

many others in Germany in these years, the reconnection of German cultural life, of which

spiritual life was an important part, into the community of civilized, Western cultures was

seen as a paramount goal.

Barth's speech to the Rencontres Internationales in 1949 was a further contribution to

this project. The "new humanism" that was the subject of the conference was exemplified by

the fact that a Protestant and a Catholic theologian were sharing the rostrum, something

which would have been unthinkable forty or fifty years previously. Why this was so re-

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[148] The NKFD had originally been formed by communists in exile in the Soviet Union and had spread among
German prisoners of war. For this reason it was looked upon with intense suspicion by the occupation govern-
ments in the three western zones. On the history of the NKFD, see Heike Bungert and Nationalkomitee "Freies
Deutschland.", *Das Nationalkomitee und der Westen: die Reaktion der Westalliierten auf das NKFD und die
Freien Deutschen Bewegungen 1943-1948* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1997).
[149] On the debates surrounding these documents, see Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German
Protestants Confront the Nazi Past*.

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mained an open question. That it was so was an act of daring. As theologians they would be open to all the various viewpoints that would be discussed at the conference. Nonetheless, other participants in the conference were not to expect that they as Christians would draw back from asserting their own distinctive point of view. Christianity and its relationship to the human were key to addressing the pressing issues of the postwar moment. Christian theology was not to be viewed as one doctrine among others. Rather, the Christian message was the truth that underlay all human ideas. Christianity meant in this moment, as it had always meant, that "all human beings and all human sentiments and struggles attest to the will, the works, and the revelation of God."[150] Barth referred to this imbrication of the Christian message in all aspects of human existence the "humanism of God". Barth was sensitive to the fact that the message of the humanism of God, particularly as presented by two representatives of opposing Christian sects, might be viewed by other participants at the conference as "even more disturbing than the presence of communists."[151] It might even be the case that communists and non-communists might find common ground in opposing the influence of Christian theology on the discussion of humanism. Such was the political tenor of the times. Nonetheless, Barth was prepared to risk these contemporary political objections in order to add an important dimension to the discussion of humanism.

The bulk of Barth's talk was dedicated to explaining the concept of the humanism of God. The Christian message was the word of God made flesh through the agency of Jesus Christ. Human beings were, Barth argued, an expression of the word of God:

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[150] Karl Barth, "Die Aktualität der christilichen Botschaft," in *Humanismus* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag A.G., 1950), 4.
[151] Ibid.

> In Christian knowledge the human being is not a higher, not a lower, not a different essence, but precisely that essence that is expressed by this word. The human being is that essence that is visible in the mirror of Jesus Christ.[152]

God was that which made the revelation of human beings possible and whose love and purposes suffused all human life. God's love for man was an expression of freely chosen mercy. It was not the expression of some necessary quality of God's, but of "God's sovereign, creative, merciful decision and act that He avowed in the making of Jesus Christ into a human being."[153] It did not lie within the capacity of human beings to take control of their existence. Human existence was the pure gift of God, one which was fundamentally ungraspable and which could not reflect merit on the part of human beings. All attempts to understand human being, and this was the goal of the proceedings, had to arise from an understanding of the "voluntary grace of God" and its incarnation in Jesus Christ. Christ was not to be seen as a symbol or an image of the universal reality of human beings but its actuality, and thus the expression of the wholeness of the Christian message, "a history that was an eternal history precisely in its temporal uniqueness."[154]

Barth then turned to the question of the human being. Barth offered a definition with four elements. The human being was the product of a historical-theological movement: a process of creation by God and relation to Him. "The true human being," Barth claimed, "is that which occurs in this history."[155] Human consciousness played a crucial role in this historical process. The results of natural science and natural philosophy attested to the unique position of human beings within the broader scope of existence. Philosophical idealism highlighted the element of freedom that characterized human beings within historical and natural

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[152] Ibid., 5.
[153] Ibid., 6.
[154] Ibid., 7.
[155] Ibid.

processes. Modern existentialism had further filled out this picture, illustrating the situation of human beings as finite, endangered, self-conscious actors, struggling to transcend their individual existential conditions. All of these conclusions were commensurate with the Christian message. According to this message, human beings were created by God and were rushing toward eternal life with him. Everything was the expression of human possibility:

> Human self-understanding encompasses the possibilities of the human, not the human being himself, not the actual human being. The human being himself, the actual human being, exists in virtue of the fact that the living God is for him and with him – his beginning and his end. The actual human being is [the manifestation of this relationship in] this history. That is the basis upon which the Christian message can peacefully coexist with classical and other varieties of humanism, although it must also be in conflict with them.[156]

The human being was further defined by his relationships with others. "An isolated human being," Barth asserted, "is not a human being."[157] Moreover, it was also the case that a man without a woman was similarly lacking in terms of humanity. This, according to Barth, raised the question of the status of individualistic and collectivistic versions of humanism past and present. In fact, Barth argued, both could be commensurate with the Christian message, because that message spoke both to individuals and to communities. The Christian message rejected both Nietzsche's excessive individualism and Marx's excessive communalism. In modern political circumstances, this implied the rejection of the personalistic truth of the West and the socialistic truth of the East. The Christian message protested both against the assertion of power of one man over another and against the massification of human beings. As an alternative, Christianity offered the recognition of human dignity, human duty, and human law in so far as these preserved the possibility for actual humanity to persist in common (that is to say communal) life.

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[156] Ibid., 8.
[157] Ibid.

In his third definitional point, Barth argued that, from the perspective of the Christian message, human beings never lived under ideal conditions. The fallen condition of human beings meant that they were always deviating from the truth path of God's will. Human beings thus always stood in a relation of deficiency to God and under threat of His condemnation, from which the sacrifice of Jesus Christ had only partly freed them. Here the humanism of God differed from classical humanism in that the latter rejected both God's accusation of infidelity and His judgment of human beings. "It remains to be seen," Barth noted, "whether a new humanism will admit the validity of these things."[158] The current era was one in which many illusions about human beings and their happiness persisted. Reading the work of philosophers such as Heidegger and Sartre caused Barth to ask himself whether human beings were more resistant to the idea of grace than they had ever been. The current situation of human beings was one of extreme existential danger. "The actual human being is infinitely and irremediably endangered by himself." The importance of the Christian message was that it provided a means of human salvation, both in a temporal and in an eternal sense.

The decisive conclusion to be drawn from the Christian message, so Barth claimed, was that "even estranged from his reality, even eternally and irremediably endangered" the human being was still the subject of God's love. Although God indicted human beings and judged them for their failings, His grace and the prospect of eternal life in Him remained available. "The humanism of God is this free and valid grace."[159] Human beings, and here as always Barth made no ethnic, national, or geographical distinctions, were united in their universal relationship to God. The truth of God was not a "religious" but rather a universal truth. In spite of its apparent connections to Christianity, classical humanism had never come to

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[158] Ibid., 10.
[159] Ibid., 11.

terms with the immediacy of God's involvement in the human. The reality of the Christian message was the overcoming of the doubt and pessimism of the times through the joyful recognition of God's involvement with all aspects of human existence.

For Barth, the humanism of God was a defining theme in the dissemination of the Christian message in postwar Europe. It was a concept which promised the reconciliation of the deep divisions haunting European society. In a talk given in February of 1950, Barth claimed that the very occurrence of a meeting such as the *Rencontres*, at which "philosophers and historians, natural scientists and orientalists, theologians and Marxists" had shared a table together to exchange views, showed that the spirit of humanism that had suffused intellectual life from Socrates to Goethe was still a living concern. "That such human togetherness could take place in such inhuman times as ours counts as a great success."[160] That said, Barth conceded that, ultimately, "we [the conference participants] were not able to come to a consensus as to whether a 'new humanism' could be expected or should be sought in our times."[161] The proceedings of the conference had shown that the very definition of humanism was beset by great enigmas and contradictions. For some, such as the compilers of the dictionary of the Académie Française, humanism was limited to the pedagogical problem of refamiliarizing Western culture with the philosophy and art of classical antiquity. Its program was the realization of the nobility of the individual, the promotion of which would result in the nobility of the collectivity. This program could either be based on a definite attitude or on an anthropology. If it was the latter, on which of the available anthropologies of the classical world (Barth's list of possibilities included Plato, Aristotle, and Stoicism) was it to be based? For Barth, this fascination with the minutiae of the past obscured the basis of the humanism

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[160] Ibid., 13.
[161] Ibid., 14.

required of the present moment. The new humanism would have nothing more to do with old

texts. This new humanism took into account the changes in European culture wrought since

the 16th century, changes in the worldview of the natural sciences and in the image of the

human being. It had also expanded its reach horizontally by taking account of "oriental 'hu-

manisms' that are both veritable in their wisdom and respectability."[162] Barth assayed a fur-

ther definition of this new humanism:

> On the basis of these considerations one has said: humanism consists in the
> open-minded engagement with – other humanisms! One has elsewhere affec-
> tionately defined it negatively: it consists in the absence of all 'exclusive'
> dogmas, in a fundamental spiritual opening toward all sides. One has de-
> scribed this as the self conception of human beings in perpetual historical
> transformation.[163]

Rather than being linked with the intellectual products of antiquity, Barth's new humanism

cut loose from such canonical foundations and located the essence of humanism in the free

development of human self understanding. The underlying premise of this position was a

universal validation of the human as such in contrast to the various forms of exclusivism to

which human cultures had historically been prone.

Barth did not specify in this text the precise exclusive dogmas to which he referred. It

is hard to imagine that National Socialism would not have numbered among them, given

Barth's experiences with National Socialism's attempt to bend Christianity to racially exclu-

sivist purposes. Barth's attitude toward communism was somewhat different. In the February

1950 talk he explicitly included communism, to the extent that it was a movement promoting

communal human existence and having an underlying commitment to human freedom.

Barth's humanism distinguished, as many did not, between National Socialism and commun-

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[162] Ibid., 15.
[163] Ibid.

ism. Historians have noted the ways that, under the influence of anticommunism, concerted efforts were made in intellectual and popular culture to associate National Socialism and communism under the conceptual rubric of totalitarianism.[164] Barth had explicitly addressed the question of the relationship between National Socialism and communism in an exchange of letters with Emil Brunner in 1948. After Barth had visited Hungary to meet with religious leaders there, Brunner expressed his surprise that one who had taken such a strident stand against National Socialism would have engaged in actions that seemed to lend legitimacy to a communist regime. If anything, Brunner claimed, the communists were worse because, in his view, the Nazis had been dilettantes, while the communists were much better organized in terms of their efforts to inject the state into all aspects of human life.[165] In his response, Barth argued that it was a mistake both to create simplistic equivalencies between National Socialism and communism and blindly to attach oneself to a principle without recognizing the significance of the historical moment in its embodiment. National Socialism had been a movement that bewitched people, first in Germany, then throughout central and Western Europe. It had exerted an allure such that even convinced Christians were blinded to its true character. By contrast, although communism was a monstrous system, it did not seem to have the same capacity to encourage people otherwise at variance with communist core values to become complicit. It was simply not the case that the right and just beliefs of Christians in West Germany and in the liberal democratic regions of Europe were in danger of being overwhelmed by communism. Thus it was not necessary for every Christian to assert on theologi-

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[164] For an overview, see Ian Kershaw, "The Essence of Nazism: Form of Fascism, Brand of Totalitarianism, or Unique Phenomenon," in *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[165] In Karl Barth, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 33 (Zürich: Theologischer Vlg, 2000), 348-57.

cal grounds "that which every citizen can in any case read in the daily papers with approving nods, that which has already so felicitously been expressed by Mr. Truman and the Pope."[166]

For Barth it was not the case that the question of east versus west was unimportant for Christians. Rather, the question really was: what attitude ought Christians as Christians to adapt to the contemporary political context? Brunner had called for Christians to invoke explicitly their values and thereby to take part in the struggles of the Cold War. Barth countered that the question really to be asked was where the teachings of the church and calls for moral conduct ought to be directed. It made no sense to address these questions to the Americans or the populations of the liberal democratic states of Europe, for they were already convinced opponents of the USSR. But neither could the church direct its criticism and appellations toward the communists themselves, "for how could it be understood that the Western churches, having in old and in recent times acquiesced without admission, and even participated, in so much 'totalitarianism', now claim to have that of others on their minds?" Further, it did no good to importune the churches in the communist occupied areas for failing to adopt a sufficiently oppositional posture. For people such as Barth and Brunner, such urgings cost nothing. The churches in communist states had no such freedom. Engaging public opposition to communist governments would only lead to more severe repression and cost the churches their ability to do whatever positive work might have otherwise been possible. For the Christians in West Germany, it was important not to dissipate their efforts in overly general opposition, but rather to stand aside from the conflict until it could be ascertained "whether and in what sense the situation had once again become serious and ripe for decision."[167]

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[166] Ibid., 362.
[167] Ibid., 364.

Barth clearly recognized that, to a great degree, his views were out of step with those in Adenauer's West Germany, where anticommunism was an important element of government policy. In an essay written in 1949, Barth wrote of his ambivalence about the way that the relationship between east and west had been constructed in West German political life:

> Not that I want to muster up any sympathy for eastern Communism in view of present self-presentation; I much prefer not to have to live under its conditions, and I wish that no one else was forced to do so. I do not accept that politics or Christianity demands the sort of animosity and repudiation that have been seen with increasing asperity in the West in the last fifteen years. As a matter of principle I think that anti-communism is a greater evil than communism itself.[168]

For Barth, what went on in the Soviet Union was "the natural countermove and result of western developments." The inhuman compulsion that characterized life under Soviet communism had its roots in the political cultures of the West, and it was thus impossible to criticize communism without simultaneously criticizing the cultural order out of which it had arisen. By this, Barth meant to highlight the fact that Hitlerism had not been a foreign importation to European culture but was in fact an integral outgrowth of that culture. The underlying premise was that Christian humanism, on Barth's account, needed to put itself above the struggle between communism and liberal capitalism and focus on the significance of the Christian message for human beings irrespective of condition.

As in the case of other humanisms in the years around the beginning of the Cold War, Barth's humanism was a universalistic attempt to rise above immediate conditions to an order of value relevant to all human beings. Christianity was well placed to undertake the project in the respect that it had been, since its inception, an explicitly universalistic system of belief. The turn to humanism among some liberal Christians in postwar Germany was an

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[168] Karl Barth, "How My Mind Has Changed, 1928-1958," in *Der Götze wackelt: zeitkritische Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe von 1930 bis 1960* (Waltrop: H. Spenner, 1993), 201.

attempt to regenerate the power of the Christian message by highlighting its imbrication in human affairs. It was tempting to put this Christian humanism explicitly in the service of the West, since there was an underlying homology between Christian humanism and the culture of the West more generally. Barth argued, in contrast, for an ecumenical position vis-à-vis the systemic conflict of the early Cold War, holding that a simplistic association with the culture of the West discouraged believers from addressing the ways that the West was co-responsible for the evils of communism. Like the humanism of the classical scholars and the humanistic gymnasia, Christian humanism was predominantly a Western European phenomenon. Indeed, Christian humanism would only appear in East Germany in the final decade of its existence, as the churches in the GDR sought a mode of making contact with their co-religionists in the Federal Republic that would not immediately raise the objections of the communist authorities. In the early years of the Cold War, however, Christian humanism shared with other contemporary humanisms both the project of linking German values with those of the West and the tendency to assume that the values of the West were, in fact, universal.

Conclusion

Humanism was among the most widespread terms in the lexicon of intellectual life in postwar Germany. As the preceding discussions have shown, it took a wide variety of forms and appeared in a wide variety of contexts. Usages of the term ranged from very general invocations, in which humanism was a metonym for the highest (but often unspecified) values to which human beings could attain. At other times, humanism was a part of specific technical discourses based in classical and literary scholarship or in Christian doctrine. These vari-

ous usages shared two factors. Humanism in the usages described here involved, in one way or another, the idea of well-rounded human development. Sometimes, in particular when the term figured in discourses relating to the traditions of Weimar classicism, this process of self-development centered on the concept of *Bildung*. But even when *Bildung* did not figure explicitly, the focus on the development of the individual featured as a means of overcoming the modern tendency to reduce human beings either to isolated individuals or to the proletarianized masses. A second feature shared in common by the usages of humanism discussed here was the project of accessing universal values. German scholars on both sides of the nascent Cold War divide were confronted with the problem that German values were seen as complicit with, if not vitiated by, the heritage of National Socialist barbarism. Humanism provided access to values that were either universal or common to all the cultures of the West. Often times there was a more or less subtle slippage between the two, as it was frequently assumed that the values of the West were, in fact, values that were implicitly valid for all human beings irrespective of culture or condition. At the very least it was hoped that invocations of humanism would emphasize the homology between true German values and civilized values more generally.

The Cold War border, officially established in 1949 but in practice extant since the formation of the structures of zonal control in 1945, exerted a powerful influence on the manifestations of humanistic discourse in the postwar period. In the western zones of occupation, humanism was frequently employed as an element in projects of reconstructing German culture. There, humanism provided the opportunity to redeem what was still valuable in German culture while transcending the inhuman, and thus anti-humanistic, value order of National Socialism. East of this border, humanism played role that was similar in terms of the

legitimating function, but in which the project was that of building a new society that rejected the trappings of bourgeois capitalism. In West Germany, the influence of humanism waned with the economic recovery of the 1950s and the ever more thorough imbrications of the Federal Republic in to the political and military structures of NATO. Humanism, particularly in its metonymic form continued to be employed in scholarly and public discourse. But as West Germany proved to be a loyal ally of the United States and Western Europe, particularly during and after the Korean War, the project of realigning German values with those of the West was increasingly viewed as a *fait accompli*. The talk in the late 1950s was less of humanism, or of guilt, or of renewal, than of the economic miracle and of the struggle of a unified Western bloc against the new onslaught of barbarism from the communist east.

Chapter 2: Humanism and Marxism-Leninism

In an article entitled "The Humanism of Today," published in the communist-backed cultural journal *Sonntag* in 1946, the journalist and future East German cultural official Alexander Abusch enlisted the heritage of German humanism in the cause of creating a workers' state. How, Abusch asked, was Germany's falling away from stars in the cultural firmament such as Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel explicable?[1] The "great personalities of the German humanist renaissance" had struggled against the "dominating, dark forces of their time." This struggle had, however, been a part of the "tragically failed development of Germany" in that it had not fought against the temporal power of the aristocracy and the clergy, but had been directed inward. Humanism was important, but it had been misunderstood by German intellectuals before 1933. In their hands it had become a "stunted liberal cultural commodity" (*ein verwachsenes liberales Bildungsgut*). By contrast, Abusch argued,

> True humanism is not tired, smug, passive. It is a combative humanism; it takes a position, it struggles. Such a humanism was lacking in German intellectuals before 1933—and that abetted (along with other important factors such as the splitting of the German working class) the temporary triumph of the murderous Nazi demon (*Ungeist*).[2]

The enemies of humanity were seeking to bring back the "brown barbarism." In order to defend German culture, humanism needed to be allied with a party: "[a] party against the old razor-thin upper class of the depraved of our nation and for the democratically awakened people; a party against the force which has oppressed our land for centuries and for its sup-

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[1] Alexander Abusch, "Humanismus der Gegenwart," *Sonntag*, no. 16 (1946).
[2] Ibid.

pressed spirit."[3] The party in question was the Socialist Unity Party (SED), which had been formed earlier that year in the Soviet Zone of Occupation by the forced merger of zonal sections of the Socialist Party of Germany (SPD) and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). For Abusch, as for numerous other German intellectuals in the period following the end of the Second World War, humanism was to play a key role in the reconstruction of German culture on premises far different than those which had shaped the previous regime. In the Soviet Zone of Occupation and in the communist German Democratic Republic that it became, humanism would become a means of legitimating a new order and a weapon to use against the capitalist state and its sponsors beyond the Cold War border.

Invocations of the German cultural past were not, however, the only point at which humanism made contact with East German society. Humanism was also associated with the early works of Karl Marx which, although that had been rediscovered in the 1930s, only became widely available after the Second World War. Marx himself did not make much of the humanism of his approach to philosophy. The humanistic content was extrapolated by later thinkers (for instance Herbert Marcuse). For orthodox Marxist-Leninist thinkers, the humanistic Marx presented a problem. On the one hand, it could be argued that Marx had only intended to indicate that communist society would be the order best suited to human thriving. As such, Marxism was humanistic in the metonymic sense of being ideal for human thriving. But, beginning in the early 1950s, it became increasingly clear that some Marxist thinkers were deploying this element of Marx's writing as the normative basis for a critique of actually existing socialist societies organized along Marxist-Leninist and Stalinist lines. It was not until the later 1950s that the ideologues of the East German state became comfortable enough

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[3] Ibid.

with the solidity of the order that they had created to attempt to work humanism systemati-cally into Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

This chapter takes up the question of the various ways that humanism functioned in the intellectual life of the Soviet Occupation Zone and of the East German state. After a brief discussion of the humanistic and universalistic aspects of Marxism and its later variants, the first of the main sections will look at the ambivalent attitude of East German philosophers to the supposed humanism of Karl Marx's early works. The East German authorities were an-xious to put their stamp on intellectual life through asserting control of the intellectual insti-tutions. The publication of early works by Karl Marx seemed to raise the prospect of a hu-manistic version of Marxist thought, and this in turn raised possibility of a normative stan-dard (the human being) outside of the control of the party. Figures such as Rugard Otto Gropp and Georg Lukács took up the cudgels to defend doctrinal orthodoxy of Stalinist Marxism-Leninism in the field of philosophy. The following section looks at metonymic em-ployments of the term in the period following the end of the war and, as well as invocations of the German cultural past. As in the western zones of postwar Germany, humanism was among the most commonly invoked concepts in the intellectual culture of the occupation zone. The final section looks at attempts by East German philosophers in the late 1950s to make humanism into a positive part of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. This was predominantly in an extension of the metonymic usage, involving the claim that Marxism-Leninism pro-vided a theoretical means to building a society ideal for human thriving.

Section I. Marxism as Universalism and Humanism

The role played by Marxism, and in particular by Marxism-Leninism, in postwar German culture is closely linked to its status as a universalistic and humanistic ideology. Both issues were contested. Attaining some clarity on this question is important, since the universalistic and humanistic qualities of Marxism are crucial to the argumentative agenda of this project. In the previous chapter, it was argued that the various deployments of humanism allowed access to a realm of all-encompassing values. Access to this realm was crucial, as it facilitated the process of reintegrating Germans into the community of civilized peoples in the wake of National Socialism. This approach was shared by Marxist-Leninist thinkers in postwar Germany, but with the added impetus of more direct and immediate involvement in the ideological struggles of the nascent Cold War. German Marxist-Leninist thinkers were anxious to demonstrate that Marxism was universal (i.e. that it was applicable to all human beings irrespective of particular situation) and that it was humanistic in the sense of creating a political and economic order optimal for human flourishing. In order to more clearly understand the role of these claims in the postwar period, it will be useful to look back at the historical foundation of these claims.

Universalism was a fundamental element of Marx's project and was carried through into most of the modern appropriations of his work. For Marx, history was an ineluctable and all-encompassing progression. Human society passed through a number of stages (which all subgroups in the human population would eventually have to traverse) leading to the final overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a society not riven by class distinctions. The fate of all mankind, irrespective of race, creed, or gender, was to be life in a society

geared toward the fulfillment of human potential.[4] Marx viewed history as a process of sublation of all concrete, particularistic histories into the all-encompassing historical totality.[5] Universality, in the form of concept of totality, was crucial to Hegelian philosophy on which Marx's project was based. On Hegel's account, all being centered on Absolute Spirit, developing from unity, through alienation, and resolving into a higher level of unity. As Hegel noted in the introduction to the *Philosophy of History*, "The principles of the national spirits progressing through a necessary succession of stages are only moments of the one universal Spirit which through them elevates and completes itself into a self-comprehending *totality*."[6] Hegel designated the bearers of the executive powers of the state as a "universal estate" (*allgemeiner Stand*) which would unify the particular interests of society with the universal interests of the state. In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel wrote,

> The execution of the sovereign's decisions, and in general the continued implementation and upholding of the earlier decisions, existing laws, institutions, and arrangements to promote common ends, etc., are distinct from the decisions themselves. This task of *subsumption* in general belongs to the *executive power*, which also includes the powers of the *judiciary* and the *police*; these have more immediate reference to the particular affairs of civil society, and they assert the universal interest within these [particular] ends.[7]

The bureaucracy, an estate formally open to all members of society, played the role of mediator between the particular and the universal, and thereby allowed the state to take on its role as the expression of reason in history. Spirit (*Geist*) had to express itself through a multitude

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[4] On the radical universalism of Marx's project see Agnes Heller and Ferenc Fehér, *The Grandeur and Twilight of Radical Universalism* (New Brunswick, U.S.A.: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 1-6.
[5] Some commentators have also seen Spinoza's undifferentiated holism as fundamentally influential on Marx's thought. The stress on the Spinozist roots of Marxism tends to be characteristic of anti-Hegelian (and generally anti-humanist) approaches, in particular in the work of structuralists such as Etienne Balibar. See for instance Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics* (London ; New York: Verso, 1998).
[6] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Reason in History, A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953), 95.
[7] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 328-29.

of finite spirits, and thus finite human beings were necessary for the process of Spirit realizing itself.

Marx reversed the valence of the Hegelian historical narrative, making the sensuous activity of human beings, as opposed to Spirit's self-realization, the basis of historical development. Marx's historical narrative was one of stages leading to the eventual elimination of the class-governed capitalist state form by the power of the unified industrial proletariat, and the establishment of the post-capitalist society not riven by the particularities of class. The history of all societies up to the present day, Marx argued in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), had been characterized by class struggle. Whereas in the case of feudalism this had led to a complex structure of class relations, "[o]ur epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat."[8] At the end of the Marxist historical narrative, the proletariat would become the "grave-diggers" of the bourgeoisie and of the capitalist system. In a phrase which would later have a somewhat different theoretical resonance, Marx wrote of the bourgeoisie, "Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."[9] The result would be the end of class society and the emergence of a just social, political, and economic order inclusive of all human beings.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Marxist theorists in Germany (and across Europe) struggled to realize this universalistic premise in the face of the growing influence of particularistic political and social movements, most prominently nationalism, antisemitism, and colonialism. The political practice of some socialists during the period of the Second and

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[8] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: With Related Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 66.
[9] Ibid., 77; ibid.

Third Internationals did not always reflect this universalism. Sometimes, even in the case of Marx and Engels themselves, the result was the creation of unstable alloys of Marxism with various forms of national and cultural chauvinism, racism, and gender bias, but these approaches generally existed uneasily with the universalistic impulses central to Marxist doctrine.

The period of the Second International, from 1889 to 1916, witnessed the rise of virulent political antisemitism in Germany, a renewed wave of European colonial expansion with its attendant discourse of nationalism and racial supremacy, and the early stirrings of the nascent feminist movement.[10] These challenges led to struggles within Marxist theory to address particularistic claims in a way that allowed them to be worked into the broader historical narrative. This was done with varying success. In the case of antisemitism, for instance, the relative impotence of explicitly antisemitic political parties does not quite reflect the breadth of antisemitic feeling in German society, even within the support base of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).[11] Marxism, beginning with Marx himself, did have an ambiguous relationship with Judaism because of the claims of the latter to define a particularistic identity as against the universalistic narrative of mankind propounded in Marxist theory. Nonetheless, the opposition to antisemitism, both in its political and broad social forms, was a key element of the politics of the SPD throughout both the imperial period and the Weimar Republic.[12] The attitude of the SPD to the rise of antisemitic political parties in the 1890s

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[10] Peter G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany & Austria* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988). Pascal Grosse, *Kolonialismus, Eugenik und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland, 1850-1918* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2000). Nancy Reagin, *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hanover, 1880-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[11] Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[12] Enzo Traverso, *The Marxists and the Jewish Question: The History of a Debate, 1843-1943* (Atlantic Highland, NJ: Humanities, 1994).. See also Rosemarie Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie und Antisemitismus*

was to reaffirm that antisemitism was a pathology of capitalism which would eventually disappear, but not before it radicalized its working class adherents against capitalist exploitation.[13] A similar course of events can be seen in the case of nationalism, which was a powerful force among German workers but which was vigorously opposed by the SPD on the grounds of its commitment to proletarian internationalism.[14] In the case of the nascent women's movement, the SPD was once again out in front of its base. Bebel's *Women and Socialism* (1878) sold 140,000 copies during his lifetime, making it one of the most widely read socialist tracts in Germany, but it is unclear how much the egalitarian views there expressed were able to compete with the deeply patriarchal traditions of German society. Bebel's book took a maximalist approach to women's rights, calling for suffrage, property rights, access to the educated professions, and even sexual liberation. The practical politics of the SPD, however, did not always live up to this standard of inclusiveness. The founding congress of the SPD in 1875 rejected the idea of extending the party's suffrage demands to women and there are numerous accounts of the unpleasant environment at socialist meetings created by the exclusivist attitudes of some sections of the male party membership.[15]

Political practice often presented grave challenges to Marxist universalism, but it is nonetheless clear that universalism was inseparable from the Marxist historical narrative. The question of whether humanism is similarly integral to Marxist theory is more complicated.

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im Kaiserreich: Die Auseinandersetzungen der Partei mit den konservativen und völkischen Strömungen des Antisemitismus 1871-1914 (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1978)..

[13] Donald L. Niewyk, *Socialist, Anti-Semite, and Jew: German Social Democracy Confronts the Problem of Anti-Semitism, 1918-1933* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971). See also August Bebel, *Antisemitismus und Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1893)..

[14] Dieter Groh, *Vaterlandlose Gesellen: Sozialdemokratie und Nation, 1860-1990* (München: Beck, 1992). The failure of the SPD's efforts in combating nationalism were painfully evident in 1914 when the SPD parliamentary fraction was compelled to vote for war credits by the quite justified fear that rejection would lead to abandonment by their electoral base.

[15] For instance see Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 99-100. See also Renate Pore, *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981).

Clearly, if human is taken to mean essentialism, that is, the positing of some discrete and unchanging human nature, this is precluded in Marx's theory. In his sixth thesis on Feuerbach, Marx rejected precisely that sort of essentialism which was most characteristic of Christian classical humanism:

> Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.

Marx saw the human being as a locus of developmental possibilities based on the capacity of human beings to manipulate their material environment and to reshape it as an expression of their individual selves. That a large proportion of the population was unable to do so was the result of the structure of social relations established under the capitalist mode of production. In the manuscript writings of 1844 Marx wrote,

> Labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity* – and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general. This fact expresses merely that the object which labor produces – labor's product – confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labor. Labor's realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realization of labor appears as *loss of realization* for the workers.[16]

This critique of capitalism was, in an important sense, humanistic in that its normative basis was the effect that the capitalist mode of production has on human beings. In later works, and most prominently in *Capital*, Marx's critique of capitalism involved a scientific analysis of the workings of the system and the reasons for its proneness to crisis. But Marx never repudiated these earlier critical pronouncements, even though he abandoned the concept of species being that played the role of a positive normative concept in his early writings. His criti-

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[16] Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (Harmondsworth ; New York: Penguin, 1992).

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que of the effects of capitalism on human beings remained as an implicit and necessary concomitant to Marx's later "scientific" approach.

This humanistic element of Marxism was not available to the Marxists of the Second International, who had only a limited subset of Marx's published writings from which to glean his views.[17] It was not until the publication of Marx's early writings in the 1930s under the auspices of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow that humanism began to reenter the vocabulary of orthodox Marxism.[18] Marx's early works presented a problem for the official account of Marxism, as they revealed a figure much more indebted to the work of Hegel, much less committed to a scientific approach to political economy, and one much more prepared to talk substantively about the deleterious effects of social organization on human beings than about laws of historical development.[19] The texts variously referred to as *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* or *The Paris Manuscripts* contained, among other things, extensive discussions by Marx on the effects of the capitalist mode of production on human beings as a normative basis for a critique of capitalism. His discussions of the concept of alienation (*Entfremdung*), taken from Hegel and given a critical edge in Marx's project, appeared to create a basis for evaluating political and social formations that was linked the historical narrative of the seizure of power by the organized proletariat. The full impact of the challenge that they posed to contemporary interpretations of Marxism was not realized until

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[17] Some scholars have argued that Georg Lukács was able to extrapolate the ethical content of the manuscripts of the 1844, which were not published in their entirety until the early 1930s, solely from a close reading of *Capital*. For instance see Andrew Feenberg, *Lukács, Marx, and the Sources of Critical Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[18] Portions of these texts had been published in 1902 by Karl Mehring. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass*, ed. Franz Mehring and Ferdinand Lassalle (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1902). However, the texts published under the editorship of David Riazanov were the first time that all of the available material had been properly edited and completely rendered. On this history of this process see Rolf Hecker, Carl-Erich Vollgraf, and Richard Sperl, eds., *David Borisovič Rjazanov und die erste MEGA* (Hamburg: Argument,1997).

[19] One measure of official disfavor toward these texts was the fact that the *Paris Manuscripts* were not included in the first edition of the *Marx-Engels Werke*, the official compendium of the works of Marx and Engels published by the East German government beginning in 1957. Marx Engels *Werke*

after the enforced delay in the reception of Marx's early writings caused by the rise of National Socialism in Germany, although some of their implications were explored by Herbert Marcuse in a seminal article published in the SPD journal *Die Gesellschaft* in 1932.[20] These writings formed the basis of a movement, sometimes termed Western Marxism, the development of which straddled the period from the interwar years to the end of the 1950s. Although not all of the interpretations of Marxism that fall under this designation could be termed humanistic, many of them did rely on the critique of capitalism's effects on human being found in Marx's early texts.

At the same time that this "humanistic" challenge to orthodox Marxism-Leninism was percolating in central and Western Europe, a version of Marxist humanism also arose in Stalin's Russia. In a recent paper the historian Samuel Moyn noted that in the mid-1930s the Soviet Union had "discovered that communism was a humanism" and that "in 1934-5, the [Soviet] regime made the occasional slogan of the 'new man' the center of its propaganda for domestic and foreign consumption."[21] This rise in the profile of humanism was associated with the brief return to favor of Nikolai Bukharin, but was also to be found in essays by Maxim Gorky from the early 1930s.[22] This avenue of Marxist humanism was eventually snowed under by the turmoil of the late 1930s and the start of the Second World War, but it created an interesting precedent, some important consequences of which were played out in the German Democratic Republic during the first decades of the Cold War.

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[20] Translated as Herbert Marcuse, "New Sources on the Foundations of Historical Materialism," in *Heideggerian Marxism* ed. Richard Wolin and John Abromeit (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

[21] Samuel Moyn, "The Search for the True Humanism" Unpublished conference paper, Columbia University, 2008.

[22] See Gorky's essays "Humanism and Culture" (1933) and "The Old Man and the New" (1935) in Maxim Gorky, *Culture and the People* (New York: International Publishers, 1939).

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Section II. Marxism-Leninism and the Critique of Humanism

In a speech delivered at the First SED Party Conference in Berlin in January 1949, Otto Grotewohl gave a programmatic outline of the policy of the party. "We are resolved," Grotewohl told his audience, "to realize in our party Lenin's groundbreaking and victorious teachings on the proletarian party of a new type."[23] The guiding ideology of this party, and of the state that it would control, would be Marxism as viewed through the lens of those theorists who had shaped Marx's ideas to make them relevant to modern conditions. In the discussions leading up to the conference, the SED had made clear that Marxism-Leninism was, "that purified Marxism that had been further developed by Lenin and Stalin in the epoch of imperialism."[24] This process of further development was crucial. Marx had scientifically analyzed the functioning of the capitalist system, but he could not have foreseen the precise direction future events would take. It had thus been necessary for the leaders of the actually existing proletarian revolution in the Soviet Union to revise and update Marx's account (while still retaining the essence of his original analysis). The role played by humanism in East Germany would be shaped in important ways by the dictates of this modernized Marxism.

The period from 1945 to 1948 was designated in the official history of East German philosophy as the phase of "antifascist-democratic revolution".[25] Five imperatives guided the reconstruction of philosophical study in East Germany during these years: the analysis of fascism and the struggle against fascist ideology, Marxist-Leninist philosophy and human-

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[23] Otto Grotewohl, "Die Politik der Partei und die Entwicklung der SED zu einer Partei neuen Typus," in *Protokoll der Ersten Parteikonferenz der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei. 25 bis 28. Januar 1949 im Hause der Deutschen Wirtschaftskommission zu Berlin* ed. Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland (Berlin: Dietz, 1949), 369.

[24] Ibid., 374.

[25] Vera Wrona and Friedrich Richter, *Zur Geschichte der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie in der DDR*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1979), Section 1.

ism, the recognition of the universal validity of Leninism, dialectical and historical material-ism and natural science, and Marxist-Leninist philosophy in the struggle with postwar bour-geois philosophy and ideology.[26] There was an important connection between the approaches taken to the first two questions. One important element of the struggle against fascism was the attempt to bring all those forces opposed to fascism together into one camp.[27] Humanism presented a promising conceptual tool with which to accomplish this. In common parlance it had no firmly established content, and thus could be used to attract people from a range of (progressive) political orientations without raising difficult ideological issues. As Wrona and Richter noted in their official history, "the spiritual link between the working class and other democratic forces in the antifascist struggle would be an active humanism coupled with commitment to democracy."[28]

The general attitude of Marxist-Leninist philosophy towards humanism as a concept was one of deep ambivalence. Marxist humanism ostensibly had a basis in the writings of Marxism's originator. But it also contained the potential to provide a normative basis for op-position to the dictates of the communist party. As an official East German lexicon noted, dedication to the party (*Parteilichkeit*) was the "central ideological principle" of socialist cul-tural policy and of the East German political system in general.[29] *Parteilichkeit* implied the coordination of the views expressed in artistic and scholarly works with "the ideas, tasks, and goals of one party, the party of the working classes."[30] To attribute characteristics to human

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[26] This list was distilled by Kapferer from a reading of Wrona and Richter's history of East German philosophy. See Norbert Kapferer, *Das Feindbild der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie in der DDR, 1945-1988* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), 18.

[27] On antifascism in the Soviet zone see Jeannette Michelmann, *Aktivisten der ersten Stunde : Die Antifa in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002)..

[28] Vera Wrona and Friedrich Richter, *Zur Geschichte der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie in der DDR*, 61.

[29] Manfred Berger, *Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin: Dietz, 1978), 545.

[30] Ibid.

beings, and to make this humanity the basis of normative judgments presented the prospect

of criticisms of the party, or of Marxist theory more generally that could not be answered

within the boundaries of the doctrine. The official line held that the any notional contradic-

tion between the promotion of socialist humanism on the one hand and the demands of *Par-*

teilichkeit on the other was merely apparent. An official cultural lexicon noted of the role of

artists that they "gave practical impulse to the realization of socialist humanism in the GDR,"

and that their adherence to the principle of *Parteilichkeit* in doing so "elevated them to a

new, high level of freedom."[31] Viewed in the holistic context of the creation of a socialist

state, the political order best suited to human flourishing, the acceptance of party discipline

constituted a higher sort of freedom than the mere license of individualistic political criti-

cism. In the decades after the war, policy toward humanism in the Soviet occupation zone

and in the GDR reflected the collision of two approaches. On the one hand, there was suspi-

cion toward the concept of the human because it presented the possibility of a normative

standard other than *Parteilichkeit*. On the other hand, humanism was viewed by many in the

intellectual spheres of the East German state as a useful tool in the project of legitimating the

new political order that they were building and of associating it with the values of the civi-

lized West.[32]

    The attitude of the SED toward humanism was particularly important given the in-

creasingly intensive control asserted by the party over intellectual life in the eastern zone. As

tensions between the former Allied powers escalated toward the end of the 1940s, authorities

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[31] Ibid., 547.

[32] On efforts to legitimate German communism in the early postwar period see Gunter Mai, "Staatsgründungsprozeß und nationale Frage als konstitutive Elemente der Kulturpolitik der SED," in *Weimarer Klassik in der Ära Ulbricht* ed. Lothar Ehrlich and Gunther Mai (Köln: Böhlau, 2000). More generally, see Magdalena Heider, *Politik, Kultur, Kulturbund : zur Gründungs- und Frühgeschichte des Kulturbundes zur Demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands 1945-1954 in der SBZ/DDR* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1993).

in the eastern zone became more concerned with the preservation of ideological orthodoxy. In the universities of the eastern zone, officials of the SED and the Soviet military government became more aggressive in demanding explicit commitments to Marxism-Leninism from teaching faculty and students alike.[33] The Soviet occupational authorities were particularly adamant that the appropriate political tone be set in the universities, and took measures to station Soviet officers in the university administrations to oversee the work of the SED functionaries.[34] As Colonel Tjulpanov, the head of the Information Department of the SMAD, noted in 1948, "it is necessary to have in every university at least one [Soviet] political worker controlling and directing the ideological-political life of the university."[35] These policies were pursued in deadly earnest by the zonal authorities. Attempts to resist Stalinization by students at the University of Rostock resulted in draconian repression including a series of long jail sentences and, in the case of the student leaders Arno Esch and Karl-Alfred Gedowski, executions.[36] One consequence of ratcheting up of the pressure for political conformity was a series of emigrations that came in two waves. First, non-Marxist scholars with conservative orientations, such as Hans Freyer and Hans-Georg Gadamer relinquished the positions that they held at universities in the eastern zone (most prominently the University of Leipzig). Shortly thereafter, a number of Marxist intellectuals who had rallied to the eastern zone in the hopes of building a socialist society there began to run afoul of the narrowing

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[33] Marianne Müller and Egon Erwin Müller, *"Stürmt die Festung Wissenschaft!" Die Sowjetisierung der mitteldeutschen Universitäten seit 1945* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1953).

[34] For a general analysis of Soviet influence on the rebuilding of universities in the Eastern Europe, see John Connelly, *Captive University : The Sovietization of East German, Czech and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

[35] Cited in Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1995), 66.

[36] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk, *Geist im Dienste der Macht: Hochschulpolitik der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1961* (Berlin: Links, 2003). See also Thomas Ammer, *Universität zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur: Ein Beitrag zur Nachkriegsgeschichte der Universität Rostock* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1969).

of the latitude for ideological deviation.[37] Figures such as Leo Kofler and Wolfgang Abendroth left to build new careers in the Federal Republic, while Wolfgang Leonhard, one of the chief ideologists of the regime, fled to Tito's Yugoslavia, seeking a less restrictive interpretation of Marxism-Leninism.

These waves of emigration highlight the failure of the common struggle on the basis of humanism promised in the early days of East German philosophy. The polarization that resulted in the splitting of Germany along Cold War lines also had the effect of accentuating precisely those ideological and philosophical differences that the appropriation of humanism was meant to avoid. In 1947 and 1948 there was a pattern of intensifying attacks against "bourgeois philosophy" by prominent figures in the GDR. In a speech given at the 1st Cultural Conference of the SED in May 1948, Grotewohl (who the next year would be appointed *Ministerpräsident* of the GDR) argued that bourgeois culture was unfit to participate in the building of a proper society. "The nearly complete and unreserved capitulation of our bourgeois intelligentsia before fascist barbarism was a clear symptom of the weaknesses of this bourgeois culture, signs of its incapacity to avert the national catastrophe."[38] Had bourgeois thought, its philosophy and pedagogy, its psychology and its humanism, positively shaped the consciousness of the German people or clarified the true grounds of its existence? Grotewohl argued that it had not. On the contrary, out of fear of the rising political power of the working class, "the bourgeoisie joined with the reactionary, feudal powers" and worked to build a society in which the products of high culture "did not serve the people but rather served the egoistic interests of one class and were squandered with criminal foolishness."[39]

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[37] Norbert Kapferer, *Das Feindbild der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie in der DDR, 1945-1988*.
[38] Otto Grotewohl, "Die geistige Situation der Gegenwart und des Marxismus," in *Deutsche Kulturpolitik: Reden von Otto Grotewohl* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1952), 10-11.
[39] Ibid., 11.

What was needed instead was an understanding of culture (and here Grotewohl also meant philosophy) that was linked to the historical development of the German people and the historical mission of the working class. This was a role that could only be filled by a philosophy consciously grounded in Marxism-Leninism. To the millions of Germans who had survived the horrors of the Second World War, whether at the front or in air-raid shelters, bourgeois philosophy (in the form of existentialism) offered only subjectivism and isolation. Marxism, set its "all-encompassing worldview" based on "constant objective study and perception of nature" against this philosophy. Marxism-Leninism would point the way for "all working human beings to achieve a new, more humane and livable existence in a new socialist society."[40]

Grotewohl's speech highlighted the emergence of a new phase in the relationship of the intellectual life of the eastern zone to that of the west. Both Marxist theory and the leadership of the Soviet occupation called for a reorientation of German scholarly and education institutions in ways that would systematically promote Marxist, that is to say Marxist-Leninist, ideology. On the Marxist account, philosophy reflected the power of the dominant class. At the point of the breakdown of capitalism and the transition to socialism there were really only two kinds of philosophy: that of the organized proletariat and that of the bourgeoisie. Scholarly and educational institutions played a crucial role in the reproduction of the dominant ideology of the state. Thus it was imperative that these institutions be purified of bourgeois influence. On the other hand, there was a strong impulse toward the collection of all progressive and antifascist forces into a combined front against the resurgence of fascism and for the reconstruction of a free and civilized Germany. It is difficult to know to what extent the offers of common action with "progressive" forces were authentic or merely tools in

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[40] Ibid., 27.

interzonal propaganda battles. What is clear is the increasing tensions between the USSR and the western allies in 1948 put paid to such offers and gave rise to a distinct hardening of the opposition to bourgeois philosophy in the eastern zone.

In the years between its founding in 1949 and the death of Stalin in 1953, philosophy in the GDR increasingly became what Norbert Kapferer has termed "cadre philosophy" (*Kaderphilosophie*).[41] This approach to philosophy, for which Marxist-Leninist *Parteilichkeit* was a paramount value, resulted from the increasing political coordination of the teaching staff in East German universities. The pool of qualified philosophy instructors was filled out with a crop of home-grown scholars, as the East Germans undertook the broader project of creating their own intelligentsia to replace those who had fled to the west.[42] In the first years of the 1950s, East German philosophers engaged in an asymmetric battle against what they termed "late bourgeois philosophy."[43] The term itself was indicative, since it located the struggle temporally toward the end of the period of bourgeois hegemony and shortly prior to the dawning of a new era organized along Marxist-Leninist lines. In the early years of the Cold War, the principle target of this struggle was the philosophy of existence, as personified by Heidegger and Jaspers, as well as by Jean-Paul Sartre.[44] Beginning in 1953, attacks on the philosophy of existence and existentialism competed for space with extensive debates about what, if any, role Hegelianism should play in Marxism-Leninism in the pages of the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, the leading philosophical journal of the GDR.

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[41] Norbert Kapferer, *Das Feindbild der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie in der DDR, 1945-1988*.

[42] On the building of the homegrown intelligentsia in the GDR see John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and Its Legacy* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

[43] It was asymmetric in the sense that their attacks on scholars and philosophers outside the communist bloc met with little or no response from those they targeted.

[44] Norbert Kapferer, *Das Feindbild der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie in der DDR, 1945-1988*, 39-45.

The attempt to appropriate Hegel's philosophy was occasion for an intensification of pressure against unorthodoxy in East German philosophy in the mid-1950s. Attempts by Ernst Bloch and the circle of scholars and students around him to explore the significance of Hegelian philosophy for Marxism were met with an increasingly severe response from the political authorities. Bloch had made Hegel's account of subjectivity the basis for an attack on the rigid materialism of SED dogma.[45] This was a period of high tension in the communist world. Polish workers had rioted in Poznan in June 1956, leading to violent repression by the military. In October 1956, a protest movement emerged in Hungary which would eventually result in the formation of Nagy's reformist government, lasting only weeks before it was brutally suppressed with Soviet tanks. In light of these events, the leadership of the SED was highly sensitized to signs of potential dissent. After a speech by Bloch at a celebration of the 125th anniversary of Hegel's death at the Humboldt University in Berlin, several leading philosophical dissidents were arrested. Most prominent among these was Wolfgang Harich, who was subsequently sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Later in the year, the offices of the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* were raided by the police and the editorial board was removed *en masse*. It is indicative of the gravity with which intellectual matters were treated in the GDR that these Hegelian deviations were met with severe police repression and public censure by leading political figures in the SED, including party leader Walter Ulbricht.[46] Bloch was stripped of his teaching position and isolated in Leipzig, but not put under arrest, probably because of his reputation in the west. He would be practically excluded from East German intellectual life until he and his wife immigrated to West Germany in 1961.

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[45] Sylvia Markun, *Ernst Bloch in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1977), 93-96.

[46] Ulbricht's speech to the 30th Plenum of the SED mentioned Harich by name and criticized Bloch's teaching at Leipzig without naming him. Markun 95-6.

Starting in the mid-1950s, two contradictory impulses strove for influence in East German philosophy.[47] A move toward what Kapferer has termed "philosophical coordination" resulted in the publication of a number of works meant to explicitly define orthodox Marxist-Leninist doctrine.[48] In the wake of the 20th Party Congress in the Soviet Union, with its repudiation of the cult of personality around Stalin, the SED struggled to come to terms with implications of "de-Stalinization." Works such as Rugard Otto Gropp's *Der dialektische Materialismus. Kurzer Abriss* (*Dialectical Materialism. Short Survey*) and the collective work *Die deutsche Philosophie nach 1945* (*German Philosophy since 1945*) were concise and direct statements of Marxism-Leninism that reaffirmed the centrality of scientific dialectical materialism and class struggle.[49]

On the other hand, there was a move toward the delineation of an avowedly Marxist-Leninist philosophical humanism. Between 1957 and 1968, humanism found increasing acceptance in the East German philosophical lexicon in the context of a broader willingness to countenance analysis of human being itself. Before 1956, humanism tended to be seen either as an element of bourgeois and revisionist critiques of Marxism or as a part of the struggle to appropriate the symbolic capital of German literary and artistic traditions. The analysis of human being in and of itself, especially on the basis of Marx's critique of alienation in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* was of little interest to theorists of Marxism-Leninism. Since human beings were products of social relations, the proper level at which to analyze human being was that of society, not of the human. Analyses of the human too easily

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[47] Norbert Kapferer, *Philosophie in Deutschland 1945-1995: Grundzüge und Tendenzen under den Bedingungen von politischer Teilung und Wiedervereinigung*, vol. 1 (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2008), 188-95.

[48] Ibid., 188.

[49] Rugard Otto Gropp, *Der dialektische Materialismus, Kurzer Abriss* (Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1958)., S. Wollgast, ed. *Die deutsche Philosophie nach 1945* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften,1961).

fell into the error of defining human being in terms of some essence common to all. In an article published in 1947, the SED functionary Willy Huhn argued that modern humanism made the false claim of having discovered the truly human. In overcoming dogmatism, modern humanism claimed to have clarified what was veritably human. "But this is not the human being per se," Huhn argued, "but the human being within existing capitalism society."[50] Modern humanism, in advancing a claim to understand the relationship obtaining between human beings and nature amounted to the claim to have discovered something essential about human being. This essentialism was precisely what Marx's critique of Feuerbach was meant to forestall. Beginning in late 1950s and continuing into the next decade, philosophers in East Germany worked to define a specifically and self-consciously Marxist-Leninist account of human being. Humanism played an important role in the project.

For the leaders of the Soviet Union, and for their proxies in East Berlin, revival of interest in the early writings of Marx was distinctly unwelcome. They rejected as revisionist the humanistic versions of Marxism that had arisen in the interwar period, particularly in the wake of the publication of Marx's *Paris Manuscripts of 1844* in the early 1930s. Devotees of scientific socialism, both from the GDR as well as from Western Europe (and in particular France) attacked humanist approaches to Marxism for lacking conceptual clarity and for failing to recognize the role of socialist science (be it Stalinist or structuralist) grounded in class struggle as the best defense for actual human beings. Rugard Otto Gropp wrote in 1956,

> In the place of concrete investigations of the work called for by history, a vague blather (*Spintisiererei*) about 'persons,' their 'estrangement,' and the like is presented…The root of the matter lies therein: an abstract – 'humanistic' socialism is posed in opposition to scientific socialism developed on the basis of class struggle which is supremely humanistic.[51]

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[50] Willy Huhn, "Der 'reale Humanismus' des jungen Marx," *Aufbau* 4, no. 2 (1947): 114.
[51] Rugard Otto Gropp, "Idealistische Verirrungen unter 'antidogmatischem' Vorzeichen," *Neues Deutschland*, 19 December 1956.. The fact that Gropp's remarks were originally printed not in a philosophical journal but in

In positive terms, they promoted the idea that the East German state in which "true human-ism" was the goal, as opposed to the reduction of human beings to a condition of barbarism in capitalist West Germany.

The writings of Marx's intellectual youth presented a complicated problem for the Marxist-Leninist theorists of the SED. Having made Marx the defining figure in their ideo-logical pantheon, it was then difficult to argue that some of the master's writings were not canonical. But in writings such as the *Paris Manuscripts*, *The German Ideology*, and the ar-ticle "On the Jewish Question" Marx evinced a concern with the situation of human beings as a basis for his critique of capitalism that was hard to square either with analysis in terms of laws of historical development or with the SED's rigid demands for party loyalty. Clearly, Marx had undergone a process of intellectual development, one which had caused him to ab-andon parts of the conceptual apparatus of his early works, such as the concept of *Gat-tungswesen* (species being). But in the chapter on estranged labor, Marx seemed to use the concept of estrangement in a way the pointed to a positive ideal for human being. In part the response of the SED to the interest in the works of the young Marx that had grown up since their "rediscovery" in the 1930s was to avoid the question, and thus it is hardly surprising that the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* were not added to the East German critical edition of Marx's works (*Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: Werke*) until 1968. However, since it was impossible to prevent the dissemination of these works in the wider world, and because they were being used as the basis for "humanistic" versions of Marxism that challenged Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, it was also necessary to try to fit them into the broader picture of Marxism.

Neues Deutschland, the major daily newspaper of the East German state, indicates the wide potential appeal of humanistic approaches to Marxism in the view of the intellectual authorities in the DDR.

In an article published in the SED's flagship philosophical journal in 1954, Georg Lukács argued that the writings of the young Marx were significant because the light the cast on Marx's transition from Hegelianism, via the work of Feuerbach, to his mature dialectical materialist position.[52] Lukács's approach was to analyze the works of Marx's youth in order of appearance, beginning with his dissertation on the philosophy of Democritus and Epicurus, through his journalistic work as the editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, and then to the first instances of Marx's critique of Hegel in "The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," his writings for the abortive *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, and the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. By the time of his work on the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, Marx had advanced from Hegelianism to an "extremely radicalized Feuerbachian 'real humanism,'" but had not yet made "the breakthrough to a definitive, scientific version of proletarian socialism."[53]

Lukács's final section dealt with the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. These were a matter of central concern from the perspective of orthodox Marxism-Leninism, in particular because the concept of estrangement (*Entfremdung*) employed by Marx there seemed to provide the basis for normative criticism of social and economic formations independent of party control. In the manuscript material from 1844, Marx had employed estrangement as a way of describing the negative effects of the capitalist mode of production on human beings. In production under capitalist social relations, Marx wrote, "[t]he devaluation of the human world grows in direct proportion to the *increase in value* of the world of things."[54]

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[52] Georg Lukács, "Zur philosophischen Entwicklung des jungen Marx (1840-1844)" *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 2, 2 (1954). Lukács's article was issued as a book by a West German publisher in 1965. Georg Lukács, *Der junge Marx: seine philosophische Entwicklung, 1840-1844* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1965)., from which these citations are drawn.
[53] Ibid., 41.
[54] Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, 323-24. Italics in the original.

The expansion of productive capacities systematically devalued human beings. Moreover, under capitalist relations of production, the capacity of human beings to reproduce their innermost selves through labor was harnessed it to a process of making things disconnected from their makers. The products of human labor became alien objects to those who made them. "The worker places his life in the object; but it now no longer belongs to him, but to the object."[55]

The central theme of Lukács's analysis was the tracing of Marx's development toward his mature position. The manuscripts were important because they showed Marx for the first time engaging in systematic analysis of political economy while, in parallel, continuing his philosophical critique of Hegelianism. Lukács stresses the importance of the continuing confrontation with Hegelian philosophy. He quoted Lenin's view that these writings "appropriated all that was valuable in Hegel," and that in these writings Marx prefigured positions on logic, dialectics, and epistemology taken in *Capital*.[56] However, the manuscripts showed that Marx was still groping toward his mature position, in particular because political economy and philosophy were discussed there in parallel rather than as two aspects of the same process. "The 'Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts' of Marx mark the overcoming of Hegelian idealism, as well as highlighting those logical errors that follow as a consequence of the idealistic character of the Hegelian dialectic."[57] For Lukács, the proper attitude was to focus on Marx's transition from Hegelianism, rather than trying to fit fragments of antiquated Hegelian jargon, such as the concept of estrangement, into Marx's mature system. The importance of Marx's discussion of estrangement was not so much the conclusions that could be drawn from it about the human consequences of capitalism, but rather the way that it hig-

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[55] Ibid., 324.
[56] Georg Lukács, *Der junge Marx: seine philosophische Entwicklung, 1840-1844*, 54-55.
[57] Ibid., 59-60.

hlighted Hegel's failure to understand the distinction between the abstract concept of objectification and real human alienation in the context of capitalist exploitation. The account precluded viewing Marx, even in his earliest works, as a humanist in the sense of positing an unchanging essence common to all human beings. Instead, human beings were characterized by their capacity for self-creation through labor, a capacity which highlighted the fundamental openness (in the sense of indeterminacy) of human being. In the official East German view, it was socialism that was humanistic, in the sense of creating the ideal conditions for the free development of indeterminate human essence. Through the middle of the 1950s this attitude toward humanism functioned to discourage most discussions of human being per se in East German philosophy.

Section III. Humanism and the German Cultural Heritage

On 10 July 1945 Victor Klemperer attended a performance of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* put on by the city government of Dresden (then in the Soviet occupation zone). Klemperer had served at the front in the First World War and then had worked as a professor of romance literature at the Technical University of Dresden. Of Jewish descent, Klemperer was a convinced German nationalist, although one of firmly democratic convictions.[58] Klemperer was dismissed from his position at the TU in 1935, ostensibly because the administration no longer deemed French literature an appropriate subject of instruction at a technical university, although the fact that he was Jewish would have eventual-

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[58] Klemperer alluded to this from time to time in his diaries. See for instance Viktor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness, 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*, trans. Martin Chalmers (New York: The Modern Library, 1998), 129.

ly cost him his position anyway.[59] He was spared deportation because his wife was "Aryan."[60] They spent the war in horrendous conditions in the Jews' House in Dresden, facing the constant threat of deportation, until the fire-bombing of Dresden in February 1945 allowed them to escape to southern Germany where they waited out the end of the war in anonymity. Now, two months after Germany's capitulation and still struggling for the necessities of life in the postwar ruins, Klemperer and his wife began "the definitive awakening from the all-too-beautiful fairytale" that their lives had seemed in the wake of their survival.[61] Klemperer was ambivalent about the event. Although the performance was "very good" and the invitation from the Lord Mayor of Dresden "delightfully flattering," he was troubled by the choice of Lessing's play. "Admittedly," he noted somewhat ruefully, "I felt *Nathan* to be a presumptuous lack of tact, I would have preferred *Iphigenia*." Klemperer was well aware of the strong residuum of antisemitic feeling that remained in Germany after the end of the war. Meeting some of his former colleagues at the performance, he noted bitterly that they acted as if the injustices of the previous period had not occurred. He was still angry over the loss of his professorial position and convinced that the end of the Nazi regime was unlikely to lead to a rectification of the situation. It seemed that members of the professoriate who had worked with the Nazis were to retain their positions, which boded ill for the denazification of German society. Later on in the same diary entry, Klemperer noted, "So evidently

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[59] Klemperer had not lost his position after the promulgation of the "Aryan Paragraph" of the German Civil Service Law by the Nazis in 1933 because he had served at the front in the First World War and was thereby exempted.

[60] Quotation marks are used here to highlight the fact that Aryan is used to designate an element of the Nazi racial hierarchy rather than as a substantive scientific term.

[61] Victor Klemperer, *The Lesser Evil: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1945-1959* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 21-22..

things are to go on just as they did after 1918: the enemies of the new regime are to be left quietly to continue with their work, which naturally will turn into work of subversion."[62]

Klemperer's description of the choice of Lessing's *Nathan* as "a presumptuous lack of tact" casts an interesting light on the political and cultural conditions in Germany in the days directly following the end of the war. In Lessing's play, a wise Jew teaches the virtues of cosmopolitan religiosity to the Muslim sultan Saladin and a Templar knight. The choice of this particular work in the context of postwar Germany reflected a clear desire on the part of the local political and cultural authorities to be seen to be making a clear break with the Nazi regime, and in particular with its antisemitism. The elimination of National Socialist ideologies from German society was a policy goal of the authorities in all four of the occupations zones, but it was pursued with varying emphasis and varied levels of success. In November 1945, Klemperer joined the KPD, a choice motivated to a great degree by his belief that the communists were authentically committed to denazification. As he wrote in his application to join the party, "[a]s a university teacher I was forced to watch at close quarters, as reactionary ideas made ever greater inroads. We must seek to remove them effectively from the bottom up. And only in the KPD do I see the unambiguous will to do so."[63]

In the zone of Soviet control, the appropriation of humanism played a somewhat different role than it did in the western zones. The humanism of the eastern zone was centered on the German cultural heritage. Christianity was anathema to orthodox Marxism-Leninism, and the uneasy relationship between the authorities in the eastern zone and the dedicated Christians among the German population precluded giving official sanction to Christian values. The version of humanism promoted by the cultural authorities in the Soviet zone of oc-

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 76.

cupation generally excluded references to the societies of ancient Greece and Rome, characterized as they were by slavery, patriarchy and, in the case of Greece, extreme racism. These were not viewed as appropriate models for the classless, egalitarian society that the KPD (and subsequently the SED) was attempting to build in Germany. Weimar classicism and, more generally, the German culture heritage provided a much better basis on which to construct a German socialist culture. From 1945 to 1947, the idea of a common antifascist struggle was employed by the eastern zonal authorities (both Soviet and German) in an attempt to build broad-based support across zonal boundaries. The use of figures drawn from German cultural traditions was meant to facilitate this project by involving Germans in all zones in a project of specifically German cultural renewal without raising the suspicions of the authorities in the western zones.

The division of Germany had a somewhat less profound effect on humanism in East Germany. The focus on the German cultural heritage had been part of the antifascist struggle and of attempts to build interzonal solidarity among Germans on this basis. The rejection by the authorities of the western zones of a common project was characterized in East Germany as a failure of commitment on the part of political authorities who, as the puppets of American liberal capitalism, were bent on reconstructing fascism in Germany. The continuing commitment of East Germany to humanistic values based on the German cultural heritage provided a platform from which to level charges of political apostasy against West Germany. The humanism of the German cultural heritage was also an important tool in the project of legitimating German socialism. The continued employment of humanistic German culture was a means of winning over Germans to the cause of German socialism. It helped to allay fears that Germany would become merely an appendage of the Soviet Union. Thus, the cul-

tural politics of German humanism continued to play an important role in the project of establishing and maintaining the legitimacy of the German Democratic Republic, both throughout the Ulbricht era and afterwards. An appeal for educational reform jointly published by the KPD and the SPD in October 1945 claimed that "the spirit of a truly progressive humanism must have a way into the schools" if the renewal of German culture was to be anything other than a half measure.[64] This demand was repeated verbatim by the chairman of the KPD, Wilhelm Pieck, in a speech to party cultural officials in February 1946.[65]

A. Humanism as Metonym in East German Communism

The metonymic usage of the term "humanism," so common in the intellectual culture of the western zones of occupation, was also much in evidence in the regions of postwar Germany under Soviet control. In the latter case, however, the employment of humanism as a placeholder for those values most felicitous for human flourishing was a much more systematic project. In the first years after the war, German communist proxies for the Soviet occupation authorities sought to build consensus for communist rule in Germany by associating communist values with universal human values. As it became clear that communism would be limited to the Soviet occupation zone, the nominally ecumenical nature of party propaganda diminished, but humanism was retained as a normative concept. It retained its universalistic content, but against a transformed political background. In the first years after the war, the usage of humanism in the eastern zone paralleled that in the western zones. It provided the promise that German values could once again be consonant with those of the civi-

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[64] "Grundsätze für die demokratische Erneuerung der deutschen Schule," reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann, *Doppelte Staatsgründung: Deutsche Geschicht, 1945-1955*, 391-92..

[65] Wilhelm Pieck, "Um die Erneuerung der deutschen Kultur," in *Um die Erneuerung der deutschen Kultur* ed. Kommunistische Partei Deutschland (Berlin: Verlag Neuer Weg, 1946), 26.

lized world. With the intensification of the Cold War, however, humanism was ever more firmly associated with the claims of the communist project. Both were universalisms, but in the latter case there was a further implication that communism was now superseding all prior approaches to the goal of ideal human flourishing.

Humanism was a key term in the communist vocabulary in postwar Germany. A call for refoundation of reform of the German school system issued jointly by the central committees of the KPD and the SPD in October 1945 warned that, "[t]he spiritual renewal of our people would remain only half complete if it did not comprise an exhaustive reform of the system of higher education. The new spirit of a truly progressive humanism and a militant democracy must find its way into the universities."[66] The content of this progressive humanism was not spelled out explicitly. The purpose of employing the term was, rather, to convey the impression that the reconfiguration of the German system of higher education would be accomplished in such a way as to imbue it with values contrary to those of the National Socialist barbarism. The measures promised by the appeal for the promotion of this progressive humanism would be the "recalling of all of the docents and professors displaced by the Hitler government" and the admission to the professoriate of those forces that had demonstrated their calling as teachers of the young "by their scientific achievements and by being upstanding militants against Hitler."[67] In this usage, which was common to all zones of postwar Germany, humanism is not a discreet program of education and enduring values, but rather a contrast to the manifest inhumanity of the preceding regime.

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[66] Zentralkomitee der KPD und Zentralkomitee der SPD, "An allen Eltern, Lehrer und Hochschullehrer! Aufruf des Zentralkomitees der KPD und des Zentralausschusses der SPD zur demokratischen Schulreform, 18 Oktober 1945" in Institute für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, ed. *Dokumente und Materialien zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, Reihe III*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag,1959), 212.
[67] Ibid.

In the early postwar years, humanism was used as a key term for expressing the common goals of Soviet-German collaboration. In an article published in October 1946, Alexander Dymschitz, the chief cultural officer of the Soviet Military Administration, wrote at length about cultural development in the Soviet Union and their significance for Germany. Dymschitz wrote of the need for art that was uplifting and wholesome, and thereby appropriate for Soviet (and by implication German) youth, whom nurturing "in the spirit of humanism" would make optimistic, peace-loving, and productive[68] At a cultural congress held in Dresden in October 1946, a Soviet cultural officer told the audience, "[h]umanism in art is an essential element of human life. The economic relations of the capitalist period have…caused a crisis of humanism to arise which has led to the egoistic individualism of society.[69] It was the socialist humanism of the Soviet Union that would provide the model for a new society, one that would move beyond bourgeois individualism to a social order based on cooperation and dedicated to the full development of human capacities. This humanism was distinct from that promoted in capitalist countries in that individualism was not given primacy over the good of all. In Marxist-Leninist humanism the good of the totality was the precondition of the good of the individual.

Officially sanctioned German writers chimed in as well. Richard Weimann, an SED journalist from Berlin wrote in the same month of the role that art and science would play in the new German state. They would be the means by which the Germans would be brought into alignment with universal values. Weimann wrote, "[t]he spirit of humanism and progress, which is at the same time the spirit of true science, must suffuse our whole life and our educational system. Beside technical specialization, as important as it is, must stand the

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[68] Alexander Dymschitz, "Probleme der heutigen Sowjetkunst," *Tägliche Rundschau*, 13 October 1946.
[69] "Kongress der Künstler in Dresden," *Neues Deutschland*, 1 November 1946.

sensitivity to connections, the eye for the whole, and the spirit of universality."[70] The message was clear. Technical competence was an important goal for which to strive, but it had to be undertaken in a mindset that allowed one to see the bigger picture. The spirit of humanism was the spirit of universality. The radical particularism of National Socialism, which had sought to eliminate the variations in human being physically, would be overcome by a commitment to artistic and scientific practice that promoted the highest development of all mankind.

Humanistic rhetoric was frequently employed as a normative basis for communist party ideology. In March 1947, the SED cultural functionary Fritz Erpenbeck bemoaned the lack of appropriate material for theatrical performance in the eastern zone. Erpenbeck was silent about the degree to which this was a result of the limitations of Zhdanovist ideology.[71] Instead he argued that the theater had to be a moral institution. This implied, "the demand for democratic-humanistic feeling, thought, and will, to be applied to concrete being: to life in Germany in 1947."[72] Such feeling was lacking in the German public, exposed as they had been to twelve years of National Socialist barbarism. It was also important, Erpenbeck noted, that Germans be open to influences from outside that might facilitate the process of bringing German values and mores back in line with those of the civilized peoples of the world. "It goes without saying," Erpenbeck wrote, "that we cordially welcome every foreign work, irrespective of origin, so long as it contributes to the reeducation of our people to democracy and humanism; all the more so when this contribution consists of refamiliarization with the

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[70] Richard Weimann, "Kunst und Wissenschaft im neuen Staat," *Neues Deutschland*, 22 October 1946.

[71] Zhdanovism, named for its originator Andrei Zhdanov, was a policy that mandated the rigorous maintenance of communist orthodoxy in art and literature. It was first instituted in December 1946 and then promulgated throughout the European regions under Soviet control. On the influence of Zhdanovism in the Soviet-controlled areas of Germany, see David Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 470-83.

[72] Mark E. Spicka, *Selling the Economic Miracle: Economic Reconstruction and Politics in West Germany, 1949-1957* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 69.

modes of life, thoughts, and feelings of other nations."[73] But this did not mean that Germans should simply open themselves up to the influence of bourgeois modes of thought, such as the titillation of thrillers or pseudo-intellectual surrealism The former offered only diversion rather than taking the problems facing Germans head on, while the latter substituted experimentation with form and presentation for critical analysis of the historical moment at hand.

Although he did not state it explicitly, the external influences to which Erpenbeck referred were to be found in the world of communist orthodoxy. The commitment to this orthodoxy shaped the official worldview of the SED. The systemic conflict between capitalism and communism provided a basis for evaluating all cultural productions. The integration of ideas from outside of the domestic cultural sphere was not to be valued for its own sake. That was mere cosmopolitanism, an approach which the communist officials rejected.[74] As the SED central committee member Stefan Heymann noted in an article written during the celebratory Goethe Year of 1949, cosmopolitanism (*Kosmopolitismus*) was, "an incorrectly understood internationalism."[75] It was important, particularly in the spirit of Goethe's commitment to the uplifting of all human beings, to be open to humanistic influences. But this did not mean that one should slavishly follow artistic fashions, particularly when they distracted attention from the realistic presentation of contemporary social conditions. By the same token, it was important not to get fixated on mere details like the failings of communist rule at the expense of recognizing the truth of the totality. This error, designated in communist cultural jargon as "objectivism" or "formalism," resulted in ideological deficiencies that made it more difficult for the socialist world to defend its values against the values of the American-

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[73] Ibid., 71.

[74] The English term cosmopolitanism is rendered in German by two different terms. *Weltbürgertum*, literally world citizenship carries a positive implication, while *Kosmopolitismus* is, in almost every case, a term of abuse.

[75] Stefan Heymann, "Kosmopolitismus und Formalismus," *Neues Deutschland*, 1 December 1949.

led bloc. As the East German prime minister Otto Grotewohl told a session of the East German parliament in March 1950, cosmopolitanism was "the most prominent ideology of Americanism," the goal of which was the destruction of the ability of European peoples to resist American cultural barbarism.[76] Marxism-Leninism would allow Europeans, and eventually all people, to scientifically analyze social and economic conditions and to use the truths derived from these analyses to create societies optimal for human thriving. Cosmopolitanism promised openness, but the openness really implied defenselessness in the face of the extension of capitalist relations of production across the globe.

As in the regions of Germany controlled by the Western Allies, humanism used as a metonym for ideal human existence was an important feature of the intellectual culture of communist Germany. The role that it played was similar in many important respects. The Nazi past, with its barbaric disregard for the fundamental rights and dignity of human beings, weighed heavily on intellectuals in both communist and non-communist Germany. Humanism as a metonym for cultural values essential for human thriving allowed intellectuals in the communist areas of Germany to create a notional connection between the post-Nazi order that they were seeking to create and the broader values of the Western culture. This was no less the case for communists than for their opponents. Marxist-Leninist ideology implied the claim that the social order that would result from its implementation would more fully realize those values that the capitalist society that it was intended to supplant. This proposition also held for humanism as an outgrowth of the German cultural past.

B. The Kulturbund

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[76] Otto Grotewohl, "Die deutsche Kultur is unteilbar," *Neues Deutschland*, 23 March 1950.

The role played by the German cultural heritage in the years between the end of the war and the formation the GDR in 1949 underwent a transformation that paralleled political developments. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the most organized promotion of cultural reconstruction was carried on by the Kulturbund zur demokratische Eneurerung Deutschlands (the Cultural Federation for the Democratic Renewal of Germany). The organization was founded in the Soviet zone. Its leading figure was the communist poet Johannes R. Becher. Becher had spent the war in the Soviet Union at the center of a cell of German communist artists being groomed for the role of rebuilding postwar German artistic life.[77] Once back in Germany, Becher and his group were tasked with the formation of an organization that would unify all the forces for German cultural renewal throughout all four zones of occupation. In the period from 1945 to 1947, the two guiding terms for the Kulturbund were antifascism and humanism, each geared to a particular element of the political problem confronting Germany. Antifascism was meant to highlight the role that the German cultural heritage could play in helping Germans to overcome the legacies of National Socialism. Humanism was, in a sense, the other side of the coin, a concept meant to highlight the supposedly ecumenical nature of the undertaking.

The functionaries of the Kulturbund organized numerous events throughout occupied Germany at which German culture was celebrated. In addition to putting on readings and performances at various localities throughout the four zones, the Kulturbund engaged in cultural politics on the national scale, organizing conferences for authors and artists, and generally trying to put itself at the head of a movement for German cultural renewal. For much of the

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[77] On the Becher group in Moscow see Martin Greifenhagen, *Das Dilemma des Konservatismus in Deutschland* (Munich: R. Pieper & Co. Verlag, 1977). On the exile groups more generally, see Magdalena Heider, *Politik, Kultur, Kulturbund: zur Gründungs- und Frühgeschichte des Kulturbundes zur Demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands 1945-1954 in der SBZ/DDR* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1993).

early period of its existence, the Kulturbund was nominally ecumenical and did not actively promote the political line of the German communists. When, against the orders of the Soviet official in charge of cultural affairs (and counter to his own efforts) Becher was elected president of the newly formed Kulturbund in August 1945 he was called on the carpet to explain this failure of this policy. What was wanted was leadership by a figure not linked to the communists in order to preserve the non-party appearance of the organization. Given the nature of Soviet attitudes toward the role of art and culture in society, this apparent neutrality could only last so long. As relations between the allied nations deteriorated in the period from 1947 to 1949, the Kulturbund increasingly came to be seen as a tool of Soviet policy. In the course of 1948 the organization was banned in the three non-Soviet zones of Germany.

The formation of the Kulturbund illustrates the emphasis placed by the German communists on the role of culture in society, and particularly on the ways that the promotion of the German cultural heritage could reinforce the claims to legitimacy put forward by the newly founded communist state. The competition for legitimacy between the FRG and GDR that ran throughout the entire lifetime of both states had its roots in the systemic conflict of the immediate postwar years. As the discussion of the debates over the role of Goethe in the renewal of German culture cited above suggest, cultural matters were seen by many as a key means of coming to terms with the barbarism of the immediate past. While in the western zones (and subsequently in the FRG) this was primarily a matter of the spontaneous action of scholars and littérateurs, in the Soviet zone and in the communist state that succeeded it this was an element of government policy. As the historian Esther von Richthofen has argued in a recent study, the promotion of culture to the masses was a matter of acute concern to the lea-

dership of the GDR.[78] In practical terms this involved numerous local cultural associations and the training of a cadre of functionaries whose job it was to engage the citizenry in cultural projects. These were meant to reaffirm the commitment of the state to German culture. Among other things, the appropriation and employment of German domestic cultural figures was intended to emphasize the point that the communist system of the GDR was an outgrowth and an expression of traditional German cultural values.

At an event staged to launch the Kulturbund in Berlin, the opening appeal noted that one reason for the success of National Socialism in imposing its politics and culture on German society was the failure of the educated classes to engage the German cultural traditions in an appropriate fashion. "We must admit," the authors wrote, "that the great German classical humanistic heritage was no longer sufficiently vital among the German intelligentsia to impart the power of steadfast resistance against the Nazi regime."[79] This did not call the power of the tradition into question. Quite the contrary, it indicated the weakness of the bourgeois intelligentsia and their failure to seize upon the humanistic content made available to them via the traditions of the German Enlightenment and Weimar classicism. This failure on the part of the intelligentsia made clear the need for an organization such as the Kulturbund, the purpose of which was to disseminate German cultural traditions among the population in order to strengthen the foundations of post-Nazi German society. In this early moment of the history of the Kulturbund the political content of the event was ecumenical. Although the Kulturbund had been organized by high-ranking members of the SED, they had been instructed by the Soviet cultural authorities to refrain from forthright political agitation in the

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[78] Esther von Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses: Control, Compromise, and Participation in the GDR* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).
[79] "Aufruf" in François Dosse, *The History of Structuralism*, trans. Deborah Glassman, vol. I (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 6.

cause of communism.[80] Thus the opening ceremonies of the Kulturbund included guests such as the philosopher Eduard Spranger and the pastor Otto Dilschneider, neither of whom were communists. Johannes R. Becher highlighted the point when he thanked the representatives of the churches for taking part in the ceremony. "In its essence," Becher intoned, "Christian doctrine is deeply connected with every humanistic, democratic worldview."[81] Christianity could hope to play a role in the great task facing the Kulturbund in postwar Germany: the reconstruction of German culture purified of Nazism and the cultural traditions that had succored it.

It is clear that, even in its nominally ecumenical phase, the Kulturbund was primarily intended as a vehicle for the assertion of cultural hegemony by Soviet-backed German communists. It was certainly viewed as such by the leadership of the other occupation zones in late 1947.[82] The Kulturbund was then limited to the Soviet-controlled zone and lost most of its non-communist members. The humanistic message continued much the same as it had before. In a talk delivered at an SED party conference held in July 1950, Becher (then the president of the Kulturbund) announced,

> A new German culture cannot arise out of nothing. It must take orientation
> from the best traditions of our people. We will have to distinguish between
> that which has only historical significance and that which we can carry over
> from the past and appropriate productively. There can be no new culture with-
> out the national tradition.[83]

Becher invoked the national tradition, an apparently particularistic position. But it was done from universalistic motives. The goals that the SED pursued were humanistic in the sense

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[80] On the "ecumenical" approach of the early months of the Kulturbund, see Magdalena Heider, *Politik, Kultur, Kulturbund: zur Gründungs- und Frühgeschichte des Kulturbundes zur Demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands 1945-1954 in der SBZ/DDR*, Chapter 2.
[81] Johannes R. Becher, "Ansprache" in François Dosse, *The History of Structuralism*, 39.
[82] David Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949*, 385-86.
[83] "Diskussionsbeitrag Johannes R. Bechers auf dem III. Parteitag der SED," *Neues Deutschland*, 25 July 1950.

that the party was attempting to construct a social order based on the promotion of human flourishing. To do this it was necessary to make use of the values and models of conduct to be found in Germany's "humanistic" (by which he meant Weimar classical) heritage. The great virtue of these traditions was that they were "open to the world" (*weltaufgeschlossen*). What was needed was not an inward looking cultural chauvinism but an appreciation of German culture that was open to dynamic engagement with other cultures as well. In this way the particular could be maintained within the universal: German culture could serve as a means for the achievement of the universally human.

The rhetoric of the Kulturbund was echoed by other cultural functionaries. Alexander Abusch, the communist journalist, whose call for a militant humanism was quoted at the beginning of this chapter, wrote frequently about the salutary power of Germany's humanistic cultural traditions. Abusch, who would later serve as minister of culture in the East German government (1958-1961), was one of the leading publicistic promoters in the eastern zone for the Goethe Year that was celebrated on both sides of the Cold War divide. For Abusch, Goethe was the progenitor of a humanism that tasked modern Germans:

> So the task is given to us: to expound Goethe's humanism out of its sources in his times, its class struggles and intellectual currents, in order to further develop his intellectual legacy in ways appropriate to our own epoch and our Marxistic perceptions. In this Goethe Year 1949, we in eastern Germany have the opportunity to open up the democratic and humanistic content of Goethe's work among the broadest circles of our people, often for the first time.[84]

The work of Goethe would provide the key for a regeneration of German culture left in ruins by dehumanizing National Socialist barbarism. Abusch then sketched Goethe's program so as to make clear how it fit into the larger project of socialist humanism. Goethe had been sys-

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[84] Béatrice Han-Pile, "The 'Death of Man': Foucault and Anti-Humanism," in *Foucault and Philosophy* ed. Timothy O'Leary and Christopher Falzon (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 126.

tematically misrepresented, Abusch claimed, both by bourgeois interpreters before 1933, and by Nazi ideologues thereafter. Goethe had been aestheticized, a process that drained the social significance out of his work. Contrary to the claims of bourgeois interpreters, Goethe had been a passionate supporter of liberation movements in France and North America. Moreover, in his works such as *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahren*, Goethe had argued for a concept of personality that both valorized individual development and ensconced the individual personality in broader human social connections. Goethe rebelled against the limitations of the nascent bourgeois capitalist world, his poetic genius struggling toward a notion of human flourishing outside of bourgeois conventionality. Thus, on Abusch's account, Goethe became a socialist *avant la lettre*, promoting the sort of humanistic values that would subsequently be systematized in the work of Marx and his partisans.

Viktor Klemperer was, perhaps, one the unlikeliest recruits to the cause of SED cultural politics. Klemperer had, originally not been terribly sympathetic to communism. In a diary entry from December 1933, Klemperer wrote of an argument that he had had with Gusti Wieghardt, a convinced communist. Klemperer accused her of "utter imbecility and stubbornness and extremism" and noted, "Against this I have again and again emphasized that in the end I equate National Socialism and Communism: both are materialistic and tyrannical, both disregard and negate the freedom and the spirit of the individual."[85] As noted at the beginning of this section, in the days following the end of the war Klemperer's attitude toward the communists changed. He had come to see National Socialism as the greater evil and viewed the communists as the only force in Germany committed to the complete and uncompromising extirpation of National Socialist ideology. Klemperer built a new career for himself in the East German university system. He worked as a lecturer at the universities of

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[85] Viktor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness, 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*, 45.

Greifswald, Halle, and Berlin, became a delegate to the cultural section of the East German parliament, and in 1952 was awarded the National Prize (Third Class) for his scholarly achievements.

The degree of Klemperer's adjustment to the political conditions of communist Germany can be seen in a short book published in 1956 titled *Der alte und der neue Humanismus*.[86] Much of the text is devoted to the examination of earlier forms of humanism, from classical antiquity to the writers of the Italian renaissance. It was a definitive feature of the "old" humanisms that they were mired in idolatry for classical culture. They argued for a "free personality" but to whom, Klemperer asked, had such personalities belonged in the classical period? "It was always only the members of the upper class and the minority to whom this unfolding of personality was extended, and this was because they were freed from debilitating labor."[87] Subsequent humanists, including both those of the Italian renaissance and the German writers of the 18th and 19th centuries, had merely taken over this aristocratic idea. Their heroic and tragic ideals served an "aristocratic monopoly." The humanistic gymnasium which had survived into the 20th century (and in which Klemperer himself had been educated) was merely the final phase of this politically and culturally exclusive humanism.

Klemperer held that a new phase in humanism had arrived in the Germany with the Red Army. It was certainly not the case that the soldiers of that army had sat around memorizing Greek and Latin poetry. Nonetheless, they were the bearers of the humanistic ideas of Gorky and Lenin, ideas which were not beholden to the class stratified cultures of antiquity. The humanism promulgated in the context of Soviet communist was a true humanism in the respect that it was universally applicable to all human beings rather than the jealously

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[86] Viktor Klemperer, *Der alte und der neue Humanismus* (Leipzig: Urania Verlag, 1956).
[87] Ibid., 12.

guarded appurtenance of a privileged few. Klemperer discussed at length the changes

wrought upon Russian society in the course of the formation of the Soviet Union as examples

of the new humanism in action. "One of the very first laws of the new government was the

School Law and consequently in a decisive sense of the concept of humanism, a humanistic

law that laid the groundwork for the development of human personality."[88] Along with this,

the Soviet government had promoted a wide ranging program of agricultural and technologi-

cal improvements which had created conditions for the full development of human beings

such as never had been seen before in human society. The material improvement of society

had had a concomitantly salutary effect on intellectual life. The formation of the Soviet Un-

ion had thus created the conditions for a new humanism:

> All of this…quite obviously implies a humanization of human beings, in de-
> veloping thus the previously neglected and repressed fleshly-human capacities
> of the senses and of the intellect. Whoever works for the humanization of such
> a great people, be it as a teacher or as an author, as a school builder or a facto-
> ry engineer, etc., etc., not unjustifiably also bears the title of a humanist; and
> thus one is also a human being who can be redeemed from the condition of
> bondage and may be called a humanist with the same justice that students in
> the humanistic gymnasium are so designated.[89]

To be a humanist was not to concern oneself with the languages of dead men, but to build a

new society for living ones. Moreover, this new humanism was not a matter of individualistic

self development, as the old humanisms had been. To be a humanist in the modern age was

to create conditions in which all human beings could develop to their fullest potentials. "The

new humanism," Klemperer argued, "certainly stands in animosity to the idea of the devel-

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[88] Ibid., 21.
[89] Ibid., 21-22.

opment of individual personalities into supermen."[90] The new humanism was, rather, committed to a synthesis of collective development.

Although Klemperer had earlier espoused a moderate political liberalism, by this time he could find it acceptable to defend the Five Year Plans, calling Stalin a true student of Lenin and arguing that forced collectivization had merely been a step along the path of creating a society in which all human beings could develop to the fullest. Stalin reflected the "unique quality" of the new humanism. It had space for a great personality such as Stalin, but only to the degree that his powers were put in the service of the collectivity. The genius of Lenin and Stalin had been to take the values of the old humanism and turn them to the service of humanity in general by creating conditions that facilitated human self development.

Klemperer's arguments, odd as they may sound in light of current historical knowledge of the brutality of Stalinism, were a clear illustration of the East German view of the connections between socialism and the humanistic cultural traditions of Germany. For the ideologists of the SED, German cultural traditions provided access to a realm of universal values, universal in the sense that the artistic genius of Goethe and Schiller illustrated a mode of personhood in which the ideal of individual development was pursued within the context of a just social order. German cultural traditions had preserved the values of human flourishing in societies dominated by late feudal and capitalist elites. Although these societies did not provide appropriate avenues for human beings to realize their potential, it was the greatness of these artistic creations that they could preserve ideals of human flourishing until such time as a just social order had been created. That social order was now being built in the German Democratic Republic, and it was the task of the intellectual leadership of the state to take the

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[90] Ibid., 22.

final step and rescue the socialistic values of the German cultural heritage from their bourgeois integument.

In a lecture delivered at the Humboldt University in Berlin in January 1962, the prominent East Germany literature scholar Wilhelm Girnus sought to fit an account of humanism grounded in the German cultural heritage into a Marxist-Leninist social analysis. For Girnus, the modern era called for a humanism distinct from that of earlier periods. "The humanism of the past bore an essentially literary character; it was the more or less valid expression of the longing and the striving for a humane existence (*einem menschenwürdige Dasein*)."[91] If one looked at the products of earlier humanism, such as in the works of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing and Hölderlin, one discovered that the unifying factor was an attempt to come to terms with the human consequences of societies divided along class lines. Humanism in the present moment was in a different situation because of the decisive emergence of a post-capitalist society.

> Humanism as a spiritual-political current is faced with a completely new, qualitatively completely altered historical situation. What is essential? The human beings on this planet are coming ever more to understand that the hour has struck in which everything that in the past was a more or less unclear postulate can and will become real.[92]

The socialist world system that had begun to emerge with the foundation of the Soviet Union had become "the decisive factor of our epoch."[93] For Girnus, communist ideology was the most humane ideology that had ever existed. In the past, humanistic thought had been a means to address the oppressive, classed based order of society. It involved the promulgation of abstract values in the face of abject material conditions. By contrast, modern humanism

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[91] Wilhelm Girnus, *Humanismus und sozialistisches Menschenbild* (Berlin: Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland, 1962), 4.
[92] Ibid., 5.
[93] Ibid., 7.

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involved the realization of "essential human capacities" through the construction and extension of the world socialist system. The extension of this system would provide for human beings both materially and intellectually.

The appropriation of the cultural past as a model for socialist humanism was one of the most enduring features of the intellectual culture of the GDR. As in the case of such appropriations in the western occupation zones and in West Germany, the underlying claim was that figures from the German cultural tradition such as Goethe and Schiller had enunciated humanistic values that could function as models for post-Nazi German society. It was crucial that the values in question were humanistic, for the underlying project was one of reintegrating German values with those of the civilized (non-Nazi) world. Although the cultural traditions were specifically German, the values that they promoted were relevant for all human beings. But the East German engagement with these figures and their works added the claim that, properly understood, their values and those of Marxism-Leninism were consonant.

Section IV. Humanism as a Positive Part of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy

At the 5th SED Party Conference in July 1958, SED party leader Walter Ulbricht enumerated his "10 Commandments for the New Socialist Human Being."[94] These stressed dedicated labor for the party and the socialist fatherland as the most crucial qualities of the new socialist human being, for these would create the conditions under which all human beings could reach their full potential. For the SED, humanism amounted to creating the conditions for full human development, but did not specify an ideal form of human being. Rather, what was demanded was striving toward a system in which indeterminate and unique human

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[94]Walter Ulbricht, *Der Kampf um den Frieden, für den Sieg des Sozialismus, für die nationale Wiedergebürt Deutschlands als friedliebender, demokratischer Staat.* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1958), 121-22.

capacities could have the freest expression. In this way humanism would be transformed from an abstract speculation about human beings to the construction of the material conditions for true human self-realization. The world socialist system was creating nothing less than new human beings, but the focus of the discussion was on how they would be created, not what their characteristics would be.

An important change got underway in the GDR in the summer of 1958. For much of the preceding eighteen months, intellectual life in East Germany had been the subject of intense official scrutiny. To a great extent this reflected the tendency throughout the communist world in the wake of outbreaks of opposition to communist party leadership in Poland and Hungary in 1956. At the party congress, held in Berlin from the 10th to the 14th of July, Ulbricht gave the keynote address, a major speech which outlined new policies in a range of areas, most prominently industrial production, foreign policy, and intellectual life. Ulbricht devoted a portion of his talk to the question of ethics and morals in socialism. This was an unusual topic for the leader of a Marxist-Leninist state to address. Marx eschewed overt discussions of justice, perhaps because he viewed the attempt to specify abstract moral rules ran counter to his dialectical view of history. Specifying supra-historical normative claims presupposed a supra-historical position from which to assert them. Since human beings were determined by the historically mediated social relations in which they lived, such a supra-historical standpoint was unavailable.

Discussions of socialist morality were not entirely unheard of in East Germany. The Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften (Institute for Social Sciences) had sponsored a conference on socialist ethics in Berlin in April 1957. In a speech opening the conference, the Director of the Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften, Lene Berg explained the role that ethics

was to play in the Marxist-Leninist state. Although the question of moral norms had found an "appropriate place" in the classics of Marxism, it was nonetheless the case that "not much has been said in the struggle of the revolutionary working class against the loud proclamations of bourgeois moral hypocrisy."[95] The "first elements" of socialist morality, so Berg claimed, could be derived from the history of the struggles of the workers movement, such as the those of the Communards, the German socialists in the era of the Anti-Socialist Law, the Bolsheviks during the October Revolution in Russia, and Ernst Thälmann's Communist Party of Germany in the era of German fascism.[96] At the present time, socialism was in the process of being built in the GDR, and these new conditions called for a new discussion of the question of socialist morality, one that was more systematic and substantive than that which had gone before.

> Today, at a point in time when many peoples are in the process of transition to a new society, a society without classes and thus also without exploitation and repression, the problems of socialist morality, the ethical norms of relations between human beings, take on a new importance. New relations between human beings are already in evidence in the first stages of the construction of socialism. They have, in a certain sense, arisen spontaneously. The task now is not merely to nourish and cultivate these relations for a small portion of the working class, but to make everyone conscious of these new relations, which have already built the foundations of new objective social relations, and to educate and win the support of all working people.[97]

The construction of socialist morality was, thus, a question of the practical development of morals in the context of action, the active process of building socialist societies, rather than of theoretical speculation. Moreover, the fact that true socialist societies were actually in the

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[95] Lehrstuhl Philosophie des Instituts für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED, *Neues Leben, Neue Menschen: Konferenz des Lehrstuhls Philosophie des Instituts für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED über theoretische und praktische Probleme der sozialistischen Moral am 16. und 17. April 1957* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1957), 7.

[96] Ibid., 8.

[97] Ibid.

process of being built indicated that there had been a temporal change, one which opened a space for discussion of socialist morality. For Marx, it was vain to speculate about the morals of socialist society, just as it was vain to speculate about its precise structure because it was impossible to know in advance under what material and historical conditions such societies would arise. Now that the process of building these societies had begun it was possible to evaluate these conditions and to engage in moral thinking on that basis.

It was nonetheless important to note that even during the construction of socialism it would not be possible for the masses to spontaneously develop appropriate moral notions. In line with Lenin's contention in "What is to be Done" that the workers by their own efforts would only ever reach the level of trade union consciousness, Berg argued that the assistance of the party was necessary in order for socialist morality to achieve the requisite degree of clarity. "Our party," Berg announced, "has taken up this requirement and given expression to it in the demands of our Central Committee and the decisions of the party that one of the most important tasks of our philosophy consists in the working out of socialist ethics, that is, to give expression to the moral-ethical behavior of human beings that is emerging under socialist relations, to assimilate it, and thereby to assist the party with the great task of educating working people for the consolidation and further development of socialist consciousness."[98]

In a subsequent talk, Berg's deputy at the Institut, Matthäus Klein delved more deeply into the substance of socialist ethics. The problem of morality manifested differently not only between different epochs, but also at various points within epochs. This was clear evidence that "the moral is not something divine, eternal, unchanging, valid for all times and peoples, classes and societies, but rather, as Marxism first discovered, a historically and socially con-

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[98] Ibid., 8-9.

ditioned phenomenon."[99] Systems of morality developed in the course of history and could only be critiqued on the basis of standards developed within that logic of the extant historical process. There could be no universal ethics in a society divided along class lines. Morality had a class character, and thus it was only in a society in which human beings lived as equals, that is, having transcended the repressive relations of class division, that a human morality could be constructed. The task of creating an egalitarian social morality could only be accomplished "from the standpoint of a class that in its *particular* class interest embodies the *universal* interest of society and humanity, a class whose own class interest no longer stands in contradiction to universal-human interests (*allgemein-menschlichen Interesse*)."[100] Marxist philosophy was similar to bourgeois philosophy in that it wanted to universalize a philosophical view based on the perspective of a particular class. What was different was that the class whose interest Marxism sought to universalize was the one whose task it was to eliminate classes and thus to comprise the totality of human beings.

This process had been dramatically accelerated by the formation of proletarian socialist societies. The most important accomplishment of these societies from a philosophical perspective was that human beings now had the freedom to develop their essential selves. "True freedom," Klein argued, "the unhindered unfolding of all essential human capacities and abilities, is only possible on the basis of socialist ownership of the means of production."[101] The formation of a classless society that would eventually encompass the entire world was being undertaken with the goal of creating the conditions under which human beings could create themselves unhindered by the need to sell their labor power in order to eat. What was crucial, from Klein's perspective, was to educate the citizens of the newly struc-

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[99] Ibid., 26.
[100] Ibid., 38. Empahsis in the original.
[101] Ibid., 47.

tured societies so that they would understand the connections between social organization and the free unfolding of human essence. "We wish to educate people in such a way that their thoughts and actions comport with the needs and requirements of our new social development, people who are ready and willing to lead higher our new society, our socialist society, and to form it more beautifully."[102]

The positions taken by Berg, Klein, and the other participants at the conference were closely commensurate with the traditional Marxist account of ethics. What defined human beings was how they lived. The social relations that ordered their lives determined their capacity to freely create themselves. In a sense, the conference didn't really produce any new information about human beings, but merely reiterated the standard Marxist view of ethics. More important was the fact that one of the leading scholarly institutions of the SED state staged a conference on this topic and the participation of so many leading figures from the institutional world of East German scholarship. In addition to Berg and Klein, two of the leading figures at the Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften, other participants included Hanna Wolf, the director of the Parteihochschule "Karl Marx", Horst Büttner, the director of the Deutsche Institut für Rechtswissenschaft, Roland Wunderlich, a member of the Central Committee of the Frei Deutsche Jugend, and Inge Meyer, the secretary of the Demokratische Frauenbund Deutschland. The conference was, in effect, an institutional affirmation of the SED's Marxist-Leninist account of ethics. The timing of the conference can be read as an attempt to confirm the progress of socialism in the face of the disorders of 1956. The program of the conference was meant to focus discussion moving socialism forward, on the premise that socialist society was a fait accompli.

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[102] Ibid., 255.

The connection between socialist ethics and the progress of the East German state was strongly reconfirmed in Walter Ulbricht's contributions to the 5th Party Congress of the SED. Ulbricht's "Ten Commandments" were consonant with the ideas expressed at the 1957 conference. Ulbricht's first commandment framed the new socialist human being in the geo-political situation of the socialist struggle: "Thou shalt always be committed to the international solidarity of the working classes and of all working people as well as for the steadfast alliance of all socialist countries."[103] The international solidarity of the working classes was a precondition of the world-wide spread of socialism called for in the Marxist historical narrative, and the mutual support of socialist nations against the capitalist ones was a further step along that road. In the mean time, it was crucial to focus on the maintenance of socialism in the particular divisions to which the current world was subject. Thus Ulbricht's second commandment: "Thou shalt love your fatherland and always be prepared to mobilize all your strength and ability for the defense of the workers' and farmers' state (*der Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Macht*)." Until the formation of the all-encompassing state run by proletarians and peasants, it was necessary to build and maintain socialism in the context of extant national entities. These would be populated by a new variety of human being because the institutions of socialist states would be constructed in such a way as to provide the optimal conditions for human development.

These new human beings, Ulbricht argued, had the obligation to behave in a way that facilitated the expansion of socialist values. His third commandment called for the elimination of "the exploitation of human beings by human beings," while the fourth mandated tak-

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[103] Walter Ulbricht, *Der Kampf um den Frieden, für den Sieg des Sozialismus, für die nationale Wiedergebürt Deutschlands als friedliebender, demokratischer Staat.*, 121. I have translated "Du sollst" as "Thou shalt" (instead of the more colloquial "You should) because it is clear that Ulbricht meant to reference the mode of expression of the Bible. Thus, he used the familiar "du" instead of "ihr" (the plural form of "you') or "man" ("one").

ing action in support of socialism, "because socialism leads to a better life for all working people." Ulbricht also explicitly raised the issue of socialist morality. He demanded "mutual assistance and comradely collective action" but that one should "respect the collective and take its criticisms to heart." The "collective" in this case meant the SED, and Ulbricht here reaffirmed the importance of party discipline to the order that was being built in the GDR. The next four commandments dealt with the protection and expansion of the common property of the socialist people, the responsibility of maintaining disciplined (and frugal) conduct in socialist labor, the role of education in imbuing children with socialist principles, sobriety and respectability in family life respectively. They continue the focus on the building of socialism in Germany, both in terms of institutions and in terms of personal conduct. Finally, Ulbricht commanded his listeners to "cultivate solidarity with those who struggle for national liberation and the defense of their national independence," a clear reference to the involvement of the GDR in conflicts of the decolonizing world.

The most prominent themes in Ulbricht's commandments were the geopolitical situation of socialist states in the context of the Cold War and the struggle to build and maintain the institutions of actually existing socialism. Ulbricht did not define the human being, but rather took it to be self-evidently the result of the institutional structure of the state and the solid and sober moral outlook of new socialist human beings. Ulbricht's approach was, thus, very much in line with the Marxist tradition of focusing on social relations and institutions rather that attempts to nail down unchanging characteristics of human beings. As his speech continued, however, Ulbricht undertook a discussion of socialist morality. This marked a departure. Although the question of socialist morality had not been completely ignored (as the text of the 1957 conference illustrates), it had never received extensive public treatment by

the sitting leader of the SED. This represented a new approach. Traces of the earlier East German appropriation of humanism as an educational program were still evident in Ulbricht's speech. Discussing the need for the formation of a new, homegrown intelligentsia in the GDR earlier in his talk, Ulbricht noted,

> We wish that every member of the intelligentsia were a socialist as well as an expert, but in this respect we make no conditions on the old intelligentsia. We are convinced that the great humanistic prospects for the future of socialism and also the perception of the deep, tragic contradiction that has tormented the honest scientists in imperialistic states impels us ever more strongly towards concerted, comradely cooperation which depends on mutual esteem.[104]

The intelligentsia of non-socialist countries, whose scientific efforts could not but come into conflict with imperialistic demands of their home states, were to be brought in as allies of the proletariat to the common project of building socialism, a project which was humanistic in the sense that it created the appropriate environment for the free development of the human person (in this case through scientific research). The humanism of this future was of a very general kind. It did not attempt to specify what relations would exist among human beings, only those which would not. The elimination of class-based exploitation and repression would create the conditions for the formation of a new social order, but Ulbricht did not speculate about the positive content, the actual moral norms that would characterize such an order.

Ulbricht signaled a change in approach in that he specified the content of socialist relations. The world was facing a new situation. The attempts of the NATO states to foment counterrevolution in Poland and Hungary had failed and socialism was firmly grounded in the states of the eastern bloc. Socialism was entering a new phase, one in which the relations of true socialism ceased to be a matter of speculation or generalization and could now be

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[104] Ibid., 62.

talked about in concrete terms because the actual contours of socialist society were now in view. "Through the establishment of the workers' and farmers' state, the development of popularly controlled industrial enterprises, and agricultural production collectives, new social relations have been established that constitute the presuppositions for the formation of a new socialist consciousness."[105] The emergence of this new society had created the conditions for the formation of a new, socialist mode of consciousness. The most prominent aspect of this consciousness was the internalization of labor discipline by the working classes, among whom socialist consciousness was most widely spread. Even the intelligentsia, many of whom had been educated in the ideological and social conditions of the capitalist world had begun to internalize socialist values, thus drawing themselves closer to the leadership of the working classes.[106] The workers and intellectuals were laboring together as human beings for the creation of a new society. In the process, the new society was creating new human beings. The new consciousness that was the basis of this process of mutual creation spread to all aspects of society, from the factory floor to domestic relations between spouses and among parents and children.

In his closing presentation to the 5th Party Congress delivered five days later, Ulbricht drew for his audience some conclusions to be taken from the congress as a whole. These included the importance of the further development of the industrial and agricultural capacities of the GDR in its continuing struggle with the capitalist Germany across the Cold War border, as well as with the capitalist system generally. The building of the socialist system was,

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[105] Ibid., 112.
[106] Ibid., 115.

Ulbricht contented, the best defense of freedom and provided the best prospect for the reunification of Germany.[107]

A sign of the turn toward a positive engagement with humanism in the GDR was the publication of a German translation of P. N. Fedoseyev's *Sozialismus und Humanismus*.[108] Fedoseyev, whose book had originally been published in the Soviet Union in 1958, was the vice president of the Philosophical Section of the USSR Academy of Sciences. The publication in the context the tightly party controlled environment of East German philosophy of the work of this high-level Soviet suggests an attempt to smooth the transition to a policy apparently in conflict with the earlier attitude of the SED toward humanism. East German philosophy in the 1950s had been shaped by the struggle to overcome or to integrate modes of philosophy, such as logic and epistemology, that promised forms of intelligibility apart from the Marxist-Leninist mode of understanding. The debates over logic in the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* in the mid-1950s demonstrated the difficulty of integrating "bourgeois" objectivism with the requirements of *Parteilichkeit*. The situation with regard to ethical philosophy was more clear cut. The class component of ethics was clearer, at least from the Marxist-Leninist perspective, and struggle against bourgeois values had a long and extensive provenance in Marxist philosophical writing. Marxist parties in power tended to be very resistant to accepting any normative standard originating outside of the conceptual framework of Marxism-Leninism. Humanism, in the sense of norms based on a substantive conception of humanness, had aroused the opposition of Stalinist philosophers in the early 1950s because the party was an expression of scientific socialism, and was thus the only acceptable

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[107] Ibid., 173-77.

[108] P. N. Fedoseyev, *Sozialismus und Humanismus* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1960).

basis for norms. The idea that there existed another standard by which the actions of the party could be judged was thus inimical the party's claims to scientifically grounded knowledge.

The essays in Fedoseyev's book illustrated a change in strategy from opposition to cooptation. Rather than claiming the humanism merely a bourgeois ideology, Fedoseyev argued for a specifically Marxist humanism, one which moved beyond the contradictions that resulted from trying to shoe-horn the inhumanities of capitalism into the concept of humanism. For Fedoseyev, the question of humanism was immediately linked to the geopolitical struggles of the Cold War. "In the present ideological struggle, bourgeois sociologists and publicists have increased their efforts to spread the nonsensical assertion that Marxists reject humanism in the name of socialism and ignore the interests of the human personality."[109] Contrary to these assertions, Fedoseyev contended, Marxism was the fulfillment of the true values of humanism rather than an ideological competitor. Fedoseyev's argument had two parts. First, he argued that the ethical values that bourgeois humanism purported to embody were merely formal, covering up the inequalities that actually characterized life under capitalism. This was consonant with the critique of bourgeois humanism put forward by Stalinist philosophy in the first years of the Cold War. But now, Fedoseyev made explicit what earlier had only been implied: "The ideology of scientific communism is a new, higher form of humanism."[110] The fate of humanity hung in the balance of the systemic conflict. In order for true humanism to emerge, human beings had to be freed from "the yoke of capital," a just international order had to be created in which colonialism would be abolished, and humanity had to overcome the threat of mass extinction presented by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Socialism was the only way that these three goals could be achieved.

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[109] Ibid., 5.
[110] Ibid., 9.

Fedoseyev's work on humanism and socialism was part of a new phase in Soviet intellectual life that arose in the wake of de-Stalinization. In the immediate wake of Stalin's death, as one historian of humanism has written, Soviet policy (and thus the policy of its client states) had been "the maintenance of an ideological front that combined criticisms of Stalin with the attack upon the anti-Stalinist 'humanist' revival" based on the reappropriation of Marx's early writings.[111] Soper argues that the combination of these two agendas proved difficult for Soviet theoreticians and that, around 1960, a more individual-centered humanism became the order of the day. This personal humanism was predicated on the idea that the dictatorship of the proletariat was no longer necessary because the Soviet Union had achieved a classless society.

The translation and dissemination of Fedoseyev's book by the East German government was a tentative step in the emulation of Soviet policy. It was followed by the emergence of a homegrown version of philosophical humanism in the GDR. Thus in 1960, Kurt Hager gave a speech under the title *Humanismus und Wissenschaft* (*Humanism and Science*) in which he provided a positive assessment of the importance of humanism for the construction of socialism, one that went beyond the veneration of cultural heritage..[112] Hager was the head of the *Abteilung Wissenschaft* (Sciences Section) of the Central Committee of the SED and was, in this position, the party's most prominent ideologist and its most aggressive ideological policeman. After completing his doctorate in philosophy in the late 1940s, he was made the head of the *Abteilung Parteischulung* (Party Education Section). In those days, he was responsible for the promulgation of orthodox doctrine through compulsory training courses for all East German academics held at the Parteihochschule "Karl Marx" in the Kleinmach-

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[111] Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism: Problems of Modern European Thought* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 86.

[112] Kurt Hager, *Humanismus und Wissenschaft* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1961).

now section of East Berlin. Hager was a committed Stalinist, and his views remained consistent throughout the entire lifetime of the GDR, even after the Soviets had begun to modify Stalinist doctrines.[113]

Humanismus und Wissenschaft was delivered to a gathering in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Humboldt University in November 1960. Hager began by locating the history of the Humboldt University in the broader historical narrative of threats to Germany. The university had been founding in the era of foreign domination under Napoleon, at a time when Germany was divided into tiny states and ruled by an oppressive feudalism. Humboldt had been committed to the unity of scholarship and action and to the pursuit of knowledge in the service of advancement of the German nation. In an era of national subjugation, Humboldt's education project created the basis for the coalescing of the German nation through the active promulgation of humanistic values. At the advent of the National Socialist era, the humanistic values of the university had been carried forward in the resistance activities of Humboldt graduates such as Dietrich Bonhoefer and Robert Havemann. On the other hand, the values of the university had been compromised by the infiltration of bourgeois liberal ideals:

> As the bourgeoisie revealed their liberal ideals and came out in favor of imperialistic power struggles, the humanistic spirit, which was still preserved in the work of individual scholars, was gradually displaced from the university as a whole to make way for that reactionary idiocy which finally led to the debasement of German science by antihuman Hitler fascism.[114]

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[113] Hager's continuing devotion to the old line was starkly illustrated in 1987 when in an interview with the West German magazine *Stern* he was asked about what implications *perestroika* would have for the GDR. Hager responded by asking: "If your neighbor changes his wallpaper would you then feel obliged to change yours as well?" *Stern,* 9 April 1987.

[114] Kurt Hager, *Humanismus und Wissenschaft*, 9.

The national catharsis of 1945 had posed the question as to whether the humanistic traditions of the German universities would be revived or whether they would be replaced by the ideologies of imperialism and militarism. The Humboldt University had been fortunate in being in the area controlled by the Soviets, because the socialist values that they embodied were perfectly commensurate with the humanistic traditions of German scholarship. Ensconced in a social order committed to the construction of socialism, the Humboldt University could now be a force for the advancement of universal human values in contradistinction to the radical racial particularism of "antihuman Hitler fascism" and the class domination of US capitalism.

While Hager made the obligatory references to the humanism of the German cultural heritage, he moved on relatively quickly to a discussion of the human consequences of Marx's critique of capitalism. The bourgeoisie had created "an elaborate system of exploitation" that "squandered not only human flesh and blood, but also nerves and brains and transformed all human virtues into commodities."[115] Marxism, which held the promise of alleviating this situation, was based on the ideals of humanism and was, in fact, their realization:

> Marxism has, through its doctrine of the liberation of the working class, and
> of all who labor, from the chains of social exploitation and spiritual slavery,
> given humanism a basis for the first time. Marx has scientifically established
> that the working class is the bearer of true humanistic ideals and social power,
> which in close alliance with all progressive people realizes these ideals
> through the establishment of socialist and communist social order. The transi-
> tion from capitalism to socialism is supremely humanistic, because thereby
> the exploitation of human beings by human beings is forever abolished, be-
> cause henceforth is accomplished that voluntary and conscious union of free
> individuals which finds the conditions of unfettered development of its talents
> and capacities in socialist community.[116]

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[115] Ibid., 18.
[116] Ibid., 19.

Of particular importance was the social significance of the connection between humanism and natural science. The problem with the bourgeois account of the value of natural science was that it became an individualized pursuit of knowledge, divorced from the needs and values of society. As a consequence, a social process that had the prospect of lifting humanity to ever higher levels had, instead, been turned into the producer of atomic bombs. This fact had not gone unnoticed in the capitalist lands, so that even their own ideologists were voicing concerns about the role of science in the future of humanity. Here, Hager cited a speech given by Karl Jaspers in which the latter had claimed that "scientific cognition can establish no goals for life, nor can it give any answers to the question of its meaning."[117] In the West it had become common to question the humanistic credentials of natural science, both because of its complicity in the catastrophic violence of the 20th century and because it its perceived incapacity to answer the most important questions of human being.

Hager concluded by drawing out the geopolitical implications of the differing conditions of science under socialism and capitalism. The growing stockpiles of weapons produced by the capitalist world illustrated the consequences of the divorcement of science from the project of human improvement. The complicity of science in the production of atomic weapons was, for Hager, a western problem: the efforts of scientists in the social world were merely efforts in defense made necessary by the "irrational and antihumanist tendencies" of capitalism. By contrast, in the socialist world science was seen in the context of the totality of social relations. The mission of science was not merely the production of knowledge for its own sake, but to facilitate the survival and advancement of humanity as a whole.

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[117] Ibid., 26-27. Although he cites sources for most of the quotations given in the talk, Hager does not provide a precise citation for this one. See Karl Jaspers and Adolf Portmann, *Wahrheit und Wissenschaft. Adolf Portmann, Naturforschung und Humanismus*, Basler Universitätsreden (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1960).

"The struggle for freedom," Hager argued, "is the highest moral duty and the most important humanistic task of science." In Germany, natural science had the capacity to positively affect the political situation. Science provided a basis for common understanding across the Cold War border. Contrary to the views of West German critics, Hager was of the opinion that, "there exists consensus on many basic questions of national development between scientists in the German Democratic Republic and …in the Federal Republic, and that an understanding of common tasks is crucial for humanism and a peaceful future for our people."[118] Hager noted three points of agreement. First, scientists on both sides of the border agreed on the importance of the maintenance of peace in Germany and on the necessity of using of the results of scientific research "exclusively to peaceful, humanistic purposes."[119] As a basis for this claim, Hager pointed to the 1957 Göttingen Manifesto, in which eighteen prominent German physicists had opposed arming the Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons. The nuclear question had cast a pall over German politics since the mid-1950s when Adenauer's government first mooted the idea of adding a nuclear dimension to German rearmament. This suggestion had caused alarm in both East and West Germany, with many fearing that Germany would be reduced to a nuclear wasteland in a battle between the United States and the Soviet Union, and that the Nazi Holocaust would be followed by a holocaust of even greater proportions.[120] Hager's argument was that scientists on both sides of the border recognized that such an outcome would be ultimately antihuman. Hager further claimed that there was substantial agreement between scientists in both German states that it was the role

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[118] Kurt Hager, *Humanismus und Wissenschaft*, 31.
[119] Ibid.
[120] The comparison between the Holocaust and nuclear mass annihilation was a frequent, if extremely problematic aspect of the debate on giving nuclear weapons to the Bundeswehr. For an extensive discussion of this issue, see Susanne Schrafstetter, "The Long Shadow of the Past: History, Memory and the Debate over West Germany's Nuclear Status, 1954-69," *History & Memory* 16, no. 1 (2004).

of science to work for a reunification of Germany. For this contention Hager provided no support. Nor did he offer any substantiation for a subsequent claim that East and West German scientists agreed that there needed to be more extensive scientific contacts between the two German states, in spite of the efforts of "partisans of NATO politics."[121]

Hager's presentation was, as might be expected, extremely one-sided. There is little evidence to suggest that the absence of East German scientists at scholarly conferences was much noticed, and their absence was, in any event, more likely to be the result of travel restrictions imposed by the East German government rather than any policy of exclusion undertaken by the West Germans.[122] For Hager, humanism was a means of bridging the ideological gap separating the two states. Humanism played the role of providing the possibility of a common normative basis for action, but it also had an important element of symbolic power. Linking humanism to socialism affirmed the legitimacy of the East German state and located it in a law-governed narrative of historical progress. It framed the GDR as the defender of values of Western culture as a part of the ideological struggles of the Cold War. Hager's talk was a manifesto for the project of positioning the GDR as promoter of humanistic and scientific values.

> The humanistic principles of science are identical with the humanistic essence of socialism. In socialist society, the humanistic objective of science has become an immediate reality for all human beings for the first time. Here, for the first time, the humanism of the scientists can fully bloom and become effective for the good of the whole society.[123]

Hager's position on science runs parallel to his position on humanism: in both cases the construction of a socialist society had created the ideal conditions for the highest development of

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[121] Kurt Hager, *Humanismus und Wissenschaft*, 32.
[122] On this see Agnes Charlotte Tandler, *Geplante Zukunft: Wissenschaftler und Wissenschaftspolitik in der DDR 1955-1971* (Freiberg: Technische Universität Bergakademie, 2000).
[123] Kurt Hager, *Humanismus und Wissenschaft*, 39.

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science and humanism. The West Germans might try to behave as representatives of humanism, but this was only a ploy to make people forget that they had been complicit in the extermination of the Jews. They sought to balance the legitimate fears of the intelligentsia about nuclear proliferation with unjustified fear of socialism and communism. But it was the GDR and the other socialist countries that were truly working for the progress of mankind and the preservation of universal human values.

Humanismus Heute? (*Humanism Today?*), published in October 1961, expanded the more positive engagement with humanism evinced by Hager's talk, but also highlighted the connection between the modern philosophical humanism and the humanism of the German cultural heritage. Published only two months after the construction of the Berlin Wall, it betrayed no trace of this momentous event. The contributors to the collection represented a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds. After an introduction written by the sinologist Erhard Scherner, the first essay was written by the Germanist Wilhelm Girnus, the second by the novelist Leo Weismantel, the third by the philosopher Hermann Ley, and the forth by the physicist Heinz Schmellenmeier. Girnus and Ley were prominent GDR intellectuals and reliable promoters of the Marxist-Leninist politics of the SED. Girnus had been a member of the editorial board of *Neues Deutschland* in the early 1950s before receiving his doctorate from the University of Leipzig in 1953. In 1957 he was promoted to the state council of ministers and made Secretary for Technical and Vocational Education. Hermann Ley had also taken his doctorate at Leipzig, qualifying with a thesis on concept formation in economics and the natural sciences. In 1954 he received a chair for the study of dialectical and historical materialism at the Technical University of Dresden and in 1960 he received the National Prize in recognition of his intellectual services to the GDR. Heinz Schmellenmeier was similarly po-

litically reliable from the perspective of the East German intellectual establishment. He had received his doctorate in physics in 1935 and had been active in the KPD during the early years of National Socialism. After the war he assisted in the rebuilding of the scientific faculties of the Humboldt University. He completed his habilitation in 1953 (he had been prevented from doing so before the war by the Nazis for political reasons) and spent much of the 1950s teaching physics at the Technical University for Chemistry at Leuna-Merseburg. In 1958 he was made Rector of Technical Universities for the whole of the GDR.

In an introductory essay punctuated with references to DaVinci, Diderot, and Goethe, Scherner argued that the discussion of humanism had a specific connection to the nature of the era in which mankind currently found itself. This era had begun with the Bolshevik revolution. "The Russian Revolution has opened the gate into a world in which man can be a friend and brother to man."[124] As a consequence of this opening, "hundreds of millions of human beings on every continent are struggling for a free, just world." [125] In the lands where communism prevailed, the struggle had achieved "complete victory." In the Soviet Union, Lenin's party had built, "a human order in which everyone experiences true freedom equality, and true fraternity." Humanity was witness to the birth of a new age, one which realized all of the old dreams of humanity. "A new humanism is being born: the working human being, on whose shoulders the Earth rests, is finally stepping into the clear light of the times – politically, morally, aesthetically." For Scherner, as an orthodox Marxist-Leninist, human beings were fundamentally social, and thus improvements to the human condition could only be effected through social means. In the first instance, this means the creation of a society that made possible the free unfolding of human capacities.

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[124] Erhard Scherner, "Das Menschenzeitalter," in *Humanismus Heute?* (Berlin: Kongress-Verlag, 1961), 7.
[125] Ibid.

Wilhelm Girnus's essay, "Humanismus in der Entscheidung" ("Humanism in the Decision") began by distinguishing two forms of humanism. Girnus's description of the first variety rehearsed the main points of the East German program of assimilating the German and European cultural heritage into the intellectual world of Marxism-Leninism. In Europe and North America (Girnus disclaimed any knowledge beyond these spheres) humanism referred, in the first instance, to an educational program arising in the course of the Italian Renaissance in which human development (*Bildung*) was to be achieved via "the study of the philosophical, poetic, artistic, and scientific creations of classical antiquity in the original languages."[126] These ideas were consonant with those that Girnus had since his time supervising broadcasts on Radio Berlin as a member of the Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung (Central Administration for Popular Education) in the late 1940s.[127]

There was, however, a second kind of humanism that had to be considered, one that was more inclusive than the first and which had "clearly prevailed to a much greater degree in lands such as France, Italy, and Russia than in Germany."[128] Girnus provided a definition taken from an entry in an Italian reference work (the *Dizionario Letteraria Bompiani*), written by Eugenio Garin, modern editor of the works of Pico della Mirandola:

> In its most general sense, one understands by the term humanism the unfolding of the power of the human spirit in free activity without obscuration by the belief in authority; to be described as humanistic is any position that stresses the value and dignity of human beings as well as their productive capacities and which proceeds from the fact that the human being is the producer and sovereign lord of the world. Humanistic, therefore, is every rejection of theo-

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[126] Wilhelm Girnus, "Humanismus in der Entscheidung," in *Humanismus Heute?* (Berlin: Kongress Verlag, 1961), 10.

[127] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *In a Cold Crater: Cultural and Intellectual Life in Berlin, 1945-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 125.

[128] Wilhelm Girnus, "Humanismus in der Entscheidung," 12.

logical paternalism which seeks to seeks to suffocate the rise of life through a concept of the godly that is completely separated from all things human[129]

This second conception of humanism was grounded in the idea of the free development of human capacities. It was, in a sense, prior to the conception of humanism embodied by the study of classical and Renaissance figures in that the freedom to allow humans to become that which the characteristics of their individual being made possible was necessary in order for "humanistic" art, literature, and science to have their salutary effects.

It was important, Girnus argued, that one not view the humanism of the Renaissance as an ahistorical source of transcendentally valid truths, but rather as an element of a historical process. The writers of the Renaissance had used the works of Greek and Roman antiquity as a means of legitimating their own ideas and making them more forceful. As a result, their work had often been taken to be the expression of absolute values, when "in reality [their views] constituted nothing other than a particular stage of historical maturation in the development of the idea of humanity (*Menschlichkeit*)."[130] One consequence of mistaking a stage in a developmental process for the endpoint of that process was that it resulted in a Eurocentrism that vitiated the universalistic claims of humanism. As Girnus noted,

> The narrowness of view obviously consists in the limitation of the development of humanism to the Hellenic-Latin cultural area and the relationship of the nations of Europe to it. That contradicts the concept of humanity, for its validity stands or falls with its applicability to the totality of mankind.[131]

Humanistic values were apparent from even a cursory examination of the literatures of various non-Western cultures, such as China, India, Iran, and the Arabic speaking world, and this extra-European had found its way into European culture via the works of figures such as

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[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., 14.
[131] Ibid.

Averroës, Avicenna, Omar Khayyam, and Rabindranath Tagore. Girnus had, at the outset of the essay, disclaimed any deep knowledge of cultural developments outside of Europe, yet it was his project to show the universality of humanistic values. Every form of European nationalism was contradictory to the "essence of humanism as a universal human doctrine." This was also true by extension of Western cultural chauvinism:

> It would be a harmful misapprehension of humanism if one was to believe that one could only be a humanist if one was in a position to read *Antigone* in the Greek original. It is a deficiency in the in the present intellectual development of Europe that the humanism of non-European cultures has remained the object only of narrow studies.[132]

It was important that the socialist humanism of the GDR was only one of many expressions of humanism. But it was similarly important that the GDR was the highest expression of humanism.

Scholarship in the GDR remained wedded to the Marxist-Leninist historical narrative throughout the lifetime of the SED state. This narrative was grounded in a highly schematized version of Marx's theory of historical stages, buttressed at appropriate points by Lenin's theory of imperialism. While there could be variations in the path less developed nations took to the socialist utopia, it was clear that it must lead through full industrialization. Thus, the socialist states of the developed world could act as models of the utopia to come because they had achieved both the most advanced economic position (industrialization) and the most advanced social system (a classless socialist society).

Humanism was the universal norm that underpinned the socialist order. It was grounded in an idea of human essence common to every human being. "The human being differs from existing entities because the totality of its facilities, capacities, and its effects are

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[132] Ibid., 15.

greater than all other entities."[133] This view, Girnus argued, was common to understandings of the human based on religion and myth as well as to those with a natural scientific basis: both Goethe and Darwin believed this to be the case. While human beings might be inferior to some other beings (animals for instance) in terms of some particular quality, in its totality the human being was superior.

The particular form that humanism took was dependant on the social relations obtaining in the societies in which it emerged. The humanism of the ancient Greeks took the form of an opposition to "the matriarchal order" and to "ancient oriental despotism," while that of the Renaissance was shaped by the struggle against feudalism and dry scholasticism.[134] The humanism of the modern world was similarly shaped by its historical moment. National Socialism had been the most direct opponent of humanism in the recent past. Against Humboldt's idea that all the races of humanity were forms of a common underlying type, the National Socialists had argued that the Aryan/German race stood above all the others. Paying little heed to the salient differences, Girnus claimed that West Germany was advancing "practically the same claim" against the German Democratic Republic and the socialist states with which it was allied.[135] The claims by the Bonn government that they were obliged to extend their "forms of domination" in order to free the peoples of the east was analogous, according to Girnus, to the Nazi assertion of racial superiority.

Now, humanism was facing off against full blown modern capitalism, with the United States as the "El Dorado" of the capitalist system. The mode of life in the United States did not live up to the humanistic ideals that it so ostentatiously espoused. The work of bourgeois sociologists and psychologists showed life under capitalism had deleterious effects on human

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[133] Ibid., 17-18.
[134] Ibid., 23.
[135] Ibid., 28-29.

beings. Capitalist society functioned to deform and destroy the human personality. This "de-personalization" gave rise to "ever graver psychic and neurotic disturbances, and hence to increasing symptoms of moral degeneracy."[136] The western capitalist societies were prone to all sorts of social ills, such as alcoholism, illiteracy, and suicide that, Girnus claimed, either did not exist in socialist countries or only remained in vestigial form. Ultimately, the most important question of humanism in the modern era was that of war and peace, on which the survival of the human race depended. Opposition to war was a recurrent theme in the Western philosophy since the Enlightenment, but now the advent of nuclear weapons raised the opposition to war to a "categorical imperative." The choice was between the war mongers of the European and North American capitalist societies and the systematic commitment to peace embodied by the socialist countries.

Nineteen sixty one was a momentous year in the history of international communism. The Berlin Wall went up that summer, slowing to a trickle to flow of scholars and technicians from east to west and starkly defining the Cold War border. In October, the 22nd Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union took place in Moscow. Khrushchev criticized the Albanian communists for failing to distance themselves from Stalinism, but the Chinese representative Zhou Enlai defended the Albanians and offered his own counter-critique of the developments in Soviet policy since the death of Stalin. This was the most public manifestation to that point of the split which had been brewing between the two most significant communist powers since the late 1950s.[137] The Chinese leader Mao Zedong had since the 1930s developed his own version of communist thought, one which deviated from Stalinism in terms of its positive evaluation of the revolutionary role of the peasantry. None-

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[136] Ibid., 33.

[137] On the longer history of the conflict see Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

theless, even after his theoretical "emancipation"[138] from Stalin in the 1930s, Mao continued to work closely with the Soviets in a common communist front against the United States and its allies. In the wake of Stalin's death, Soviet policy had moved in the direction of inter-systemic competition framed by peaceful coexistence, while Mao remained committed to a more aggressive approach. In the late 1950s, Mao had undertaken the so-called "Great Leap Forward," an attempt, modeled on Stalin's Five Year Plans of the 1930s, to short circuit the Marxist stage theory by jumping from an agricultural society to fully fledged communism. As in the case of Stalin's Five Year Plans, the result was a catastrophic failure that led to devastating famine conditions in 1960 and 1961. In his secret speech to the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev had criticized Stalin's policies of forced collectivization, and his critique of Stalin's approach and he was perceived by the Chinese as extending a similar critique to their own burgeoning efforts at agricultural collectivization.[139] The failure of the Great Leap Forward gave new force to these criticisms and aggravated the differences between Soviet and Chinese approaches to foreign policy.

This new twist in the geopolitical conflict had consequences for the humanistic philosophy that had arisen in the context of the post-Stalinist intellectual thaw. In an article in the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* published early in 1962, the philosophers Klaus Hilbig and Günther Grohmann sought to analyze the situation of humanism in the wake of the 22nd Party Congress. The congress, Hilbig and Grohmann argued, had showed that the capitalist system was tottering and ripe for social revolution. They took as their remit the task of investigating the ethical implications of this situation.

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[138] The term is Lüthi's, see ibid., 28.
[139] Ibid., 46.

Hilbig and Grohmann began by situating their arguments in the broader Marxist developmental narrative. The most powerful force shaping modern history was the rise of the proletariat, the social class that, in its political action, carried with it the interests of humanity in general because its historical task was to bring about a classless society. This was in the process of happening in the socialist lands, but West German critics, from Karl Jaspers on the right to Waldemar von Knoeringen[140] on the left, sought to fill people with fear in the face of the onset of a socialist future. Western critics argued that communism failed to understand that human beings were basically incapable of ethical improvement and, thus, unworthy of freedom. Communism, by contrast, was committed to an ethic of human progress to be achieved via just social relations. Unlike the western critics, whose ideas amounted to abandoning the bulk of humanity to exploitation via capitalism and imperialism, communists had a plan for the improvement of the condition of mankind. The Soviet leadership had countered these capitalist claims in a positive way, laying out policy goals meant to pave the way for the further progress of this project:

> The answer of the communists to the lies about the ethical weakness of eternally imperfect humanity in the resolution of the 22nd Party Congress of the CPSU is given in temporal unity by the three primary tasks for the construction of communism: the construction of the material-technical basis of communism, the establishment of communist social relations, and the education of communist personality.[141]

Humanism had a key role to play in this process. It was not merely the case that communism was the result of a law-governed historical process. Communism was the first political doc-

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[140] Waldemar Freiherr von Knoeringen (1906-1971) was the leader the Bavarian SPD from 1947 to 1963 and gave the opening speech at the 1959 SPD Party Congress in Bad Godesberg in which he supported the party's renunciation of revolutionary socialism.

[141] Klaus Hilbig and Günther Grohmann, "Der humanistische Charakter des Programms und der Politik der Kommunistischen Partei der Sowjetunion und das antihumanistische Wesen des Imperialismus " *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 10, no. 2 (1962): 134.

trine "that objectively coincided with the interests of all human beings, and that objectively implied the essence of humanism, the unfolding of the capacities of the human essence (*menschliche Wesenskräfte*)."[142] The task at hand was to build humanism into the long term narrative of Marxist development as a basis for ethical claims. For much of the twentieth century, Marxist theorists had viewed questions of ethics as epiphenomenal to the playing out of historical laws in which the establishment of a classless society was to be the end point. The focus on humanism as a basis for Marxist-Leninist ethics represented an important change of perspective, one that required squaring a very stubborn logical circle. If ethical values were not to be hypostatized residues of the social relations that were themselves historically transitory, it would then be problematic to talk in substantive terms about ethics, since absent the appropriate social relations ethical precepts would have the character of speculation.

Hilbig and Grohmann situated these ethical considerations into the narrative of the geopolitical conflict then ongoing, in particular the militarism of the capitalist world and the role of imperialism in ramping up the threat of war. The underlying sources of war were class conflict and the profit motive, both of which were abolished in socialist societies. Instead of a society of competing interests, socialism was the unifier of all human interests, and thus the only solution to capital-driven processes of war and colonial enslavement. The conflict between capitalism and communism was, so Hilbig and Grohmann contended, shaped by the essential qualities of the respective systems. "As peace is connected with socialism-communism," they argued, "so are aggression and war part of capitalism's own essence."[143] In order to achieve peaceful coexistence, for this was the goal that Khrushchev had reaffirmed at the 22nd Party Congress, what was needed was "merciless class conflict." Peace

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid., 137.

could not be defended by "talk of 'universal love of humanity' but rather through exposure of war plans, not through 'wait for better times' but rather through the taming of the imperialists and the militarists will peace be defended."[144]

But if peace was not to be defended by "talk of 'universal love of humanity'" how then was humanism to figure into the project? Hilbig and Grohmann provided no immediate answer. Instead they shifted their discussion to the question of freedom, which they presented in the standard Marxist-Leninist terms: "From the observation of the relationship of communism to the humanistic ideal of freedom, we make the assumption that the most universal content of humanitas is the unfolding of essential human capacities."[145] As support for this position, they offered a reference to Hager's *Sozialismus und Humanismus*. From there, the argument proceeded along familiar lines. The claim that communist society provided the best opportunity for the unfolding of human capacities was advanced as the normative basis for the claim that the construction of socialist society was the leading edge of the advancement of humanity as a whole. The productive capacities of the socialist world were growing to the point that they would soon surpass those of the capitalist world in terms of material production. History, developing in law-like intelligible patterns, was moving inexorably in the direction of the spread of socialism to all corners of the globe. The spread of socialism was synonymous with the spread of human freedom. Freedom was the most humanistic of values because it permitted the fullest development of "essential human capacities" (*menschliche Wesenskräfte*).

Georg Mende and Egon Oetzel's "Der sozialistische Humanismus als streitbarer Humanismus," published in the same issue of the Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie, ad-

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[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., 138.

dressed many of the same themes. Once again, it was the 22nd Party Congress which had paved the way for a new stage of historical progress in which the construction of socialism and its spread throughout the world would facilitate the realization of the humanistic values that the capitalist countries espoused but did nothing to realize. Mende and Oetzel made explicit the idea that a new level of social development had been achieved and that the realization of the communist utopia was at hand: "After the extensive realization of the humanistic ideals of socialism, the 22nd Party congress was able to elevate the humanistic ideals of communism to a concrete program of struggle."[146] The realization of this humanistic program would require a humanism that was not given to contemplation or passivity, but a militant humanism (*streitbarer Humanismus*). Humanism was militant when it was actively committed to class struggle, the motor which drove the historical process. Counterrevolutionary forces in West Germany and in the capitalist world generally were seeking to drive a wedge between socialism and humanism, just as they were trying to drive wedges in between the socialist peoples:

> Particularly in times of acute class conflict, the opponents [of socialism] intensify their attempts to foment antagonism between socialism and humanism. That could just as well be seen at the time of the imperialist inspired fascist putsch attempt of 17 June 1953, as in the counterrevolutionary events in the autumn of 1956 in Hungary. The decisive measures taken by our government on 13 August 1961 were and are a renewed occasion for the imperialist politicians and ideologues to denigrate the peaceful politics of our workers' and farmers' state as supposedly violent and totalitarian – and therefore as anti-humanistic.[147]

The ideologists of West German capitalism were seeking to use the construction of the Berlin Wall, the "measures" of 13 August 1961, as a means of challenging the humanistic creden-

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[146] Georg Mende and Egon Oetzel, "Der sozialistische Humanismus als streitbare Humanismus," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 10, no. 2 (1962): 149.
[147] Ibid., 152.

tials of the GDR. But the wall had been made necessary by years of "imperialistic frontline city politics" (*imperialistischer Frontstadtpolitik*), in which Berlin had been the site of human trafficking, child theft, and all sorts of murderous provocations. The wall had to be built to defend humanistic socialism against the depredations of forces of imperialistic capitalism.

Both Hilbig and Grohmann and Mende and Oetzel walked a fine political line in their articles. On the one hand, it was obligatory to offer public support to the policies of the Soviet Union. On the other, the East German leadership was never comfortable with de-Stalinization. Nor were they very interested in peaceful coexistence as a policy. The West German opponent was right on their doorstep, providing a ready haven for critics of the government line and educated professionals looking to cash in on their credentials.[148] It was much easier for those disaffected with life in East Germany to move seamlessly into a culture where German was the native language. The humanistic message was, in one respect, an attempt to provide ideological cover for a decision which seemed to be in direct contradiction with the commitment to human freedom that socialism implied. Those who were critics of the wall were either imperialist agents, or had mistaken the true nature of freedom. Freedom was not the atomized, exploited existence of human beings under liberal capitalism. Rather it was "the well-planned forming of new human beings," who would have the freedom to realize their capacities in the universal human community of a socialist society.[149]

Conclusion

Once it had been fully established as a positive element of the Marxist-Leninist program, humanism continued to be invoked as an element of the bill of charges against the ca-

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[148] John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and Its Legacy*.
[149] Georg Mende and Egon Oetzel, "Der sozialistische Humanismus als streitbare Humanismus," 158.

pitalist system and against the imperialist regime in the German state next door. Unlike in West Germany, where the cause of humanism declined in the face of economic development and political reintegration, in East Germany it remained a matter of the official lexicon into the 1960s. The entry for "Humanismus" in an officially produced philosophical dictionary claimed in 1966, "In the German Democratic Republic, humanism is the present and historical reality."[150] For the author (or authors)[151] of the entry, socialist humanism was the final realization of traditions of humanistic thought going back to classical Greece. Much of the entry is composed of a retelling of the history of humanism hitting all of the major historical landmarks, from classical Athens, to the Italian renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the German classicism of Goethe and Schelling. In each instance, the underlying point was the role of humanism as an ideology of resistance employed by the rising class against those currently in power. Thus, renaissance humanism was "not merely a spiritual rebirth of classical Athens" but at the same time "a revolutionary militant movement against feudalism and the spiritual despotism of clerical scholasticism."[152] With the advent of the work of Marx and Engels, the situation of humanism had changed fundamentally. Prior to that time, humanists had lacked a scientific means of realizing their ideas. Marx and Engels had linked the historical content of humanism with the historical mission of the working class, whose lot it would be to overthrow capitalism and to establish a socialist society. All previous humanism had been linked to the interests of a particular class. Socialist humanism was different in that it related to the formation of a classless society and was thus linked to the interests of every

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[150] Georg Klaus and Manfred Buhr, eds., *Philosophisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: VEB Bibliographisches Institut,1966), 243.

[151] It is impossible to know who among the eight member collective responsible for the book actually composed the entry. This is often the case in works published in the GDR because the state institutions preferred to stress collective, as opposed to individual, responsibility.

[152] Georg Klaus and Manfred Buhr, eds., *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, 241.

human being without exception. Modern humanism had been born in the struggle against capitalist society, but with the rise of communism, it had gone from being a negative, critical ideology, to positive embodiment in the socialist state.[153]

The appropriation of humanism in East German philosophy was intimately linked to the larger project of maintaining the legitimacy of the East German communist state. The defense of East German Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy was, in many respects, similar to the struggles over orthodox doctrine in Reformation-era European Christianity. The Catholic Church could not tolerate deviations from its doctrine both because of the truth of the doctrine itself, but also because of the potential of certain sorts of doctrinal challenges to become the basis for challenges to the institutional order. For the East German leadership, it was important to defend Marxism-Leninism as a true and scientific doctrine. It was also important to rebut attempts to locate the normative foundations of Marxism in an abstract conception of the human being. This bourgeois idealism masquerading as Marxism failed, so East German theorists argued, to take into account that the building of a socialist society was definitively humanistic in that it presented the most promising prospects for the free self-development of human beings. The party had the right to demand sacrifices in terms of immediate freedoms because the long term goals of the social order were fundamentally just. On this view, the party, as the organized power of the proletariat, was the arbiter of social justice and the correct interpretation of the Marxist corpus.

Humanism posed (or was perceived to pose) a fundamental challenge to this institutional and ideological order. Philosophy in the GDR, no less than in the rest of the socialist world, was a political matter. Philosophy was not, as the bourgeois ideologists would have it, a "free floating" pursuit of truth, but rather a key element of the struggle between socialism

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[153] Ibid., 241-42.

and capitalism with the task of intellectually legitimating the socialist order. As such, it was important that unanimity and *parteilichkeit* were maintained as decisive values even at the expense of "objective" truth. Dissident Marxists such as Leo Kofler and Ernst Bloch, whose experiences will be discussed at length in Chapter 3, discovered that deviation from the SED party lines, even by extremely sympathetic critics, could have drastic professional and personal consequences. The ideologists of the SED reacted defensively against interpretations of Marxism that gave too much weight to Marx's Hegelian antecedents. Hegelianism, as a variety of idealism, was inimical to the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint because it lent too much influence to intellectual abstractions and directed attention away from the material conditions that the communist state sought to create. Similarly, the focus on the human being per se was not consonant with a rigorous Marxist-Leninist perspective because it sought to create a normative basis for evaluating social conditions outside of the self-interpretation of the SED. As inter-systemic conflict became more intense at the beginning the 1960s, the SED, following at least to some extent a Soviet lead, undertook a change of emphasis with respect to humanism as a concept. The argument that socialism was, by definition, the more truly humanistic side of the Cold War conflict had been present in East German scholarly literature since the earliest days of the GDR. To the extent that humanism was given any positive content in the 1950s, it tended to be as an element of the project of appropriating the German and European cultural past and marshalling it as a basis for the legitimacy of the East German state. A positive philosophical appropriation of humanism was added to this cultural thematic towards the end of the 1950s. Here, the argument was that socialism created a political, social, and economic order that was ideal for human thriving, and thus that socialism was by its very nature humanistic. This Marxist-Leninist humanism either rejected or simply ignored

the idea that the situation of human beings could somehow form the basis for a critique of socialism itself. For socialist thinkers this represented a failure to take the totality of geopolitical and economic circumstances into account. As we shall see in the Chapter 3, the more loosely Marxist socialist humanism of the mid-1960s and the praxis-centered theorizing of the dissident Eastern European Marxists both shared in this failing. Socialist humanist thinkers deemphasized doctrinally rigorous Marxism. Rather, the human was seen as a normative basis for political and economic analysis. Socialist humanists and dissident Marxists such as those in the Yugoslav Praxis Group, represented a direct and internal challenge to the institutional order of the communist world by attempting to employ Marxist theory to critique the social order created by the Soviet Union and its political clientele. It is to this challenge that we now turn.

Marxism, in the form of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED), was one of the most powerful ideological forces in the postwar years in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Outside of the confines of the GDR, other versions of Marxism arose to challenge the intellectual hegemony of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. The political and social conditions in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), particularly in the early decades of the Cold War, strongly influenced both the tone and substance of the Marxist theory that developed there. West German Marxism took shape slightly later than in the east, both because most German Marxists has either been killed or forced to flee Germany during the years of National Socialism, and because many that returned after the war went first to the eastern zone. Marxist thought was mostly absent from the postwar West German intellectual public sphere. The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, re-founded in 1950 by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, constituted an exception to this, but even there the Marxism of their approach was somewhat muted.[1] It is indicative of the shape of postwar intellectual culture that when Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was officially published in 1947, Adorno had first gone through and systematically excised any mention of monopoly capital and most of the other Marxist language.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s a humanistic strain of Marxism began to arise in West Germany, due in part to the arrival of disaffected scholars emigrating from East Germany. In West Germany, *pace* frequent East German assertions to the contrary, the liberal

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[1] On the influence of the Frankfurt Institute in the early years of West Germany see Clemens Albrecht, Günter C. Behrmann, and Michael Bock, eds., *Die intellektuelle Gründung der Bundesrepublik: Eine Wirkungsgeschichte der Frankfurter Schule* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus,2000)..On the intellectual culture of West Germany in the early years of the Federal Republic see Monika Boll, *Nachtprogramm: intellektuelle Gründungsdebatten in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004).

capitalist state form allowed the formation of a public sphere which was relatively free from formal constraint. Pursuit of political programs explicitly oriented toward the overthrow of the current order were forbidden, leading to the outlawing of political parties from both the extreme left and the extreme right of the political spectrum.[2] Outside of this, however, the degree of latitude allowed to groups and individuals grew progressively wider during the era of Adenauer's chancellorship (1949-1963), as the democratic system became more firmly entrenched. The Social Democratic Party of Germany pursued a policy of anti-communist socialism. While the party officially cut its ties to Marxism in the Bad Godesberg party program of 1959, this merely put an official seal on what had been, in practice, the policy of the party throughout the postwar period. Marxism in West Germany was thus increasingly the province of scholars and cultural critics.

The main sections of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of four versions of dissident Marxism that were influential in West Germany during the Cold War. Leo Kofler, Ernst Bloch, and Herbert Marcuse each considered themselves to be in some sense orthodox Marxists, but their accounts of Marxism were decidedly different from the orthodoxy prevalent in the regions of actually existing socialism. The Cold War shaped their respective careers in decisive ways. Kofler and Bloch returned from periods of exile to the Soviet Occupation Zone, and both hoped to assist in the building of socialism in Germany. Both eventually ran afoul of the SED and both eventually emigrated to West Germany. Herbert Marcuse, on the other hand, became a naturalized American citizen during the Second World War. Although he returned to Germany only occasionally during the remainder of his life, he was still extensively engaged in German cultural life via his extensive contact with former col-

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[2] The far-right Socialist Empire Party (*Sozialistische Reichpartei*) was illegalized in 1952. The German Communist Party was made illegal in 1956.

leagues from the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, such as Horkheimer and Adorno. Like Kofler and Bloch, Marcuse's work in the decades of the Cold War reflected a two-front struggle against the deficiencies of Soviet Marxism on the one hand, and the repressive pseudo-culture of liberal capitalism on the other. Erich Fromm, the fourth figure discussed here, was less committed to orthodox Marxism, striving rather to build a non-dogmatic socialist humanism that would realize the original impulses of Marx's project.

For all four of these figures, concepts of human being played central roles in both their critical work and their positive accounts of Marxism. Each struggled against the tendency, found in both Second International and Soviet Marxism to reduce human beings to their class position, seeking instead to ground the normative claims of Marxism in an account of the effects wrought by capitalism on human beings. Although they developed widely different interpretations of Marxism, all four of these figures shared an approach that placed (or replaced) human beings at the center of Marxist social theory, rather than focusing on immutable laws of historical development. Further, all four shared a syncretism in their approach to social theory, allowing them to alloy Marxism with important themes in non-Marxist social thought, such as Freudian psychoanalysis. Finally, all four were strongly influenced by the Cold War as a contextual factor for their respective projects, which posed challenges to orthodox Marxism-Leninism on the one hand, and liberal capitalism on the other.

The works of Kofler, Bloch, and Marcuse will be taken as representative of the high-point of humanistic Marxism during the Cold War. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the transformation of Marxism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, during which several trends shared influence. On the one hand, there was an attempt, taken up most promi-

nently by Fromm, to create a space for a less doctrinally rigid socialist human that would allow anti-Stalinist leftists to find common ground. On the other hand, the rise of structuralist Marxism in France (particularly in the works of Louis Althusser) as well as the rise of radical Leninist (and in some cases terrorist) Marxisms in the extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany posed severe challenges to the humanistic Marxism of the earlier postwar dissidents.

Section I. Leo Kofler: Humanist Marxism and the Critique of Stalinism

Although he is little remembered today, Leo Kofler was one of the most influential figures in postwar German Marxism.[3] Kofler's work is important to this study for a number of reasons. He was both a convinced Marxist and an early postwar critic of Stalinism, for which he was forced to leave the GDR in 1950. In his theoretical works he sought to integrate humanism into a Marxist framework shaped by the concept of totality as developed by the Hegelian Marxists of the prewar era. After his departure from the GDR, his opposition to Stalinism, which had only been implicit in his earlier work, became both more explicit and more pointed. Throughout the 1960s, Kofler kept up a twofold struggle: against Stalinism and for a critical, humanist Marxism that took account of the value of bourgeois contributions to the analysis of society.

In the years before World War II, Kofler had been a member of the Austrian Socialist Party, and studied Marxist theory under the tutelage of the prominent Austro-Marxist Max

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[3] A *Festschrift* published in his honor in 1980 included contributions from Ernst Bloch, Agnes Heller, Adam Schaff, György Márkus, and Ernest Mandel, among others. Dietrich Garstka, Werner Seppmann, and Ernst Bloch, eds., *Marxismus und Anthropologie: Festschrift für Leo Kofler* (Bochum: Germinal,1980).

Adler.[4] A Marxist and of Jewish descent, Kofler had been forced to flee his home in Vienna when the Nazis seized power in Austria in 1938. He spent the bulk of the war years in an internment camp in Switzerland, during which time he was nonetheless able to attend lectures by the noted Swiss Marxist Werner Kaegi, as well as to write a book on the Marxist approach to sociology.[5] He returned to Germany from Switzerland in 1947 in the hopes of making some contribution to the construction of socialism in Germany. On his arrival in the Soviet Occupation Zone, Kofler discovered that he was to make a greater contribution than he had expected. The denazification of the professoriate in the eastern zone had left the educational institutions there desperately short of personnel. He was visited by representatives of the Socialist Unity Party, who convinced him only with difficulty to take up a position in at the University of Halle. Kofler had never completed his university training and thought himself unqualified to take up a teaching position. After years spent in internment, a teaching position and a chance to participate in the building of a new, socialist political order in Germany seemed to be an ideal situation. It was, however, not to last.

The trouble started in 1948, when Kofler published a work entitled *Zur Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (*On the History of Bourgeois Society*), which he had originally turned in as his *Habilitationsschrift*, the second dissertation required in order to receive a *venia legendi*, the credential required to teach at a German university.[6] The prospects for this seemed promising, although Kofler's work diverged in important ways from the approach to social theory found in the writings of Stalin and other orthodox Marxist-Leninists. Kofler's

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[4] Biographical details on Leo Kofler drawn from Dietrich Garstka and Werner Seppmann, "Aus der Lebensgeschichte Leo Koflers," in *Marxismus und Anthropologie: Festschrift für Leo Kofler* ed. Ernst Bloch, Dietrich Garstka, and Werner Seppmann (Bochum: Germinal Verlag, 1980); Christoph Jünke, *Sozialistisches Strandgut: Leo Kofler, Leben und Werk, 1907-1995* (Hamburg: VSA, 2007).
[5] Leo Kofler, *Die Wissenschaft von der Gesellschaft: Umriss einer Methodenlehre der dialektischen Soziologie* (Bern: A. Franke, 1944). This work was originally published under the pseudonym Stanislaw Warynski.
[6] Leo Kofler, *Zur Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft. Versuch einer "verstehenden" Betrachtung der Neuzeit nach dem historischen Materialismus* (Halle/Saale: Mitteldeutsche Druckerei und Verlaganstalt, 1948).

book was a long-form examination of civil society in capitalism. Its approach was consonant with the Kant-influenced approach to Marxism, which Kofler had taken from his teacher, Max Adler. Adler had held that the dialectic was a methodological principle of sociological analysis rather than an intrinsic element of the process of historical development.[7] This sociology was paired with an attempt to make Kantian ethics consonant with Marx's critique of the effects of the capitalist mode of production on human beings. Kofler's work was shaped in important ways by Adler. His history of bourgeois society was a sociology of the intellectual life of the capital owning classes. When Kofler proposed the idea to the Central Administration for Popular Education, he was able to submit supporting opinions on his work from a number of his colleagues, among them the renowned historian Walter Markov.[8]

The publication of Kofler's book took place during a period in the prehistory of East Germany. The period immediately following the end of the war had been one of relative intellectual freedom. The SED and their allies in the Soviet Military Administration were prepared to show ideological leniency in the hopes of drawing intellectuals and other fellow travelers into the orbit of the party. Given the paucity of properly ideologically committed intellectuals, a wider degree of freedom of opinion was allowed.[9] As the 1940s drew to a close and the prospects for a reunification of the occupied zones of Germany faded, the SED underwent a period of Stalinization, which was felt throughout the intellectual world of the eastern zone as a tightening of the reins of political orthodoxy.[10] The result of this transition has been described by the historian Norbert Kapferer with the term *Kaderphilosophie* (cadre

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[7] Max Adler, *Das Soziologische in Kants Erkenntniskritik* (Wien: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1924).

[8] Christoph Jünke, *Sozialistisches Strandgut: Leo Kofler, Leben und Werk, 1907-1995*, 207f.

[9] Magdalena Heider, *Politik, Kultur, Kulturbund: zur Gründungs- und Frühgeschichte des Kulturbundes zur Demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands 1945-1954 in der SBZ/DDR*.

[10] On the process of Stalinization in the SED generally see Andreas Malycha, *Die SED: Geschichte ihrer Stalinisierung 1946-1953* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2000).

philosophy), an approach which saw the philosopher not as a lone seeker for truth but as a functionary of the party, responsible for the production of ideological weapons with which to combat the philosophy of the bourgeoisie.[11]

The process of Stalinization in Halle was heralded in November 1948 by a speech given by Otto Grotewohl, then a member of the governing council of the SED, in which he stressed that "from now on it will not be tolerated that the students should remain ignorant of Marxist philosophy."[12] Kofler had become progressively more alarmed by the influence of the "Stalin cult" during the months he had spent in the eastern zone. In the summer of 1948, Kofler attended a four month long professional development course at the "Karl Marx" Party Academy in Berlin-Kleinmachnow. In the course of the discussions there, Kofler had the temerity to assert, contrary to Stalinist orthodoxy, that totality was part of the categorical structure of the dialectic. According to the Marxist-Leninist view, totality was a hangover from Marx's youthful Hegelianism, one which was did not comport with the view of Marxism as a scientific project of deriving laws of historical development comparable to those discovered by the natural sciences. A row erupted between Kofler and Kurt Hager, one of the SED's chief ideologists, when Kofler left the seminar room and returned with his heavily underlined edition of Marx's *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* with which to buttress his arguments.[13]

This was a particularly inauspicious time for Kofler to have chosen not to toe the party line. The split in June 1948 between Tito's Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union had raised the stakes of orthodoxy throughout the communist world. In Germany, it was becoming increa-

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[11] Norbert Kapferer, *Das Feindbild der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie in der DDR, 1945-1988*.

[12] Quoted in a diary entry by Viktor Klemperer from 31 October 1948, in Victor Klemperer, Walter Nowojski, and Christian Löser, *So sitze ich denn zwischen allen Stühlen: Tagebücher 1945-1959*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1999), 601.

[13] Christoph Jünke, *Sozialistisches Strandgut: Leo Kofler, Leben und Werk, 1907-1995*, 222-24.

singly clear that Stalin's plan for unification and neutralization of Germany would not succeed and that socialism would be built in earnest in the eastern zone. The increasingly aggressive moves by the SED to insure doctrinal conformity had the effect of disillusioning those not satisfied with the party line. In March 1949, Wolfgang Leonhard, an instructor at the Karl Marx Party Academy and a member of the Ulbricht group in Moscow during the war, fled to Yugoslavia. This was viewed with particular alarm in the governing circles of the GDR because Leonhard had chosen to flee not to the capitalist west but to another communist state.[14]

The consequences of Kofler's resistance to party orthodoxy were not long in arriving. His *Zur Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* began to come under concerted attack. Kofler was assailed in the party journal *Einheit* in two articles written by Rugard Otto Gropp, a former student of Ernst Bloch and one of the most aggressive defenders of the SED's version of Marxism.[15] Gropp's first article, published in June 1949 under the title "Unmarxistische Geschichtsdeutung" (Non-Marxist interpretation of history), began by accusing Kofler of devaluing the critical capacities of Marxist theory. "He gives us to understand," wrote Gropp, "that for him historical materialism is not yet the science of society, but needs to be replaced by something new, a deeper understanding."[16] Gropp quickly moved on to an attack on Kofler's use of the concept of totality. In dialectical (and thus in Marxist) thought, the concept of totality functions to shift attention away from individual details and toward a focus on their dynamic action with larger wholes. Gropp argued that although Kofler had invoked the concept of totality, he had done so in a way that merely ensconced Marx in the tra-

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[14] Ibid., 225.
[15] Rugard Otto Gropp, "Unmarxistische Geschichtsdeutung," *Einheit* 4, no. 6 (1949). Rugard Otto Gropp, "Kofler - Ein ideologischer Schädling," *Einheit* 5, no. 5 (1950).
[16] Rugard Otto Gropp, "Unmarxistische Geschichtsdeutung," 572.

jectory of 19th century idealist thought. Gropp rejected Kofler's attempts to view Marx's

theory in the broader scope of the philosophy of history in 19th century Europe. "Ultimately,

Kofler just reproduces in his own way the bourgeois methodological confrontation of Ger-

man philosophy with empiricism."[17] Rather than contrasting dialectical thought with the me-

taphysical thinking of bourgeois ideologists such as John Stuart Mill and Max Weber, Kofler

had accepted the premise that rationalistic thought or thought that was grounded in the under-

standing (*verstandesmäßig*) could make a contribution to an analysis of society based on the

concept of totality. The result was merely that Kofler had offered up his own metaphysics in

the form of a philosophy of totality.

For Gropp, Kofler's attempt to take account of bourgeois philosophy was merely ob-

fuscating the scientific analysis made possible by orthodox historical materialism. "Truth of

history," Kofler had written, "in fact comprises far more than the merely factual."[18] For

Gropp, this got the analysis of history backward:

> For Marxists, the truth cannot lie above or behind, but only in factuality.
> Marxism is a code of practice for an exact – understanding oriented (*verstan-desmäßigen*) – investigation of factuality, but not an understanding-interpreting world view.[19]

Kolfer's coquetting with bourgeois philosophy merely clouded the issue, rather than contri-

buting to the development of a clear and scientific presentation of history. Bourgeois philos-

ophy of history purported to be superior to the materialist view of history by giving a more

inclusive account of the complex factors of which historical processes were composed. On

Gropp's view, and in the view of the party ideologists, historical materialism was of value

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[17] Ibid., 573.
[18] Leo Kofler, *Zur Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft. Versuch einer "verstehenden" Betrachtung der Neuzeit nach dem historischen Materialismus*, 18.
[19] Rugard Otto Gropp, "Unmarxistische Geschichtsdeutung," 573.

precisely because it was capable of cutting through the superficialities and fixing on the concrete factors which were the true motive forces in history. In his attempt to alloy Marxist and bourgeois thought, Gropp argued, Kofler evinced an "intellectual-petty bourgeois resentment against the organized working class."[20] So far as Gropp was concerned, the only reason to give any attention to Kofler's book was because of the capacity of his "falsifications" of Marxism to confuse his readers, thus abetting the opponents of Marxism. Gropp concluded that, "[i]t would be advisable for Comrade Kofler to undertake personal self-criticism and to make modest efforts to understand Marxism before he decides to publish anything more."[21]

In the following months, the pressure on Kofler intensified. In September 1949, a review of *Zur Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* appeared in the *Tägliche Rundschau*, the official paper of the Soviet Military Administration.[22] The author (identified only as "G. E.") took Kofler to task for his engagement with bourgeois thinkers such as Troeltsch, Sombart, and Weber, resulting in a "conglomerate with pseudo-Marxist infusions" that was neither bourgeois nor Marxist. The following January, Kofler was the subject of a speech delivered by Fred Oelßner, the chief ideologist of the SED, to an audience of students and functionaries of the SED youth organization (the Frei Deutsche Jugend or FDJ). Oelßner attacked both the language and the content of Kofler's *Zur Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. After quoting extensively from Kofler's discussion of the concept of totality in historical materialism, Oelßner asked,

> Confronted with such gibberish, how should a student begin, how could a student really grasp what historical materialism is? And what purpose is Professor Kofler pursuing when he covers his false and deviational view under such gobbledygook, where we have classic and unambiguous formulations of his-

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 574.
[22] G. E., "Die Geschichte des Bürgertums nach Kofler," *Tägliche Rundschau*, 9 September 1949.

torical materialism from Marx, and above all from the groundbreaking book by Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*?[23]

Not only was Kofler guilty of filling his students' heads with Hegelian jargon, already theoretically surpassed in the works of Marx and Stalin, he had also, so Oelßner claimed, completely misunderstood the situation in the Soviet Union and the political implications of the planned economy. Kofler had criticized the Soviet Union for excesses of state power and bureaucracy. Here too, Kofler's error could be traced back to his fascination with the concept of totality.

> Professor Kofler, as a devotee of the principle of totality, ignores such small matters as the capitalist encirclement [of the Soviet Union]. Is it not clear that anti-Soviet contraband is being smuggled at the University of Halle, under the mask of a scientific interpretation of Marxism? And is it not time that the progressive students in Halle take up the energetic ideological struggle against the purveyors of this anti-Soviet contraband?[24]

This was clearly intended as a public calling out of Kofler in a circumstance where he was in no position to defend himself. Rudolf Sauerzapf, a young colleague of Kofler's at Halle sought out Oelßner during an interval in the proceeding to complain that it was inappropriate to offer such criticisms when Kofler was not permitted a rebuttal. Oelßner told him brusquely, "We don't have discussions with Trotskyists," and walked away.[25]

The accusation of being a Trotskyist was a sort of code in the language of the Stalinism. It was not meant as an analysis of someone's position, but rather to designate them as having deviated from orthodox Marxism-Leninism in a leftward direction. *Parteilichkeit*,

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[23] The sections of Oelßner's talk relating to Kofler are reproduced in Christoph Jünke, *Sozialistisches Strandgut: Leo Kofler, Leben und Werk, 1907-1995*, 238-40. Oelßner's speech was also extensively excerpted in the *Neues Deutschland* of 15 January 1950.

[24] Ibid., 240.

[25] Rudolf Sauerzapf, "Die Vertreibung des Leo Kofler," *Utopie kreativ*, no. 168 (2004). Viktor Klemperer was also present at the talk, describing Oelßner's comments as "excessive" (*maßlos*). Victor Klemperer, Walter Nowojski, and Christian Löser, *So sitze ich denn zwischen allen Stühlen: Tagebücher 1945-1959*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1999), 9.

submission to the discipline of the party in all things, was the chief virtue in Marxism-Leninism. Trotsky had violated this principle by opposing Stalin's assertions that the construction of socialism in a single country could be commensurate with Marxist doctrine.[26] In the wake of this, Trotskyism became a designation for any attempt to assert that the party was not fulfilling the demands of Marxist doctrine. The labeling of Kofler as a Trotskyist was meant to designate his thought as outside the pale of acceptable criticism of the doctrines of the SED.

Several months later, Gropp published a second article in *Einheit*: an even more extensive and vicious attack on Kofler and his book.[27] The title of the article, "Kofler – An Ideological Vermin," gave an important indication of the tone and content of this attack. The use of "vermin" (*Schädling*) as a term of abuse is significant, as this term had been frequently used in National Socialist propaganda, particularly in relation to Jews.[28] Gropp, a former inmate of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, could hardly have been unaware of antisemitic overtones of this term in the Nazi lexicon. In substance, Gropp's article took up where his previous contribution had left off. Since that time, Kofler had "in no way attempted to overcome his weaknesses and errors."[29] Rather than suffering from a lack of clarity while on the way to a fuller understanding of Marxism, Kofler's arrogant and demagogic falsification of Marxism showed him to be "an outspoken enemy of the party of the working class."[30]

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[26] Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky, 1921-1929* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

[27] Rugard Otto Gropp, "Kofler - Ein ideologischer Schädling."

[28] On the National Socialist employment of this term see Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1998), 552-57. The term *Parteischädling* (literally "party vermin") was a commonly used term of abuse in the East German party press. The use of *Schädling* on its own was much less frequent.

[29] Rugard Otto Gropp, "Kofler - Ein ideologischer Schädling," 457.

[30] Ibid.

Gropp then proceeded to his substantive criticisms of Kofler's work, which amounted to a laundry list of positions opposed to Stalinist orthodoxy. Gropp's criticisms fell under three headings: defamation of Marxism, the idealistic falsification of historical materialism, and opposition to the party. In his book, Kofler had attempted to locate Marxist theory within the broader trends of 19th and early 20th century European social theory. To Gropp, this amounted to an "objectivistic equating of bourgeois 'science' with Marxism."[31] Marxism-Leninism alone was capable of presenting a scientific account of history. The so-called objectivity of bourgeois science was, in fact, nothing but camouflage for continuing class domination.

> With Kofler a particularly crass and pathetic objectivism abounds. It appears not only in his overestimation of bourgeois ideology, but also in his direct attempt to merge Marxism with these ideologies which are opposed to it. This alone makes Kofler's completely un-Marxist position clear.[32]

Kofler, so Gropp claimed, had ignored the world historical role of the workers and peasants in the development of Marxism, in favor of a professorial approach which was prone to an all-too-easy acceptance of bourgeois "science."

Under the heading of idealistic falsification, Gropp took up the topic of Kofler's employment of the concept of totality, the issue which had led to Kofler's original conflict with Kurt Hager. For Gropp, Kofler's interest in totality amounted to a flabby metaphysics that confused objective and subjective idealism. By objective idealism, Gropp meant the influences of material processes on the consciousness of the proletariat. The interpretive method of totality, by contrast, was subjective idealism. This latter method was deficient because it did not take sufficient account of material social processes. Kofler's great methodological

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[31] Ibid., 457.
[32] Ibid., 458.

mistake was to confuse these two forms of idealism. One consequence of this was that Kofler could not satisfactorily analyze history. Kofler's commitment to bourgeois objectivism had led him attribute the rise of Nazism to "the deeply rooted undemocratic intellectual and spiritual structure of German people."[33] Gropp rejected this as a "new theory of race," one which ran counter to the communist analysis of Nazism as an outgrowth of capitalism and also raised questions about the East German project of reconstructing German culture in that it made the sources of Nazism intrinsic to Germans as Germans. This was all part and parcel of Kofler's failure to understand the central role of class struggle as the motor of historical development. With Kofler, socialism did not arise from class struggle, but rather out of "humanistic ideals."[34]

These attacks were followed by a campaign at the University of Halle against "Koflerism" which effectively isolated Kofler from his colleagues. Kofler responded by composing two works meant to defend his view of Marxism and to critique the failings of the university system in the eastern zone. In *Geschichte und Dialektik*, Kofler defended himself against the charge of idealism and implicitly criticized the mechanistic dialectics of his East German opponents.[35] Neither the materialism of the Enlightenment nor German idealism had, Kofler claimed, managed to bridge the gap between the cognizing subject and the external world of objects. Hegel had managed to remedy this through his philosophy of totality grounded in the dialectical method. The bulk of the book is devoted to an extensive critique of "vulgar Marxism." The predominant failing of this vulgar Marxism was its tendency to assume that subjecting history to a purely class-based analysis, one which simply took a contrarian position

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[33] Ibid., 461. The quote is from Leo Kofler, *Zur Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft. Versuch einer "verstehenden" Betrachtung der Neuzeit nach dem historischen Materialismus*, 434.
[34] Rugard Otto Gropp, "Kofler - Ein ideologischer Schädling," 461.
[35] Leo Kofler, *Geschichte und Dialektik; Zur Methodenlehre der marxistischen Dialektik* (Hamburg: Kogge-Verlag, 1955).

to bourgeois analyses, provided access to the truth of history. Formalistic and positivistic, vulgar Marxism failed to take Marx's critique of positivism into account and produced an account of history that was guilty of "bourgeois fact fetishism."[36] The solution to the problem of historical analysis was not a fascination with facts on the model of bourgeois science, but rather the employment of the concept of totality as means of developing a dynamic under-standing of broader historical processes.

Kofler was critical of Hegel's "idealistic basic conception" which prevented him from "coping with the world of facts in dialectical fashion."[37] A correct view of knowledge in general, and of historical knowledge in particular, had to be grounded in an account of the relationship of consciousness to the surrounding world. Consciousness was a function of life (*Lebensfunktion*) and as such could not be divorced or conceived of as separate from the material world:

> Consciousness is a function of life, developed in the struggle of highly developed animal species with their natural environment, which cannot otherwise exist without being equipped with the capacity correctly to reflect objective reality … Consciousness could not…fulfill its task of serving life if it did not have a capacity for correct knowledge of objectively existing reality, for the human being could not act practically without it.[38]

Kofler's view of the dialectic was grounded in the norms of human experience in a way that, in his later work, he would describe as anthropological. In contrast to the mechanistic view of history and its laws that characterized vulgar Marxism, and clearly he included the variety of

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[36] Ibid., 174.
[37] Ibid., 176.
[38] Ibid., 22.

Marxism being taught in Kleinmachnow, Kofler stressed the need to understand history as a totality grounded in the actual activity of human beings.[39]

As Kofler's biographer has noted, the position taken in *Geschichte und Dialektik* represents a variety of Western Marxism "coupled with Kofler's variant of self-critical reform communism."[40] The text was not explicitly critical of the authorities in the eastern zone, nor did Kofler draw explicit connections between Stalinism and the vulgar Marxism that he took as his target. Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (1938), a crucial and oft-invoked text in the arsenal of Marxism-Leninism, is mentioned only once. Neither did Kofler engage in specific criticisms of his opponents, such as Kurt Hager, R. O. Gropp, or Fred Oelßner. Rather, Kofler grounded his arguments in the original Marxist corpus, in particular volumes one and three of *Capital* and the *Critique of Political Economy*. Early works of Marx, such as *On the Jewish Question*, *The German Ideology*, and *The Holy Family*, were occasionally cited, but references to later works by Engels (*Anti-Dührung*, *The Peasant War in Germany*, and *The Origins of Family, Private Property, and the State*) as well as to Lenin's *Aus dem philosophischen Nachlaß*, were much more prevalent. This is noteworthy because, Kofler's Hegelianism, most clearly evident in the centrality of the concept of totality in his work, was not grounded in a reading of the *Paris Manuscripts* but rather in texts written later in Marx's life, texts which had already received the imprimatur of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. It has been argued that in *History and Class Consciousness* Lukács had extrapolated important elements of the Hegelianism of the *Paris Manuscripts*[41] without hav-

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[39] The Berlin suburb of Kleinmachnow was the site of the Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus. Founded in 1949, the Institut was tasked with the maintenance of ideological orthodoxy in the German Democratic Republic.
[40] Christoph Jünke, *Sozialistisches Strandgut: Leo Kofler, Leben und Werk, 1907-1995*, 257.
[41] Extrapolated because, apart from a few fragments, the manuscripts composed by Marx in exile in Paris in 1844 were not available until they were published under the auspices of the Moscow Marx-Engels Institute in 1932.

ing ever read them, merely on the basis of a reading of *Capital*.[42] Kofler's approach in his

work prior to his removal to the Federal Republic suggests the plausibility of such a reading.

For Kofler, this was orthodox Marxism.[43] As his rift with the ideological authorities in the

eastern zone widened, Kofler increasingly took the view that it was their view, and not his,

which deviated from true Marxism.

Kofler's critique of Stalinism began to take shape even before he finally departed for

the west in early 1951. In his final months in the GDR, Kofler composed *Kritik des ost-

deutsche Universitätssystem*, a text running to more than one hundred typescript pages.[44] Un-

like in *Geschichte und Dialektik*, here Kofler was explicitly critical of the university culture

in the eastern zone and of its effects on the society of the nascent GDR. The universities of

the eastern zone had foresworn the humanistic outlook that had been taken over into the re-

constructed university system in the early postwar days. But with the adoption of a strictly

Marxist-Leninist approach to education, undertaken in the context of heightened ideological

conflict toward the end of the 1940s, something important had been lost.

> The Marxist doctrine of the abolition of the relationship of expropriation be-
> tween the proletariat and the bourgeoisie loses all meaning (whatever ap-
> proach one takes to this theory) as soon as one divorces it from the humanistic
> perspective, that is, when one degrades socialism to a niggling and narrow
> "sausage-end socialism" (*Wurstzipfelsozialismus*) however this might be ca-
> mouflaged.[45]

Rather than developing the student's human qualities, education in the eastern zone had be-

come a training ground for bureaucrats and for those who would live under their rule. Young

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[42] On Lukács's prescience of the content of the *Paris Manuscripts* see Andrew Feenberg, *Lukács, Marx, and the Sources of Critical Theory*.

[43] According to his biographer, Kofler harbored hopes that *Geschichte und Dialektik* could be published in the GDR. Christoph Jünke, *Sozialistisches Strandgut: Leo Kofler, Leben und Werk, 1907-1995*, 262.

[44] This text has never been published. It has been partially excerpted in ibid., 259ff.

[45] Cited in ibid., 259.

people were being transformed into "subaltern and characterless tools of a narrowly practical and ignorant bureaucracy" in which "socialist education was in no way possible."[46]

Kofler's unwillingness to adjust to the requirements of this approach to pedagogy eventually forced him to depart the GDR. He was isolated in Halle, and although he was still sympathetic to the overall project of building socialism in Germany, he had come to believe that that agenda was being hijacked.[47] His failure to toe the line made him an apt candidate to be used as an example for other prominent independent-minded intellectuals in the GDR, figures such as the economist Fritz Behrens, the physicist Klaus Zweiling, and the philosopher Ernst Bloch, all of whom were seen as wavering from the official line during this period.[48] In September 1950, Kofler was stripped of his teaching position and was forced to sneak out of the GDR under threat of arrest.

The circumstances of Kofler's departure from East Germany illustrate an important feature of the ideological landscape of the early Cold War. There is a sense in which the first decades of the postwar period were the apex of influence of Marxist theory. The Soviet Union, which claimed to be a society consonant with Marx's ideas, was one of the two dominant powers in the world. The Red Army had been the principle force in the defeat of Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union exerted political hegemony across a wide swath of eastern and southEastern Europe. The doctrine of "socialism in one country," originally developed by Nikolai Bukharin and then made part of official policy by Stalin, cleared the way doctrinally

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[46] Ibid., 259-60.

[47] Even in the late stages of his conflict with the party, he was still willing to believe that matters might someday be turned around. In a later autobiographical interview, Kofler noted that he had been approached in 1950 by several SED functionaries about the prospect of forming an underground resistance group. Kofler peremptorily rejected this idea because he was "dedicated to the party and a good Marxist." Interview in Thomas Grimm, *Linke Vaterlandsgesellen: Sozialisten, Anarchisten, Kommunisten, Raufbolde und andere Unangepasste* (Berlin: Parthas, 2003).

[48] Behrens and Zweiling were both eventually rehabilitated, as was the historian Walter Markov who also came under suspicion during this period. Ernst Bloch eventually emigrated after years of official interference with his work, as will be discussed further below.

for the construction of socialism in the Soviet zone of control. Absent this doctrine, objections might be raised to the construction of socialism prior to the formation of a dominant proletarian movement in the context of the full working out of the possibilities of the capitalist mode of production. In the preface to *A Critique of Political Economy*, Marx had written that "[n]o social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society."[49] In the context of the formation of competing spheres of economic and political influence after 1945, the need to exhaust the possibilities of the current mode of production took a back seat to the exigencies of the immediate political situation.

At the same time, this hegemonic position was in constant need of defense. Lenin's "Twenty-one Conditions" (1920) had announced the Bolshevik Party's claim to define Marxist orthodoxy. The physical elimination of dissidents such as Leon Trotsky and the victims of the show trials in the 1930s highlighted the seriousness with which the Stalinist regime viewed the issue. Soviet policy in the immediate postwar period put this claim in to practice. As such, the defection of Tito from the international Communist movement in 1948 presented a direct challenge to the ideological hegemony of the Soviet Union, one which heightened the sensitivities of Stalinist officials throughout the areas under Soviet control.[50] The attacks on Kofler were an important element of the East German response to this challenge. The flight of Wolfgang Leonhard to Tito's Yugoslavia put a premium on the rooting out of ideological non-conformity. The occasion for the attack on Kofler's position had been his idealism and his willingness to take seriously the work of non-Marxists. The critiques by

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[49] Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 21.
[50] Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*, 305-11.

Gropp and others, by and large, presented an accurate account of the substance Kofler's position, but in the official view this position deviated from that which was acceptable. Having thus established that Kofler had expressed unorthodox views (and refused to renounce them), the authorities then sought to multiply his sins. Kofler was both a bourgeois idealist and a Trotskyist, as wells a Titoist, an enemy of the party, and an enemy of the Soviet Union.

After his departure from the GDR, Kofler held a number of academic appointments at several West German universities. In the period between his emigration to the FRG in 1951 and the early 1970s, Kofler built on the themes which had come to the fore in his conflict with the ideologists of East German socialism. These themes had a critical and a positive dimension. On the one hand, Kofler continued to develop his critique of Stalinism in a series of publications during the early 1950s. In the second half of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, Kofler also began to describe in positive terms a revolutionary socialist humanism, grounded in Marxist theory, which he viewed as a response both to Stalinism and to the liberal capitalism of the Federal Republic.

Kofler's critique of Stalinism centered on the deleterious effects of bureaucratization on human freedom. Stalinism had abandoned dialectics to such a degree that it was nearly unrecognizable as a Marxist doctrine. In place of dialectical social analysis, Stalinism offered a mechanistic economism. In *Das Wesen und die Rolle der stalinistischen Bürokratie* (*The Nature and Roll of Stalinist Bureaucracy*), published in 1952, Kofler argued that there was a sense in which Stalinist bureaucracy was comparable to the Puritanism described by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic*.[51] In both cases there arose, "a moralism that, in the bureaucracy, was

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[51] Kofler was not alone in noting the similarity between Stalinism and religious practice. The French sociologist Jules Monnerot compared Stalinism to Islam in his widely read *Sociologie du communisme* (1949). The Jesuit Gustav Wetter argued in *Der dialektische Materialismus* (1952) that Stalinism was comparable to Thomism in its approach to doctrinal questions.

less stringent than Calvinistic moralism and was, moreover less subjectively colored, but which proved itself strong enough to find a strict moral standard for judging the public and private lifestyle associated with individual practices."[52] Stalinism, like Puritanism, demanded "blind subordination to a sacrosanct social system (Geneva and Moscow) and a stratum conditioned by leadership based on divine or historical destiny."[53]

Stalinism translated socialist planning into an institutional order existing for its own sake and characterized by its own internal dynamics. This bureaucratization reached to all important sectors of social life. Intellectual life was dominated by an intellectual bureaucracy (*Geistesbürokratie*) exhibiting three "characteristic forms of deformation." The elimination of dialectics resulted in a "naturalistic-materialistic parody of Marxist philosophy and social theory. The Stalinist fascination with bureaucratic practice reduced historical materialism to "shallow economism." Finally, Kofler noted, Stalinism destroyed the humanistic core of Marxism. One had to recognize:

> …the dehumanization of Marxism on the path of the "oversight" and "forgetting" of the essential insights of *Marxist humanism*, for instance the idea of the all-around development of human personality on the basis of the independent and economic freedom of the individual.[54]

The normative core of Marxism was the free development of the individual promised by the overcoming of reified capitalist social relations. Stalinism abandoned this in favor of the development of specialized capacities useful to the mechanistic reproduction of the bureaucratic order.

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[52] Leo Kofler, "Das Wesen und die Rolle der stalinistischen Bürokratie," in *Stalinismus und Bürokratie: Zwei Aufsätze* (Neuwied am Rhein and Berlin: Luchterhand, [1952] 1970), 67-68.
[53] Ibid., 68.
[54] Ibid., 86-87.

Kofler's last systematic analysis of Stalinism from the 1950s was a series of articles published in the *Deutsche Universitätszeitung* in 1954 and 1955.[55] In the last of these essays, published on 3 February 1955, Kofler sought to differentiate the ethical implications of his position from the Stalinist ethics, but also from the bourgeois ethical thought prevalent in the west.[56] Marxism, both its critics and its partisans agree, did not provide an ethics in the sense of a theoretical system of values,

> Insofar as theoretical ethics sets itself the goal of illuminating the validity of the universal (that is, supra-historically valid) foundations of behavior on the basis of a morally experienced ought, this ethics separates – at least taking its attempt to reconcile the two poles retroactively as its point of departure – the "ought" (the normative) from the "is" (the "causal" or the "law-governed"). This separation contradicts the Marxist idea of "unity" of being, more precisely the dialectical identity of contradictions which does not permit the separation of is and ought.[57]

Marx's ethical thought sought to move beyond the formalism and one-sidedness of bourgeois ethical systems such as that of Kant, which attempted to specify norms that were valid for all human beings, irrespective of time, place, and condition. Kofler sought to differentiate Marx's ethics from both Stalinism and from the "ethical" socialism found in Western Europe. In this same period, Kofler published a number of essays critical of ethical socialism grounded on the work of the neo-Kantian philosopher Leonhard Nelson.[58] Ethical socialism

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[55] These articles, which originally appeared between May 1954 and February 1955, have been reprinted in Christoph Jünke, ed. *Zur Kritik bürgerlicher Freiheit: Ausgewahlte politisch-philosophische Texte eines marxistischen Einzelgangers* (Hamburg: VSA-Verlag,2000). There, they appear under the title "Marxistischer und Stalinistischer Marxismus,." Although Kofler occasionally mentioned Stalinism in reviews and short pieces from the later 1950s, the essays from 1954-5 were his last systematic analysis of Stalinism until his *Aufbruch in der Sowjetunion? Von Stalin zu Gorbatschow* (1986).

[56] Leo Kofler, "Marxistischer und Stalinistischer Marxismus," in *Zur Kritik bürgerlicher Freiheit: Ausgewahlte politisch-philosophische Texte eines marxistischen Einzelgangers* ed. Christoph Jünke (Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 2000), 58-67.

[57] Ibid., 58-59.

[58] Leo Kofler, *Marxistischer oder ethischer Sozialismus* (Bovenden b. Göttingen: Verlag Sozialistische Politik, 1955). Leonard Nelson (1882-1927) had not himself been a socialist, but his ethical thought had been influential on a number of socialist thinkers in the postwar period such as Alexander Rüstow, Gerhard Weisser, and Willi

was, for Kofler, an attempt by moderate socialists to play on the utopian inclinations of some more progressive sections of the bourgeoisie. This project wavered between "formal critical rejection of capitalist conditions" and an "anthropological pessimism" which saw human nature as an enduring problem for socialism.[59] Kofler argued that this approach made the same error as the bourgeois ethical thinking that it sought to supplant: it depended on the idea of an essential and unchanging nature common to all human beings. "They do not understand, or understand only in a less than essential sense, that this 'nature' that underlies humanity is in truth the nature of human beings formed by capitalist society."[60]

In the case of Stalinism, the problem was somewhat different. "Stalinism finds itself in the tragic…situation of being pressed forward along the line of historical development while at the same time attempting hopelessly to contradict it."[61] Stalinism falsified what Kofler referred to as "the ethical humanism of the Marxist doctrine," making the wellbeing of the state primary over that of the human development of the people ruled by the system. In the industrially developed countries of Western Europe, there was less danger of bureaucratization and dehumanization because the democratic state form allowed for more effective resistance by progressively oriented social forces. In the Soviet Union, by contrast, where such democratic traditions were lacking, bureaucratic institutions, bearing the legitimizing force of the language of human liberation, were much more difficult to resist.[62] The Soviet system legitimated itself through an aggressive "hypermoralism" that categorized any opposition to the official line as immoral by definition. In this respect it was, Kofler once again averred,

Eichler. On Nelson's influence on democratic socialism in postwar Germany see Anthony James Nicholls, *Freedom with Responsibility: The Social Market Economy in Germany, 1918-1963*.
[59] Leo Kofler, *Marxistischer oder ethischer Sozialismus*, 82-83.
[60] Ibid., 83.
[61] Leo Kofler, "Marxistischer und Stalinistischer Marxismus," 61.
[62] It is worth noting here that Kofler focused his criticism on the Soviet Union, leaving open the question of what democratic traditions might exist in East Germany and what the implications of this might be for the reordering of East German socialism along more humanistic lines.

similar to the overweening moralism of early modern Puritanism. In both cases, "a strict and exaggerated ethicism lies over the wide unethical content like a fog over the landscape and effects the mystification of true ethics in the uncritical consciousness of the individual."[63]

In his critiques of Stalinism from the first half of the 1950s, Kofler frequently alluded to a humanism in Marxist doctrine that formed an opposing pole to the formalism and bureaucracy of Stalinism, but also to the essentialism of West German democratic socialism. Kofler clarified his positive account of Marxist humanism in two texts, the first from the mid-1950s, the second published during the high point of student radicalism in West Germany in 1968.[64] The first of these was *Perspektiven des revolutionären Humanismus*, first published in 1953 and then reissued in slightly revised form in 1957.[65] Marxism, Kofler argued, had a humanistic-ethical fundamental orientation. In Marxism, "every individual theory or scientific statement is developed in such a way that they proceed from the human being, placing the human being in the center of the analysis and directing all its results toward the fulfillment of human needs (security, freedom, justice, personhood)."[66] Marxism was humanistic because, for Marx and for those who had correctly interpreted his doctrines, the human being was the central point of analytical orientation. This was asserted in contrast to Stalinist and similarly mechanistic versions of Marxism (such as that of the Second International) which centered their analyses on supra-human laws of historical development. For Marx, the fundamental aspect of social analysis was to find the human relations underlying the apparent commodity relations characteristic of capitalist society. In support of his argument, Kofler

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[63] Leo Kofler, "Marxistischer und Stalinistischer Marxismus," 66.
[64] Leo Kofler, *Perspektiven des sozialistischen Humanismus* (Köln: Internationale Gesellschaft für Sozialistische Studien E. V., 1957); Leo Kofler, *Perspektiven des revolutionären Humanismus* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1968).
[65] Leo Kofler, *Perspektiven des sozialistischen Humanismus*.
[66] Ibid., 6-7.

adduced (without citation) a quotation from the first volume of *Capital*, thus driving home

the point that the humanistic content in Marx's theory could be read out of the generally ac-

cepted Marxist texts, rather than needing support from the more controversial works of

Marx's youth (such as the *Paris Manuscripts*).

Kofler attributed to Marx a non-essentialist concept of the human. Rather than defin-

ing the human as the bearer of some particular essence or combination of discreet qualities

(such as the propensity to truck and barter cited by Adam Smith), the human being was, for

Marx, defined by a dynamic, historically and socially mediated process of self-creation. As

Kofler noted:

> Every epoch, every social order has its human beings. It is a deep and widely
> held error to believe that the human being is always 'at its base' the same. The
> *form* is the only thing which abides. The *content* of human life, that is, the
> manner of interacting with the natural environment, laboring or other kinds of
> action, concrete relations with one's fellow man, modes of thinking, history
> and culture, all constantly transform themselves.[67]

The essence of the human was constantly being defined by its relationship to the "social

community" (*gesellschaftliche Gemeinschaft*). Without the social relations that gave shape to

the individual, any attempt to conceive of it was merely a "meaningless abstraction." [68]

Kofler developed his conception of human nature as socially constructed by specify-

ing what he termed "forms" of human life which were ostensibly unchanging. Kofler speci-

fied seven such forms, including physical and mental organization, rationality, needs (al-

though not individual specific needs), relatedness to other human beings, and the capacity to

labor.[69] Human being was a "contradictory being" (*ein widerspruchsvolles Wesen*). It was, on

the one hand, an individual seeking to satisfy its own needs, on the other hand, a species be-

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[67] Ibid., 9.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 10-12.

ing (*Gattungswesen*) which could only satisfy its needs socially. Human beings were, thus, simultaneously self- and socially- related. Finally, Kofler added to these a quality of human being that was not, precisely speaking a form, in the sense of being part of the framework of self-construction, but an existential condition. Human beings externalize (*entäußern*) themselves in the context of their action, turning the object of their action into a reflection of themselves.

> But once present, the product shows a tendency to become independent [of its human producer], be it only that it becomes something given and present at hand which must be reckoned with or to which one is habituated, which constrains or threatens to constrain freedom of action. If the breach between the product and the human being becomes complete, the product becomes something ranged against the human being with which one is not finished, as a power that is both one's own and external. Then externalization becomes alienation.[70]

Human beings realized themselves through their activity, but the products of this realization then became part of the independently existing framework of being, liable to become the source of repression when the appropriate social relations obtained.

This framework for human development functioned in the context of a broader historical narrative of the attainment of increasing degrees of freedom. "History is the progressive realization of human freedom."[71] Not that it always appeared as such. There had been free human beings long before there had been slaves, and freedom coexisted, even in the modern world, with widespread unfreedom. To look at things this way reflected, for Kofler, a failure to understand the nature of historical processes. Slavery was a necessary part of the transition from one mode of economic organization to another, and this broader transition led to more overall freedom as a higher economic formation replaced a lower one. Viewed in terms of

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[70] Ibid., 13.
[71] Ibid., 15.

historical development, the institution of serfdom in the Middle Ages was a step forward from the slavery that had preceded it. It was crucial to remember that freedom meant different things to people at different points in the class structure of society. "The difficulty in the determination of the historical concept of freedom is that in class society there is no simple form of freedom that is valid in the same way for everyone."[72] It is only in the context of fully developed socialism that a non-contradictory form of freedom becomes available to all members of society.

Much of the latter part of *Perspektiven des sozialistischen Humanismus* is taken up with the analysis of the structure of bourgeois society, in which Kofler sought to come to terms with the situation of the left in West Germany in the late 1950s. This was the high period of the Adenauer era. The Social Democratic Party of Germany had, under the leadership of Kurt Schumacher and Erik Ollenhauer, been consigned to political opposition, fighting a two front struggle against the political power of the Christian Democratic/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the accusation, commonly found in CDU political literature, that the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) was consciously or unconsciously the agent of communism in West Germany. The Communist Party of Germany, whose ranks had been decimated during the years of the Nazi dictatorship, had never recovered the levels of popularity that it had enjoyed during the Weimar period. It was banned by Adenauer's government in 1956, by which time it had already been reduced to irrelevance. In the era of the so-called "economic miracle" and with the ever-present threat of communism embodied in the other German state, those on the political left in West Germany struggled to find traction with a mass political audience. In the later chapters of *Perspektiven des sozialistischen Humanismus*, Kofler discussed the problems of West German society at length, arguing that the

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[72] Ibid., 16.

freedom of bourgeois society was an illusory, commodified freedom. The condition of the working classes had indeed improved materially, but this did not change the fact of the alienation of human beings living in a society that re-presented the materializations of the inner lives of human beings as object alien to themselves and arrayed against them.

In a work published three years later, Kofler argued that there was a sense in which the old class distinctions in society had become less important.[73] Society was controlled by elites, some of whom were nihilistic and sought only personal gain and the maintenance of the status quo. Other segments of the elite had progressive or humanistic sentiments. The existence of the nihilistic elites could simply be attributed to the systematic logic of capitalism. The formation of progressive elites within capitalism was the result of two historical factors. They arose from "the disintegration of the once most influential and esteemed popular tribunate of the socialist movement on the one hand, and from the continuing effects of the glimmers of antinihilism and humanism out of the ashes of decadence and nihilism."[74] In all of the political and religious formations of the modern industrialized world there existed "a greater or lesser number of free thinking individuals who can resign themselves neither to the spirit of nihilistic denial nor to overblown subjectivism, fixated on empty freedom and aristocratic anti-populism."[75] It was crucial for the workers' movement to recognize the existence of these progressive elites and to work toward integrating them into a broad progressive front. In this way it might prove possible to break the domination of the nihilistic elites and the exploitive social order that they defended.

Kofler's text can be read as an attempt to come to terms with the disappointed hopes of the radical left in West Germany at the end of the 1950s. The SPD was moving steadily to

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[73] Leo Kofler, *Staat, Gesellschaft und Elite zwischen Humanismus und Nihilismus* (Ulm: A. J. Schotola, 1960).
[74] Ibid., 346.
[75] Ibid., 346-47.

the center, renouncing Marxism and dissociating itself from its overly-radical student wing, the Socialist German Student Union (SDS). The trade unions were also moving in a more centrist direction, as highlighted by the focus of the Federation of German Trade Union (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) on the pursuit of the 40-hour work week. The deprivations of the early postwar period had, by 1960, given way to a flourishing consumer culture and relatively low levels of unemployment.[76] Under these conditions it was difficult for those on the radical left to make the case that capitalism was a destructive and dehumanizing system.

For Kofler the early 1960s were, much like the 1950s, a period of relative isolation. He had great difficulties securing as position. He did not have many contacts in the west and his reputation had been somewhat tarnished by his work in the GDR, irrespective of his extensive critical writings on Stalinism.[77] In 1952 he sought to parlay a contact with Max Horkheimer into a position at the newly reformed Frankfurt Institute, only to be told by Adorno (who was handling matters of personnel at that point) that the Institute's financial situation would not permit it.[78] Kofler spent the balance of the 1950s teaching in the networks of educational institutions run by the SPD, the SDS, and by the West German trade unions. It was a precarious existence, poorly remunerated, and often punctuated with material and professional uncertainty. During this period, Kofler was associated with the independent radical left stretching from the left wing of the SPD to the vestiges of the KPD (before its

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[76] Michael von Prollius, *Deutsche Wirtschaftsgeschichte nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006). Hanna Schissler, *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*.

[77] Christoph Jünke, *Sozialistisches Strandgut: Leo Kofler, Leben und Werk, 1907-1995*.

[78] There has been some debate about whether the financial issues were the real reason for Adorno's rejection of Kofler's entreaties. See Alex Demirovic, "Spannungsreiche Nähe: Zum Verhältnis von Frankfurter Schule und Leo Kofler," *Mitteilungen*, no. 3 October (1999): 38. Demirovic holds that Adorno's claim of financial distress was plausible. In any event, it is not entirely surprising that Adorno would have had little interest in bringing a mature scholar with his own fully developed intellectual program into the fold of the Frankfurt Institute.

eventual banning).[79] Kofler published extensively in a series of more or less ephemeral journals such as *Wissenschaftliche Sozialismus*, *Die andere Zeitung*, *Weg und Ziel*, and *links*, which catered to the revolutionary, non-Stalinist left. The failure to associate himself with the Frankfurt School consigned Kofler's work to the "social political ghetto of the radical left."[80] By the beginning of the 1960s, Kofler's prospects had narrowed somewhat further because of the rightward shift of both the SPD and the DGB, which caused Kofler's revolutionary Marxism to seem out of step with the broader political imperatives of both electoral social democracy and bread and butter trade unionism.

In the later 1960s, Kofler's prospects improved. The rise of the radical left provided many more contacts and opportunities for Kofler, and his revolutionary humanism aroused much greater interest among students looking for options beyond the moderate democratic socialism of the SPD. Socialist presses in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland offered expanded opportunities for the publication of texts with a leftist orientation, and Kofler benefited from this. Between 1964 and 1968, Kofler was about to bring out not only a heavily revised edition of his *Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, but also three new works that, if they were not entirely new, presented important aspects of Kofler's thought in a new light.

In 1964, Kofler published *Der proletarische Bürger* (*The Proletarian Citizen*), which included slightly edited versions of the texts in his *Marxistischer oder ethischer Sozialismus* (1955).[81] In the added material, Kofler focused on the extent of reification in modern capitalist society, which he viewed as so much more extensive than at any previous point in history as to constitute a qualitatively new situation:

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[79] Hans Manfred Bock, *Geschichte des linken Radikalismus in Deutschland: Ein Versuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976).
[80] Christoph Jünke, *Sozialistisches Strandgut: Leo Kofler, Leben und Werk, 1907-1995*, 308.
[81] Leo Kofler, *Der proletarische Bürger; Marxistischer oder ethischer Sozialismus?* (Wien: Europa Verlag, 1964).

> [T]he extreme reification of *all* domains as well as of the ego and its interior is, at its base, a phenomenon of the most recent times. Thus, in contrast to the liberal epoch, bourgeois philosophy, theory, and literature have for roughly half a century been giving way to a definition of the freedom of the individual as mere possibility of redeeming oneself through a quasi-creative act; for the masses, by contrast, there is only sinking into the reified "fate" of impersonal "emptiness," "senselessness," and "isolation" in a mechanistic lifestyle.[82]

Life under conditions of modern industrial capitalism was shaped by a dialectic between the extreme individualism of the bourgeoisie and the de-individualized "massification" (*Vermassung*) that was the fate of the working classes.

Kofler developed this theme in more depth in *Der asketische Eros* (*The Ascetic Eros*), published in 1967.[83] Here, Kofler explored what the concept freedom had come to mean in the context of late bourgeois society. This society justified itself by providing its citizen with security, a modicum of commodities, and a certain kind of freedom, in particular from sexual taboos. In return, human beings in this society were forced to concede the possibility of un-constrained self-development.[84] The concomitant feature of the erotic liberation of late bour-geois society was an enforced asceticism.

> The modern high bourgeois form of repression conceals itself under a dense veil of apparently permissible political and, most prominently, erotic free-doms. The permissible Eros will be bought through repression and renuncia-tion in the extra-individual domains of life, and in the case of individuals this eroticism does not even have those effects that the ideology seems to prom-ise.[85]

Capitalist repression was alloyed with the provision of certain deficient freedoms that served only to camouflage the fact that the system was based on the expropriation of that capacity for creation that was fundamental to human being. To understand precisely how this was so,

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[82] Ibid., 40.
[83] Leo Kofler, *Der asketische Eros* (Wein: Europa Verlag, 1967).
[84] Ibid., 192.
[85] Ibid., 15.

it was necessary to extensively analyze the false freedoms of bourgeois and the human canvas on which they played out.

In *Der asketische Eros*, Kofler continued an engagement with the thought of Freud that he had first taken up in the newly written sections of *Der proletarische Bürger*. There he had argued that "the essential presupposition of the Marxian humanistic anthropology in principle contradicts that of Freud."[86] In Freud's thought, human beings were "work-shy" (*Arbeitsscheu*), but Marx had shown that labor was, in fact, fundamental to the human essence. Furthermore, Freud's ego psychology had posited human beings as a series of egos each relating to each other as an ego. For Kofler this reduced society to disconnected individuals, whereas on Marx's view socialization acted as a sort of collective superego that created a basic connection between human beings. Individualization was not an essential human characteristic but the result of living under the alienating condition of capitalist social relations. The Freudian architecture of the psyche posited a repressed libido, the same for all social classes, the impetus of which had to be worked out in labor and other sorts of achievements. For Marx, so Kofler contended, labor under capitalist relations of production was the form of repression *par excellence*, while human labor would facilitate the healthy expression of libidinal drives.[87] Finally, Freud had characterized human beings as fundamentally anarchistic and immoral. Marx had shown, on the contrary, that such conclusions about human beings failed to recognize that human personalities were constructed in the context of repressive societies. Freud had provided a serviceable analytical construct for understanding

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[86] Leo Kofler, *Der proletarische Bürger; Marxistischer oder ethischer Sozialismus?* , 68.
[87] Here Kofler employs the term *Lust* (which can mean both lust and inclination) in order to make clear the connections between Marx and Freud beyond the differences in their respective terminologies. There is an obvious connection here to the position taken by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* which will be discussed below in the section directly addressing Marcuse's work.

human being, but it was necessary to correct it by applying the lessons that Marx had taught about the effect of certain kind of social orders on the way human beings are formed.[88]

Kofler's academic career continued into the 1980s, and he lived to see the final collapse of the actually existing socialism that he had sought to build in East Germany. The transition to anthropology in *Der proletarische Bürger* constituted an important and fundamental change of approach from that taken in Kofler's earlier works, one which would only come to fruition in the years after 1970. Kofler's turn toward anthropology had a twofold purpose: to reintroduce a philosophical dimension to the empiricist social science that anthropology had become and to analyze systematically the human consequences of the alienation attendant upon life in a society structured by reified social relations. Yet, as the orientation of Kofler's *Perspektiven des revolutionären Humanismus* shows, he retained an interest in the human being as a normative basis for Marxist politics. Kofler was one of the few West German Marxists to explicitly characterize his work as humanistic. In general, Marxists were disinclined to do so both because of the historical baggage that came with humanism as a concept and because it seemed to imply an essentialist account of human being that Marx had explicitly rejected. But there were other prominent West German Marxists who sought to understand the way that the fundamentally human could be the basis for a politics that went beyond the bureaucratic repression of Stalinism and the false freedom of the liberal capitalist order.

Section II. Ernst Bloch: Utopian Humanism

Kofler's experiences are paralleled in a number of important ways by those of Ernst Bloch. Bloch was twenty two years older than Kofler, and thus was more extensively active

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[88] Leo Kofler, *Der asketische Eros*, 24.

in the years before World War II. He had been friends with Lukács when both were in their twenties, hanging around the edges of the circle around Max Weber in Heidelberg. Bloch had a dramatic, almost messianic personality, which often rubbed people the wrong way. Weber is famously reported to have complained about the pretentiousness of Bloch's behavior and suggested that he might send people to Bloch's residence to pack up his belongings and take them to the train station as a way of encouraging Bloch to leave town.[89]

In the years surrounding the First World War, Bloch practiced a syncretic approach to philosophy and social criticism, running, as one biographer put it, between the poles of Karl Marx and Karl Mai.[90] Bloch came to Marxism around the time of the war, but his connection to Mai goes back to the earliest days of his reading life. Mai stories of the American Old West had a powerful effect on Bloch's imaginative life during his childhood in Ludwigshafen on the Rhine.[91] Bloch's first book, *The Spirit of Utopia* (first published in 1916 and re-published in 1923 with extensive additions and revisions) had a strongly critical dimension and many Marxist influenced passages, without being Marxist per se.[92] In final section of the book, entitled "Karl Marx, Death, and the Apocalypse," Marx is invoked as a critic of the modern social order, which Bloch regarded as spiritually deficient, but Bloch's employment of Marx is strictly philosophical and avoids all engagement with Marx's materialist social theory. Bloch was conscious of the formation of the Bolshevik state in Russia, an event which he regarded in terms of the spiritual struggles of the modern world: "[T]he West, with its millions of proletarians has not yet spoken; meanwhile there stands, unbowed, a Marxist republic in Russia; and the eternal questions of our longing, of our religious conscience still

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[89] Arno Münster, *Ernst Bloch: Eine politische Biographie* (Berlin: Philo, 2004).

[90] Tony Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia* (London: Pluto Press, 1974).

[91] There are numerous passages in a book of essays and impressionistic writing published by Bloch under the title *Spuren* (*Traces*) in 1930.

[92] Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*.

burn, undiminished, unbent, unredeemed in their absolute claims."[93] Both Marx and Bolshevism were symptomatic of the spiritual condition of the age, a reaction against the bankruptcy of many of the most widely popular intellectual motifs of western civilization.

> Whereas the Romanticism of the latest reaction has inherited absolutely nothing proper, is simply coarse and backward, is neither factual nor enthusiastic nor universalist, but simply numb, obstinate, withdrawn, soulless and un-Christian; so with its pathos of the autochthonous it can elicit only the decline of the West, in completely animalistic stupidity, irreligious extinction: faded blossom and for today only civilizational atrophy, a navy, and the pessimism of historiographical registration as the only goal, but for Europe only prompt, eternal death.[94]

This typically elliptical passage highlights Bloch's critique of the European intellectual life in the interwar period. Important aspects of the old social order, such as belief in organized religion had been compromised by the violence and cynicism of the war. The nascent communist order in the Soviet Union was a sign of a rebirth of European culture, the precise outlines of which could not yet be discerned.

Marx, Bloch argued, provided European thought with a means of coming to terms with this future. Marx's view of history had predicted the demise of capitalism and the rise of a social order grounded in principles of freedom and human self creation. Although it was impossible to specify beforehand what shape this society would take, the importance of Marx's philosophy was the forward-looking dimension of utopian thinking. Marx provided a model of critical practice, in which one could unmask fetishized social relations and conceive of a better future the traces of which could be discerned behind those relations.

> [I]n order be able to think purely economically alongside capital, against its injustices, just as the detective is homogenous with criminal – where nothing but the economic aspect has to be considered; and only afterward to imagine a

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[93] Ibid., 236.
[94] Ibid.

higher life, as soon as the space and the liberation of the idea have been won, and the measureless lies, as well as the unwitting embellishments, excuses, superstructures, variables of purely economic functions, can be destroyed in favor of the always and finally genuine idea of society.[95]

Bloch closed this particular passage with a comment about Marx's thought which highlights the conventionality of his views at this point: As Marx had defined scientific socialism, "it is not our consciousness that determines our being, but on the contrary our economic being that determines our consciousness, the breeding ground of ideas."[96]

As the references to Christianity in the above-cited passage indicate, Bloch's thought had a prominent religious, or more properly eschatological, dimension.[97] As the 1920s progressed, the apocalyptic messianism of Bloch's earlier writings gave way to a more extensive engagement with Marxism, and a firm partisanship of the positive values embodied by the Soviet Union.[98] Bloch had spent the First World War in exile in Switzerland. He was forced into a second period of exile in the late 1930s, fleeing Austria with his second wife Karola, eventually ending up in the United States. Bloch's choice of haven was a peculiar one. Given his avowedly pro-Communist stance, and the fact that his wife was a Comintern agent, the Soviet Union might have seemed a more appropriate destination. The impression is strengthened by a number of articles published by Bloch during the show trials in Moscow in between 1936 and 1938. In one article published in early 1937, Bloch took French critics of the anti-Trotskyite trials in Moscow to task for not giving the official accounts of the trials suffi-

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[95] Ibid., 242-43.
[96] Ibid., 243.
[97] Bloch presented a more extensive attempt to combine Marxist and religious thought in a book on the German millenarian Thomas Münzer published between the two editions of *The Spirit of Utopia*. Kevin Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism: A Critical Study* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).
[98] One possible reason for Bloch's move away from an openly religious position was the death of his Catholic wife, the sculptor Else von Stritzky, in 1921.

cient credence.[99] In another article, published in the journal *Neue Weltbühne* in December

1937, Bloch once again defended the trials.

> There are a number of people today who seem to be somewhat disconcerted. Although many of them may have loved the beginning of the Russian Revolution, during the last two years they have lost their enthusiasm. They cannot get over the fact that this 20-year-old bolshevist child must rid itself of so many enemies, and that it discards them so ruthlessly. They are confused, yet they never really examine the situation. While scarcely understanding these sad events, and often admitting as much, they pass judgment. And so many do not join in celebrating the long common struggle. In fact, they almost repudiate it.[100]

Bloch justified the conduct of revolutionary justice in the Soviet Union by comparing it to

revolutionary situations in other periods of European history. The poetry of Klopstock and

other contemporary German partisans of the French Revolution were marshaled by Bloch to

highlight the need for stern measures in birthing a new society out of the ruins of feudalism.

Nonetheless, Bloch chose not to subject his own future to the vicissitudes of the Soviet sys-

tem, and left Europe for a parlous six year stay in the United States.[101]

It was during his period of exile, spent mostly in New York, New Hampshire, and in

Cambridge, Massachusetts. Bloch composed his three-volume *Die Prinzip Hoffnung* (*The*

Principle of Hope), one of the most important contributions to the humanistic Marxism of the

postwar era. *The Principle of Hope* was humanistic in a much different sense than the work

of Kofler had been. Bloch did not explicitly appropriate humanism as a term, nor did he at-

tempt in any extensive sense to specify what precisely a human being was, as Kofler had

done when he specified the forms characteristic of the human being. Rather, Bloch's project

was humanistic in the sense that it sought to ground Marxist analysis in the experiential and

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[99] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness; Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971).

[100] Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Zürich: Artemis-Verlag, 1949).

[101] Arno Münster, *Ernst Bloch: Eine politische Biographie*, 212-15.

imaginative life of human beings. In the first volume of *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch analyzed the content of fantasy life for people at different ages and in various locations within the class structure. Human beings are "a quite extensive complex of drives," acquisitive, sexual, power, among others.[102] Various attempts had been made to specify what the basic human drive was, but all that could really be said was that self-preservation tended to predominate, but even that was historically constructed. What could be confidently asserted was that all humans created a fantasy life as a partial fulfillment of the particular structure of their drives. This fantasy life had different characteristic forms at different point in life. Babies begin knowing only their cravings, which are then constructed as they interact with the world:

> …we also learn to wait. Because what a child wishes seldom comes in time. We even wait for wishing itself, until it becomes clearer. A child grasps at everything to find out what it means. Tosses everything aside again, is restlessly curious and does not know what about. But already here the freshness, the otherness lives, of which we dream. Boys destroy what they are given, they search for more, unpack the box. Nobody could name it or has ever received it. So what is ours slips away, is not yet here.[103]

As people aged they developed new fantasies based on the interaction between their inborn drives and the historical moment in which they lived. The Greeks had had certain kinds of fantasies, the Egyptians others, Europeans living in the age of mass culture and fascism still others.

Bloch located this fantasizing human being in the context of an ontology of the hidden and evolved a range of concepts meant to illustrate the dynamic processes in which human being was enmeshed. Like Kofler, Bloch followed Marx's sixth thesis on Feuerbach in positioning the essence of human beings as their potential for making their indeterminacy

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[102] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), 47.
[103] Ibid., 21.

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determinate, rather than in the position of any substantive quality or characteristic. In the section of *The Principle of Hope* dedicated to the analysis of anticipatory consciousness, Bloch wrote,

> Man is that which still has much before it. He repeatedly stands ahead on frontiers which are no longer such because he perceives them, he ventures beyond them. Authentic man in the world is outstanding, waiting, lives in fear of being frustrated, lives in hope of succeeding. Because what is possible can equally well turn into Nothing as into Being: the Possible, as that which not fully conditional, is that which is not settled. Hence, from the outset, if man does not intervene, both fear and hope are appropriate when confronted with this real suspension, fear in hope, hope in fear.[104]

Both Bloch's ontology and his account of human subjectivity stretched forward and backward from the moment in which the individual found themselves. Bloch wrote in several places about the subject's inability to immediately understand their lived experience, a condition he described as the "darkness of the lived moment" (*Dunkel des gelebten Augenblicks*).[105] Human consciousness was always engaged in the attempt to construe lived experience post facto and to build it into narratives that made not only the past, but also the future, comprehensible. Bloch accepted Freud's view of consciousness as segmented and not fully available to the self-analysis of the subject. "The inward glance," Bloch noted, "never sheds equal light. It is sparing, only ever illuminating a few parts of us."[106] The preconscious could not be accessed by the inward gaze but manifested itself in dreams and daydreams. The dream life of human beings was, for Bloch, a clue to the way that human consciousness related to the dynamic possibilities inhering in the world.

The forward dreaming fantasy life of human beings played out against the backdrop of a dynamic ontology laden with not-yet-realized possibilities. Bloch characterized these

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[104] Ibid., 246-47.
[105] In the darkness of the lived moment specifically, see ibid., 290-300.
[106] Ibid., 114.

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possibilities with the concepts tendency (*Tendenz*) and latency (*Latenz*).[107] Bloch thought of himself as a materialist, but he conceived of matter as dynamic rather than static, as "Being which has not yet been delivered."[108] Tendency refers to the pressure of objectively real possibility that builds up in the actually existing world until it breaks through the blockage of that which currently exists. Latency is a more remote level of objective possibility, possible futures lying below that which exists in the present. Tendency was a more immediate manifestation of that which is latent in the real. The moment of realization is what Bloch called the "Front." "There is," Bloch noted, "a driving in things in which our affairs can still be conducted, a Front in which our future, precisely this, can be decided."[109] This Front was the point at which the latent tendencies of the real break forth in the form of something new, which Bloch termed the "Novum." The sum of these concepts was a dynamic view of historical development, grounded in the Marxist view of history, but not reducible to it. But lacking the teleology of the Marxist historical narrative, it also it also lacked the motive force. Marx had argued that the proletariat would realize the transition to a new historical moment. Bloch, by contrast, located the force of change in the human imagination, and left the direction of historical change open to the vicissitudes of tendencies whose substance was difficult to discern until after they had manifested.

Bloch's interpretation of Marx was novel and, despite his protestations to the contrary, quite difficult to square with Stalinist bureaucratic centralism. *The Principle of Hope* included three sections in which Bloch engaged with Marx's thought at length. In the first, Bloch linked his concept of anticipatory consciousness to Marx's philosophy by dissecting

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[107] Ernst Bloch, *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978).
[108] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1371. Bloch also attributed this view to the interpretations of Aristotle by Avicenna and Averroes. See Ernst Bloch, *Avicenna und die aristotolische Linke* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1952). See also Vincent Geoghegan, *Ernst Bloch* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 29-36.
[109] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 288.

the "Theses on Feuerbach."[110] Bloch divided the theses into four groups: the epistemological group (1, 3, 5), the anthropological-historical group (4, 6, 7, 9, 10), the theory-practice group (2, 8), and thesis 11 which Bloch termed "the password" (*das Losungswort*).

Bloch returned to Germany in 1949. The authorities at the University of Leipzig were looking for a high profile replacement for the conservative philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer who had departed in 1948, looking for more congenial political circumstances in the west.[111] In the letter of invitation from the classicist Werner Krauss, Bloch was offered "unrestricted freedom" in his teaching and scholarship.[112] Bloch began teaching at the Leipzig Philosophical Institute in the summer semester, lecturing on this history of philosophy, although he had never actually habilitated. It was decided that Bloch would be allowed to submit *The Principle of Hope* as his habilitation dissertation.

Bloch arrived in the GDR at a time of increasing political tension. In 1949 the Cold War systemic competition was becoming ever sharper and, as mentioned above, there was a concomitant stress on the maintenance of ideological orthodoxy. Unlike Kofler, Bloch was not openly critical of the bureaucracy and hove to the party line. For him, the GDR was the realization of the socialist project and a state committed to the extirpation of the heritage of German fascism. At the same time, that East German state had an interest in maintaining good relations with prominent figures such as Bloch. Bloch's presence in the GDR lent weight to the intellectual institutions of the nascent communist state and increased the chances that other progressive-minded intellectuals would rally to the cause of creating actually existing socialism.

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[110] Ibid., 249-86.

[111] Peter C. Caldwell, *Dictatorship, State Planning, and Social Theory in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Arno Münster, *Ernst Bloch: Eine politische Biographie*.

[112] Quoted in Arno Münster, *Ernst Bloch: Eine politische Biographie*, 253.

Bloch reached the high point of his career in the GDR in the years 1954-1955. His philosophical credentials had been reaffirmed with the publication of three shorter works writing during his exile in the United States. These included a book on the seventeenth century German theologian Christian Thomasius analyzing the roots of Marxist doctrine in the historical traditions of Christian theology and natural law, and a second on Avicenna's interpretation of Aristotle's views on matter, in which Bloch posited a dynamic conception of matter as a basis for a Marxist ontology.[113] Bloch's third book from this period dealt with Hegel.[114] In it, Bloch argued presented a different take on Hegel than many of his other Marxist defenders such as Marcuse, Kojève, and Hyppolite, all of whom had de-emphasized the spiritual aspects of Hegel's thought in an effort to synchronize his philosophy more thoroughly with that of Marx. For Bloch, the mysticism of Hegel's thought was part and parcel of his rationality. Bloch analyzed the subject-object relationship, arguing that Hegel had been a process thinker and in that respect was superior to thinkers relying on fixed, static concepts.

Bloch's attitude toward Hegel was an important element of the break that began to form around this period between himself and the defenders of intellectual orthodoxy in East Germany. Bloch had ended the foreword to *Subjekt-Objekt* by saying, "Hegel denied the future, but no future can repudiate Hegel."[115] This, and Bloch's continued substantive interest in Hegel, ran counter to the historical narrative of Marxism-Leninism in which Hegel's thought had been definitively superseded by that of Marx and Engels. Hegel was an idealistic thinker who approach gave primacy to abstractions rather than to material causes, and in this respect he had to be corrected by Marx who had famously said that he had turned Hegel right

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[113] Ernst Bloch, *Christian Thomasius* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1949). Ernst Bloch, *Avicenna und die aristotolische Linke*.

[114] Ernst Bloch, *Subjekt-Objekt; Erläuterungen zu Hegel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962).

[115] Ibid., 12.

side up. Hegel had contributed the dialectical method, but this had been thoroughly integrated into Marxism-Leninism, thus obviating further substantive engagement with his philosophy. Little notice had been taken of Bloch's book when it had first been published, mostly because the text was so abstruse that it was difficult to pin down Bloch's ideas, much less how these ideas might relate to orthodox Marxism.

Bloch reached the apogee of his position in the GDR in 1955 when he was awarded the National Prize for Science and Technology (Second Class) for conjoining "incisive analysis and interpretation of the world with a progressive attitude."[116] A greeting to Bloch from the Central Committee of the SED on the occasion of his 70th birthday describe him as "a distinguished scientist and publicist" who had "for decades stood in the struggle against the demon (*Ungeist*) of German militarism and imperialism, and for a new, more beautiful life for our people."[117] He had, it was noted, remained loyal to this struggle even during his years of exile and had in his works laid the foundation for a socialistic life. "The publication of his highly distinguished works thereby contributed to the awakening of a healthy pride in the great cultural traditions of our people and to the propagation of ideas of humanism and progress in our German Democratic Republic."[118]

Yet, even as he was being lauded in the leading newspaper of the GDR, there were also signs of stress in the relationship between Bloch and the East German state. On the same page as the congratulatory article there also appeared a piece by Kurt Hager, Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED and one of the party's chief ideological watchdogs. Entitled "Parteilichkeit oder politische Neutralität" ("Party Loyalty or Political Neutrality"), it began

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[116] From the prize announcement in the *Neues Deutschland*. Cited in Michael Franzke, ed. *Die ideologische Offensive: Ernst Bloch, SED und Universität* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag,1992), 32.
[117] Zentralkomitee der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands, "Zum 70. Geburtstag Prof. Ernst Blochs," *Neues Deutschland*, 8 July 1955.
[118] Ibid.

with further congratulations to Bloch, but quickly moved on to a criticism of philosophers and other intellectuals whose "idealistic" thinking led them to eschew party loyalty in favor of political neutrality inside the ivory tower.[119] In the fourth of the article's eight paragraphs, Hager lauded Bloch's recent publications (the above-mentioned books on Thomasius, Avicenna, and Hegel, as well as the recently published *Principle of Hope*), but in a rather backhanded way. "A Marxist philosopher will have much critical to say about these works, while however agreeing with Bloch's humanism and his absolute party loyalty." While complimenting Bloch's work, there is an unmistakable subtext: Bloch work was not strictly orthodox, but was to be tolerated because of his overt loyalty to the party.

Bloch clearly did not take the hint, as in the following year he continued to lecture on Hegel and to pursue his "idealistic" philosophy in the face of increasing pressure to toe the orthodox dialectical materialist line. 1956 was year of crisis throughout the communist world. On 25 February 1956, Nikita Kruschev had delivered his so-called secret speech, "The Personality Cult and Its Errors" to a closed session of the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Within weeks, the contents of the speech had become widely known and Stalinist officials throughout the communist world were forced to come to terms with the change in the political landscape. The speech was not an occasion for liberalization, but rather a call to return to orthodox Leninism and to move away from allowing any individual to exert unrestrained power over the party. As dedicated followers of Stalin, Walter Ulbricht and the leadership of the SED were resistant to criticism of Stalin. The Central Committee released a moderately worded statement on 30 June 1956 acknowledging Kruschev's speech and the critique of the cult of personality around Stalin,[120] but the overall ef-

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[119] Kurt Hager, "Parteilichkeit oder politische Neutralität?," *Neues Deutschland*, 8 July 1955.
[120] Cited in Michael Franzke, ed. *Die ideologische Offensive: Ernst Bloch, SED und Universität*, 42-43.

fect of these events was to heighten tension within the party and to make its ideologues more watchful about the orthodoxy of public figures in East Germany.[121]

The tensions related to international events, such as the disturbances in Poland and Hungary, as well as those immediately preceding the arrest of Wolfgang Harich, have been described earlier in this chapter. Bloch himself had begun to come under direct pressure in the spring of 1956. In April 1956, Bloch was attacked by the Leipzig SED leader Paul Fröhlich at a meeting of the Leipzig District Administration. In a rambling speech on the general theme of rebutting criticisms of Walter Ulbricht, Fröhlich claimed that "an atmosphere counter to the party and the power of the workers and peasants" held sway in the philosophical faculty at the University of Leipzig. According to Fröhlich, Bloch had said the reunification of Germany could only be achieved if Walter Ulbricht resigned.[122]

> Assistants, students, who are members of the party, behave not only neutrally, but rather publicly support this opinion. Moreover, Bloch's philosophical analysis is accepted without criticism. It must however be acknowledged that Bloch's philosophy is not exactly based on the foundations of Marxism-Leninism. It is actually a falsification of Marxism, approximating vulgar Marxism.[123]

Later in the same meeting it was claimed the Bloch was setting up for himself a cult of personality along the lines of that for which Stalin had recently been criticized.[124] Later that month, Fröhlich heightened the pressure on the University. In a meeting of the district administration held on 26 April, the rector of the University, Hans Mayer tried to defend the institution against calls by members of the district administration for more ideological supervision over the faculty. Mayer took the position such pressure would only lead to the departure of

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[121] Dietrich Staritz, *Geschichte der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996).
[122] The sourcing of this quote is unclear, and Fröhlich himself provided none.
[123] Michael Franzke, ed. *Die ideologische Offensive: Ernst Bloch, SED und Universität*, 48.
[124] Ibid., 51.

talented individuals to the west. Fröhlich retorted that the only question at issue was one of socialist versus capitalist ideology. The supposed quality and reputation of professors was no substitute for ideological clarity. Further on, he mentioned Bloch by name, saying, "If we tolerate Bloch's opinion that he is best and allow his students to be irresponsible we end up putting those professors who hold our own views in the position of allowing the unclarity of conflicting opinions."[125] For Fröhlich it was imperative that the educational institutions of the SED state convey a coherent and consistent body of doctrine to the students. Bloch's Marxism, tinged as it was with religion and idealism, ought not to be allowed to confuse students in the process of learning the truth of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Bloch's intellectual position in East Germany was tenuous. Early in 1957, Bloch's wife Karola (a long time communist activist) was expelled from the SED.[126] Bloch was disqualified from his teaching position in the philosophy faculty at the University of Leipzig and his house was put under surveillance by the Stasi. In April 1957 the party leadership organized a conference on (or more properly against) Bloch's work, which was clearly intended as a warning to any of the local faculty who still covertly supported him. This was followed by the publication of what can best be described as an anti-*Festschrift* on Bloch's work.[127] Two years before, when he had been awarded the National Prize as an outstanding intellectual figure in the GDR, a *Festschrift* had been published in his honor featuring contributions from figures on both sides of the Cold War border.[128] Now, with Bloch's political position in

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[125] Ibid., 62.

[126] The details of the campaign against Bloch are discussed at length in Arno Münster, *Ernst Bloch: Eine politische Biographie*, 275-311.

[127] J. H. Horn, ed. *Ernst Blochs Revision des Marxismus: Kritische Auseinandersetzungen marxistischer Wissenschaftler mit der Blochschen Philosophie* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften,1957).

[128] Rugard Otto Gropp, ed. *Ernst Bloch zum 70. Geburtstag: Festschrift* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften,1955).

the GDR dramatically altered, the party leadership wanted it made clear that Bloch's version of Marxism was no longer to be tolerated.

In his lead article for the collection, Rugard Otto Gropp attacked Bloch's philosophy as an "anti-Marxist theory of world redemption."[129] Bloch did not present his philosophy in plain language, and this was because he viewed the world as a secret and thus clothed his words in secretive form. His philosophy was characterized by "mysticism and irrationalism" and he sought to ensnare his readers in an "unscientific view of the world."[130] Robert Schulz, like Gropp a colleague of Bloch's at Leipzig, argued that Bloch's philosophy was simply not historical materialism.[131] "Historical materialism is – as an essential component of Marxist philosophy and inextricably connected to dialectical materialism – the science of the universal laws and categories of society." It did not require fundamental renewal or completion, either from Marxist anthropology or from the philosophy of hope.[132] Unlike Bloch's philosophy, historical materialism stated its position clearly and was in a constant process of making its conceptual formulation more precise. Schulz saw no need for Bloch's "vague and ambiguous concepts and phrases." For more than one hundred years, historical materialism had been "an invincible weapon of the working class in the struggle for peace, democracy, and socialism."[133] Bloch sought to replace it with bourgeois philosophy, cultural anthropology, sociology, and some version of the Christian idea of salvation. According to Schulz, Bloch preferred the ideas of bourgeois figures such as Alfred Weber, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Arnold Gehlen to the orthodox doctrines of historical materialism. "With the 'comprehensive'

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[129] Rugard Otto Gropp, "Ernst Blochs Hoffnungsphilosophie -- Eine antimarxistische Welterlösungslehre," in *Ernst Blochs Revision des Marxismus* ed. J. H. Horn (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1957).
[130] Ibid., 9.
[131] Robert Schulz, "Blochs Philosophie der Hoffnung im Lichte des historischen Materialismus," in *Ernst Blochs Revision des Marxismus* ed. J. H. Horn (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1957).
[132] Ibid., 51.
[133] Ibid., 52.

category of hope, which pushes economic factors into the background, Bloch surrenders himself to these bourgeois ideologists, and in the matter of using idiosyncratic terminology to conceptually obscure social relations that have already been clearly understood, he excels them all."[134]

Bloch spent the balance of the 1950s in isolation in Leipzig. He was forbidden to teach or to meet with his former students, and his works were held in official disfavor by the party leadership. Unlike other victims of such repressive policies (such as Leo Kofler before him), Bloch had an international reputation. This was one of the factors that had originally made him attractive to the SED party leadership, and which had prompted them to overlook the peculiarities of his interpretation of Marxism, which was clearly no more or less orthodox in 1957 than it had been in 1949, for so long. Although he was no longer a part of the official East German philosophical establishment, Bloch had access to western media outlets. He refused to have the third volume of *The Principle of Hope* published in East Germany, as he had agreed to do by contract with Aufbau Verlag in 1952. Instead, he had all three volumes published by the West German Suhrkamp Verlag in 1959. His reputation also meant that it was difficult for the SED leadership to prevent him from travelling. In 1961, Bloch and his wife were vacationing in Tübingen (where Bloch had given a very well-received lecture the previous year) when the Berlin Wall was built. They decided to remain there rather than return to East Germany.

Bloch was offered a professorship at Tübingen, which he duly accepted, which allowed him to lecture freely on the history of philosophy. His first publication after his emigration was *Natural Law and Human Dignity*, an analysis of natural law thinking from a

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[134] Ibid.

Marxist perspective.[135] At first glance this might seem to be a quixotic venture. Marxist doctrine tended to preclude specifying firm and unchanging ethical precepts, and this was precisely what the tradition of natural law sought to do.

Bloch's career is emblematic of the role of dissident Marxism in Germany in the Cold War. Although he had gravitated to the east because it seemed in its early days to present the prospect of the creation of a socialist society, his Marxism ultimately could not be made to fit into the narrow confines of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, and even his commitment to the party could not save him when its orthodoxy came under stress during the mid-1950s. In West Germany his philosophy found a better reception, especially among members of the student movement who saw in it a theoretical basis for a more humane Marxism and a more human society. Rather than theorizing at the level of laws of social development, Bloch employed Marxism as means to understand human being through an analysis of dreams and utopias. In this sense it was humanistic, but it was prone to many of the same problems of humanistic Marxism and of humanism more generally. Bloch took account of the effects of class position, of gender- and of age in his analyses, positing only the capacity for utopian thought as a universal characteristic of human beings. But the dreams that he looked at were European dreams, the capitalism that he analyzed was European capitalism, and it remained unclear how universal capacity for utopian thought would play out in environments further afield, or how European utopias might relate to the utopias of other lands.

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[135] Ernst Bloch, *Natural Law and Human Dignity*, trans. Dennis J. Schmidt (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986).

Section III. Herbert Marcuse: From Hegelian to Freudian Marxism

Herbert Marcuse was probably the most influential theorist of the German left in the second half of the twentieth century. Adorno was perhaps a more incisive thinker, but his social theory was undertaken at a level of abstraction that made it difficult to translate into a program of practical action. Indeed, Adorno's unwillingness to simplify his approach or to allow it to be used as ideological cover for direct action caused him to run afoul of the nascent student movement with disastrous consequences.[136] Adorno once famously complained about attempts by political radicals to make us of this theoretical work, writing somewhat plaintively, "I developed a theoretical model of thought. How was I to know that they would try to realize it with Molotov cocktails?"[137] Marcuse's relationship to the student movement, as well as to other elements of the extra-parliamentary opposition, was smoother both because he was more comfortable with the translation of his theoretical work into practical political action, and because Marcuse himself was a willing participant in postwar political radicalism. Although he visited Germany only occasionally from the exile in the United States to which he had been forced by the rise of National Socialism, Marcuse was an emblematic figure in the German and wider European left. His influence can be seen in the acerbic comment made by Hans-Georg Gadamer, who wrote in the "Afterword" to *Truth and Method*, "Marx, Mao, and Marcuse – whose names are inscribed together on many walls these days – do not have 'unconstrained dialogue' to thank for their popularity."[138] For conservatives like Gadamer, Marcuse was the figurehead for a movement that sought to destroy moral and cul-

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[136] Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (Hassocks, Eng.: Harvester Press, 1977); Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Adorno: Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003).

[137] Rolf Tiedemann, ed. *Theodor Adorno: Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 20 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag,1997), 400.

[138] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 567. Gadamer made this comment in the context of a critique of Habermas's discourse ethics.

tural values of the west. Marcuse's unpopularity among conservatives in the west was paralleled by active loathing on the part of the ideologists of Marxism-Leninism. East German scholars tracked Marcuse's work and made it the subject of blistering criticism.

Marcuse's Marxism occupies a middle position between that of Kofler and that of Bloch: more penetrating than that of the former, more systematic and coherent than that of the latter. Beginning in mid-1920s, Marcuse developed a version of Marxism grounded in the experience of human beings. He had originally come to Marxism during the First World War, at the end of which he participated in the workers' and soldiers' councils. He completed a doctorate at the University of Freiberg in the years immediately following the war, writing a dissertation on German artist novel.[139] After spending the mid-1920s out of academia, he returned to scholarship, eventually studying under Martin Heidegger (once again at Freiberg). Marcuse wrote a habilitation under Heidegger's supervision which attempted to recast Hegel's account of historicity in a Heideggerian framework. Accounts vary as to whether it was turned in and rejected, or just never turned in, but political events in its year of completion (1932) made the Marcuse's professional prospects so poor that the question is moot. As a Jew and a Marxist, Marcuse recognized that there was very little likelihood of his obtaining a teaching position in Germany.

In an interview given later in life, Marcuse sought to explain why he, a self conscious Marxist, had become interested in the philosophy of the arch-conservative Heidegger. In part, Marcuse explained, the attraction of Heidegger had been that of phenomenology in general: the prospect of a philosophy that could provide unmediated access to truth by bracketing that which was inessential. The student generation in Germany after the First World War "saw in Heidegger what we had first seen in Husserl, a new beginning, the first radical attempt to put

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[139] Barry Kātz, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Verso, 1982).

philosophy on really concrete foundations – philosophy concerned with human existence, the human condition, and not with merely abstract ideas and principles."[140] Heidegger's philosophy and his claims to have swept away the obstructive metaphysics that had distracted western philosophy since the time of the Greeks had a generic interest for Marcuse and for many other students of philosophy in Germany, as it held out the prospect of achieving a more essential understand of being. But Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology (and it was a reading of *Being and Time* that attracted Marcuse to him) had a specific interest for Marcuse in relation to Marxism. "I, like all the others, believed that there could be some combination between existentialism and Marxism, precisely because of their insistence on concrete analysis of actual human existence, human beings, and their world."[141] Marcuse hoped to find in Heidegger's analysis of the minutiae of human existence a means of connection the actual experience of the proletariat. Eventually, he came to realize the abstraction of Heidegger's conceptual architecture, but he never lost interest in the underlying question that had drawn him to Heidegger in the first place: how can the human being be more thoroughly analyzed in the context of historical materialism. This persistent interest can clearly be seen in the appropriation of the works of the young Marx (detailed above) in which Marcuse worked through the anthropological aspects of the *Paris Manuscripts* in minute detail.

Marcuse became an associate of the Frankfurt Institute in the early 1930s and under their auspices moved to Geneva in 1933 to see to the affairs of the Institute there as it was moved outside of Germany. The following year, Marcuse emigrated to the United States, returning to Europe only occasionally over the course of the rest of his life. Between 1934 and 1936 he collaborated with other members of the Frankfurt Institute on *Studien über Autho-*

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[140] Herbert Marcuse, "Heidegger's Politics: An Interview," 165-66.
[141] Ibid., 166.

rität und Familie, as well as contributing numerous reviews and essays to the Institute's

journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, as well contributing to other journals.[142] During

his time in the United States, Marcuse was employed by the Office of War Information

(1941-43) and the Office of Strategic Services (1943-45) working on projects relating to

propaganda and planning for postwar denazification.[143] At the end of the war he worked for

several years for the Central European section of the US State Department before taking up a

career in academia at Columbia, Brandeis, and finally the University of California, San Di-

ego.

Although he had moved to an intellectual culture much different than that in Germa-

ny, Marcuse's work continued to pursue many of the same themes at it had in the 1930s. In

1941, he published *Reason and Revolution*, in which he presented a Hegelian critique of the

positivism that was prevalent in the Anglo-American social sciences. In *Reason and Revolu-

tion*, Marx's work was presented "not only as a critique of capitalism, but also, at least impli-

citly, as a critique of Stalinist communism."[144] Marcuse sought to defend Hegel from the

charge that his theory had been a precursor of fascism, and to argue that Hegel's dialectical

philosophy of totality was the basis for Marxism.[145]

The positive emphasis on the Hegelian concept of totality found in Marcuse's writ-

ings about Hegel presents an interesting counterpart to the analysis of another all-

encompassing concept, universalism, in his writings about National Socialism. In an article

published in 1934 in the Frankfurt Institute's in house journal, Marcuse analyzed the underly-

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[142] Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[143] Barry Kātz, "The Criticism of Arms: The Frankfurt School Goes to War," *Journal of Modern History* 59, no. 3 (1990).

[144] Kevin Anderson, "On Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory: A Critical Appreciation of Herbert Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*, Fifty Years Later," *Sociological Theory* 11, no. 3 (1993): 244.

[145] Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), vii.

ing conceptual structure of National Socialism. In National Socialist doctrine, and that of the far right generally, the universalism is used to obfuscate or to camouflage the social relations comprised within a social totality.

> Compared with individuals, the social totality as self-subsistent and primary reality becomes, by virtue of its pure total character, a self-subsistent and primary value: the totality is, as totality, the true and the genuine. Universalism does not ask whether every totality does not first have to prove itself before the tribunal of individuals, to show that their potentialities and needs are realized in it. When the totality is no longer the conclusion but the axiom, the path of theoretical and practical social criticism leading to this totality is blocked off. Totality is programmatically mystified.[146]

Hegel's totality, particularly as expressed in Marx's writings, was a way of opening up new avenues for understanding by conceiving of individual facts as part of dynamic, mutually interconnected wholes. National Socialist ideology made abstract wholes the basis of its normative program in a way that sought to immunize it from rational critique. At the time that the essay was written, Marcuse was struggling along with other European Marxists to find a way to understand the relationship of National Socialist totalitarianism to liberal capitalism. He argued that the universalism of National Socialism was part of an attempt to shore up monopoly capitalism by positing a false unity of the *Volk* in order to cover up the class basis of the capitalist order.[147] "A classless society, in other words, is the goal, but a classless society on the basis of and within the framework of – the existing class society."

In his writings in the early years of the Cold War, Marcuse confronted a political order fundamentally different from that of the 1930s. In a manuscript written in early 1947, Marcuse wrote, "After the military defeat of Hitler-Fascism (which was a premature and isolated form of capitalist reorganization) the world is dividing into a neo-fascist and a Soviet

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[146] Herbert Marcuse, "The Struggle against Liberalism in Totalitarianism," in *Negations; Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 7.
[147] Ibid., 21.

camp. What still remains of democratic-liberal forms will be crushed between the two camps or absorbed by them."[148] Under the conditions then obtaining, their only valid course of action was, "to ruthlessly and openly criticize both and to uphold without compromise orthodox Marxist theory against both. In the face of political reality such a position would be powerless, abstract and false, but when the political reality as a whole is false, the unpolitical position may be the only truth."[149] This last sentence could serve as the slogan for Marcuse's postwar career: the two front struggle to oppose both Soviet state socialism and western liberal capitalism on the basis of a revolutionary theory that remained true to Marx's original intentions (and which was therefore orthodox).

Both parties to the Cold War systemic conflict were anathema to such orthodox Marxism. Although the Soviet Union continued to the employ the vocabulary of revolutionary Marxism, the rise of the doctrine of socialism in one country had led the formation of a self-reinforcing bureaucratic centralism which gave no prospect of actual development toward true communism. Soviet politics and the proto-fascism of western liberal capitalism functioned in a complimentary manner, each acting as the justification for the other. The threat of intervention into Soviet socialism by the capitalist powers had justified a dictatorship of the party that was nominally a temporary prelude to the dictatorship of the proletariat but which in fact functioned to occlude progress toward a non-capitalist social and economic order. In the liberal capitalist world, the bourgeoisification of the Western European social democratic parties was part of a larger process of adjusting the working class to intensified exploitation. Furthermore, the situation in the Soviet Union served to augment the legitimation claims of the capitalist democracies. "The fact that the first successful socialist revolu-

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[148] Herbert Marcuse, "33 Theses," in *Technology, War, and Fascism: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume One* ed. Douglas Kellner (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 217.
[149] Ibid.

tion has not yet led to a freer and happier society has contributed immeasurably to reconcilia-

tion with capitalism and has objectively discredited the revolution."[150] Marcuse noted that

there was an important sense in which conditions in the liberal democracies were less imme-

diately repressive that under Soviet state socialism, but this freedom came at a cost, "The

bourgeois freedom of democracy is better than total regimentation, but it has been literally

purchased with decades of prolonged exploitation and delayed socialist freedom."[151]

The struggle, as Marcuse saw it, was to present socialism as the determinate negation

of capitalism, which would also distinguish it from the false liberation of Soviet state social-

ism. "This negation is not the nationalization of the means of production, nor their better de-

velopment, nor the higher standard of living, but rather the abolition of domination, exploita-

tion and labor."[152] Raising wages or standards of living did not change the underlying rela-

tions of domination in the capitalist mode of production. Soviet socialism had accepted the

rationality of capitalism in its drive to build a socialist order in one country. Soviet socialism

could only surpass the material productivity of capitalism by outdoing its competitor in terms

of compulsory subordination of labor to the productive apparatus. In fact, Marcuse argued,

the Soviet socialist system had taken on many of the exploitive characteristics of capitalism:

"power over the means of production has been transferred to the state, which exercises this

power through the employment of wage labor."[153] Rather than the universality of the class-

less society promised in Marx's writings, the Soviet socialist state existed only to perpetuate

existing social relations. "The universal interest, "Marcuse noted, "for which the planned so-

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[150] Ibid., 221.
[151] Ibid., 223.
[152] Ibid., 224.
[153] Ibid., 222.

ciety is designed and implemented, is the existing apparatus of production, the existing form of the social division of labor (national and international) and the existing social needs."[154]

What was important for Marcuse was the creation of a social order characterized neither by the inherently oppressive capitalist relations of production, nor by the ossified bureaucratic centralism of Soviet state socialism. The positive solution that Marcuse prescribed harkened back to his participation in the council communist movement around the end of the First World War.[155] Marcuse argued that the only way to overcome the repressive social relations that characterized both systems to put production in control of the immediate producers.

> The production apparatus developed under capitalism, propelled by wage labor within the existing form of the division of labor, perpetuates the existing forms of consciousness and needs. It perpetuates domination and exploitation, even when control of the apparatus is transferred to the state, i.e. to the universal, which is itself one of domination and exploitation. Prior to the revolution the universal is not a factor in socialism: its domination is not freer and not necessarily more rational than that of capital. Socialism means a determinate universal: that of free persons. Until developed communist society has become real, the universal can only take the form of the domination of the revolutionary working class, because only this class can negate all classes, it alone has the real power to abolish the existing relations of production and the entire apparatus that goes with it. The first goal of the communist dictatorship over the proletariat…must be to surrender the production apparatus to the proletariat: the council republic.[156]

Rather than freezing the development of socialism at the transitional point between revolutionary and proletarian dictatorship, Marcuse argued for the devolution of power into the hands of the actual producers which, he assumed, would prevent the formation of a self-

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[154] Ibid.

[155] On Marcuse's experiences with council communism see Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 14-18.

[156] Herbert Marcuse, "33 Theses," 222-23. It is worth noting as an aside that the ideas that Marcuse expressed here bear interesting similarities to those of Otto Rühle, a prominent theorist of council communism in the 1920s, in particular in his *From the Bourgeois to the Proletarian Revolution* (1925). Although Marcuse never sites Rühle, it is probable that he was familiar with his work due to his own involvement with the German socialist left at the end of World War I.

perpetuating bureaucratic order. It is interesting, then, that further on Marcuse conceded the need for a vanguard party of the Leninist variety as a necessary agent to combat the economic, political and cultural leveling of the proletariat by the bourgeoisifying forces of monopoly capital.[157] The memory of the revolutionary conditions was kept alive in the theories of communist parties, thus such a party was a necessary point of coalescence for attempts to resist capitalism and the state socialist alternative.

The vision presented by Marcuse in the "33 Theses" is somewhat pessimistic. Two power blocks confront each other, each with the power to crush any concrete manifestations of dissent occurring within their borders, and each spreading out their influence in a process of polarizing the international community. The only hope of systematic and progressive resistance was the reconstruction of communist parties in the liberal capitalist states divorced from the stultifying influence of Moscow. This outlook was certainly consonant with that of his Frankfurt School contemporaries, particularly as expressed by Horkheimer and Adorno in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which was published properly for the first time in 1947.[158] Through the 1950s and 1960s Adorno (and to a lesser extent Horkheimer) would produce a body of work that called into question both the potential of the proletariat to achieve critical consciousness and the capacity of reason to function as a tool of liberation. Marcuse, however, was less prone to wallowing in cultural pessimism. While his diagnosis of the ossified nature of Soviet socialism remained relatively stable throughout the postwar years, Marcuse continued to theorize about the modes of repression under liberal capitalism and the possi-

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[157] "Leveling" in the text is a rendering of the German term *Gleichschalten,* literally synchronization or bringing into line. The gerundial form, *Gleichschaltung*, was a well-known piece of Nazi terminology from the years after Hitler's seizure of power, referring to the process of reshaping the institutions of German society along Nazi lines. It is clear that, in using this term, Marcuse was once again stressing the connections between liberal capitalism and fascism.

[158] It had previously been circulated privately by Horkheimer and Adorno in a pasteboard printing in the mid-1940s. It was then edited by Adorno, who excised much of the overtly Marxist terminology, and issued by the Dutch publisher Querido Verlag.

bilities that remained for resistance and liberation.[159] His works of the 1950s and 1960s were characterized by a practical commitment to the critique of capitalism expressed by Marx in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, the normative basis of which was the effect wrought by capitalism on human beings.

Marcuse did not publish much in the late 1940s and early 1950s, perhaps due to the demands of his job working for the Department of State, or the infelicitous climate for the left in the United States created by McCarthyism.**[160]** But, as his biographer notes, this was not a time of intellectual stagnation, as his work for the government provided him with access to "enormous amounts of historical and empirical material" and fruitful contacts with co-workers, many of whom were "distinguished academics."[161] In late 1951, Marcuse began work on the text that would eventually become *Eros and Civilization* (1955), his best known work of the 1950s.[162] In it, Marcuse pursued his practical program of analyzing the effects of the conditions of modern society on human beings. In the 1930s, under the influence of Frankfurt Institute colleagues such as the psychologist Erich Fromm, Marcuse had become interested in role that Freudian psychology could play in the analysis of capitalism.[163] In "On Hedonism", published in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* in 1938, Marcuse had examined the role of modern society in closing off the prospects for proper sensuous gratification in a culture riven by class distinctions and centered on commodity production.

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[159] Marcuse's *Soviet Marxism* (1958), an attempt at an imminent critique of the Soviet system (i.e. a critique grounded on its own internal standards) came to much the same conclusion about the self-perpetuating bureaucratic structure of state socialism as is found in the "33 Theses".

[160] Marcuse's only publication in the second half of the 1940s was a long review of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* published in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* in March 1948.

[161] Douglas Kellner, "Introduction," in *Technology, War and Fascism: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume One* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 24.

[162] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955). A German translation was produced two years later. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros und Kultur*, trans. Marianne von Eckardt-Jaffe (Stuttgart: Klett, 1957).

[163] Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 266-73.

> The development of the productive forces, the growing domination of nature, the extension and refinement of the production of commodities, money, and universal reification have created, along with new needs, new possibilities for enjoyment. But these given possibilities for enjoyment confront men who objectively, due to their economic status, as well as subjectively, due to their education and disciplining, are largely incapable of enjoyment.[164]

Capitalism had reduced happiness to a function of consumption. In order to integrate workers into life in the system of production that was mostly boring and unpleasant, society produced a work ethic in which pleasure was seen as somehow suspect. This had the effect of deflecting attention from the closing off of avenues for free self-development in favor of participation in a commodity culture. Thus the workers were called upon to participate in a further step in the circulation of capital, thus helping to perpetuate the system.

In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse extended this analysis via an extensive engagement with Freud, both his psychoanalytic theory and his social analysis. Freud had argued in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that human happiness was impossible under the conditions of modern mass society. The need to control violent and unruly human impulses required a repression of libidinal drives, forcing human beings to sacrifice full erotic gratification to the rational progress of society. "It almost seems," Freud wrote, "as if a great human community would be most successful if no attention had to be paid to the happiness of the individual."[165] Marcuse concurred that the conditions of modern mass society stacked the deck against non-repressive human fulfillment, but he argued that there were, nonetheless, liberating possibilities concealed in the system of repression. As the historian Rolf Wiggershaus has noted, Marcuse "tried to show that a culture without repression is indeed conceivable, and that it can

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[164] Herbert Marcuse, "On Hedonism," in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 183.

[165] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961), 105.

exploit the objective conditions created by the previous, repressive culture."[166] Marcuse's argument was roughly consonant with that found in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: human beings in capitalist society appeared to be free, and were so formally in the sense that they could choose from a range of systemically proffered life choices. Substantively, however, human beings were unfree precisely because of the constraints of the system which restricted choice to those that facilitated the reproduction of the system.

Although there was a strong and overt commitment to the project of human liberation in evidence throughout the book, and although it was deeply and extensively critical of capitalism, Marx is notably absent from *Eros and Civilization*. This in itself is hardly surprising since Marcuse was still, although naturalized, a foreigner from a suspect political background in the United States during the height of the anti-communist panic following the stalemate of the Korean conflict. Marx was not cited or mentioned in *Eros and Civilization*, yet it still falls within the tradition of dissident Marxism due, in the first place, to the political commitments of its author and, in the second, to the critical project undertaken in its pages. Marcuse's writings of the late 1950s reflect a transition from Freudian analyses of capitalist society to more technical analyses of both capitalism and state socialism. But the question of the significance of Freud for the conceiving of modern society always remained in the background of Marcuse's thought. In a preface written for a new edition of *Eros and Civilization* published in 1966, Marcuse returned to the role of instinct control in the maintenance of circuits of capitalist reproduction. "Where the high standard of living does not suffice for reconciling the people with their life and their rulers," Marcuse noted, "the 'social engineering' of the soul and the 'science of human relations' provide the necessary libidinal cathexis. In

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[166] Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, 499.

the affluent society, the authorities are hardly forced to justify their dominion."[167] Human

beings in the West appeared to be freer than at any time in the past, but this freedom was still

illusory and, in fact, destructive. For the white bourgeoisie, not subject to racial oppression

and experiencing an unprecedented degree of sexual liberty, it was tempting to see the exist-

ing order as ideal. But for Marcuse, this "freedom" had far-reaching political consequences,

> [T]he truth is that this freedom and satisfaction are transforming the earth into
> hell. The inferno is still concentrated in certain faraway places: Vietnam, the
> Congo, South Africa, and the ghettos of the "affluent society": in Mississippi
> and Alabama, in Harlem. These infernal places illuminate the whole. It is easy
> and sensible to see in them only pockets of poverty and misery in a growing
> society capable of eliminating them gradually and without catastrophe. This
> interpretation may even be realistic and correct. The question is: eliminated at
> what cost – not in dollars and cents, but in human lives and in human free-
> dom?[168]

Consistent with his earlier works, the question for Marcuse remained: what is the effect of

the political and economic orders of society on human beings? Here it is also worth noting

that Marcuse's vision of the human was not limited to those human beings in the most ad-

vanced sectors of the developed world, but extended to the decolonizing world in both Africa

and North America.

The context of the Cold War continued to shape Marcuse's work in the late 1950s.

With support from Columbia University, Marcuse undertook an extensive study of the politi-

cal system of the Soviet Union. The resulting book, *Soviet Marxism* (1958, German transla-

tion 1964) was, as Marcuse put it, an attempt at an "imminent critique" of the Soviet sys-

tem.[169] Rather than merely rehearsing the dogmatic critiques of the ideologists of liberal capi-

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[167] Herbert Marcuse, "Political Preface to *Eros and Civilization*, 1966," in *Towards a Critical Theory of Society: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 2* ed. Douglas Kellner (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 97.
[168] Ibid., 98.
[169] Herbert Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism, A Critical Analysis* (New York,: Columbia University Press, 1958), 1.

talism, Marcuse sought to evaluate the Soviet Union on the basis of standards grounded in

the doctrines to which the Soviet leadership subscribed. Marcuse's critique echoed many of

the sentiments that he had expressed in the "33 Theses" of 1947. The dictatorship of the party

had gone from being a short term expedient on the path to the dictatorship of the proletariat

and the establishment of a communist society to a practically permanent condition en-

trenched in a self-reproducing system of bureaucratic centralist domination. By this time,

however, Marcuse was more critical of Lenin's reconfiguration of Marx's ideas. Lenin had

revised Marx's doctrine in the face the rise of revisionist social democracy and the ideologi-

cal requirements of building socialism in a predominantly agrarian economy. In doing so,

> …the groundwork was laid for the development of the Leninist party where the true interest and the true consciousness of the proletariat were lodged in a group different than the majority of the proletariat. The centralistic organiza-tion, which was first justified by and then applied to the "immaturity" of backward conditions, was to become the general principle of strategy on an international scale.[170]

But the construction of this avant-garde of the revolution resulted in a break with original

Marxist theory of revolution predicated on the spontaneous consciousness and action of the

proletariat. Lenin had understood the Bolshevik revolution as tentative and preliminary, un-

derstanding that the emergence of socialism required the emergence of capitalism (or of a

high degree of development of productive capacities) as its precursor. In this conception,

Marcuse argued, one could see "a foreshadowing of the Stalinist policy" of brutal, enforced

industrialization.[171] Stalin's "two camps" doctrine, advanced at the end of the Second World

War, facilitated the intensification of bureaucratic centralism in the communist world while

eventually resulting in the detachment of the communist parties of the western liberal capital-

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[170] Ibid., 32.
[171] Ibid., 43.

ist states from their connections with actually existing socialism. While the states in the Soviet orbit hunkered down to await the general crisis of capitalism, the western communist parties were increasingly left to adopt popular front strategies in order to prevent themselves from being completely shut out of effective political power in their own domestic polities.

The overarching result of the Soviet policy of bureaucratic industrialization was that there was a certain commonality of approach between the state socialism and liberal capitalism. "Total industrialization," Marcuse wrote, "seemed to exact patterns of attitude and organization which cut across the essential political and ideological differences. Efficient, 'businesslike management,' highly rationalized and centralized, and working on equally rationalized and coordinated human and technical material, tends to promote political and cultural centralization and coordination"[172] In the west this has resulted in "a corrosion of the humanistic liberal ethics" based on the rights of autonomous individuals.[173] Although lip service continued to be paid to the values of the preindustrial order, the coordinating and centralizing tendencies of both states led to a degree of convergence between the ethics in practice in the socialist and capitalist systems.

Marcuse's next major work, *One-Dimensional Man*, published in 1964, presented a challenge to the Marxist historical narrative. Marxism and critical theory were geared to a formative stage of capitalist production in which bourgeoisie and proletariat faced off against each other as implacable foes. The emergence of full-blown industrial society had recast this relationship. As Marcuse noted in his introduction, "capitalist development has altered the structure and function of these two classes in such a way that they no longer appear to be agents of historical transformation. An overriding interest in the preservation and improve-

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[172] Ibid., 195.
[173] Ibid.

ment of the institutional status quo unites the former antagonists in the most advanced areas of contemporary society."[174] The advancement of technological capacities in both the capitalist and communist worlds seemed to have taken the question of qualitative changes in social relations, at least of a revolutionary sort, off the table entirely. The Marxist historical narrative held that the proletariat, its class consciousness amplified by the everyday experience of repressive social relations, would be the driving force of history, moving capitalism off the stage and replacing it with a classless society. But through a combination of extensive consumer culture and ideological manipulation, industrial society appeared to have resolved many of the tensions that had characterized earlier modes of capitalism. "The reality of the laboring classes in advanced industrial society makes the Marxian 'proletariat' a mythological concept; the reality of present-day socialism makes the Marxian idea a dream." The totally administered society, the dystopia of critical thinkers from Weber through Horkheimer and Adorno, seemed to have arrived.

The year after the publication of *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse contributed an essay to an edited volume assembled by Erich Fromm on the topic of socialist humanism.[175] It is particularly notable in that it was one of a very small number of instances in Marcuse's writings where he addressed the concept of humanism directly, as opposed to indirectly via his account of the effects of forms of social and economic organization on human beings. Marcuse began with discussion of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Humanism and Terror*, which had been published nearly twenty years previously. In choosing between capitalism and socialism, Merleau-Ponty had argued, one could not choose between violence and non-violence, but only between capitalist violence and socialist violence. In that situation, one

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[174] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), xii-xiii.
[175] Herbert Marcuse, "Socialist Humanism?," in *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium* ed. Erich Fromm (Garden City and New York: Anchor Books, 1965).

had to opt for socialist violence because it was connected with a system devoted to around the proletariat, which alone had the historical capacity to realize true humanism. In fact, Marcuse argued, "Merleau-Ponty knew that precisely this condition no longer prevailed, and that the proletariat and that the proletariat had ceased to be 'the term of reference' in communist thought and policy, but he refused to engage in an ideological rescue of humanism and to reject the actual development in the face of humanistic 'values'."[176] In the current situation (i.e. in 1965), in the wake of the de-Stalinization of the communist world and the settling of the systemic conflict into a pattern of (mostly) peaceful coexistence, humanism had not been the immediate result, but circumstances made a re-examination of the idea of socialist humanism appropriate.

On Marx's view socialism was a humanism in the respect that it organized human relations in a non-exploitive way and allowed satisfaction of human needs with a minimum of toil. "Social production, controlled by the 'immediate producers,'" Marcuse noted rehearsing a theme found in his earlier postwar writings, "would be deliberately directed toward this goal."[177] Freed from the necessity of working in order to survive, the human being could develop themselves as an "all-round individual", but it was also important to note that socialism as a humanism had capitalism as its historical *a priori*, because capitalism was necessary for the creation of the proletariat itself.[178] This, in a nutshell, was the outcome of the Marxist historical narrative: the emergence of full-blown capitalism followed by the establishment of true humanism by the revolutionary proletariat. However, Marcuse argued, this prediction had been overtaken by actual events and the "objective conditions for the identity of socialism and humanism" no longer obtained. In the east, a state ostensibly run by the proletariat

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[176] Ibid., 108.
[177] Ibid., 109; ibid.
[178] Ibid., 110.

had degenerated into the bureaucratic dictatorship of the party. In the west capitalist societies had proved more resilient than Marx had anticipated. Further, they had reached a level of technology such that there was the possibility that labor itself would become obsolete, although this had not resulted in the abolishment of repressive social relations of production. Moving forward, Marcuse drew two conclusions of significance for the future of socialist humanism. The first was that technology had to be divorced from the social system that made it a tool of repression. The precondition of humanism was the "severance of the fatal link between technical progress and progress in domination and exploitation."[179] Second, socialists had to realize that Marx's historical narrative needed to be made consonant with the current development of the capitalist system:

> The proletariat which was to validate the equation of socialism and humanism pertained to a past stage in the development of industrial society. Socialist theory, no matter how true, can neither prescribe nor predict the future agents of a historical transformation which is more than ever before the specter that haunts the established societies.

One could argue that, on the basis of his displacement of the proletariat from the position of history's driving force, Marcuse had ceased to be a Marxist by the mid-1960s. It would probably be closer to the truth to say that he was trying to maintain the spirit of Marx's critical project while taking into account transformations in the historical situation that Marx could not have predicted.

Section IV. Socialist Humanism

In 1965 Erich Fromm edited a collection of essays entitled *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium* featuring contributions from socialists and dissident Marxist from

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[179] Ibid., 114.

both sides of the Cold War divide.[180] In his introduction to the collection, Fromm wrote of a "renaissance of humanism," a philosophy whose many variants "shared a belief in the possibility of man's perfectibility."[181] According to Fromm, humanism arose historically in periods of trauma and social transformation, an ideology intended as a means of defense against a generalized danger to mankind:

> Humanism has always emerged as a reaction to a threat to mankind: in the Renaissance, to the threat of religious fanaticism; in the Enlightenment, to extreme nationalism and the enslavement of man by the machine and economic interests. The revival of Humanism today is a new reaction to this latter threat in a more intensified form – the fear that men may become the slave of things, the prisoner of circumstances he himself has created – and the wholly new threat posed to mankind's physical existence by nuclear weapons.[182]

Fromm recognized that the contributors to the volume came from a wide variety of intellectual and political backgrounds, many of which were at odds with those of Fromm himself and with the other authors. Fromm himself separates his defense of socialism from his defense of humanism. His defense of the former he undertakes with reference to Marx, and specifically to the critique of alienation characteristic of Marx's early works.[183] Whereas the humanism of the Enlightenment believed that the fulfillment of man's humanity could be achieved through education, Marx had argued (convincingly so Fromm thought) that "free and inde-

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[180] Erich Fromm, *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965); ibid. The table of contents reads like a veritable who's who of dissident central European Marxism, with Germans (or German speakers) among the most numerous and prominent. In addition to contributions from Fromm, Marcuse, and Bloch, the collection also featured contributions by another refugee from East Germany, the Marburg political scientist Wolfgang Abendroth, as well as from the Frankfurt political scientist and editor of *Marxismusstudien,* Iring Fetscher. In addition to this considerable German contingent, dissident Marxists from Eastern Europe were well represented. Representative figures include the Polish theorist Adam Schaff, the Heidegger-influenced Czech Marxist Karel Kosík, and Yugoslav Praxis Group members Mihailo Marković, Gajo Petrović, and Predrag Vranicki (among others).

[181] Ibid., vii.

[182] Ibid., viii.

[183] A more extensive discussion of the early works of Marx and of Fromm's relationship to them will be provided below.

pendent man" could only be come about in the context of a rationalized social and economic system, the full development of which was the full development of man.[184]

Fromm had worked out the particulars of his own humanistic take on Marxism in a book published in 1961 under the title *Marx's Concept of Man*.[185] The book paired an essay by Fromm examining Marx's views on the nature of human beings with a full version of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and other related primary documents. Although Fromm and Marcuse had quarreled publicly in the pages of the journal *Dissent* in 1956 over their respective interpretations of Freud's anthropology, Fromm's interpretation of Marx was in many ways consonant with that of his former Frankfurt Institute colleague. "Marx did not believe," Fromm noted, "as do many contemporary sociologists and psychologists, that there is no such thing as the nature of man; that man at birth is like a blank sheet of paper, on which the culture writes its text." But if man was not a tabula rasa, as one might have thought from reading Marx's sixth thesis on Feuerbach, of what did his nature comprise? Fromm quoted Marx's critique of Bentham from the first volume of *Capital* in response: "To know what is useful for a dog, one must study dog nature. This nature itself is not to be deduced from the principle of utility. Applying this to man, he that would criticize all human acts, movements, relations, etc., by the principle of utility, *must first deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each historical epoch*."[186] Fromm argued for the continuity of Marx's views on human nature between his younger and older works, claiming that although Marx had ceased to use the term "human essence" in his later works, "he clearly retained the notion of this essence in a more historical version."[187] On Fromm's

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[184] Erich Fromm, *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, viii; ibid.
[185] Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Continuum, 1966).
[186] Ibid., 24-25. Italics in the original.
[187] Ibid.

account, Marx distinguished between the fixed aspects of human nature, such as hunger and sexual appetites, only the forms of which are subject to historical or cultural change, and what Fromm referred to as "relative" drives which are culturally created, such as the desire for money in capitalism. Human development was a process of self-creation comprising the shaping of fixed and relative drives by individuals under circumstances governed by the social relations of production in which they lived. Capitalism had given rise to (and many parties of the left had accepted) the idea that the maximum of production and consumption was a good thing in and of itself. But production was only a prop to the emancipation of man and the creation of circumstances in which free human self development can occur. Production under capitalist relations of production resulted, as Marx had argued in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* in a condition of alienation in which the realization of human essence is expropriated and re-represented to the producer as something alien to themselves. For Fromm, this was the normative basis of the critique of capitalism: "Alienation leads to the perversion of all values."[188]

The Fromm volume itself is a telling artifact of the mid-1960s, a collection point for a newly self-conscious socialist humanism seeking to build an ecumenical and doctrinally open socialist politics. It was symptomatic of a pattern of political radicalization, the high point of which was the disturbances of 1968, and which then suffered greatly diminished influence in the 1970s. At the same time as Fromm and others were trying to soften the ideological boundaries separating various Marxists projects by promoting socialist humanism, Marxist theory itself was in a period of transition. The dissident, humanistic versions of Marxism that had provided important intellectual support to the radicalism of the 1960s lost influence in the face of three key historical factors. The first of these was a generational change in Western

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[188] Ibid., 54.

Marxism. Many of the figures whose works had dominated the middle decades of the twentieth century were coming to the ends of their lives and becoming less productive. Adorno died in 1968, Lukács in 1971, Horkheimer in 1973. German Marxism in the 1970s was less given to rehashing the debates of the 1930s and 1940s about the relevance of Hegel or Freud for Marxist social criticism, taking on a rather more technical tone. The historian Ingo Elbe has argued that there was a shift in the dominant patterns of interpretation in West German Marxism around 1965.[189] The work of Western Marxists gave way in terms of influence to that of figures such as Louis Althusser and Jacques Rancière internationally and Hans-Georg Backhaus and Helmut Reichelt domestically. Textually, interest shifted from the interpretation of Marx's early Hegelian and Feuerbachian writings to texts such as the *Grundrisse* (first published in 1953), "The Results of the Immediate Process of Production", and the three volumes of *Theories of Surplus Value*, all of which promised to provide new insights into the complexities of Marx's analysis of commodity production. The controversies that were most influential revolved around matters such as the derivation and class nature of the state (the so-called state derivation debate) and the specific qualities of state monopoly capitalism as an economic formation.[190]

As second factor, related to the first, was the growth of influence of the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser, which was not only different in orientation from Marxist humanism but in fact actively opposed to it. In his *For Marx* (written in 1965 and available in German translation from 1968), Althusser had argued that there was an "epistemological rup-

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[189] Ingo Elbe, *Marx im Westen: Die Neue Marx-Lektüre in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), 25-29.

[190] On the state derivation debate see Elmar Altvater and Jürgen Hoffmann, "The West German State Derivation Debate: The Relation between Economy and Politics as a Problem of Marxist State Theory," *Social Text* 24(1990). On the analysis of state monopoly capitalism see Rolf Ebbinghausen, ed. *Monopol und Staat: Zur Marx-Rezeption in der Theorie des staatsmonopolistischen Kapitalismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag,1974).

ture" (*coupure épistémologique*) separating Marx's early philosophical works and his later scientific ones written after 1845. On Althusser's account, and on much the same grounds as those cited by orthodox Marxist-Leninists in East Germany, actually existing socialism was the defender of a true humanism:

> In fact, the objective of the revolutionary struggle has always been the end of exploitation and hence the liberation of man, but, as Marx foresaw, in its first historical phase, this struggle had to take the form of a struggle between *classes*. So revolutionary humanism could only be a 'class humanism', 'proletarian humanism'. The end of the exploitation of man meant the end of *class* exploitation. The liberation of man meant the liberation of the working *class* and above all liberation by the dictatorship of the proletariat. For more than forty years, in the U.S.S.R., amidst gigantic struggles, 'socialist humanism' was expressed in the terms of class dictatorship rather than those of personal freedom.[191]

The real achievement of Marx, brought to fruition in the interpretation of Lenin, was to have developed an objectively true and scientific analysis of capitalism. To become fixated on Marx's idealistic juvenilia was to become mired in a mode of analysis that Marx himself had rejected.

Finally, left wing radicalism in West Germany, in which the works of the older dissident Marxists (especially Bloch and Marcuse) had been quite influential, underwent a fundamental transformation in the early 1970s with the fragmentation of the student movement of the previous decade. Throughout the liberal capitalist world in the early 1970s, there arose movements with a similar politics and rhetoric as the student movement, but centered on particular identities, such as the black liberation and women's movements. The rise of these new modes of politics called into question attempts to discuss politics at the level of the human being denuded of the gender and racial characteristics of actual human beings.

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[191] Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), 221.

In a lecture given at Stanford University in 1974, Marcuse voiced his belief that the women's movement was "perhaps the most important and potentially the most radical political movement that we have, even if the consciousness of this fact has not yet penetrated the Movement as a whole."[192] Marcuse went on to attempt a fusion of the Marxist historical narrative with that of the nascent women's movement. He distinguished between patriarchal domination on the one hand, and class domination on the other, making the point that the former could not merely be reduced to the latter. This was a major deviation from the standard Marxist approach to women's issues which saw women's liberation as resulting in the first instance from the elimination of capitalist relations of production. However, as Marcuse noted, "there can be discrimination against women even under socialism."[193]

At the same time, other elements of the radical movements of the 1960s, at least nominally remaining closer to their ideological origins, turned revolutionary Marxism into the basis for extremely brutal campaigns of terrorism. Groups such as the Socialist Patients Collective, the Roaming Hash Rebels, and (most spectacularly) the Red Army Faction employed simplified Marxist language and concepts to justify attacks on representatives of the system the consequences of which were the antithesis of humanistic Marxism. These attacks drew condemnation from many on the left. In an article published in *Die Zeit* during the height of the so-called "German autumn" of 1977, Marcuse wrote,

> In taking a position towards terrorism in West Germany, the Left must first ask itself two questions: Do terrorist actions contribute to the weakening of capitalism? Are these actions justified in view of the demands of revolutionary morality? To both questions I must answer in the negative. The physical liquidation of single individuals, even the most prominent, does not undermine the normal functioning of the capitalist system itself. On the contrary, it

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[192] Herbert Marcuse, "Marxism and Feminism," *Women's Studies* 2, no. 3 (1974): 279.
[193] Ibid., 280.

strengthens its repressive potential without (and this is the decisive point) either engendering opposition to repression or raising political consciousness.[194]

The policy of murdering police officers and business leaders, Marcuse argued, could not possibly be successful because these were only representatives of a system of which there was a practically unlimited supply. The victims of the terrorists were in a sense responsible for capitalism and were thus not innocent, "but their guilt can only be expiated through the abolition of capitalism itself."[195] It had been argued that terrorism in the Federal Republic was merely an extension of the goals of the student movement undertaken in conditions of intensified repression. In fact, Marcuse argued, terrorism represented a break with the movement of the extra-parliamentary opposition, which had been a mass movement with the proclaimed goal struggling for a concrete utopia surpassing all "traditional conceptions of socialism." Terrorism, by contrast, "remains bound to the old society that it wishes to overturn. It works with weapons that will undermine the fulfillment of its goals."[196] The terrorism of the 1970s wrought terrible damage to the left, splitting it at a time when unity was needed and discrediting leftists generally in the eyes of the wider population. And indeed, as Marcuse noted, the radical opposition to capitalism in West Germany was "for the most part isolated from the working class."[197] Worse yet, it made the eminently humane doctrines of Marx into the justification futile and self-indulgent acts of brutality. In the wake of repeated outrages by the terrorist left, humanistic Marxism, already weakened by the challenges of anti-humanism and identity politics, had faded from view by the end of the 1970s.

The various employments of humanism in Marxist theory highlight a number of important features of the politics of the Cold War. Both orthodox Marxist-Leninists and their

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[194] Herbert Marcuse, "Murder is Not a Political Weapon," *New German Critique* 12(1977): 7.
[195] Ibid., 8.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.

critics sought the appropriate humanism, both as a concept and as the terrain on which theory was grounded, as an element of their political projects. In the West German political landscape, humanist Marxism was proposed as a means of taking up the original critical heritage of Marx's work while divesting it of the mechanistic trappings of the Second International and the bureaucratic centralism of Stalinism. The work of Kofler, Bloch, and Marcuse shared a twofold critical orientation against the alienated society of liberal capitalism and the bureaucratic repression of Stalinist communism. In all three cases, the normative foundation of these critical projects was the effects of these social orders on human beings.

Conclusion

Humanistic Marxism was, in an important sense, a holdover from the interwar years. The rediscovery of the works of the young Marx came only at the end of a process of questioning the orthodox Marxist doctrines espoused by the SPD in Germany and, after 1917, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This vein of theorizing, which comprised such disparate figures as Karl Korsch, Georg Lukács, and Antonio Gramsci, was a product of the ossification of Marxism in the institutional structure of the mass parties of Europe (particularly those of Germany and Soviet Russia). The thread that connects these figures, and the intellectual tradition of Western Marxism more generally, was the attempt to define a Marxist doctrine that was both more radical and more flexible than the orthodox, Stalinist version. In contrast to the prioritization of the interplay of historical laws of development in orthodox Marxism-Leninism, the approach of dissident Marxists was to make the lived experience of human beings the focus of critiques of existing conditions. As well as applying critical scrutiny to the social order created in the liberal capitalist states, these extra-party Marxisms of-

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fered critiques of the politics of both the radical right and left, although often their criticisms of the latter were rather more sympathetic.

Figures in tradition that grew out of these dissident Marxisms in the first decades of the Cold War explored the human dimensions of Marxism and employed it as a basis for criticizing the liberal capitalist consumer culture of the West and the ossified bureaucracy of the east. The lived experience of human beings played a crucial role in both of these critical directions. In the case of the liberal capitalist West, dissident Marxisms argued that the apparent freedoms provided by these societies masked more pernicious unfreedom. Common to Kofler, Bloch, and Marcuse (as well as to other western Marxist theorists) was the view that capitalism was fundamentally and intrinsically exploitive. Capitalism viewed the bulk of humanity only in terms of their capacity to produce surplus value, harnessing their creative and productive capacities to the reproduction and expansion of surplus value. On this view, the humanity of the bulk of the population was merely a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. But if the official ideological pronouncements of the actually existing socialist states promised an order that was humanistic (in the sense of being non-capitalist) the realities found in these states belied the promise. Kofler and Bloch had both tried to make their way within orthodox Marxism-Leninism. Both had failed, finding in their critical projects that ultimately it was impossible to square Stalinism and post-Stalinist Marxism-Leninism with the human promises of Marx's original program. Marcuse was, from early in his intellectual life, already critical of Stalinism and its outgrowths, and his interactions with the main figures in the Frankfurt School reaffirmed this critical stance. Running through work of Kofler, Bloch, and Marcuse is the view that neither liberal capitalism nor orthodox Marxism-Leninism lived

up to their promises either to alleviate the condition of the human beings or to create an economic and social order ideal for human flourishing.

None of the humanist Marxists discussed here was able to extend their critical perspectives to comprehend the effects of gender or differing geopolitical locations in the decolonizing world order on human being (although Marcuse did make some moves in this direction late in his career). The fixation on the industrial proletariat and on the structure of power characteristic of the industrialized mass societies of the turn of the century precluded a systematic complication of the Marxist narrative with its focus on the role of the industrial proletariat. In this sense, the humanist Marxism of the early Cold War reproduced the most unfortunate aspects of the universalism of Marx and Engels themselves. Although Kofler, Bloch, and Marcuse were all influential on the radical movements that arose in the later 1960s, they all had difficulty adjusting themselves to the leftist identity politics of race and gender that arose in their wake. Even the socialist humanism of Fromm and his collaborators, which conceded many of the most objectionable rigidities of the traditional Marxist narrative, struggled to find traction in the politics of gender and racial liberation that dominated the left in the 1970s.[198] Of the three humanist Marxists discussed in this chapter, it was Marcuse who went furthest in revising Marxist theory and in broadening the revolutionary subject of history beyond the industrial proletariat. But the story of Marxism in the 1970s is one of declining influence and of the rise of more radical and specifically anti-humanist approaches to Marxism, such as that of Louis Althusser and his disciples. At the same time, younger Frankfurt School theorists such as Jürgen Habermas and Ulrich Beck pushed critical theory in directions that took it out of the orbit of historical materialism and toward a thematic and metho-

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[198] Michael Kenny, *The Politics of Identity: Liberal Political Theory and the Dilemmas of Difference* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2004). Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

dological rapprochement with the left wing of liberal humanism (represented by figures such as John Rawls). In the end, it could be argued that Marxist humanism was a victim of the Cold War polarization that had originally given rise to it in the first place.

Chapter 4. Postwar Anthropologies

"We live in an age of anthropology," wrote the Lutheran theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg in 1959.[1] The search for an "all encompassing science of the human" had become the primary objective of the intellectual endeavors of the modern world, displacing metaphysics from the central place it had held in human thought for centuries. In biology and philosophy, in sociology, psychology, medicine, and theology, the modern age was uniting the fragments of human spiritual endeavor into a unified conception of human being. Pannenberg's comment illustrates the growth in interest in bringing natural and social scientific disciplines to bear on questions of the human. The centrality of this project of human self-understanding was evident from the extensive discussions of the so-called "image of the human being" (*das Menschenbild*), which was the subject of numerous books, articles, meetings, and conferences in the decades following the Second World War. The Darmstädter Gespräche, a series of scholarly and artistic conferences that first took place in 1950 and recurred at irregular intervals ten more times between then and 1975, took the human being in its various aspects as the central concept for discussion. Concepts of human rights (*Menschenrechte*) and human dignity (*Menschenwürde*) played a prominent role in public discourse on both sides of the Cold War divide. In the wake of the Holocaust, the worst example of the Nazi assault on the human, the project of taking stock of the human being and of reaffirming the value of man as man was taken on by many prominent figures in German public and intellectual life.

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[1] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Weltoffenheit und Gottoffenheit," in *Was ist der Mensch?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 5.

These anthropologies were distinct from the ethnological anthropologies that had grown up in the course of the 19th centuries. In Germany, as Andrew Zimmerman has shown, ethnology was intimately connected with the project of validating the superiority of modern cultures and rejected the idea of universal characteristics uniting "primitive" and modern human beings. Postwar non-ethnological anthropologies differed in a number of important ways. From a methodological standpoint, the question of interpretation was much less problematic for non-ethnological anthropology, since the presumption was that both the investigator and the subject of investigation came from a common historic-cultural milieu. As in the case of humanism, postwar anthropology had both international and domestic components. It was important to convey the German commitment to the value of the human as such in order to bring German values into line with the avowed values of both the western capitalist and socialist worlds. At the same time, it is clear that twelve years of National Socialism culminating in a devastating and total military defeat dealt a shattering blow to German culture. The re-examination of the human was a means of coming to terms with the situation, one that allowed the focus to be shifted from Germanness to the universal characteristics of the human. Such an approach did not necessarily imply the conscious desire to minimize or to push aside horrors of the immediate German past, but this was to a great extent its practical effect. The concepts of *Mensch* and *Menschenbild* were employed as a means of naturalizing normative political assertions as the basis for a variety of political and cultural projects. At the same time, concepts of anthropology were put forward, not in the ethnological sense of the term, but rather as inductive or otherwise scientific attempts to come to terms with human beings as a type of entity.

The analysis of human being very often had a political dimension, responding to the events of the recent past or to current political conditions. In the years following the war, the sociologist Alfred Weber argued for a moderate socialism on the basis of an analysis of the ways that human beings were being shaped by their historical conditions. Conservatives also saw the potential for arguments based on an account of human being or human nature. Arnold Gehlen took up the tradition of philosophical anthropology, which had achieved prominence in the interwar period in the work of Plessner and Max Scheler, as a basis for their political views. This strategy of justification found its reverse image in the philosophy of the GDR. Where West German conservatives grounded political norms on substantive accounts of human nature or enduring human qualities, East German thinkers claimed that the classless social order being built in the communist world was bringing about the existence of a new kind of human being. For West German conservatives, the characteristics of the human being were made the basis of political prognoses and of proposals for changes in the political order of Western societies. For the East Germans, by contrast, the positive qualities of this "new socialist human being" functioned to justify the society which had created it.

This chapter will look at the role that analyses of the human being played in postwar German scholarship and political culture. After a brief excursus on the history of analyses of human being, the focus of the discussion turns to the role played by deployments of accounts of human being in political and social discourse in the first decades after the end of the Second World War. Intellectuals, theologians, and politicians made use of images of the human as the normative basis for political and social theories. While West German intellectual life gave rise to myriad accounts of the fundaments of human nature, in the German Democratic Republic discussion of the human being focused on the New Socialist Man that was

being created in the process of dismantling capitalist society. The final section of the chapter looks intensively at two particular approaches to the role of the human being: those of Alfred Weber and Arnold Gehlen. Weber's anthropology was integral to his historical sociology. Following the approach pioneered by his brother Max, Alfred Weber argued that human beings were decisively shaped by the cultural formations and that the cultural order of the West gave rise to specific types of human being. It was incumbent upon human beings to organize the political and economic structures of society in order to insure the persistence of the rational, self-governing and yet socialized individual that two millennia of Western history had brought into being. Gehlen, though also a sociologist, started from an opposing perspective. Rather than transient cultural formations, Gehlen looked to advances in biology to ground his account of the human being, and to distinguish human being from that of animals. For Gehlen what was crucial was the human lack of a structure of drives and instincts, comparable to that of animals and oriented to a specific environment. This lack left human beings liable to be overwhelmed by external stimuli and unstructured internal impulses. In contrast to Weber, whose sociological anthropology found political expression in non-dogmatic socialism, Gehlen was a staunch conservative who believed that strong social regulations give humans the security and confidence that would allow them to live most happily in an increasingly complex world.

Section I. The Study of Human Being

"Every era finds its cathartic word," wrote the philosopher Helmuth Plessner in 1928. "The terminology of the 18th century culminated in the concept of reason, that of the 19th in

the concept of development, that of the present day in the concept of life."[2] At the time these lines were written, the influence of the *Lebensphilosophie* of Dilthey, Bergson, and Simmel was widespread in Germany, and it is thus unsurprising that he would have chosen life as the definitive concept of the era.[3] If Plessner had written these lines twenty years later, at the midpoint of the 20th century, it seems likely that he would have preferred some other term. Interest in *Lebensphilosophie* was limited outside of Germany and France and after the Second World War the concept of life was of little importance in European philosophy.[4] By that time, Plessner's life had changed dramatically as well. The son of a baptized Jewish father, he had been forced out of his chair at the University of Cologne in 1933. He endured more than a decade of enforced exile, including a period living underground in Nazi occupied Holland. When he returned to Germany in 1952 to take up a newly created chair in sociology at the University of Göttingen, he found a much different intellectual environment than the one that he had left in the mid 1930s. The vocabulary of intellectual and public life had changed dramatically as Germans sought to come to terms with the historical burden of the Nazi past, and Germany's position astride the front line of the global Cold War. The particularistic language of race and *Volk* was now seen by many as compromised by its associations with National Socialist ideology and propaganda. Terms with universal reach, such as humanism, were the order of the day as German intellectuals and politicians in both German states sought to reintegrate Germany (East or West) into the community of civilized nations. Plessner engaged in a wide range of sociological projects after his return, but time and again

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[2] Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch: Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1928).

[3] Plessner was himself a contributor to this literature. Plessner's *Die Stufen* explored the implications of *Lebensphilosophie* for biological and zoological conceptions of the human.

[4] Herbert Schnädelbach, *Philosophy in Germany, 1831-1933* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 219-20.

his writings turned to the topic of human being and the anthropological themes that had shaped his work in the 1920s. For Plessner, as for many in Germany in the decades after the Second World War, the cathartic term in which the era culminated was *der Mensch*, the human being.

The rigorous analysis of human being as a philosophical project is among the most long-standing in the intellectual life of the West. A standard history of the topic, Michael Landmann's *Philosophische Anthropologie*, traces its intellectual roots to the Greek sophists of the later 5th century. For Landmann, it is culture that defines human beings. "Man is the being that must decide on his living arrangements himself, and this aspect of self-determination is what we call culture."[5] The sophists were the first true philosophical anthropologists because, although Socratic philosophy had interrogated the ethical dimension of human life, the sophists were the first to analyze culture. One might dispute Landmann's periodization, for instance by looking at the ways that human life is characterized in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, but it is nonetheless clear that the analysis of human being is of very ancient provenance.

The term anthropology is attributed by Landmann and others to the work of the 16th century German humanist Otto Casmann. Casmann's *Psychologia anthropologica sive animae humanae doctrina* (1594) was a study of "the psychophysical dual nature of man," the relevant duality being that between the mind and the body.[6] By the 18th century, anthropology had become a recognized discipline and had been "naturalized" into the canon of western

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[5] Michael Landmann, *Philosophische Anthropologie. Menschliche Selbstdeutung in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), 48.
[6] Ibid., 18. See also Odo Marquard, "Anthropologie," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 1 ed. Joachim Ritter (Basel: Schwabe, 1971), 362ff.

philosophy.[7] In the introduction to his lectures on logic (the so-called Jäsche Logic of 1800)

Immanuel Kant wrote of the questions raised by his "cosmopolitan" view of philosophy:

> What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope for? What is a human
> being? The first question is answered in metaphysics, the second in morals,
> the third in religion and the fourth in anthropology.[8]

Kant's writings dealt extensively with a range of topics related to human being. Sankar Muthu notes that, "according to his own understanding, the question of humanity encompasses Kant's entire philosophic worldview."[9] Kant's engagement with the human was divided between the underlying truth of the human, addressed via ethical philosophy, and the actual manifestation of humanity. The latter was dealt with most thoroughly in Kant's *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Perspective*). For Kant, the human being had to be understood in terms of a dialectical relationship between the potentiality implicit in the human and actual instantiations of human being. Although Kant was nominally a Christian thinker, he approached philosophy from the human-centered perspective of the Enlightenment. Thus, Kant's anthropology relied on a combination of rationalistic analysis and collation of empirical evidence about actual instances of the human being rather than viewing the human as the expression of a discreet and comprehensible divine will.[10]

"The task of the modern era was the realization and humanization of God – the transformation and dissolution of theology into anthropology."[11] So wrote Ludwig Feuerbach in 1843, in a text suggestively titled "Principles for the Philosophy of the Future." Feuerbach was a leading figure in a movement toward philosophical materialism that arose in the wake

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[7] Gerhard Arlt, *Philosophische Anthropologie* (Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzger, 2001), 7.
[8] Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 9 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1969), 25.
[9] Shankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*, 122.
[10] On Kant's anthropology, see Allan Wood, "Kant's Practical Philosophy" in Karl Ameriks ed. *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*
[11] Hanfi Fiery Brook

of that decline of Hegelian idealism that Karl Marx pungently described as "the putrefaction of absolute spirit."[12] In *The Essence of Christianity*, published in 1841, Feuerbach extended his critique of Hegelian idealism to Christian doctrine, arguing that the values that Christianity located in the divine were actually human ideals made absolute and inscribed in the figure of an all powerful deity through a reversal of subject and predicate:

> Religion, at least the Christian, is the relation of man to himself, or more correctly, to his own nature (*i.e.* his subjective nature); but a relation to it viewed as a nature apart from his own. The divine being is nothing else than the human being, or, rather, the human nature purified, freed from the limits of the individual man, made objective – *i.e.* contemplated and revered as another, a distinct being. All the attributes of the divine nature are, therefore, attributes of the human nature.[13]

Those things predicated of God, those values that were the ideals and essential characteristics of human being, were actually essential characteristics of the human. Religion for Feuerbach was, in one sense, a deficient form of understanding in that it failed to comprehend the human source of human values. Thus the proper goal of human understanding is not theology but rather anthropology, not the attempt to comprehend a being that transcends the human, but rather to comprehend the nature of human being.

The explanation of religion on terms of a process of abstraction of human values was based on Feuerbach's account of subjectivity. On his view, subjectivity had three components: reason, love, and will. These three components determined both internal and external cognition in such a way that, "[i]n the object which he contemplates, man becomes acquainted with himself; consciousness of the objective is the self-consciousness of man."[14] In the appreciation of music, for instance, the human being perceived the language of its own

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[12] Marx German ideology
[13] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989), 14.
[14] Ibid., 5.

affect. The defining feature of human being was the capacity to thematize itself, to cognize humanness as a species. This capacity to reflect on species being (*Gattungswesen*) defined the human.

For Marx, Feuerbach's work represented an important step in the project of moving beyond Hegelian idealism. In the 1860s and 1870s, Feuerbach's work provided the impetus behind the extreme materialism of figures such as Georg Büchner, Karl Vogt, and Jakob Moleschott. Feuerbach had taken as the motto for one of his later works "Der Mensch ist was er ißt" ("The human being is what he eats"), and later materialists took that as the cue for a thoroughgoing rejection of dialectical thought in favor of a purely scientific analysis of the material characteristics of human beings and the world.[15] Marx, by contrast, engaged more seriously with the implications of Feuerbach's materialism for the dialectical understanding of human being. Marx's clearest statement of his divergence from Feuerbach's position is the famous series of eleven theses, composed in the spring of 1845. "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism," wrote Marx in his first thesis, explicitly citing that of Feuerbach, "is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively."[16] As a result, Feuerbach became fixated on the human being's capacity for self-thematization, defining it as "the only genuinely human attitude."[17] For Marx, it was "sensuous human activity" that defined the human. In this sixth thesis, Marx wrote, "Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each sin-

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[15] Ludwig Feuerbach, "Das Geheimniss des Opfers oder Der Mensch ist, was er ißt," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. IV ed. Wilhelm Bolin and Friedrich Jodl (Stuttgart: Fromann, 1960). On German scientific materialism, see Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel, 1977).
[16] Marx, "Theses"
[17]

gle individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations." Marx's rejected the approach to understanding the human that sought to identify a stable essence inhering in and defining the species that had for centuries characterized anthropological thinking. In its place, he substituted an account of the human as a dynamic process of development shaped social relations.

Marx's critique of Feuerbach was a step in a process of decomposition of the static and essentialist anthropology of European philosophy through the beginning the 19th century. In the period between the 1840s and the outbreak of World War I, essentialist accounts of human being were subjected to severe criticism. In 1884, Nietzsche designated ahistorical conceptions of the human being as the "family failing of philosophers". In the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche wrote,

> All philosophers have the common failing of starting out from man as he is now and thinking they can reach their goal through an analysis of him. They involuntarily think of "man" as an *aeterna veritas*, as something that remains constant in the midst of all flux, as a sure measure of things. Everything the philosopher has declared about man is, however, at bottom no more than a testimony as to the man of a very *limited* period of time. Lack of historical sense is the family failing of philosophers; many, without being aware of it, even take the most recent manifestations of man, such as has arisen under the impress of certain religions, even certain political events, as the fixed form from which one has to start out. They will not learn that man has become, that the faculty of cognition has become; while some of them would have it that the whole world is spun out of this faculty of cognition.[18]

For Nietzsche it was a crucial deficiency of philosophy that it had tended to look at the particular manifestation of human being that it had immediately in front of it and to glean from this unchanging, definitive truths about human being in general. The key concept for understanding the human was not being, but rather becoming. This becoming suffused all aspects

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[18] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 12-13.

of the human, even the faculty of cognition. This was a matter of particular importance for those philosophers in the tradition running from Descartes to post-Kantian idealism, in which cognition was the definitive human faculty, the most fundamental ground of the human conception of the world.

From a philosophical perspective, it increasingly seemed inappropriate to talk about the human as an abstract concept. Rather, what was needed was a thoroughgoing contextualized analysis of human beings. Human beings were dynamic, historical composites of internality and externality, mediated by structures of social power. Human being had been transformed from a stable essence to a complex of fragments. As the sociologist Georg Simmel wrote in 1908:

> We are all of us fragments, not only of the human being in general, but also of ourselves. We are projections not only of the types "man," "good," "bad," and the like, but also of the – in principle unnamable – individuality and uniqueness of ourselves that surrounds our perceivable reality as if traced in ideal lines. This fragmentariness is supplemented by the other's view of us, which results in something that we never are purely and wholly. It is impossible for this view to see anything but juxtaposed fragments, which nevertheless are all that really exist.[19]

By the last years before the outbreak of war in 1914 the concept of the human being had been rendered so problematic as to have lost any pretense of normativity. This impression was made even more profound by the war itself. Men were destroyed in masses, blown to pieces by shells fired by others too far from the field even to see their opponents, much less recognize them as human. The concept of *élan vital*, that ideology that held that human dedication

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[19] Georg Simmel, "How is Society Possible?," in *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms* ed. Donald Levine (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 10-11.

would be enough to carry men into the opposing trenches, disintegrated in the face of what one historian referred to as "the ineluctable logic of automatic fire."[20]

By this time too, anthropology had assumed a new function in European intellectual life. While Kant had taken anthropology to be the all-encompassing study of manifestations of human being, since the 1860s anthropology had increasingly come to be associated with the nascent science of ethnography. Andrew Zimmerman has written of the transformation of the project of late 18th century German humanism, of which philosophical anthropology was an important element, into that of the scientific scholarship on human beings in the context of European colonial expansion.[21] As Zimmerman noted, "[a]nthropologists proposed that their study of so-called natural peoples would reveal human nature directly, unobscured by masks of culture and the complications of historical development."[22] This scientific analysis of the human was also tightly imbricated in the project of establishing (or confirming) the cultural hierarchy in which Europeans were ranked above the natural peoples living in the colonized areas, which in turn buttressed both the narrative of the *mission civilisatrice*, and the economic exploitation that accompanied it.

The anthropologies that had come into being by the middle of the 20th century differed, generally speaking, from most varieties of humanism. Humanism tended to involve projects for human improvement through intellectual attainment of universal values. Anthropologies, by contrast, tended to look at human beings as they actually were and to generate strategies for human improvement out of these circumstances. For anthropological projects it was not necessary for the values toward which human beings were guided to be universal. On

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[20] John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 82.
[21] Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
[22] Ibid., 3.

the other hand, claims to universality were not precluded and there were some points at which humanistic and anthropological projects overlapped. As with humanism, the context of the anthropologies of postwar Germany was constituted by the need to deal with the recent Nazi past and the intensifying systemic conflict between the blocs led by the United States and the Soviet Union. Both raised important questions about what it meant to be human and what implications such conceptions might have for political and economic life. The heritage of National Socialism was the designation of large groups of ostensibly human beings as subhuman and their murder in millions. If Germany was to be reintegrated into the community of civilized peoples, it was necessary to remedy this failure of German understandings of humanity to remain in step with the norms of the West. At the same time, the reconstruction of the notions of human being in Germany was undertaken in the context of an intense political conflict between liberal capitalism and communism, each of which saw the human being in disparate and mutually exclusive ways.

Section II. The Human Being in Postwar Germany

The importance of the human being in postwar Germany can be read from Article 1 of the 1949 Basic Law of the Federal Republic: "Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar. Sie zu achten und zu schützen ist Verpflichtung aller staatlichen Gewalt" ("The dignity of the human being is inviolable. To respect and defend this dignity is the duty of all the forces of the state").[23] The opening line of the constitution of the West German state committed the state to the defense of the dignity of human beings irrespective of any other quality such as gender, religion, or national-ethnic origin. The ideology of National Socialism was radical

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[23] Rolf Steininger, *Deutsche Geschichte seit 1945: Darstellung und Dokumente in vier Bänden*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996).

particularism based on an essentialist conception of human beings. The mass of nominally human creatures were, according to the ideologists of National Socialism, actually divided into organic racial communities that were in a condition of unceasing Hobbesian conflict with each other.[24] The new West German state was to be founded on a rejection of those ideas. Human beings had a dignity which should be protected without regard to any contingent characteristics defining particular human individuals or groups.

The goal of defending human dignity with its implication of connections to the values of the wider human community was a common feature of the political architecture of the West German state. The preamble to the constitution of Rheinland-Pfalz, adopted in May 1947, defined the goals of the state government as, "to defend the freedom and dignity of human beings, to order communal life according to the principle of social justice, to promote economic progress for all, and to form a new democratic Germany as a vital member of the community of peoples." That of Baden-Württemberg, adopted six months previously committed the state to, "the dignity and the eternal rights of human beings as an expression of the will to unity, peace, and freedom."[25] The precise content of the concept of the dignity of human beings was, like many of the positive normative concepts employed in these documents, not precisely specified but rather defined negatively against the misdeeds of National Socialism. The national and state constitutions were meant as ecumenical documents, binding people of all political persuasions into institutions the norms of which would be shaped by the rejection of the Nazi past and the project of re-synchronizing German values with those of the West.

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[24] Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945*.
[25] Both state constitutions are excerpted in Dieter Felbick, *Schlagwörter der Nachkriegszeit 1945-1949*, 398.

This was intended as a rejection of essentialism. According to National Socialism, race and blood were fundamental qualities of human beings that defined individuals and groups in a way that transcended the vagaries of environment and experience. There was no human essence apart from the racial essence. In the ideas of the German Basic Law, and for many in the broader spheres of German intellectual and cultural life, the reconstruction of German culture required an explicit commitment to an idea of the human that was universal in scope. One expression of this was the discourse of humanism which, as discussed in Chapter 1, proposed utopias of human self-formation based on conceptions of *Bildung* or of just social relations. East and West German versions of humanism shared a utopian viewpoint: the idea that human being could be improved or perfected. The term *Mensch* and its composite forms can be used as markers to map deployments of the human that functioned differently than humanism while occupying an overlapping lexical position in the vocabulary of postwar German intellectual life. In an article entitled "Vom sanften Gesetz der Menschlichkeit" ("On the Gentle Law of Humanness") published in the liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in October 1945, the jurist Hans Poeschel wrote, "Viewed formally, the foreign word *Humanität* has the same meaning as the German word *Menschlichkeit*, but we link with it a particular concept of development defined by intellectual history, created out of the spirit of Greek culture by Cicero, the spiritual mediator between Hellas and Rome, and subsumed under the term *humanitas*: harmonious development of all those capacities of spirit and mind that are valuable for human characteristics in the service of human civilization and culture."[26] References to *der Mensch*, and to its cognates such as *Menschentum* (humanity) or *Menschlichkeit* (humanness), could be descriptive or normative or both, depending on the circumstances.

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[26] Hans Poeschel, "Vom sanften Gesetz der Menschlichkeit," *Südduetsche Zeitung*, 19 October 1945.

The analysis of the human being conducted using the conceptual framework of *Menschen* or *Menschtum* overlapped with humanism, but differed from it in important ways. Rather than focusing on ideals to which human beings ought to aspire, the discourses of the human with which we are now concerned were anthropological. As used in this context, this term is not meant to denote ethnographic studies of human populations exhibiting pre-modern modes of economic and social organization.[27] Rather, it is intended to encompass a wide range of theorizing about the human that, unlike in the case of the various humanisms previously discussed, are not predicated on an order of value embodied in the cultural products of an earlier human order. It is an attempt to understand the human being on its own terms, to understand the interaction between human nature and environment and, in its politically engaged moments, to derive improvements and ideals for the organization of human life from a thorough understanding of human beings themselves.

In the *Kölner Leitsätze* (Cologne Principles), a programmatic document published by the CDU in June 1945, the party leaders sought to address the low ebb reached by German culture and political conditions by reasserting the values of the Christian West: "What alone can save us in this hour of need is an honest reflection on Christian and Western values of life, which formerly governed the German people and made them great and of good standing among the peoples of Europe."[28] What was needed was a new culture, but one that constituted a return to that German culture that had existed before it had been hijacked by National Socialism. The regeneration of these values would allow the German people to rise again.

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[27] In recent decades the connection between anthropology and ethnography of "primitive" peoples has loosened considerably. Practitioners of the modern social scientific discipline of anthropology have increasingly turned their analytical tools to the investigation of modern societies. See for instance the work of the late Daphne Berdahl on space and power in the former East German border zone. Daphne Berdahl, *Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[28] Ossip K. Flechtheim, ed. *Dokumente zur parteipolitischen Entwicklung in Deutschland seit 1945*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dokumenten-Verlag H. Wendler,1963), 31.

Nazism had transformed German culture from a civilized culture of the West to one characterized by "dictatorship and tyranny, domination and militarism." In its place, "[a] new people should rise again whose basic law is respect for human dignity."[29] There were many in Europe and North America who might have disputed the idea that National Socialism had been the basis for all of the flaws of German culture, particularly militarism. The program of the CDU asserted both the existence of German values that were a subset of Western values and the need for the creation of something new, something different than what had gone before. In 1945, the CDU and its Bavarian sister party the Christlich-Soziale Union (CSU) were in the process of forming out of the remnants of the Catholic Center Party that had existed since the Empire. From a party whose main goal was the defense of the interests of the Catholic Church in German, Christian Democracy/Christian Socialism became an ecumenical movement after the end of the war. The goals of this party were the uniting of Christian political opinion and the defense of a very moderate conservatism with tinges of liberal individualism. Conservative impulses within the party were subordinated to the need to make a clean and unequivocal break with National Socialism. The party saw itself as the defender of the rights and dignity of the individual against attacks from both the conservative right and the collectivist left. As a party program of the CDU in the Soviet Occupation Zone, published on 26 June 1945 demanded, "[i]n place of the distorted image of a state run community of the Hitler period, a truly democratic state should come into being, one that both takes account of the duty of the people to be loyal, to make sacrifices, and to do their duty, but which just as much based on respect for the right to personhood, honor, freedom, and human dignity."[30] Terms such as loyalty (*Treue*), sacrifice (*Opfer*), and duty (*Dienst*) were of long provenance in the

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[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 27.

culture of German conservatism, but they had taken on sinister associations as National Socialism had mapped the conservative lexicon onto its own political, social, and racial projects. The Nazi state had been, in the words of the platform, a distorted image (*Zerrbild*), and likewise the language of German conservatism had been distorted by the Nazis. The goal of the program was to repair the damage to the conservative values wrought by National Socialism by reconnecting those values with those of the West.

Discussions of the human in the decade following the end of World War II often focused on the threats posed by immediate political and cultural conditions to that which was most essentially human. In an essay published in the *Frankfurter Hefte* early in 1948, the liberal Catholic writer Clemens Münster identified the problem of the human being as the central one facing the West.[31] Humanity found itself in a historically unprecedented situation. The stream of history was moving with unwonted speed and violence, transforming the world in ways more extreme than any natural disaster. Unable to deal with the new circumstances in traditional ways, human culture was like a motor stuck in idle, dissipating itself in a dialectic between need and greed that encompassed parties, classes, states governments, and even descended to the level of the family. "In economics, in politics, and often enough in the churches, the needs and elementary claims of human beings have been degraded to objects of speculation or propaganda."[32] Human beings, Münster argued, had become incapable of successfully adjusting themselves to modern conditions:

> History is moved by a constant tension between the authentic, essential claims
> of human beings and their discontent with every satisfaction of these claims;
> between the limitations of their means and the compass of their capacity for
> adaptation, classification, and subordination with respect to the natural and
> social conditions of existence and their impulse to control these conditions

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[31] Clemens Münster, "Problem Nummer Eins: Der Mensch," *Frankfurter Hefte* 3, no. 2 (1948).
[32] Ibid., 202.

and as many other people as possible; between their indolence, which causes them to wait for unsatisfiable preconditions on a massive scale, for the conversion of the unbelievers or the dictatorship of the proletariat or the restoration of free trade, and a nearly superfluous urge to action that reduces their leisure to a minimum; between quivering fear and unbridled hubris; between a farcical flight from responsibility and a really demonic acceptance of dangerous games like atom bombs and new social orders; between a surfeit of theoretical-speculative capacities and a thoroughgoing helplessness in the face of the facts; in the words of Pascal: between their greatness and their misery.[33]

These tensions were in evidence not only in the relationships between various groups within society, but also within individual human beings themselves. It was the fate of human beings never to be completely at home in the world because it was an element of their nature never to be able to satisfy their needs with any kind of finality. For Münster, a Catholic of moderate liberal political persuasion, it was crucial that the societies of the West retained a focus on the value of the human being as such, so that the conflicts attendant upon human dissatisfaction would not lead to a repetition of the inhumanity of the Hitler regime.

For liberals like Münster and his collaborators at the *Frankfurter Hefte*, the challenge was to recover values that had been aggressively pushed aside during the years of Hitler's rule. German society, still in the throes of material scarcity, had been intensely politically polarized in the period between the fall of the monarchy and the end of the National Socialist regime. It had emerged from this into political circumstances defined by another intense process of polarization: that of the systemic conflict of the nascent Cold War. Münster argued that the solution did not lie in programs for universal transformation, but rather in attempts shaped by a particular time and place. Plans for all-encompassing change, such as the attempt to completely reorganize society being undertaken in the Soviet Union, were like try-

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[33] Ibid., 202-03.

ing to build a house roof first.[34] What was needed first of all was the construction of political order that was concerned with the well-being of human beings, rather than assuming (as the nationalists had done) that the wellbeing the state and the wellbeing of its citizens was the same thing. Rather than fixing things at the level of human beings generally, it was necessary to approach the problems of particular groups of human beings. But this in turn required one to think at the level of human beings generally in order to understand what sorts of goals might be aimed at. The question of what was best for human beings as such had to be answered if the political and social remedies undertaken were to improve matters rather than merely prolong or exacerbate already existing problems. Resolution of particular crisis inevitably took one back to considerations of a more general nature.

Münster saw this crisis as a result of recent historical events, but others saw the crisis of the human being as a result of developments in the longer term cultural history of the West. This was particularly true of writers in the Christian tradition, for whom National Socialism represented a falling away from the values that had given shape to cultures of the West. The Catholic poet Reinhold Schneider wrote in 1946 of the feeling of confusion among Germans and Europeans in the wake of the war. "As survivors unable to grasp how, much less by what right, they have survived, we survey an unparalleled devastation."[35] Not only had the physical structures of human life been destroyed, but more importantly the old ways of life in which humans had felt at home as well. Humanity stood before the court of history before which the depths of sin that human beings had recently plumbed would be examined. For Schneider, the key issue was the falling away from God that had characterized the culture in the modern West. The diminishing force and breadth of Christian belief had so

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[34] Ibid., 203.
[35] Reinhold Schneider, *Der Mensch ver dem Gericht der Geschichte* (Augsburg-Göggingen: Verlag Johann Wilhelm Naumann, 1946), 5.

weakened the morality of Europeans that there had been too little strength available to fight off an obviously immoral movement such as National Socialism. In the wake of the period of barbarism that the Nazis had instigated,

The Leipzig theologian Alfred Dedo Müller argued that the sources of the "egregious situation" in which the civilization of the West found itself had its sources in "a deep-seated obstruction in human nature."[36] Human beings had become convinced that the power to re-solve the human problems lay with human beings themselves. Müller traced the sources of this view to Goethe's appropriation of classical thought, in particular of the myth of Prome-theus. In the course of the 19th century, philosophy had taken up these human-centered views, progressively displacing Christianity's veritable account of the relation of human beings to God and to the world. In the 20th century this led to a situation not only of the decline of reli-gious belief but to its degeneration. The myth of Prometheus, which Müller claimed had been gaining prominence in European culture since the 18th century, was emblematic of humani-ty's fixation on itself and its own powers. This fixation had come at the expense of striving for a fuller understanding of the ways in which human beings were an expression of the mes-sage of Jesus Christ. As the example of Goethe showed, Müller argued, "the revival of Pro-metheus in the last two centuries of the history of the human soul has undoubtedly been asso-ciated with the opinion that there is no room for Christian faith in crucial questions of hu-man-self definition and self-assertion"[37]

Müller's critique of human self-conceptions was illustrative of a major theme in postwar Christian thought in Germany. Müller saw the problems of humanity in the Christian

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[36] Alfred Dedo Müller, *Prometheus oder Christus? Die Krisis in Menschenbild und Kulturethos im Abendland* Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1948: 3.
[37] Alfred Dedo Müller, *Prometheus oder Christus: die Krisis in Menschenbild und Kulturethos des Abendlandes* (Leipzig: F. Meiner, 1948), 47.

West as essentially linked with the thought of the Enlightenment and German romanticism. Others in this critical tradition saw the provenance of the crisis in the longer term. In a talk delivered at the inaugural *Darmstädter Gespräche* in July 1950, the art historian Hans Sedlmayr argued that the state of modern art offered clues to the endangerment of the human in the modern era. Sedlmayr was a polarizing and combative figure. An Austrian by birth, he had joined the Austrian Nazi party in 1932 while it was still illegal to do so. Sedlmayr's views were grounded in an intense and very conservative Catholicism, verging at points on atavism. At the end of the war, his membership in the party resulted in his dismissal from his position as a professor at the University of Vienna by the allied occupation authorities. In 1948 he had published *Verlust der Mitte* (*The Loss of the Middle*), a manifesto of conservative cultural criticism. He would eventually find a position at the University of Munich, but he had been between positions when he was invited to speak in Darmstadt at an event combining an art exhibition and a scholarly conference.

To a great extent, Sedlmayr's talk paraphrased the views that he had expressed in *Verlust der Mitte*. Modern art and architecture, with their increasing rejection of formal representation and their pursuit of pure forms had abjured the proper role of orienting human beings and of illustrating human ideals. The representation of human beings in modern art highlighted the tenuousness of the human situation in modernity. Human beings were now "embedded in two realms…in that of the dead and that of the chaotic." Death and chaos were foreign to the human being living in good order, but modernity had begun to break down this separation: "Now, the human being – and the images of modern art have constantly illustrated this – is deeply embedded in the realm of the dead, of dead things, dead material, the lifeless, the amorphous, that which lies beneath mineral nature, and at the same time the

realm of the chaotic, that which is demoralized by conflicting forces, the disintegrated, the decayed, and so forth."[38] At the same time, art itself was in crisis, retreating since the time of Schiller into realms of increasingly pure aestheticism. Art had lost its substance so that every human creation, even ships and airplanes could in some sense be considered works of art. Art no longer recognized the superiority of cosmic and religious values over the purely aesthetic. Whereas art had formerly played the role of linking European culture with the universal values (by which he meant Christian values), in recent centuries artists had become fascinated with mere appearance. Decoupled from Christian values, modern art now merely recorded the denigration of human beings in modern society, rather than acting as a conduit between the human and the eternal. Like modern human beings, modern art lacked an image of God as a foundation for values. Thus, Sedlmayr noted, "art is both a symptom and symbol of the endangerment of human beings."[39]

Sedlmayr's conservatism drew mixed responses from the audience. While the official text of his speech notes sporadic applause, it also records other responses. When Sedlmayr launched into his critique of the lack of standards in modern art people in the crowd shouted, "These are mere platitudes" and "Give some examples."[40] The atmosphere became worse later on. Sedlmayr's claim that the intellect was inherently superior to instinctual life drew whistles and stamping from the crowd. "These are completely objective claims," Sedlmayr responded. "Don't feel yourselves attacked! I believe that I take modern art more seriously than all the Pollyannas, against whom it must be defended." This last claim drew stamping

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[38] Hans Sedlmayr, "Über die Gefahren der modernen Kunst," in *Darmstädter Gespräch: Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit* ed. Gerhard Evers (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlaganstalt, 1950), 50.
[39] Ibid., 51.
[40] Ibid., 54.

and cries of "Phooey!" from the crowd. One listener even shouted mockingly, "Heil Hitler!"[41]

Sedlmayr's talk illustrated the situation of an important strain of postwar German conservatism. Tarred with the brush of complicity with National Socialism, German conservatives struggled in the late 1940s and 1950s to articulate a politics free of brown coloration. The conservatism of the Weimar era had been characterized by an intensely pessimistic response to Enlightenment optimism about the perfectibility of human beings. National Socialism had appealed to many conservatives because it promised an unstinting defense of traditional values threatened by Enlightenment rationalism.[42] Aggressively asserting German cultural values as absolutes that trumped values grounded in human being in general had seemed to be an antidote to the perceived disintegration of traditional values. Conservatives related differently to concepts of the human than did liberals or socialists. For the latter, the human was the locus of universally valid claims to justice and dignity. Conservatives saw the human as invariably located in a particular culture and condition. Claims about the dignity of man only made sense in the context of an actual order of values. To argue otherwise was to rely on abstraction. But the concept of the human did offer a special usefulness to postwar conservatives. To argue about the situation of human beings in a particular historical context still permitted the outward appearance of universality and deflected attention from the nationalistic particularism of interwar conservatism. National Socialism had taken this particularism to

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[41] Ibid., 59.

[42] On German conservatism in the postwar period, see Helga Grebing, *Konservative gegen die Demokratie: konservative Kritik an der Demokratie in der Bundesrepublik nach 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlaganstalt, 1971); Martin Greifenhagen, *Das Dilemma des Konservatismus in Deutschland*.Recent scholarship has criticized the supposition that National Socialism actually represented the sort of atavism that it purported to. See Paul Betts, "The New Fascination with Fascism: The Case of Nazi Modernism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 4 (2002). A more extensive treatment can be found in Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

genocidal extremes. For postwar conservatives, arguing from the standpoint of the human was a means of overcoming the discredit that had accrued to them in the context of the National Socialist appropriation of their views.

Arguing at the level of the human being offered access to the broadest level of generality, one from which the trend of historical development could be assayed. Among German intellectuals there was tendency to see Germany's immediate political conditions as an epochal crisis of the human being and a concomitant crisis of the *Abendland*. Conservatives like Sedlmayr were not alone in their diagnoses. The view that mutually influential crises involving human beings and the West were the order of the day was expressed by figures representing a wide range of political traditions. Writing in the *Frankfurter Hefte* in June 1946, Walter Dirks voiced questions on the minds of many Germans in the months following the end of the war: "How did we get here and what is our position? How does one explain the appalling reversal of life of which we were the witnesses, the victims, and the accomplices?"[43] For Dirks, the answer lay in the fact that the Germans had been "disloyal to the basic law of their development." The "basic law" of which Dirks spoke was the cultural unity which linked, or ought to have linked Germans to the other civilized peoples of Western Europe. Dirks defined it in terms which linked it unmistakably to the imperatives of the present day:

> The West (*Abendland*), that unity of Romans, Germans, and Slavs, but most
> of all the Romans and the German under the sign of antiquity and Christianity,
> is a hierarchical order of values, a variety of humanity (*Menschtum*), which
> grew out of the historical marriage of the Germanic peoples with baptized, ho-
> ly antiquity, with Rome and Greece. In a long process of disintegration or de-
> cay, whose stages were nominalism, the Reformation, absolutism, the Enligh-
> tenment, the nation-state, liberalism, capitalism and materialism, imperialism
> and Bolshevism, and finally complete secularization, the result was anarchy

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[43] Walter Dirks, "Das Abendland und der Sozialismus," *Frankfurter Hefte* 1, no. 3 (1946): 68.

and dehumanization, in the context of which National Socialism appeared, naked and execrable. Salvation lies in consciousness of our actual heritage, in commitment to the spirit of the West.[44]

There is an important distinction to be made between the account of value implicit in the pairing of human being and the West, as opposed to that which underlay the classical and Christian humanisms discussed in Chapter 1. The various manifestations of humanism share a commitment to the self-development of human beings, a process whose endpoint is the embodiment of universal values. The centrality of the concept of *Bildung* for Christian and classically-based accounts of humanism illustrates the fundamental process envisioned in these humanisms. What was human was unfolded in the process of education. The goal of the process was not merely development for its own sake, but rather to bring oneself into alignment with ideals definitive of, and relevant to, all human beings irrespective of the contingencies of birth or condition. While individual humanists fell short of the universalistic ethic implied in these doctrines, it was precisely this proactive universalism which gave the doctrines their normative force.

In a text composed in 1949 on the role of Christianity in the nascent Cold War conflict, Karl Barth pointed out the centrality of ideas of the human being to the conflict. At its base, Barth argued, the conflict between east and west centered on "the opposition, which today has become extreme, between two conceptions of the human being, and particularly of the social, the political-economic ordering of their lives.[45] It was, Barth noted, "not merely a harmless 'academic' conflict between the proponents of two different viewpoints" but a systemic conflict between two groupings that controlled large parts of the world. The western

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Karl Barth, "Die Kirche zwischen Ost und West," in *'Der Gözte wackelt': zeitkritische Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe von 1930 bis 1960* (Berlin: Vogt, 1961), 130.

side accused the east of having a one-sided, materialistic account of the human being that reduced the myriad forms of human life to questions of production and consumption. The east, by contrast, accused the west of promoting a disingenuous spiritual and moral account of human beings. From the eastern perspective, the propaganda of the west denied the significance of the economic dimension of life, while defending a social order that was premised on the fundamental importance of the economic in the shaping of human existence. Barth saw himself as promoting a political third way between the two competing blocs, one which addressed the failures of both sides to live up to the moral demands of the Christian message. While they might not have agreed with Barth's approach to the conflict, the partisans of both sides clearly recognized the degree to which Barth was correct in noting that accounts of the human being were central. In the western zones of occupation, and subsequently in West Germany, there was broad tacit agreement on a model of free, self-legislating individual, exemplified, for instance, in Wilhelm Röpke's concept of economic humanism. Complaints from the right and left fringes of the polity claimed that this account of the human being implied a concept of the human detached from society and the comity of one's fellow men. The economic upturn of the mid-1950s made this Anglo-American model of economic individualism increasingly seem the norm.[46]

In the communist world, by contrast, the talk was of the creation of socialist human beings made possible by the dismantling of capitalism and the reconstruction of society along socialist principles. In a speech delivered at an SED party conference in July 1952, party chairman Walter Ulbricht spoke of the role of the arts in creating "the new human being" who would be "the fighter for a unified Germany, the activist, the hero of the construction of

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[46] On the conservative critique of liberal individualism, see Axel Schildt, *Zwischen Abendland und Amerika: Studien zur westdeutschen Ideenlandschaft der 50er Jahre* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1999), 128-35.

socialism."[47] In the new socialist order, which was still in the process of construction, artists would play a key role in educating human beings. The creation of new humans and a new society went hand in hand. One could not be created without the other. In order to better understand their task, it was necessary for the artists to study closely the best, most productive individuals in the current society. They should not be satisfied with looking at superficialities, but must "carve out precisely the new character traits of human beings."[48] Admittedly, the new socialist man had not yet been created. Ulbricht stressed the need for the artists to overcome the tendency to formalism and work through the organs of the party for the realization of socialist realism and the accomplishment of creation of this new man.

While the language of the new socialist man recurred from time to time throughout the 1950s, it was in the early 1960s that the idea of socialist man came to full prominence. In his *Von der Entwicklung des sozialistischen Menschen* (1964), the East German philosopher Wolfgang Eichhorn outlined a position emblematic of much communist writing on the topic: "Under the leadership of the communist and workers parties, a new world of interpersonal relations and a new human type are evolving in the lands of the socialist world system, embodying all the noble popular struggles of our time and of the future of humanity, and shaping the development of human life to an increasing degree."[49] Through the efforts of the Socialist Unity Party, human beings in the German Democratic Republic were being educated to a new form of social life, one which in turn was giving rise to a new kind of human being that differed fundamentally from that characteristic of the capitalist world. This new type of human being was the result of the operationalization of Karl Marx's social theory. In practice

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[47] Walter Ulbricht, "Kampf um ein realistisches Kunstschaffen," in *Dokumente der Kunst-, Literatur-, und Kulturpolitik der SED* ed. Elimar Schubbe (Stuttgart-Degerloch: Seewald Verlag, 1972), 239.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Wolfgang Eichhorn, *Von der Entwicklung des sozialistischen Menschen* (Berlin: Dietz, 1964), 7.

this meant that the development of the human being and the development of the productive forces of the socialist state were part of a parallel and mutually reinforcing process.

Underlying this view of the new man created by socialist society was a conception of human beings in which human nature could not be conceived of in the abstract but rather had to be viewed (as Marx had argued in his "Theses on Feuerbach") as an expression of the social relations governing society. "If one wants to use expressions like 'essence' or 'nature' one can only really mean the relevant historical-concrete complex of lived labor and lived capacities, the cultural-technical level of human beings, their position in the productive and class relations and in other social relations, as well as the political-moral attitude of human beings in a particular epoch."[50] On the Marxist-Leninist view, that which guided Eichhorn's work and the intellectual life of the GDR, human beings could only be conceived of socially and it was social labor, rather than some speculative concept of human nature, that was decisive in terms of defining the human. The opponents of this worldview in West Germany relied on non-scientific fantasies to define human nature, and were thus able to do so in way that made it seem as if liberal capitalism was an ideal, or even an acceptable, mode of human social organization. Marxism-Leninism, unlike the various nationally tinged ideologies that dominated West German cultural life, was internationalistic, seeking to encompass all human beings in a social order which was characterized both by a fundamental commitment to justice, and by a mode of social organization that was optimal in terms of producing human satisfaction. Socialist internationalism, Eichhorn claimed, embodied the best of all political and moral values, freeing workers from "the constraints of narrow, nationalistic modes of thought."[51]

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[50] Ibid., 41.
[51] Ibid., 265-66.

In postwar Germany, modes of analyzing the human could serve a wide range of political purposes. For conservatives like as Sedlmayr, the relevant narrative was the endangerment of the human, threatened by the degeneration of the Western culture that was the most important force shaping human life. Christian anthropologies took a similar line, arguing that the human being, taken generally, was endangered by an overweening self-fixation that diverted attention from the true human self-conception as a product of the will of God. For liberals too, arguing at the fundamental level of the human was a means of conceptualizing the challenges faced by Germans in a political environment shaped by the manifest inhumanity of National Socialism and by the increasingly intense conflict between capitalist and socialist modes of political and economic organization. The balance of this chapter will be devoted to looking more closely at systematic attempts to understand the endangered condition of the human being. The work of the sociologists Alfred Weber and Arnold Gehlen can be seen as important, scientifically grounded attempts to conceptualize the human situation in postwar modernity and to see a way forward through the dangers facing human being as such.

Section III. Anthropological Themes in German Sociology

The connections between sociology and politics in Germany had been a matter of contestation ever since the founding of the German Sociological Society in 1909. The question of the role of values in sociological analysis had absorbed much energy in the early decades of the discipline's existence. Max Weber's engagement in these debates, culminating in his resignation from the Society in 1912, has been much discussed. With the rise of the Third Reich, the question of politicization was forcibly resolved, with the Society's integration in

to Nazi ideological institutions under the leadership of Hans Freyer. The Society was effectively dormant after 1934. It was refounded under the leadership of Leopold von Wiese in 1946. Wiese outlined his view of the relationship between politics and sociology in his opening speech at the Society's first postwar conference, held in Frankfurt in September 1946. "Since the beginning of the First World War," Wiese told his audience, "we have entered the era of universal slavery (*allgemeiner Sklaverei*) and must bog down in it more and more."[52] Wiese did not differentiate between National Socialist and communist forms of slavery, speaking instead in terms of general observations. Observation of a wide range of social and political conditions had rendered an image of the enslaved human. This human lacked, "the capacity for self-determination, for the avowal of psychological and spiritual needs; he is a sort of machine-made-flesh, used (and used up) in the completion of tasks inflicted upon him from the outside."[53] The danger threatening human beings was the disappearance of the Kantian self-legislating, rational individual. The task of sociology, so Wiese argued, was to use scientifically grounded observational techniques to generate knowledge. This knowledge could then be used as a tool to defend the freedom of human beings.

In fact, this diagnosis was not new in the intellectual history of sociology. Max Weber's analysis of the trends of modern mass societies, and of the varieties of human being that resulted from those societies, contained many of the same themes. But a quarter of a century after Weber's death, the world and the problems facing it had changed in important ways. Writers in the German sociological condition were now confronted with the need to overcome the Nazi past, and to do so in the face of an intensifying intersystemic geopolitical con-

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[52] Leopold von Wiese, "Die gegenwärtige Situation, soziologisch betrachtet," in *Verhandlungen des achten deutschen Soziologentages vom 19. bis 21. September 1946 in Frankfurt a. M.: Vorträge und Diskussionen in der Hauptversammlung und in den Sitzungen der Untergruppen.* ed. Deutscher Soziologentag (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1948), 20.
[53] Ibid., 24.

flict. The remaining sections of this chapter examine two attempts to do so. It first looks at the work of Weber's younger brother Alfred, whose project was to extend his brother's sociological analysis to the transformed historical circumstances in which he found himself. In particular, Alfred Weber looked at the varieties of human being that resulted from successive historic-political formations, drawing conclusions about the political approaches appropriate to the historical and sociological situation of modern society (mainly Western society) from an analysis of the trajectories of the history of mankind. Arnold Gehlen, by contrast, sought to apply the results of biological analyses of the human to the study of human societies. Gehlen sought thereby to determine the situation of human beings in general, and to draw political conclusions from them.

A. Alfred Weber

Alfred Weber was 77 when the Second World War ended. He was one of the best known sociologists in Germany. He had spent the era of the Third Reich in internal emigration, having requested early retirement from the University of Heidelberg in the wake of the National Socialist electoral victory in 1933. Ernst Krieck, the National Socialist rector of the University of Heidelberg wrote of Weber in 1938, "[h]is scientific achievements, however they have been evaluated in the past, appear to me not only distant from the National Socialist worldview but at least in part to be opposed to it."[54] Nonetheless, Weber's fame was such that the National Socialist government neither forbade him to publish nor prevented him from travelling abroad to attend conferences.

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[54] Quoted in Eberhard Demm, *Von der Weimarer Republik zur Bundesrepublik: der politische Weg Alfred Webers 1920-1958* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1999), 236-37.

At war's end, Weber involved himself in political action. He had been active in the left liberal Deutsche Demokratische Partei. Although the party was reformed after the war as the Frei Demokratische Partei, Weber did not rally to it, choosing rather to associate himself with the moderate socialism of Kurt Schumacher's SPD. In a letter written by Weber to Theodor Heuss in 1954, Weber criticized the FDP for lacking the social liberalism of the prewar DDP and having abandoned the progressive liberal traditions embodied in prewar figures such as Friedrich Naumann, Lujo Brentano, and Max Weber. Weber thus explained his participation since the end of the war with the Social Democrats.[55] Weber also took part in extrapolitical activities aimed at rebuilding German society and culture. With Dolf Sternberger he participated in the early organization of the Heidelberg section of the Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands in the spring of 1946. Although controlled by the German communists and their Soviet leaders, the Kulturbund was, in its early days, politically ecumenical and the Heidelberg section had little or no active contact with the more heavily communist controlled organization in Berlin. Weber was also active, with Sternberger and the psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich, in the Heidelberger Aktionsgruppe für Demokratie und Freien Sozialismus. The Aktionsgruppe, which existed from 1947 to 1949, was a loose aggregation of intellectuals and figures from the major political parties who came together for conferences and worked to promote a "free socialism," a non-dogmatic socialism the goals of which were avoiding bureaucratic sclerosis, the formation of well-rounded individuals, and rejection of the communist fixation on doctrinal orthodoxy. [56]

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[55] Quoted in ibid., 363.
[56] For more on the free socialism movement in postwar Germany, see Rainer Dohse, *Der dritte Weg: Neutralitätsbestrebungen in Westdeutschland zwischen 1945 und 1955*. Participants from the political parties included Carlo Schmid from the SPD and Ferdinand Friedensburg, the CDU Bürgermester of Berlin.

In the days immediately following the end of the war, Weber published a text that he had been working on late 1944.[57] Entitled *Abschied von der bisherigen Geschichte* (*Departure from History to this Point*), Weber's text presented an analysis of the development of the modern human being grounded in an historical sociology of the West. Weber's approach to historical sociology was strongly influenced by that of his more renowned brother Max. For the latter, the key analytical concept of historical sociology was the human being. Specifically, Max Weber's research had centered on the question of what sort of human beings resulted from the various cultural formations of the West.[58] In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), Max Weber had examined the cultural effects of processes of economic and social modernization in the West in terms of the development of specific human types resulting from the mutual influence of ascetic Protestantism and capitalism. The rationalized pursuit of gain had originally meshed well with the ideology of predestinarian Protestantism. It provided psychological relief from the tension implicit in Calvinism and other predestinarian sects stemming from the inaccessibility of the *certitudo salutis*, the certainty that the believer had achieved salvation. The rational conduct of economic life was an outgrowth of the rational life ordering in the pursuit of salvation. Capitalist gain became a means to manifest grace, thus providing relief for believers who had no way of ascertaining whether they were saved or condemned.

Weber's *Protestant Ethic* is best remembered for the stark diagnosis of modernity with which it concluded. As the original religious motivation of the calling had fallen away

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[57] Eberhard Demm, *Von der Weimarer Republik zur Bundesrepublik: der politische Weg Alfred Webers 1920-1958*, 315.

[58] While much of the literature on Weber (Parsons, Tenbruck, etc.) has held that rationalization was the central problematic guiding Weber's work, Wilhelm Hennis has argued (compellingly in my opinion) that the question of the varieties of human being produced by the cultural orders of the West was the primary object of Weber's research. See Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction* (London; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

with the expansion of capitalist modes of social and economic organization, the rationality

which had promised to free human beings from the uncertainty of their ultimate fate now be-

came "a casing as hard as steel" (*ein stahlhartes Gehäuse*). The human consequences of this

development for the West were, for Weber, quite alarming:

> No one yet knows who will live in that casing in the future. Perhaps new
> prophets will emerge, or powerful ideals and ideas will be reborn at the end of
> this monstrous development. *Or* perhaps – if neither of these occurs – "Chi-
> nese" ossification, dressed up with a kind of desperate self-importance, will
> set in. Then, however, it might be said of the "last men" in this cultural devel-
> opment: "specialists without spirit, hedonists without heart, these nonentities
> imagine that they have attained a level of humanity (Menschentum) never be-
> fore reached.[59]

Capitalist rationalization of society and human conduct, unrestrained by the overarching val-

ue structures of the pursuit of Christian salvation, resulted in a variety of human being fun-

damentally lacking the capacity for well-rounded individualistic identity formation. Not only

were the human beings that resulted from this cultural formation deficient, they were also

incapable of recognizing their own deficiency.

Alfred Weber's relationship with his brother was often fraught. Somewhat ironically,

after his brother's death his own intellectual reputation was somewhat overshadowed.[60] Non-

etheless, Alfred Weber's approach to historical sociology shared much in terms of approach

with that of his brother, most prominently the centrality of the concept of the human being in

the historical analysis of cultural orders. In 1935, Weber published *Kulturgeschichte als Kul-

tursoziologie*. There he asked, "Where actually do we find ourselves in the stream of history,

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[59] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (New York: Penguin Classics, 2002).

[60] Alfred Weber's biographer notes he was sometimes referred to as "Minimax" in the later years of the Weimar Republic. See Eberhard Demm, "Alfred Weber und sein Bruder Max," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 35, no. 1 (1983): 18.

not as an individual people, but as humanity carried away on this stream?"[61] Max Weber had, at least at points, claimed that it was impossible to view matters from any but one's own cultural historical (that is to say national) position. In his 1895 inaugural lecture in Freiburg, Max Weber claimed that value judgments were only possible on the basis of the particular, nationally conditioned strain of humanity which is our own. The attainment of an Archimedean position from which to evaluate was precluded by each person's ties to their own particular national culture. "Often," Weber argued, "these ties are strongest precisely when we think we have escaped our personal limitations most completely."[62] Alfred Weber's approach was more expansive than that of his brother. His view of the varieties of humanity and the cultural formations that underlay them were not defined at the level of the nation state. Rather, it was possible through an examination of the broad sweep of human history from its origins, to identify a series of four macrohistorical types of humanity.

The first man (here Weber used the collective singular to indicate that he was designating a type of human being) was Neanderthal man, whose mode of life was characterized by being at the mercy of natural conditions. The second man differed from the first in occupying a higher point in the evolutionary trajectory of human beings. Weber's description of the differences focused in the first instance on physiological matters such as the differences in the size and shape of the cranium between Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons. But there were also differences of a more practical nature, such as that the second man was a systematic hunter and fisher. Weber's third man, which arose some four thousand years ago, differed significantly from the previous two types. Its history was more intensively articulated, as Weber traced the rise of the "primary high cultures" (Egypt, Babylon, and China) and then

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[61] Alfred Weber, *Kulturgeschichte als Kultursoziologie* (Marburg: Metropolis-Verlag, 1997), 61.
[62] Max Weber, "The Nation State and Economic Policy" in Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs, eds., *Weber: Political Writings*, 15.

through various human political formations down to the present day. The first and second men had been relatively static. The third by contrast was dynamic, encompassing numerous political and technological changes. Weber's focus increasingly shifted to the West. This is evident from his breakdown of what he called "secondary cultures" which he breaks down into two tiers (divided roughly at the collapse of the Western Roman Empire), further subdividing the later tier into the orient and the occident. In the period between the fall of Rome and 1500 the West achieved a decided advantage in dynamism on the basis of a series of internal tensions that drove processes of expansion, organization, and technological development. These tensions included that between religious orthodoxy and heterodoxy, between church and state, between cities and state power, as well as the tensions resulting from the intermixture of internally migrating populations. After 1500, Weber's account shifted almost exclusively to the West. The figure of the mounted knight formed the basis for Weber's account of the third man of the modern West. The culture of the West, as personified in its most important antecedents by mounted armed men forming their own political units within the larger structures of European governance, gave rise to free, self-defining individuals. Even though it was not the case that all members of Western culture developed this sort of personality, it was, Weber argued, the "average character" of the human being in the West. At the end of the 1935 edition of *Kulturgeschichte als Kultursoziologie*, Weber noted that this Western version of the human being was under threat by increasing proletarianization and the technological domination of nature. The rise of productive technology, which had destroyed the economy of production by hand, threatened to make human beings themselves superfluous as they were washed away in a wave of commodities.

After the Second World War, Weber employed his historical-sociological typology of human beings to cast the dangers facing human beings in the West in stark terms. His first major publication was the above-mentioned *Abschied von der bisherigen Geschichte*, written in 1944 but not published until the beginning of 1946. Subtitled *Überwindung des Nihilism?* (Overcoming Nihilism?), Weber's book was an attempt to come to terms with the situation of the West in the wake of the war and the rise of barbaric totalitarian systems. The West stood at the edge of a caesura that divided it from all preceding periods of history. The system of national rivalries that had shaped European history since the Carolingian period was now at an end, because recent history had demonstrated that it led to consequences that could destroy Europe completely. It was now necessary that the national formations engage in some sort of co-determined governance in order to prevent the outbreak of the incredibly destructive conflicts that modern political organization and military technology made possible. What was needed, Weber argued, was an organization of society at the world level. At the current time it was not in view, but it was necessary because, under the current technological conditions any new war would be a "mutual suicide," and "extermination of heretofore unimaginable dimensions…possibly the elimination of all peoples."[63]

The world had been made smaller by technology and the threat posed by renewed interstate military conflict was universal, yet Weber's political and cultural interests did not remain at the level of the totality of human beings. In partial confirmation of his brother's discounting of universalism, it was the fate of the West that most concerned Alfred Weber. The West had for centuries been characterized by an intellectual and technological dynamism superior to that of any other regional cultural formation. But this dynamism had contradictory

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[63] Alfred Weber, *Abschied von der bisherigen Geschichte / Der dritte oder der vierte Mensch* (Marburg: Metropolis-Verlag, 1997), 41-42.

outcomes. On the one hand, the culture of the West had given rise to strongly held values of humanity and freedom. On the other, the mutually influential developments of capitalism, modern science, the expansionistic nation state, militarism, and transformations in intellectual culture (particularly the fascination with the analytical powers of mathematics) laid the groundwork for the disasters of the 20th century. Weber devoted an extensive chapter to the pernicious influence of Nietzsche on European culture. Nietzsche, Weber argued, eroded the conception of the human by limiting full humanity to a spiritual elite, while denying it to the masses.

Weber's program for the regeneration of Western culture had both an institutional and an educational dimension. The publication of *Abschied* occurred at the time of Weber's most extensive involvement in postwar politics (in particular his work with the Heidelberger Aktionsgruppe). In the final section of *Abschied*, Weber wrote of the predisposition to freedom that the philosophy of the Enlightenment had viewed as intrinsic to the human being. The human being, Weber argued, was the only being that freely, artistically created itself out of its own conditions of existence. The capacity for self-creation was of particular importance in the political conditions confronting human beings in modernity. "This problem of the management of human self-development through freedom and autonomy," Weber asserted, "appeared first in its importance and gravity when it was baptized in the freedom of the masses."[64] It had become a commonplace, Weber felt, that the masses were unfit for freedom. But the modern age was the age of the masses. To preserve the idea of the human required the organization of mass societies in such a way as to spread the benefits of autonomous self-development in their widest possible compass. What was crucial was not to become fascinated by the suggestibility of that mass of men, but to focus on the "average character

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[64] Ibid., 213.

quality" of individuals.[65] Weber's definition of "character quality" fitted smoothly in to the account of well-rounded, autonomous personality characteristic of liberal anthropologies from Kant through that celebrated in the moment of its decline in Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic*. For Alfred Weber, character quality could be defined as, "[t]he stubborn will to employ one's own judgment and the steadfastness to maintain this even in the face of one's own disadvantages."[66] These virtues were particularly important in Germany, still reeling under the consequences of National Socialism.

The positive program offered by Weber and his collaborators in Heidelberg was articulated in a text published in 1946 under the title *Freier Sozialismus*. There Weber wrote,

> We represent a free socialism. That means: we view the totality of men and the individual as the two sides of a whole that complement each other and that influence free individual human beings in the space of action. We want to develop the individual as a free personality in the context of collective solidarity and collective action. The highest development of the masses through the greatest possible material and intellectual elevation of all individuals and free personality in the masses bound together by humanity are thus for us the goal and foundation of political action. For all meaningful political action aims, in the last instance, to raise the level of the individual person, of all individuals.[67]

The free socialism promoted by Weber and Mitscherlich differed from the socialism of the prewar period in its focus on the individual. They sought to combine an administered and planned economy with the creation of individual personalities of the type dear to the German liberals of the Imperial period. The program proposed in *Freier Sozialismus* saw a unified Germany as a part of a pan-European federation of states whose mutual connections would tamp down the tendencies toward violent interstate rivalries that had been the source of the disasters of the 20th century.

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[65] Ibid., 214.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Alexander Mitscherlich and Alfred Weber, *Freier Sozialismus* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1946), 39.

The key to the formation of free, democratic socialist societies was the creation of the proper sort of personality type, thus the creation of the proper sort of human being. In the sociology of Max Weber, the personality types that resulted from particular cultural orders was not, or only in very rare circumstances, a matter that could come under human control. Absent a rebirth of new ideas, Max Weber had argued at the end of *The Protestant Ethic*, what was likely to arise was a superficial human type, lacking in the depth necessary for full intellectual or ethical development: specialists focused pedantically on their particular area or hedonists obsessed with voluptuary pursuits. In his later writings on politics, Max Weber had held out the prospect that participation in the proper sort of environment could train human beings in practices and mindsets that they might not otherwise have attained. Such was his analysis of the professional politician, trained through political struggle both in the ethically grounded pursuit of his goals, but also in the art of compromise.[68] Alfred Weber was more sanguine about the prospects that education consciously undertaken to create personality types could reverse the patterns of influence and lead to, or confirm, alterations in the political and cultural order. "Education must find its belief in its power to transform; it will find it when it begins from the idea of the many-sidedness of human beings, consequently from the idea that the basis of self-responsible free action, of genuine spontaneous humanity, of calmly considered sober judgment are present in every human being; that it is a matter of uncovering them and placing them against other tendencies toward domination."[69] This reconfiguration in the approach to education was crucial if the goal of creating a new Germany and a new German human being was not to fail entirely.

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[68] See for instance the discussion of the role of compromise in "Suffrage and Democracy in Germany" in Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs, eds., *Weber: Political Writings*, 101ff.

[69] Alexander Mitscherlich and Alfred Weber, *Freier Sozialismus*, 89.

That the stakes of this educational project were higher even than this was noted by Weber in his diagnosis of the sort of human being that was being generated by the currently existing cultural order and that was likely to be produced in the future. Weber's diagnosis of the challenges facing modern man were made more explicit in an article published in *Die Wandlung*, a journal founded by Weber along with Karl Jaspers, the political scientist Dolf Sternberger, and the classicist Werner Krauss in 1948. Weber published an article in the third number entitled "Der vierte Mensch oder der Zusammenbruch der geschichtlichen Kultur" ("The Fourth Man or the Collapse of Historical Culture").[70] Once again, National Socialism and its influence on German and Western society were crucial elements of the context, but it was now of codetermining influence with the systemic conflict of the nascent Cold War. "The consequences of the catastrophe through which we are living are perceptible as through a veil behind which something new looms."[71] The heretofore existing modes of human historical and cultural life had come to an end. Now, two issues held human development in the balance: the danger posed by the atomic bomb, and the growing threat of totalitarianism. The atom bomb, Weber argued, was the outgrowth of the struggle of science "to prise the last mathematically calculable secrets from nature" coupled with its "Doppelgänger": the Faustian drive of science toward reconfiguration and reconstruction for its own sake.[72] This highlighted the degree to which, human beings had lost control of the products of human culture in modernity. These latter had given rise to dynamics that threatened the existence of humanity as a whole. Moreover, the type of human being that tended to result from the dynamics of these technological processes was the "specialist without spirit" of Max Weber's *Protestant*

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[70] "Der vierte Mensch oder der Zusammenbruch der geschichtlichen Kultur" in Alfred Weber, *Kulturgeschichte als Kultursoziologie*.
[71] Ibid., 465.
[72] Ibid., 466.

Ethic. Modern conditions called forth "a completely new and different form of human being that is no longer a unity." This new human had a split personality combining conscious cynicism with an intensely idealistic worldview.[73] "This is no longer the 'third man' whose most prominent feature was the bringing of concern for all mankind to the level of consciousness."[74]

For Weber what was crucial was the decoupling of science from humane, morally grounded activity. This had been facilitated by a number of factors. Among the most significant was the rise of universalistic social ideologies (designated by Weber as "universal social religions"). These were non-religious systems of belief that to an increasing degree shaped modern societies both within the West and without:

> These social religions have largely taken the place of transcendental religions; ideally and in terms of social structure they generate practical-dynamic revolutionary forces of modern existence to an unprecedented degree. They are *the* mode of self-understanding of the Western type of the "third man," with the help of which [the third man], joining the ideal and social structural, is world revolutionary in the spiritual-intellectual sense.[75]

The Soviet Union and the United States embodied two distinct social religions: the Soviet totalitarian and the democratic liberal. There was also a third social religion, the freedom-socialistic, which was not linked to either of the leading powers in the systemic conflict. Irrespective of their justification in terms of ethics, struggles for universal human rights and freedom had become detached from the binding powers of their foundations in transcendental religions, posing intensifying challenges to existing social and political orders. These had brought forth "a new epoch of universal history," one whose human consequences would not

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[73] Ibid., 467.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 473.

be limited to the West, and one which was bringing forth a new human being: the fourth man.

The fourth man was a human type that was suited to, even prone to, totalitarian systems of politics. Weber's biographer has noted that, while his concept of the fourth man was originally meant to designate the so-called "Schreibtischtäter" of the Third Reich, his analysis was extended in the postwar period to encompass the sort of human being that developed under communism.[76] Weber's most thorough elaboration of his ideas about this new variety of human being were presented in his 1953 monograph, *Der dritte oder der vierte Mensch* (1953).[77] There, Weber began by describing the historical and cultural circumstances that had acted most powerfully to shape the modern age.

Since 1800 the West had entered a period of saturation in which the cultural factors which underlay its dynamic development had begun to turn back upon themselves. "The saturation, simply caused by the limitations of the planet, obtains its particular, all-determining character through the civilizational-technical results of the scientific progress that has proceeded so rapidly since the 19th century and the technology developed from it."[78] Technology had ensconced the earth in networks of trade and information. It had facilitated great advances in hygiene and reductions in infant mortality, facilitating massive increases in human populations. For Weber, these were developments of universal scope in terms of the human experience. Although they originated in the West, their effects were felt across the globe, shaping societies far removed from the European core of the Western order. The outcome of

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[76] Eberhard Demm, *Von der Weimarer Republik zur Bundesrepublik: der politische Weg Alfred Webers 1920-1958*, 254.

[77] It is indicative of the degree to which Weber viewed these postwar analyses as consonant with his earlier works that the two articles discussed here were combined with minor alterations to form an eighth chapter in the 1950 reissued of *Kulturgeschichte als Kultursoziologie*.

[78] Alfred Weber, *Abschied von der bisherigen Geschichte / Der dritte oder der vierte Mensch*, 262.

this process of saturation was a crisis in the West. "All the familiar basic appearances of this time of crisis in which we find ourselves, most prominently the development of wars of capitalist imperialism into world wars with their terrible consequences, can be grasped in terms of this new situation."[79]

Weber then spelled out what he took to be the major intellectual, civilizational, and spiritual consequences of the crisis. The illumination of consciousness stemming from Western science had undermined the magic-mythical cohesion of non-Western cultures. This illumination of consciousness had, moreover, the effect of preparing the masses for technological mobilization steered through mass media, resulting in what Weber termed "the revolt of the masses." This revolt, facilitated by the spread of the totalitarian social religion (whose nominal guiding concept was equality), had spread through the relatively less developed areas of Europe (principally Russia) and throughout the non-Western mass societies (most prominently China). In these areas, the idea of freedom had not been integrated into concepts of the human being. As such, the consequence of the revolt of the masses was the destruction of old social orders without the moderating force of the valorization of human freedom that had steered the development of the West. There, by contrast, the social religions that had integrated freedom and humanity stood under threat from the totalitarian social religion of complete equality. It was now the case that those remaining cultures structured along less than totally modern lines could only by rescued from the spread of totalitarianism through rapid and radical internal reforms that embraced the freedom integrated view of human being.

The postwar world, which was in Weber's narrative the outcome of the crisis of the freedom integrated human being, was shaped by the systemic conflict between the United

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[79] Ibid., 263.

States and the Soviet Union. Writing in 1949 in the midst of the heightened systemic tensions of the Soviet blockade of Berlin, Weber noted that the result of the Second World War had been, "[i]n the shape of Soviet Russia and the United States, two social religions that, as far as one can see, are spiritually irreconcilable."[80] The two systems were grounded in the idea of human rights, but differed intensely over the question of precisely what concept of the human being would form the basis of such rights. The Soviet Union strove to embody the social religion of universal substantive equality, while the United States promoted an ideal of universal equality of opportunity. In point of fact, Weber argued, neither system actually lived up to the ideals that their respective social religions promoted. The consequence of these failures was that each of these societies, whose political and economic influence shaped those societies numbered among their clients, was generating varieties of human being not shaped by the integration of freedom and equality characteristic of the third man. Although the Soviet Union and the United States each viewed the other as a diametrically opposed system, Weber argued that they were united in giving rise to a particularly modern social form: the functionary. This type, in which it is easy to see Max Weber's "specialists without spirit" was the most developed form of the fourth man, the emergence of which posed a fundamental threat to the culture of the West. On the one hand, the type could clearly be seen in the form of the Soviet bureaucrat, but for Weber the type was also exemplified by the American industrial manager.[81] Yet, for Weber, this was something in the nature of an equivocation. As the picture of the fourth man took shape in Weber's writing, it became increasingly clear that the American version of this type was a deviate consequence of a universalistic social religion whose premises were, to a great extent, commensurable with those of the West.

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[80] Alfred Weber, "Zur Gegenwartslage. Kommt der vierte Mensch?," *Europäische Zukunft* 1(1949): 97.
[81] In the article in *Europäische Zukunft*, Weber cited James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* as illustrating the American correlate of the bureaucratic functionary.

In his article in *Europäische Zukunft*, Weber seemed to suggest that there was not much to choose between the social forms stemming from the Soviet Union and those from the United States. By 1953, when his *Der dritte oder der vierte Mensch* went to press, Weber had clearly decided that the social order of the United States, while not optimal, at least embodied the values of the freedom integrated human being to a much greater extent than the Soviet Union. The conception of human rights promulgated in the United States had much more in common with the values of the West than the universal social religions of equality found in both Russia and in the non-Western mass societies. Weber's earlier political commitments, as illustrated by the search of the free socialists for a third way between Soviet communism and Anglo-American liberal capitalism, had evinced a certain agnosticism with regard to the systemic conflict of the nascent Cold War. By the early years of the 1950s, Weber had come to believe that the most salient distinction was between the West, in which the United States would be included even in the face of some reservations, and the non-West. It became increasingly clear that the thing that really distinguished the West was the conception of the freedom integrated human being. The social religion on which Soviet society was based did not promote this variety of human being, and it was thus the case that it was no longer truly part of the West, at least in cultural terms.

Weber's work played little direct role in the Cold War conflict. Intellectual authorities in the GDR were, in general, suspicious of sociology. To them, sociology was a science dedicated to the remediation of the contradictions of capitalism, the system that Marxism-Leninism was committed to overthrowing.[82] In his *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (1953), the philosopher Georg Lukàcs included an extensive Marxist-Leninist critiques of German soci-

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[82] Beginning in December 1951, East Germany began in earnest to develop its own homegrown sociology with the foundation of the Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften, on which see Lothar Mertens, *Rote Denkfabrik?: Die Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 56ff.

ology. Lukàcs, who had once been a member of the circle around Max Weber in Heidelberg, argued that sociology was intimately linked with the project of social progress, defined as the maintenance of the current order. "In the beginning," Lukàcs argued, "particular among the founders, sociology was founded on that standpoint of social progress, and in fact it was one of sociology's main goals to facilitate this scientifically. But it was an idea of progress characteristic of the bourgeoisie in decline; it was one that led to an idealized version of capitalist society as the apex of human development"[83] The failing of sociology, as of bourgeois philosophy generally, was that it was complicit in the formation of an irrationalistic worldview, one that had formed the basis for National Socialism. Even Max Weber, who according to Lukàcs, "struggled against the charge of relativism," had formulated a method that was formalistic and agonistic. "Weberian 'value freedom' in sociology, its apparent purification from all elements of the irrational, leads only to further irrationalization of social-historical events."[84] The split between facts and values, upon which Weber's theory of science in society rested, was itself an expression of the fundamental irrationality of Weberian social theory.

Lukàcs's account of the work of Alfred Weber was similarly dismissive. He did not engage with Weber's works from the 1930s (much less with those of the postwar period). Instead, Lukàcs limited his commentary to a critique of Alfred Weber's first work, *Ideen zur Staats- und Kultursoziologie* (1927), which he viewed as attempting to combine the sociology of Max Weber with the *Lebensphilosophie* of Bergson and Dilthey. Nonetheless, it is not hard to extrapolate from Lukàcs's critique of Max Weber's sociology to that of his brother. For Lukàcs, Alfred Weber's attempt to preserve the third man as opposed to the fourth, and

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[83] Georg Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1954), 462.
[84] Ibid., 485.

his promotion of a non-Marxist democratic socialism could only be an expression of bourgeois sociology's task of attempting to save capitalism from its own internal contradictions.

It is hardly surprising that Alfred Weber's sociological approach to the problems of modern society met with little approval from Lukàcs. Weber's attempt to identify the particular types of human being generated by modern societies, and to use this as the basis for political and social prognoses, reflected an approach that was quite prominent in postwar sociology. The historian Wilfried Mausbach has noted that, "Weber's [*Der dritte oder vierte Mensch*] can be seen as the German counterpart to William H. Whyte's immensely popular description of *The Organization Man*," both evoking, "the nightmare of a technocratic class capable of any task and able to follow any command without moral misgivings."[85] Alfred Weber shared his brother Max's ambivalence toward the effects of technological development and its accompanying modes of rationalization on society. For Weber, the mutual influence of technology and society led to a rationalized bureaucratic order that systematically drained human beings of that capacity to be self-legislating, rational actors. It was the influence of this malign rationality that has formed the basis for National Socialist barbarism, no less than for the communist barbarism that continued to threaten the civilization of the West. His analysis of the dangerous interaction between technology, rationality, and society was both an explanation of the recent German past and a warning to the West that the origins of National Socialism were embedded in the trajectory of the development of the West. But Weber's jaundiced view of technology was certainly not the only one present in German. At the same time, an influential version of German conservatism was making itself felt in German sociology and in German society more generally. The next section of this chapter will

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[85] Wilfried Mausbach, "'Burn, ware-house, burn!' Modernity, Counterculture, and the Vietnam War in West Germany," in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980* ed. Axel Schildt and Detlev Siegfried (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 183.

look at the work of Arnold Gehlen, who sought to fuse a positive attitude toward technology with a revival of German conservatism based not on the promotion of a particular cultural or racial grouping but on a biologically and sociological grounded account of human being.

B. Arnold Gehlen: Anthropology and Sociology

Although it occupied a somewhat less prominent place in the public intellectual culture of Germany than either Marxism or attempts to appropriate the German cultural heritage, philosophical anthropology, the attempt to systematically understand human being via systematic philosophical analysis, constituted a third important mode of understand the human in the postwar era. Humanism, of both the Marxist and the classical variety, was predicated on suppositions about human nature. These suppositions were then made the basis of attempts to regenerate cultural life or to found a political utopia. Philosophical anthropology comprised a range of intellectual projects, varying in method and political orientation. Some, such as Arnold Gehlen and Helmuth Plessner employed biology and sociology as tools to analyze the human being. Both looked back to an intellectual tradition of philosophical analysis of the human running from Kant's anthropology to the interwar writings of Max Scheler. These approaches were the subject of bitter criticism from Marxist thinkers on both sides of the Cold War divide. Until the late 1950s, the East German intellectual establishment viewed philosophical anthropology as an attempt to rationalize or disguise the repressive nature of capitalist society. For Marxist-Leninist thinkers, attempts to understand the situation of human beings under capitalism were superfluous, resulting only in hypostatizing the dynamic openness of the human essence. This attitude mellowed somewhat by the early 1960s, and

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there were attempts in the early years of the decade to develop a Marxist-Leninist approach to ethics that highlighted to modes of human life made possible by socialism.

The analysis of the *Mensch* shared a focus on the human with the discourses of humanism of both the classical and Marxist varieties, but there were also a number of salient differences. Classically based humanisms were connected to the concept of *Bildung* as a central element of a human project of unfolding the potentialities of the individual self. Western culture since the classical period was seen as providing a series of models by emulating which all humans could achieve higher levels of self development. Marxist humanisms on both sides of the Cold War divide were based on the idea that if institutions grounded in appropriate social relations could be created, human beings could freely develop their own powers and capacities. Both approaches were shaped by utopias formally open to any human being irrespective of race, gender, or regional origin. Both were characterized by internal tensions between the universalism of their utopian ideals and practical instantiations that fell short of encompassing the whole of humanity. Generally speaking, philosophical anthropology approached the question of the human from the other direction. Rather than assuming knowledge of the appropriate mode of life for human beings in virtue of their humanity, philosophical anthropology looked at the situation of human beings in the actual conditions of human life and then drew conclusions about the appropriate form of human life.

Conservatives, such as the sociologist Arnold Gehlen and the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, differed in terms of methodology but shared a critical attitude toward modernity grounded in political and cultural conservatism.[86] Helmut Plessner, by contrast, viewed modernity with an attitude of resignation. His political liberalism was an attempt to

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[86] On Gehlen's critique of modernity see Christian Thies, *Die Krise des Individuums : zur Kritik der Moderne bei Adorno und Gehlen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), 122.

adjust the German bourgeoisie to the demands of life in a technological industrial society.[87]

For all of these figures philosophical anthropology was a means of defending and redeeming the values of the West under threat from the Stalinism and post-Stalinist state capitalism in the one hand, and from Americanization on the other. East German thinkers clearly understood the intended political implication of West German philosophical anthropology. Although the East German philosopher Wolfgang Harich showed some interest in the attempt to turn Gehlen's theory of the state to Marxist uses, the East German intellectual establishment generally viewed philosophical anthropology as a vehicle for bourgeois political thought.[88]

Philosophical anthropology had a heyday in the late 1920s. Three texts published in 1928, Plessner's *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (*The Levels of the Organic and the Human Being*), Max Scheler's *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (*The Place of Man in the Cosmos*), and Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), shaped anthropological philosophy for the balance of the 20th century. Scheler's work, as one historian has noted, was "written in its entirety with an anthropological intent."[89] Scheler had converted to Catholicism as an adolescent (his mother was Jewish, his father Lutheran), and his early works had been marked by a pronounced Catholic spiritualism. In his *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (*Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*), published in 1921, Scheler had located the essence of human existence in the human heart, rather than in the transcendental ego. The relationship of human beings to the world

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[87] See Jan-Werner Müller, "The Soul in the Age of Society and Technology: Helmut Plessner's Defensive Liberalism," in *Confronting Mass Democracy and Industrial Technology : Political and Social Theory from Nietzsche to Habermas* ed. John P. McCormick (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).

[88] See Wolfgang Harich, *Zur Kritik der revolutionären Ungeduld: Eine Abrechnung mit dem alten und dem neuen Anarchismus* (Berlin: Verlag 8. Mai, 1998), 75-100.

[89] Paul Good, *Max Scheler: eine Einführung* (Frankfurt: ParErga, 1998), 83.

was mediated by structures of value with their foundations in emotional life. In his *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, Scheler posited five orders of understanding, ascending in abstractness from basic impulses, through instinctual and habitual behavior, full consciousness, and culminating in the conception of the holy, the highest mode of human cognition. By doing so, he sought to locate human being in a unified and all-encompassing structure of being. Scheler argued that human beings had reached a point at which there was no generally agreed upon view of what a human being was. The natural sciences had examined the human being as analytically comparable to plants and animals. For Scheler, this reflected a failure to understand that there was something peculiar to the being of humans over and above what could be discerned by the methods of the natural sciences. Of all the living things in the world, only human beings had "spirit," which Scheler associated with the capacity to develop a self-conception that rose above one's immediate conditions. Helmut Plessner's *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* reflected a similar concern with locating human beings within the larger universe of living beings. But unlike Scheler, who was suspicious of biological analyses of the human, Plessner was sympathetic to the attempt to see human beings in terms of the emerging scientific analysis of environment. For Plessner what defined human beings was the particular formation of their senses with regard to the environments in which they existed.

Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), originally submitted as his *habilitationsschrift* in 1927, differed explicitly from the approaches of both Scheler and Plessner in that Heidegger explicitly rejected the project of approaching human being in terms of philosophical anthropology or of humanism. In Heidegger's eyes, this merely put the seal on the philosophical tradition leading from Plato through Descartes to Kant, which saw the human

as a unified, reasoning subject, capable of divorcing itself from the world and thematizing the latter as a separately existing entity. As far as he was concerned, this was precisely what needed to be analyzed. The long history of anthropology in Western thought had, according to Heidegger, consistently erred in having searched for a discreet human essence. Both purely philosophical and theological approaches to anthropology shared this defect. As Heidegger noted in Being and Time, "the two sources which are relevant for the traditional anthropology – the Greek definition and the clue which theology has provided – indicate that over and above the attempt to determine the essence of 'man' as an entity, the question of his being has remained forgotten, and that this being is rather conceived as something obvious or 'self-evident' in the sense of the *being-present-at-hand* of other created things."[90] Anthropology claimed to find what was basically human. But these assessments of human being were predicated on viewing the being of humans as self-evident. It was precisely this ostensibly self-evident being that was in need of elucidation.

The central concept of Heidegger's analysis was *Dasein*, the mode of being specific to human beings. It was necessary to gain an appropriate understanding of *Dasein*, and in particular its characteristic of being a self that could make itself an issue for itself, before any project like philosophical anthropology could be undertaken. Thus, Heideggerian phenomenology was a sort of anti-anthropology. It was an approach to philosophy that sought to nail down the existential structures of being in a way prior to the sorts of analysis undertaken either by anthropologists such as Scheler and Plessner, or by Heidegger's own philosophical mentor Edmund Husserl.

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[90] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), 75.

The dissemination of Heidegger's philosophy had the effect of shifting the valence of German philosophy in the interwar period. While it was not universally accepted, it had the effect of framing many important questions in a way that seemed new and radical. In the early 1930s, the prominence of Heidegger's philosophy was also elevated by his flirtation with National Socialism.[91] In the middle of the decade it appeared possible that Heideggerian phenomenology might become the official philosophy of National Socialism, Heidegger's hopes in this respect were eventually dashed by the vicissitudes of internal party politics. Heidegger's philosophical approach to the human met with more favorable reception by National Socialist ideologists. Unlike many of the other figures associated with philosophical anthropology (Scheler, Plessner, more loosely Husserl), Heidegger wasn't a Jew. More importantly, Heidegger's phenomenology connected human being to particular cultural locations, rather than conducting the analysis at the level of the human per se. *Dasein* was "thrown" into a particular historical-cultural location and could not authentically abstract itself from this location. On its face this comported well with the National Socialist fixation on the particularity of Germanness. Although Heidegger's philosophy did not have an explicit racial dimension, it was easy for those so inclined to read the "thrownness" of true Germans into their own cultural context as a contrast to the situation of Jews who were by definition foreign and rootless. Heidegger's fall from grace within National Socialism in 1934 put paid the prospect that his philosophy would guide the movement. It would not be until after the fall of the National Socialist regime that anthropology, in the sense of the analysis of human being in and of itself (i.e. not linked to a particular cultural or racial grouping) would again find influence in German intellectual life.

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[91] There are a number of treatments of Heidegger's interactions with National Socialism, including those by Victor Farias and Hugo Ott. The details mentioned in this discussion have been drawn from Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 225-90.

Arnold Gehlen, the most prominent and influential representative of the tradition of philosophical anthropology in the postwar Germany, took up analyses of human biology and social structures pioneered by Scheler and Plessner in order to define what was specifically human and to draw from this political and institutional conclusions. Gehlen was one of the most well known conservative figures of the German Cold War. In a review of Gehlen's *Moral und Hypermoral* (1969), the Frankfurt School philosopher Jürgen Habermas described him as "the most consistent proponent of counterenlightenment institutionalism."[92] This is an apposite description of Gehlen, who was a very resolute proponent of the power of the state, both before and after the Second World War. Gehlen's anthropology, although nominally apolitical, was part and parcel of a conservative politics that saw the institutions of the state as a key means of addressing the fundamental deficiencies of the human being. Although Gehlen spent much of the postwar period in exile from the mainstream of German academia, primarily as a consequence of his membership in the Nazi Party, he was among the most prominent representative of a politically conservative, institutionalist sociology whose leading representatives (such as Gehlen, Hans Freyer, and Helmuth Schelsky) had all been associated with the so-called Leipzig School during the years of the Weimar Republic.

Gehlen was born in Leipzig in 1904. He studied philosophy at the University of Leipzig between 1923 and 1927, interrupting his stay there for a semester in 1925 to study at Cologne under Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann. Gehlen was awarded a doctorate in philosophy in 1930. In 1933, he was called to replace the theologian Paul Tillich at the University of Frankfurt after the latter had been removed by the National Socialists on grounds of political unreliability. The next year, Gehlen succeeded Hans Driesch at the University of Leipzig.

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[92] Arnold Gehlen, *Man. His Nature and Place in the World*, trans. Clare McMillan and Karl Pillemer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

Driesch, who had been Gehlen's thesis advisor, had been forced out of his position by the Nazi authorities because he refused to renounce his openly pacifistic views. Gehlen joined the Nazi Party on 1 May 1933, the same day as Martin Heidegger. As in Heidegger's case, Gehlen's relationship to Nazism has been the subject of intense debate. The political historian Christian Graf von Krockow wrote in 1990 that Gehlen had "formulated and perfected not a, but *the* fascist theory at the highest level of reflection that it was ever able to reach."[93] Others have argued that, although he was very conservative, Gehlen had not turned his philosophy to the defense of Nazi biological racism, and that in that later in life he was critical of his own actions in a way that other former National Socialist intellectuals, such as Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, never were.[94] Gehlen's *Der Mensch. Seine Nature und seine Stellung in der Welt* (*The Human Being. Its Nature and its Place in the World*), first published in 1940, contained positive references to the work of the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg (and on at least one occasion to Hitler). In the final sections of the book, Gehlen took up two concepts of Rosenberg's coinage, the *Führungssystem* (system of guidance) and the *Zuchtbild* (pattern of disciplinary guidance) as a means of addressing the challenges presented by modernity to social order.[95] Systems of guidance oriented members of society to the world, gave them models for action, and allowed them to transcend the boundaries of their own powerlessness. As such, Gehlen argued in the 1940 edition of *Der Mensch*:

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[93] Christian Graf von Krockow, *Die Deutschen in ihrem Jahrhundert, 1890-1990* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990), 362. Italics in the original.

[94] In Gehlen's defense see Karl-Siegbert Rehberg's introduction to the English translation of Gehlen's *Der Mensch. Seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt*, Arnold Gehlen, *Man. His Nature and Place in the World*, xxix-xxxii. See also Christian Thies, *Gehlen, zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2000), 15-19.

[95] Both terms are difficult to translate. *Führungssystem* might be more literally translated "system of leadership," and the fact that it was coined by a Nazi philosopher might suggest that this was a more appropriate rendering. But Gehlen used the term to talk about religions and worldviews, rather than personal leadership. Similarly, a more literal translation of *Zuchtbild* might focus on the association of the word *Zucht* with animal husbandry and take the implication that there was a connection intended to Nazi eugenic thinking. Certainly this aspect of the term was part of Rosenberg's usage, but Gehlen's used the term to talk about ideological components of the political order without intrinsic racial content.

> The construction of supreme systems of guidance is therefore a necessity of life, and are never lacking, and so they are the modes by which a community constructs and resolves the problems of its existence, how it "fixes" them for itself and sustains them in being. For, completely open to the world, they must establish a relationship to the totality of that world with which they are familiar, and express and "uphold" it in detail: that the human being is a disciplinary essence never appears more clearly than in the absoluteness of the claim that every "pattern of disciplinary guidance" (Rosenberg) must put forward.[96]

Systems of guidance and discipline were at the heart of the solutions that Gehlen proposed to the essential deficiencies of human nature describe earlier in the work (about which more will be said below). This passage was excised from the first edition published after the war, as well all references to Alfred Rosenberg and National Socialism.

Gehlen never deviated from his conservatism, but he did make efforts to distance himself from Nazi racism in a way that neither Martin Heidegger nor Carl Schmitt did.[97] In a letter to Karl Löwith from 1958, Gehlen wrote:

> In the concluding section of the first edition, and of the reprints immediately following it, one finds…a few quite drastically national socialistically formulated phrases. …I wish to suggest the possibility that these passages might be seen in a different light given that neither antisemitic utterances nor any avowal of so-called racial ideas is to be found in this book or, for that matter, in the whole of my quite extensive published work.[98]

The words *Zuchtbild* and *Führungssystem* were used, redefined as Gehlen put it, "in a technical sense" and the book itself took as a premise "the unity of the human species" and completely ignored racial ideas on this topic. Gehlen's motives for joining the National Socialists seem to have been deep political conservatism and the conviction that a strong state was cru-

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[96] Arnold Gehlen, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 3*, ed. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), 733.

[97] In the case of Schmitt, it has recently been convincingly argued that his reason for not disavowing Nazi racism after the war was that he still espoused it. See Raphael Gross, *Carl Schmitt und die Juden: eine deutsche Rechtslehre* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).

[98] Gehlen's letter is extensively excerpted in Arnold Gehlen, *Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 3*, 876-77.

cial to the survival of modern society rather than any commitment to the party's racial poli-

cies. Neither were the party's racial policies so repugnant to him as to cause him to forgo

membership.

In the wake of the Second World War, Gehlen was forced to the margins of German

academic life. His academic career had profited from National Socialist rule in Germany. In

1933 he had taken over Paul Tillich's chair in Frankfurt after the latter had been dismissed

for political unreliability. In 1935 he made a similar move to Leipzig, replacing Hans Driesch

under similar auspices. In 1940 he took up a position at the University of Vienna and in 1942

he became the head of the German Philosophical Society. At the end of the war, having lost

his position in Vienna when all foreigners were dismissed from Austrian universities in 1945,

he expected a call to a major university in one of the western zones, but his past associations

with National Socialism made potential employers leery, even after his two year long ban

from teaching ended in 1947.[99] In that year, he received a chair in sociology from the newly

founded Hochschule für Verwaltungswissenschaften (School for Administrative Sciences) in

Speyer. From 1962 to 1969 he held a chair in sociology at the Technical University of Aa-

chen. In both cases, Gehlen was offered his choice of chairs in philosophy or sociology and

chose the latter. Neither appointment carried the weight of those that he had occupied before

the war. Nonetheless, he managed to take an active part in the public intellectual life of Ger-

many. He contributed to debates about politics, technology, art, and sociology. He partici-

pated with figures such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Helmut Schelsky in the

Nachtprogramm series on Westdeutsche Rundfunk where he often expressed his skepticism

toward democracy as a mode of political organization.

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[99] Gehlen had joined the National Socialist Party on 1 May 1933 and later was a National Socialist cell-leader in Leipzig. On the details of Gehlen's involvment with National Socialism, see Christian Thies, *Gehlen, zur Einführung*, 12-19.

Gehlen's anthropological turn began in the mid-1930s, taking full form in his *Der Mensch, seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt,* first published in 1940 and then reissued with revisions in the multiple editions through the 1950s. Gehlen's project comprised two interrelated elements: the human being and the institutions in which human beings lived. He approached the problem of human beings via an account of human deficiencies. Following the work of the Swiss biologist Adolf Portmann, Gehlen held that human beings were born months too early, before they had had a chance to fully develop.[100] Human beings are thus in a peculiar position with respect to other animals in that human young need more thorough and extensive protection and nurturing.

In addition to being born before they were prepared to live in the world unassisted, even the fully developed human was, in Gehlen's term, a deficient being (*Mängelwesen*). The human being as *Mängelwesen* was defined by three deficiencies. First, human beings lacked evolutionary specialization for a particular environment. Moreover, human beings lacked the comprehensive structure of drives, instincts, and specialized organs characteristic of other animals. Not only did human being not have a preprogrammed mode of dealing with their environment, they lacked even a fully fleshed out mode of intersubjective behavior. Human beings were characterized by "openness to the world" (*Weltoffenheit*) in a way fundamentally dissimilar to other creatures.[101] Gehlen's thinking on the relationship of human beings to their environment was strongly influenced by the biologist Jakob Johan von Üexküll. Üexküll had popularized environment as a concept in the study of biology and physiology. Environment in Üexküll's analysis designated the subjective worlds in which living beings

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[100] Adolf Portmann, *Biologische Fragmente zu einer Lehre vom Menschen* (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1951).
[101] Gehlen took the concept of *Weltoffenheit* over from Scheler, who argued that human beings did not have an environment but rather a world. Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Darmstadt: Reichl, 1928), 41.

find themselves, as distinguished from their objective surroundings which he designated their environs (*Umgebung*).[102] An animal, Üexküll claimed, cannot be understood in isolation. Rather, it must be viewed in the context of its environment. It was wrong to think of animal consciousness as some sort of deficient version of human consciousness. Animals tend to be evolutionarily equipped with specific organs and modes of behavior appropriate to their environments. As Gehlen noted in Der Mensch, "[t]he lack of physical specialization of the human being, its organic destitution as well as the astonishing lack of true instincts form a context to which 'world openness' or, what is perhaps the same thing, environmental supersession (Umweltenthebung) forms an antonym"[103] This openness to the world was, for Gehlen, decisive for the definition of human beings as well as distinguishing them from all higher animals.

The world-openness of human beings was a key element of what Gehlen called the particular position (*Sonderstellung*) of humans vis-à-vis other beings. Gehlen's anthropology comprised a system of concepts that further developed the implications of the *Weltoffenheit*, at the same time describing a mode of being that was characteristic of humans alone. As a result of their lack of specialized adaptations to their particular environment, human beings were subject to what Gehlen termed surplus drives (*Antriebsüberschuss*). This was an internal distinction between humans and animals, in a way analogous to the external distinction in terms of specialized organs. Humans have no pre-given impulse selection mechanisms, and must reduce the chaos of data from the internal world on an ad hoc basis. Only by doing so can humans prevent themselves from collapsing under the strain of impulse inundation (*Reizüberflutung*). "[T]he 'world-openness' of human beings is actually, biologically speak-

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[102] Jakob von Üexküll, *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1909).
[103] Arnold Gehlen, *Man. His Nature and Place in the World*, 54.

ing, a negative state of affairs."[104] In the consciousness of animals, that which was not perceived as prey, as a sexual object, or otherwise important for life appeared only dimly, or in other cases in a field of perception with biologically superfluous contents only that which is the object of comportment is or can become meaningful in terms of drives. The human being is exposed to inundation of impulses and thus subject to a burden (*Belastung*) to which animals are not. This burdening is intensified by the increasingly complex social orders in which human beings have come to live. The primal horde has become differentiated into a range of social, political, and economic structures that, in turn, increase the pressure on the already deficient instinctive organization of the human being. Thus, unlike animals, human beings require a means of unburdening (*Entlastung*) in order not to be overwhelmed by stimuli.[105]

In a letter to the philosopher Theodor Adorno in August 1964, Gehlen asserted that unburdening could, in terms of his work, be used as a synonym for human existence. It constituted, for him, a bridge between anthropology and practical philosophy. The universal attribute of *Entlastung* is distancing from the world. The various human techniques for unburdening allow a hiatus to exist between human beings and their environments. Human beings had three principle means of coping with their deficiencies. First, the most immediate form of unburdening is language, the possession of which in fully developed form further distinguishes human beings from animals. Instinctive life is partially stabilized through language. The second form was technics (*Technik*), meaning the human capacity to create prostheses allowing them to cope with their physical disadvantages in comparison to other ani-

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[104] Arnold Gehlen, *Anthropologische und sozialpsychologische Untersuchungen* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowolt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), 50.
[105] I am using the term "unburdening" as a translation of Entlastung because, although somewhat awkward, it seems to capture the sense of the German term better than "relief," the term used in the English language translation of Gehlen's *Der Mensch.*

mals.[106] Technics is the most successful mode of unburdening in our relationship with nature.

The third was culture, which for Gehlen also included the institutions that structure human

life and interaction in modern mass societies. In his *Sozialpsychologische Probleme in der*

industriellen Gesellschaft (1949), Gehlen defined technics as those means "by which human

beings make nature subservient to themselves."[107] Although there was a tendency to see the

age of modern machines as qualitatively different than the rudimentary tools and traps used

by prehistoric humans, in fact the difference was merely one of degree. As Gehlen himself

noted, he was unlike many conservatives in taking a decidedly positive attitude toward tech-

nics. As he argued in his *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter* (1957), "[t]he abundantly flou-

rishing cultural critical literature that has arisen since Nietzsche and Spengler seldom lacks a

polemical tone toward technology."[108] Thus, for instance, Gehlen's former colleague at the

University of Leipzig Hans Freyer argued that technics had systematically transformed the

modes of modern human thought.[109] Technics had supplanted questions of why with ques-

tions of how, resulting in a social order geared to the accomplishment of discreet tasks rather

than the realization of ostensibly universal ethical norms. Similarly, Martin Heidegger argued

in his well-known essay "Die Frage nach der Technik" that technical thinking involved a

framing of questions in such a way as to insinuate the technical into all aspects of human ex-

istence. For Gehlen, these conservative attitudes toward technics were merely atavistic ex-

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[106] Although the term *Technik* is often translated as technology, I am rendering it as technics following the usage of the sociologist Lewis Mumford. In his *Technics and Civilization* (1934), Mumford used technics in preference to technology in order to highlight to practical dimension of the tools and prosthetics of human crea-tion, as opposed to technology which he viewed as an abstract pursuit.

[107] Arnold Gehlen, "Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter," in *Gesamtausgabe Bd. 6* ed. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1978), 7. Gehlen republished *Sozialpsychologische Probleme in der industriellen Gesellschaft*, in extensively augmented form, in 1957 under the title *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter*. This is how it is included in the volume of his collected works from which the quotations are drawn, but critical edition makes clear which passages were in the original work, and which appeared only later.

[108] Ibid., 5.

[109] Hans Freyer, *Über das Dominantwerden technischer Kategorien in der Lebenswelt der industriellen Gesellschaft* (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1960).

pressions of the internal conflicts within a modern society engaged in ever more rapid transition, particularly in the context of the industrial revolution.

In addition to the technical augmentation of human physical and intellectual capacities, human beings had also developed a range of cultural formations and institutions to facilitate human relationships to their environments and to each other. In the context of an intersubjective world, traditions and institutions undertake the role of detensioning our relations with the world. Where individual efforts at detensioning fail, institutions must step in to preserve the social order. Like Hobbes, Gehlen believed that human communal life is not self organizing. Man needed stable institutions in order to live in society. Gehlen was an anthropological pessimist and was, as such, a convinced opponent of Rousseau and Rousseauism. Rousseau had held that society exerted a negative influence on the natural qualities of human beings. Citing Rousseau's claims to that effect in *The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Gehlen objected that, "rational scientifically formed thought, the royal road to humanity, is denounced as unnatural."[110] In *Der Mensch*, Gehlen argued that the human being is "by nature a cultural being."[111] There are no judgments about human beings which are independent of cultural specificity. The most serious problem afflicting human beings in the modern era was the disintegration of cultural structure. For Gehlen, it was human institutions that would facilitate the overcoming of the deficiencies of modern culture.

Gehlen's theory of institutions was at the center of his postwar work. Gehlen held that the anthropologically necessary compensation for the inherent deficiencies of human beings could only be successfully provided in a hierarchical social order by strong institutions. Geh-

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[110] "Über Kultur, Natur und Natürlichkeit" in Arnold Gehlen, *Anthropologische und sozialpsychologische Untersuchungen*, 82. The text quoted here, which originally appeared in a *Festschrift* for the sociologist Erick Rothacker, also appeared (with minor changes) in the 1950 edition of *Der Mensch*.
[111] Arnold Gehlen, *Man. His Nature and Place in the World*, 80.

len had already taken up the question of the state and its role in ordering human life in his work in the 1930s, where he employed the concept of the leading system (*Führungssystem*). In the final chapter of *Der Mensch*, Gehlen designated religion, world views, and moral system as the highest leading systems (*oberste Führungssysteme*) of society. These systems functioned to give meaning to the world in general, to provide normative practical orientation for individuals and collectivities, and to protect the individual against mishap, sickness, and death.

Gehlen backtracked on this theory in the 1950 edition of *Der Mensch*. He replaced it with a theory of institutions strongly influenced by the French institutionalist Maurice Hauriou, to whose work he had been introduced through his influence on Carl Schmitt.[112] *Leitideen* (in Hauriou's terms *idées directrices*) had to be incorporated into social institutions. Without such institutional integration, ideas can neither be influential, nor even continue to exist in the long run. Ideas must be borne by associations and parties. Institutions formed the bridge between leading orientations and individual human beings, not only making possible safety and communal life but also helping to free human beings from egoism and destructive questioning of meaning. It was only in the context of institutions that a right life is possible. They were, for Gehlen, a higher form of freedom. In *Moral und Hypermoral*, Gehlen's most extensive discussion of the role of mores in society, he wrote, "To allow oneself to be consumed by institutions opens the way to the dignity of all men."[113]

Institutions are structures of social norms by which our actions are oriented. A narrower and a broader conception of institutions could be distinguished. The state was the paradigmatic institution for Gehlen (other important examples were the church and the army).

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[112] Christian Thies, *Gehlen, zur Einführung*, 25.

[113] Arnold Gehlen, *Moral und Hypermoral: eine pluralistische Ethik* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Verlag, 1969), 75.

The system of law was the fundamental modern system. Such institutions were "permanent and stationary, a comprehensive structure comprising all individuals."[114] More generally, institutions could include groups of friends and colleagues, families, estates, and social classes. In the broadest sense, institutions could be compared to "socially sanctioned models of behavior."[115] Institutions insured temporal continuity and social stability, providing a social pre-understanding that facilitated human social life. Gehlen conceded that institutions constrain individual action, but held that the safety and security that they provide are the preconditions for successful individual and social life. In any society there are a range of institutions and social regulations. The overlappings and interactions among them provided a space for free individual life conduct.

In a talk delivered at the University of Freiburg in 1960, Gehlen argued that industrialization had destroyed the institutions of society (to varying degrees in various national contexts, but most catastrophically in Germany).[116] In modernity, institutions were constrained between organizations and superstructures. The skeleton of society is composed of social structure and organizations. On the other hand, modern world society is shaped by superstructures composed of technics, natural science, and capitalism. Gehlen claims that what distinguishes organizations and structures from institutions is that the latter are bound by leading ideas (by "Charta" as Schelsky put it) which constitute a normative principle. Social structures have no meaning, while social organizations are merely designed for purposive rational goals. In modernity, institutions were being replaced by ersatz structures (organizations and structures) which are unable to reproduce the achievements of institutions. Modern

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[114] Arnold Gehlen, *Urmensch und Spätkultur: philosophische Ergebnisse und Aussagen* (Bonn: Athenaüm-Verlag, 1956), 250.
[115] Arnold Gehlen, *Moral und Hypermoral: eine pluralistische Ethik*, 96.
[116] "Mensch und Institutionen" in Arnold Gehlen, *Anthropologische und sozialpsychologische Untersuchungen*, 73.

societies are characterized both by the collapse of institutions and by a surfeit of regulations (which are ostensibly supposed to compensate). Organizations are characterized by purposive rational and ultimately egoistic modes of conduct. The collapse of institutions also leads to the release of impulses toward revolutionary aggression. The calling has become merely a job, class has become an experiential milieu, the family is also endangered.

In his later writings, Gehlen took up Erick Rothacker's concept of the *Kulturschwelle* (cultural threshold), a mode of historical sociology similar to that of Alfred Weber in its attempts to divide human history into macrohistorical periods. Gehlen sought to understand the anthropological consequences of the epochal social transformations between long-enduring periods of human history. There had been two unequivocal crossings of cultural thresholds. One was the transition in the Neolithic period to tillage and animal husbandry. The second was the industrial revolution. In *Urmensch und Spätkultur*, Gehlen suggested a third cultural threshold: the transition to monotheism. Among the most important consequences of the rise of monotheism was that "institutions have lost their theogony and god-confirming power."[117] Lacking the gods of house and hearth, the presence of god in monotheistic societies was abstract and had lost an important functionality in terms of confirming the social order and providing value guidance for human beings.

The weakening of modern institutions via monotheism was an important element of Gehlen's diagnosis of modernity. The absolutization of moral modes of action was disrupting the social order. One consequence had been the setting free of social aggressiveness. The weakening of institutional support for common orders of value resulted in ethical polarizations. As Gehlen wrote in 1969, "those same temporal conditions that lead to the polarization of ethical impulses into acute conflicts also have the effect of simultaneously increasing the

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[117] Arnold Gehlen, *Urmensch und Spätkultur: philosophische Ergebnisse und Aussagen*, 20.

level of aggressiveness of the divided factions."[118] As a consequence, modern societies were characterized by what Gehlen termed "the cruelty of pure virtue" resulting in figures such as Robespierre for whom political victory implied the extermination of one's enemies.[119] Herein lay Gehlen's explanation of the horrors of National Socialism. The extreme violence of the regime, its drive to physically eliminate its enemies, stemmed from the weakening of social institutions that allowed human beings to co-exist with those whose normative orientations were different that one's own (within certain broad limits). Gehlen described the excessive moralization of politics as moral hypertrophy (*Moralhypertrophie*). These excesses of "virtue" create moral conditions under which murder and acts of terrorism can be committed with a clear conscience. Various instinctive elements function for humans as social regulations. This is not a matter of moral philosophy or the grounding of norms, but rather in the ways that human being relate to each other factically. Every human hears in himself various moral voices. It is not a matter of "indeterminate duties" but rather of four appeals that can be internally distinguished – without being able to extract from them unequivocal social norms or modes of action: reciprocity, physiological virtues (physical reactions that are phylogenetic, such as the propensity to defend children from danger), institutional morality, and what Gehlen called humanitarianism.[120] Humanitarianism in Gehlen's sociology did not have the implication of an immediate commitment to the rights and dignities of human beings as such. Rather, humanitarianism was a sort of metaphoric sympathy for human beings built up on the basis of sympathy for a series of concentric subsets of humanity centered on the individual. The basis of humanitarianism was the clan, in which concern was extended from the immediate family group to those with whom the individual has only an abstract relationship. Con-

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[118] Arnold Gehlen, *Moral und Hypermoral: eine pluralistische Ethik*, 41.
[119] Ibid., 71.
[120] Ibid., 47-53.

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cern for others then spread to yet wider circles, with the potential that eventually this solici-
tude could encompass the whole of mankind.[121]

Normally the fourfold basis of social regulations was unproblematic for human be-
ings. In times of crisis, such as during wars or the current period in which humanitarian val-
ues have come into conflict with institutional values, that ambiguity became problematic.
The problems became more acute in modernity because of the decline of the institutions in
the modern, industrialized world. The binding power of institutions was being weakened both
by historical forces such as the rise of monotheistic religions and by the expansion and inten-
sification of the capitalist mode of production. Social institutions were losing their ability to
ameliorate social conflicts, and these conflicts were becoming ever more severe as they were
transformed into questions of principle. This was, Gehlen held, commonly a precursor to the
sorts of zero sum struggles in which victory was the annihilation of the foe.[122] Gehlen's so-
cial prognosis was very much in line with the broad trend of Hobbesian thought in postwar
German conservatism. Similar to figures such as Reinhart Koselleck and Ernst Forsthoff,
Gehlen saw the modern age as one of destructive conflict barely restrained by the vestiges of
the social order of the modern West.[123]

In addition to broader historical trends in terms of religion and economic formations,
Gehlen also located the pathologies of modernity in more immediate factors. Two modern
forces in particular were, for Gehlen, responsible for the weakening of the institutional struc-
tures of modern society: intellectuals and humanitarian social movements. In an article pub-

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[121] Gehlen's most extensive treatment of the concept of humanitarianism is in ibid., 79-94.

[122] This was an oft repeated theme in postwar German conservatism. Another influential example can be found
in the introduction to Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise; ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt*.

[123] Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Oxford:
Berg, 1988). Ernst Forsthoff, *Rechtstaat im Wandel; verfassungsrechtliche Abhandlungen, 1950-1964*
(Stuttgard: W. Kohlhammer, 1964).

lished in the journal *Merkur* in 1964, Gehlen argued that intellectuals evinced a "humanitarian ethics of conviction."[124] Gehlen borrowed the term from Max Weber, bringing with it Weber's implication that an ethics of conviction (as opposed to one of responsibility) produced political extremism and the unwillingness to make measured compromises. Intellectuals were focused on abstract, universalistic values rather than on the immediate situation in which society found itself. They felt themselves to be undervalued and because of this resented society. Because of this resentment, they were unwilling to take society's values seriously, or to recognize that modern societies were organized along scientific/technical rather the intellectual/spiritual lines. The humanitarianism of intellectuals amounted to an attempt to force an ethical universalism onto the social order. What held for the intellectuals was also true of political movements that had become widespread in West Germany with the rise of the extraparliamentary opposition (*Außerparlementarische Opposition*, or APO). For Gehlen, as for many Germans across the political spectrum, the role of institutions of higher education was the acquisition of technical qualifications that would allow individuals to make a living and to be productive members of society. This was especially crucial in the increasingly technologically developed social order of the modern industrial mass state.[125] The political stylings of the student movement were simply contrary to the purposes of the institutions of higher learning that had become their central area of organizing. Moreover, the demand that the university system be subjected to critiques based on universalistic and humanitarian values merely freighted these important social institutions with ethical demands and considerations that these institutions were not meant to resolve.

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[124] Arnold Gehlen, "Das Engagement der Intellektuellen gegenüber dem Staat," in *Arnold Gehlen Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 7* ed. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), 260.
[125] On this see Arnold Gehlen, "Zu den Problemen der Hochschulreform," in *Arnold Gehlen Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 7* ed. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1974).

For Gehlen, this ethical universalism was simply a failure to understand the nature of ethics. In his last major work, *Moral und Hypermoral*, Gehlen fleshed out this critique, arguing that the basis of social values was in particular family and clan groups.[126]Gehlen described his approach as "pluralistic" by which he meant to suggest that the attempt to specify universal values overlooked the basis of human value relations in specific, local social formations. The demands that society be organized along the lines of a "humanitarian mass eudemonistic ethic of responsibility" resulted in what Gehlen termed "moral hypertrophy." It was an outgrowth of the humanitarian ideals of the Enlightenment, but also of Christian religious conceptions. This distinction in the sources of the idea mattered little to Gehlen's analysis. Whether religiously or rationally based, "[w]hoever accepts the human being purely in terms of its humanness and claims that this mode of being occupies that highest level of value cannot accept any limitations on this evaluation, for on this path there is no end."[127] The demand that all social values be subjected to the test of a universal humanitarianism was now used by communists, anarchists, feminists, and disaffected students. It formed the basis for attacks on the institutional structures of society. This was in itself intrinsically dangerous because these institutional structures gave form to mass society and allowed human beings to live without being overwhelmed by a flood of external impulses and imperfectly formed instinctual urges. Moral hypertrophy was a pathology of modernity, for which the vanity of the intellectuals was mostly to blame. The intellectuals hungered after the love of the masses and after "an oceanic feeling" that would overcome their feelings of alienation. But the pursuit of this mass

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[126] Arnold Gehlen, *Moral und Hypermoral: eine pluralistische Ethik*.
[127] Ibid., 143.

eudemonistic ethic was much more likely to result in the disintegration of crucial social institutions rather than the generalization of human happiness.[128]

Gehlen was one of the most prominent conservative figures in West German intellectual life in the first decades after the war. Unsurprisingly, his work found little favor east of the Cold War divide. In part this had to do with his collaboration with National Socialism, any taint of which was almost invariably sufficient cause for the opprobrium of the East German authorities. In addition, the East German attitude toward Gehlen, as toward Alfred Weber, was stamped by the regime's low opinion of sociology as an academic discipline the purpose of which was to attempt to resolve or to paper over the social conflicts engendered by the capitalist mode of production. One interesting aspect of the reception of Gehlen's work in the GDR was the ambivalent role that it played in the thought of the dissident East German philosopher Wolfgang Harich. Harich addressed Gehlen's work in an article in the East German cultural journal *Sinn und Form* where he complimented him for his "deep and ingenious analysis" of the role of language in modern society, and for his development of the linguistic theory of Wilhelm von Humboldt.[129] In a discussion of aesthetics published in Sinn und Form in the following year, Harich recognized Gehlen as "the most well-known representative of modern philosophical anthropology."[130]

Harich's most intensive engagement with Gehlen's work came in the years after Harich's release from prison in 1964.[131] Kept rigorously separate from other dissident intellectuals in the GDR, Harich was allowed to publish, subject to strict supervision from the SED.

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[128] Ibid., 153-54.

[129] Wolfgang Harich, "Über einige Probleme der Logik," *Sinn und Form* 4, no. 6 (1952): 93.

[130] Wolfgang Harich, "Über die Empfindung des Schönen," *Sinn und Form* 5, no. 6 (1953): 124. In his history of East German intellectual conflict the West, Norbert Kapferer suggests that Harich's positive references to Gehlen contributed to his fall from favor and eventual censure by the intellectual authorities in the GDR.

[131] As discussed in Chapter 3, Harich had been jailed in 1957 for counterrevolutionary activities.

During his incarceration he had managed to forge contacts with publishers outside the GDR.[132] In the wake of his release, Harich published works on literary topics through Akademie Verlag, an East German publishing house that, while not under the direct control of the government, was still bound by the ideological limitations of the communist system. In 1969, Harich published an article entitled "Zur Kritik der revolutionären Ungeduld" (On the Critique of Revolutionary Impatience) in an issue of the West German leftist journal *Kursbuch* devoted to the question of anarchism in modern politics.[133] Two years later Harich published a volume, based on the article but much expanded, under the same title through an Italian publisher. In a letter to the Italian publisher, Harich pointed out that a pirated edition had already appeared through a Swiss house. [134] Harich's view at the time was that although the Italian publisher might want to work out the legalities with the Swiss, it was not really a matter of concern to him. "I didn't write it in order to earn money from it but rather for the use of the APO, and am solely interested in its dissemination."[135]

The main thrust of these works was to critique the political radicalism of 1968. Specifically, Harich criticized the left-radicalism of figures such as the brothers Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, who had questioned the continuing relevance of communism in modern political struggles in their book *Le Gauchisme, remède à la maladie sénile du communisme* (1968). Harich began by attacking the traditions of late 19th and 20th century anarchism, which he argued has responded to the lack of revolutionary enthusiasm on the part of the

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[132] In 1960 an edition of his book on the German romantic writer Jean Paul was published by Suhrkamp Verlag, one of the most prominent publishing houses in West Germany. On Harich's position in the GDR at this time see Walter Euchner and Helga Grebing, *Geschichte der sozialen Ideen in Deutschland: Sozialismus, katholische Soziallehre, protestantische Sozialethik: ein Handbuch* (Essen: Klartext, 2000), 536-38. See also Wolfgang Harich, *Ahnenpass: Versuch einer Autobiographie* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 1999).
[133] Wolfgang Harich, "Zur Kritik der revolutionären Ungeduld," *Kursbuch* 19(1969).
[134] Wolfgang Harich, *Zur Kritik der revolutionären Ungeduld: Eine Abrechnung mit dem alten und dem neuen Anarchismus*.
[135] Wolfgang Harich to Inge Feltrinelli 16 May 1971 in ibid., 9.

trade union movement with ill-considered and "childish" calls for immediate revolution. In similarly ill-considered fashion, modern anarchists and ultra-leftists rejected the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary step in the construction of a communist society that would ultimately dismantle the repressive capitalist order. Anarchists (and here Harich also meant members of the non-communist left more generally) failed to understand that non-domination (*Herrschaftslosigkeit*) was also the goal of communism. In their revolutionary impatience (revolutionärische Ungeduld), they insisted that "the freedom of the individual is the highest value, and they stipulate that there can be no talk of real individual freedom so long as directives relying on authority and subordination persist."[136] Harich was sympathetic to the goals of the non-communist left because, on his view, they were the same at those of the communists. However, it was necessary to temper enthusiasm for the elimination of domination with a realistic understanding of existing social conditions. One could not merely declare domination to be at an end. It required a process of building a new consciousness and simultaneously a new society. In the context of this building process, one could not merely reject the capacity of structures of subordination out of hand without first establishing a social order in which the population was imbued with the necessary ideology of social commitment and cooperation. What differentiated Marxism and anarchism was their respective approaches to the question of the state: "The anarchists want to abolish the state immediately, between today and tomorrow; the Marxists, by contrast, regard as unavoidable that a period of transition, designated the dictatorship of the proletariat, until the realization of communism in our own revolutionary state."[137] It was merely wishful thinking on the part of the anarchists to assume that the transitional phase could be skipped, or that the creation of a

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[136] Ibid., 23.
[137] Ibid., 33.

society free from domination could be created through a process that was itself completely free of political subordination.

Harich identified the central themes of modern anarchist politics in their commitment to action in priority over theory. The anarchists were committed to a policy of enlightenment through action (*Aufklärung durch Aktion*), to the propaganda of the deed (*Propaganda durch die Tat*) the goal of which was to make manifest the possibility of an alternative order through action and thereby to destabilize the institutions of the oppressive capitalist order. The slogan for the latter process (*Verunsichern der Institutionen*) was, Harich pointed out, a redeployment of a terminology employed by Arnold Gehlen, "one of the fiercest spiritual antipodes of the new left."[138] Harich went on to describe the concept of the *oberste Führungssystem* and its role in shaping drives and providing firm common guidelines for cultural meanings. Harich's account of Gehlen's work drew on the 1940 edition of *Der Mensch*, giving extensive treatment to the concept of the *Zuchtbild* with its racialist connotations. With regard to the destabilizing of institutions, Harich pointed out that it was ironic for partisans of the new left to characterize this as a goal to be sought, since in Gehlen's system this was a process that resulted in confusion and discomfort for human beings rather than the experience of liberation.

Conclusion

The three modes of analyzing the human being discussed in this chapter can be distinguished by their fundamental premises. Weber's sociological anthropology was predicated on a dynamic relationship between human beings and the cultural orders that they inhabited. Human types arose out of macrohistorical cultural formations, of which the West was the de-

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[138] Ibid., 75.

finitive modern exemplar. The cultural order of the West, encompassing political and economic structures, gave rise to a human type defined by the integration of freedom into the conception of the human being. This human type was threatened by the emergence of another type arising out of the bureaucratically structured modern state, operating in a world environment shaped in important ways by the spread of technology. Although it had been the case throughout the millennia of human history that varieties of human being has arisen spontaneously from extant social orders, the situation in modernity called for human beings consciously to undertake the reformation and restructuring of their own societies in order to prevent the transition from one human type to another. Weber's participation in the movement for a free (i.e. non-Marxist and non-communist) socialism was an expression of this need. His political action was motivated by his perception that a free socialism could take up the role of a universal social religion of human equality and freedom. The systemic conflict of the nascent Cold War was, for Weber, a fundamental conflict between two universal social religions that failed to properly fulfill the normative premises that underlay their respective ideologies.

Gehlen's version of philosophical anthropology, by contrast, viewed the human being in terms of qualities that were relatively stable rather than as a product of cultural, political, or economic structures. For Gehlen, human beings were defined by their biological qualities. To the extent that they were shaped from the outside this shaping was a matter of adjustment to environments viewed in terms of biology and comparable to the manner in which animals related to their environments. While Weber saw the crisis of modernity as the reduction of human beings to obedient cogs in a depersonalized mechanism of social domination, for Gehlen just the reverse was the case. The institutions of society were being increasingly

weakened by human beings lacking the discipline to stay within institutional boundaries. Both Weber and Gehlen viewed unrestrained capitalism as exerting a negative effect on human beings, but while Weber saw this as crushing out individuality for Gehlen the problem was one of excessive individuality resulting a moral hypertrophy.

Both of these examples, coupled with the discussion of various analyses of the human being in the earlier section of the chapter, illustrate the ways that the idea of the human being was powerfully shaped by the political and historical needs of Germans in the moment of intersection of the Nazi past and the Cold War present. In the absence of a generally accepted account of what it was that defined the human being, various accounts arose specifying some subset of human characteristics as definitive and employing them as a means of responding to the immediate political needs of the day. Weber viewed humans as shaped by their cultural circumstances and produced warnings intended to arrest the flow of cultural change in order to preserve what was in his view the highest form of humanity. Gehlen, by contrast, sought the defining characteristics of the human in biological qualities, particularly human deficiencies with respect to their capacities for coping with their environments. From this he generated a conservative politics based on preserving the institutional prostheses that allowed human beings to live together in a condition of reasonable comfort and happiness. The communist view of man as a concatenation of social relations bore similarities to both approaches, but it was debatable whether the new man that the theorists of Marxism-Leninism sought to create was anything more than a justification of a policy whose roots lay in immediate politics rather than the history of human beings.

Conclusion

Humanism and philosophical approaches grounded in conceptions of human being were subjected to critiques from both the left and the right of the political spectrum throughout the postwar period. These critiques became more intense during the 1960s and 1970s. German and European conservatism stepped out from the shadow of fascism in the course of the 1960s and offered pointed critiques of the universalistic philosophical approaches based in Enlightenment thought. We have already seen how Arnold Gehlen combined a scientific analysis of human biological tendencies with increasingly intense criticism of attempts to make the human being in general the basis for political norms and to organize societies on the basis of universal principles. Gehlen was not alone in this view. Younger German conservatives, many of whom had been students of the revolutionary conservatives of the Weimar period, became increasingly vocal in their criticism of the humanitarian postwar order in Germany and Europe. For conservatives such as Gehlen and Helmet Schelsky, for whom the increasing penetration of technology into spheres of human life was viewed in positive terms, humanistic universalism represented a metaphysical atavism, a longing for a value order that had been superseded by modes of social organization in which legitimacy was generated by technical processes.[1]

Somewhat ironically, one of the most important outgrowths of Martin Heidegger's conservative critique of humanism was its adoption by structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers, many of whom were politically leftist in orientation. In *The Order of Things* (1966), Michel Foucault argued that Nietzsche's assertion of the death of God was, in fact, an ele-

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[1] C. J. Thornhill, *German Political Philosophy: The Metaphysics of Law* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 310.

ment in the process of the death of man. The struggle between God and man was one with multiple rounds, with the final phase being man left to his own finitude:

> Thus, the last man is at the same time older and yet younger than the death of God; since he has killed God, it is he himself who must answer for his own finitude; but since it is in the death of God that he speaks, thinks, and exists, his murder itself is doomed to die; new gods, the same gods, are already swelling in the future ocean; man will disappear. [2]

Looked at from the perspective of science, Foucault argued, the question of man in general was not primordial but had only really taken shape (at least in the case of European thought) in the last three centuries. Once this mode of knowing passed away, as classical thought had done, man would pass away "like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea."[3]

Socialist humanism had seemed to give the concept of humanism a new lease on life within the Marxist left, but by the mid-1960s this too was coming under attack. One interesting historical sidelight of the assembling of Fromm's Socialist Humanism collection was Fromm's solicitation of a contribution from the prominent French communist Louis Althusser.[4] Although dubious about the project, Althusser duly submitted a text for the collection. But instead of exploring the possibilities of socialist humanism, Althusser's essay was a withering attack on the very possibility of a humanism based in Marxism. There was, Althusser argued, "a striking unevenness" between the concepts of socialism and humanism.[5] The Marxist conception of socialism was scientific, while humanism of whatever stripe was merely ideological:

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[2] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 385.

[3] Ibid., 387.

[4] The details of this solicitation are related in Louis Althusser and François Matheron, *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London; New York: Verso, 2003), 222-27.

[5] Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, 223.

> When I say that the concept of humanism is an ideological concept (not a scientific one), I mean that while it really does designate a set of existing relations, unlike a scientific concept, it does not provide us with a means of knowing them. In a particular (ideological) mode, it designates some existents, but it does not give us their essences. If we were to confuse these two orders we should cut ourselves off from all knowledge, uphold a confusion, and risk falling into error.[6]

Althusser then proceeded to outline the ways that the humanist conceptions of Marxism, based as they were on the early writings of Marx, failed to take into account the decisive transition in Marx's thinking. In 1845, Marx had experienced what Althusser termed an epistemological rupture (*une coupure epistemologique*), in which "Marx broke radically with every theory that based history and politics on the essence of man."[7] The rationale that Althusser provided for rejecting the pairing of Marxism and humanism was, in most important respects, indistinguishable from that found in Lukács's contribution the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* a decade earlier. Lukács had seen the change as a process of maturation in which the distinction of the older from the younger version was implicit, while for Althusser the change was more in the nature of an explicit repudiation. In any case, Althusser's rejection of socialist humanism as a way forward for the left was clear and his contribution was apologetically rejected by Fromm.

Even within the ranks of those actually sympathetic to socialist humanism, questions were being raised. In his contribution to Fromm's collection, Herbert Marcuse claimed that the intrinsic connection between socialism and humanism that had existed in former times had been broken:

> The objective identity of socialism and humanism is dissolved. It was never an *immediate* identity: it was real to the extent to which the objective condi-

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 227.

tion was seized and transcended in the consciousness of historical subjects and in their historical action. This mediation is suppressed by the overwhelming power of technical progress welded into an instrument of totalitarian domination, operating not only through the terrifying concentration of economic and military power, but also through the rising standard of living under the imposed conditions of living.[8]

Marcuse's pessimistic assessment of the situation of socialist humanism drew on many of the themes discussed in his *One Dimensional Man*, published the previous year. The spread of technology through the social and political systems of the industrialized world had changed the equation of human liberation. The basis of the project of Marxist socialism, the immiseration of the proletariat and the completion of its historical role in the abolition of capitalist social relations, had been transformed. Technological progress had transformed society to such a degree that revolution was now not merely a matter of political and economic change, but also necessarily a transformation in the way the human beings related to technology. "Prerequisite for the liberation of the humanistic content of socialism," Marcuse wrote, "would be a fundamental change in the *direction of technical progress*, a total reconstruction of the technical apparatus."[9] The conquest of the mind and the soul by scientific management had, so Marcuse claimed, vitiated Marx's idea of the well-rounded individual. There was no longer a space for a realm of human freedom in a technologically organized society, irrespective of whether the organizing principle of that society was liberal capitalism or Marxism-Leninism.

Along with the problems for the political theory of the left presented by technology, there was also an increasing awareness that the old nostrums of universalizing proletarian socialism no longer applied. Marcuse expressed doubts about this in his last writings (his article on feminism published in 1974), but even before this the politics of the German left had

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[8] Herbert Marcuse, "Socialist Humanism?," 111.
[9] Ibid.

clearly shown an expanding consciousness of the problems associated with arguing at the level of the human being. The gender politics of the Sozialdemokratisches Studentenbund (SDS), the leading political organization of the left oriented student movement, illustrate this. The politics of the SDS, while nominally adhering to a radically leftist version of Marxism, had also contained a strongly patriarchal element. In a now famous speech at the 1968 SDS convention, Helke Sander took the organization's leadership to task for failing to take account of issues specifically relevant to women, concluding bitterly that the SDS was "nothing more than a bloated mass of counterrevolutionary dough." Beginning in the late 1960s, feminists in Germany increasingly divorced themselves from the mass organizations of the left, choosing to form their own movements and to fight for their own agendas (most centrally the struggle for reproductive rights).[10]

The growth of the environmental movement, which also split off from the mainstream of the radical left in the 1960s, was further evidence of a shift in priorities. The political consequences of these developments were extensive, but most importantly for the purposes of the philosophy of the human, they reflected a move away from the universalizing discourse of the German left. [11] Neither the feminists nor the environmentalists could remain satisfied with the Marxist historical narrative in which the resolution of the problems facing human beings was put off until the overthrow of capitalism by the revolutionary proletariat. Environmentalism, in practice at least, retained many of the concerns of humanism, particularly with respect to the preconditions of human flourishing. But the goal of preventing human beings from being poisoned by chemicals or radiation was not the same as a positive theory of

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[10] Hilke Schlaeger and Nancy Vedder-Schults, "The West German Women's Movement," *New German Critique* 13(Winter, 1978): 62-63.

[11] On the splitting of the environmental and feminist movements from the established organizations of the German left, see Paul Hockenos, *Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 139-48.

the human. Feminists were even less inclined to talk at this level. For them, argument at the level of the human merely implied the elision of issues relevant to one specific element of the human population. In this context, talk of humanism among German leftists was increasingly out of step with actual developments.

In addition to responding to intellectual trends, philosophies of the human were shaped in different ways by the changing historical circumstances of the two Cold War German states. In West Germany, where humanism had played a prominent role in the project of reconnecting German culture with the universal values of the West, the story was one of declining cultural influence. Instances of the deployment of humanist language and cultural tropes decreased throughout the 1950s and 1960s. To some extent this was probably a function of the increasingly close connections forged between the Adenauer government and the US-led political bloc in the 1950s, particularly in the period during and after the Korean War. West Germany was incorporated into NATO in 1955 and this in itself was an important moment in the process of reconciliation between (West) Germany and the "civilized" peoples of Western Europe. Inclusion in NATO, among other things, allowed the West German government and its supporters to claim that they were now a part of the great struggle of the civilized world against communist barbarism. This linkage achieved a further connection to the project of overcoming the Nazi past with the growth of the comparative study of totalitarianism, in which Soviet communism and fascism were often seen as sharing important commonalities. In light of the shift in the geopolitical situation through the 1950s, the project of association German culture with universal human ideals lost traction. The institutional linking of West Germany with the North Atlantic political bloc reflected an implicit understanding that this connection already existed.

Willy Brandt's initiated overtures to both East Germany and the USSR beginning in the late 1960s resulted in a series of bilateral treaties and a general thaw in relations between Germany and its communist neighbors. That this drew a relatively muted response from the US government is an illustration of how firmly ensconced West Germany was within the American-led bloc.[12] The Luxemburg Treaty signed in 1953 paved the way for payment of reparations by the West German government to Jewish victims of the Holocaust. By 1971, these payments amounted to more than DM 41 billion. This, along with periodic expressions of contrition by West German political figures, the prominent trial of former Auschwitz functionaries in the early 1960s, and the passage of time in the fraught political environment of the Cold War eased West Germany's passage into the comity of civilized states. The late 1950s and 1960s were also a period of increasingly strong economic performance in the West German economy. GDP increased by more than 60% between 1950 and 1960.[13] Starting in 1955, West Germany signed a series of agreements with other nations (including Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Portugal) to bring in guest workers in order to ease the persistent labor shortages caused by rapid economic growth. Under these circumstances, the need to overcome the Nazi past or to justify the extant political and economic order against communism, two of the main motivations for the prevalence of humanism in the immediate postwar period, were felt with diminishing acuteness.

Humanism retained an important role in cultural policy throughout the lifespan of the East German state. In the 1960s it remained an important element of official ideological discourse, although it was promoted with less vigor than it had been in the first decades of the

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[12] Gottfried Niedhart, "Ostpolitik: The Role of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Process of Détente" in Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, *1968, The World Transformed* (Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[13] Barry J. Eichengreen, *The European Economy since 1945: Coordinated Capitalism and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 91.

GDR. The ideological power of home grown humanism continued to be employed by East German intellectual and political figures, although it is unclear what purchase these ideas may have had on a population for whom socialism and life in the political orbit of the USSR were no longer novelties. The priorities of East German cultural policy shifted after the first Bitterfeld Conference in April 1959. The so-called Bitterfeld Way called for more extensive connections between artists and workers. The apparent goal was to encourage a bottom up approach to artistic production with more contributions from people from the "productive classes."[14] The focus on art that dealt with actual conditions, as opposed to more abstract themes, never wholly displaced the role of Weimar classicism as a means of legitimating East German socialism. The entries for humanism and socialist humanism in the 1970 edition of the officially sanctioned lexicon of political and cultural terminology were extensive and substantively unchanged from versions dating back into the 1950s and 1960s.[15] The humanism of the German classics also continued to be the subject of intellectual production. Alexander Abusch's *Tradition und Gegenwart des socialistischen Humanismus*, published in 1971, can stand in for a range of works churned out by East German intellectuals in the early 1970s reaffirming the connections between the culture of East German socialism and the broader heritage of German culture. Abusch paired figures from the German classical past, such as Alexander von Humboldt and Friedrich Hölderlin, with modern figures such as Johannes R. Becher and Bertolt Brecht, as a means of emphasizing the continuities in East Germany's combative humanism.

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[14] The bottom up strategy can clearly be seen in the guiding slogan of the Bitterfeld Way: "Greif zur Feder, Kumpel, die sozialistische deutsche Nationalkultur braucht dich!" ("Grab your pen, buddy, socialist German national culture needs you!"). See Mitteldeutscher Verlag, ed. *Greif zur Feder, Kumpel; Protokoll des Autorenkonferenz des Mitteldeutschen Verlags, Halle (Saale) am 24. April 1959, in Kulturpalast des Elektrochemischen Kombinats Bitterfeld.* (Halle (Salle): Mitteldeutscher Verlag,1959).

[15] Harald Bühl et al., eds., *Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag,1970), 212-20.

The humanism of East German cultural politics was the application of an available tool in the struggle to legitimate the new socialist order in East Germany. It met little or no response from West Germany, to a great extent because the attitude of West German intellectuals in the era of the Hallstein Doctrine was that to engage with the east would be to give credence to the communism that East German intellectuals were promoting. By the time that this doctrine lost its force in the late 1960s, humanism no longer occupied the place of prominence in West German culture that it had ten or fifteen years before. In the last decades of the Cold War, humanism came increasingly to designate a sort of atheist culture, but it no longer carried the force that it had when the cultural problems to which it responded, the heritage of National Socialism and the nascent Cold War, were fresh in the minds of the German survivors of the Second World War.

In a broader sense, the fate of the philosophies of the human that were employed on both sides of the Cold War divide, was shaped in the 1960s by fundamental changes in the normative structure of political and ethical discourse in Europe and North America. These changes can be designated in a general way under the paired rubrics of the critique of universalism and the rise of identity politics. Universalism had come under increasingly stringent criticism as nationalist movements shifted to the political right in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As noted above, starting in the 1960s universalism was increasingly subjected to critiques from the political left, as European intellectuals (particularly in France) took up the Heideggerian critique of Western metaphysics. The influence of Heidegger in Germany was muted due to the withdrawal of his teaching license due to his embrace of Nazism in the 1930s. But here too the critique of universalism arose, based instead on the idiosyncratic Marxism of the Frankfurt School. In the years immediately following the war, the

Frankfurt School offered young intellectuals (such as Jürgen Habermas) the opportunity "to rescue the universalistic dimension embodied in the German Enlightenment in order to purge the country's traditions of its reactionary and fascist dimensions."[16] By the 1960s, the work of the school's major figures, most prominently Theodor Adorno, had taken on a more aggressively critical dimension in the ideological milieu of the nascent extra-parliamentary opposition. Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, composed in exile between 1944 and 1949, was a seminal text for German radical students in the 1960s and Adorno's comment early in that work that "the whole is the false" provided a point of orientation for a generation of young iconoclasts.[17] Adorno's research program in the last years of his life, accentuated this dimension of his theory. The focus on the concept of the non-identical in his *Negative Dialectics* (1966) evinced a deep seated suspicion of notions of totality, among which all the notions of universalism discussed in this project could be numbered.

At the same time, distinctions based on identity, once the province of the political right, were increasingly taken up by the political left. Groupings centered around concepts such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation began to distance themselves from the universalistic politics of the Old Left. As Grant Farred noted in an analysis of the role of identity politics on the left:

> The diversity of political activity in the 1960s demonstrated to its 1970s and 1980s successors how to mobilize marginalized constituencies, how to "politicize" culture, and how to deploy "difference" as an ideological tool in racially hegemonic societies. Having rejected the Old Left's narrow conception of politics, the New Left expanded it to include – and provide a precedent and a platform for – modes of oppositionality that would, in the 1980s, be construed as struggles over representation and identity.[18]

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[16] A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*, 124.

[17] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 50.

[18] Grant Farred, "Endgame Identity? Mapping the New Left Roots of Identity Politics," *New Literary History* 31, no. 4 (2000): 630.

Rather than focusing on positive accounts of the human, or of politico-social orders ideal for human flourishing, movements grounded in identity politics sought the expose the repressive consequences of eliding particularities below the level of universal humanity. As discussed above, the feminist movement exerted a powerful influence on leftist politics, particularly after the fragmentation of the SDS at the end of the 1960s. The 1970s and 1980s also saw the rise of political movements in Germany representing the interests of racial minorities such as Turks and black Germans.[19]

Ironically, given Adorno's role in the problematizing Enlightenment universalism, it was the next generation of Frankfurt School scholars that mounted the most developed defense of universalism in ethical and social philosophy. The most prominent figure in the resurgence of universalism was Jürgen Habermas. Habermas had been active in the academic politics of the 1960s. Originally supportive of the aims of the student movement, he was critical of the violence and anti-democratic tendencies that became increasingly prominent in the movement in the late 1960s. In 1967, Habermas publicly accused SDS leader Rudi Dutschke of "left fascism," costing him a great deal of his popularity with the student left.[20] In the 1970s and 1980s, after the political wave of the student movement had peaked and receded, Habermas took up the cudgels in defense of ethical universalism. In his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), Habermas argued that the cultural pessimism of the previous generation of the Frankfurt School had been too extreme, reducing all rationality to instrumental

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[19] On the politics of Turks in Germany, see Rita Chin, "Guest Worker Migration and the Unexpected Return of Race" in Rita Chin et al., eds., *After the Nazi Racial State : Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press,2009). For black German political movements, see May Ayim, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz, *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992). On the issue of identity politics in Germany more generally, see Rita Chin and Heide Fehrenbach, "German Democracy and the Question of Difference, 1945-1995" in Rita Chin et al., eds., *After the Nazi Racial State : Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe*.

[20] Matthew G. Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 113-16.

rationality and failing to recognize the binding ethical norms implicit in all human communi-

cation.[21] Among the most prominent features of the philosophical public from the late 1970s

to the 1990s was the running debate between Habermas and his partisans (such as Axel Hon-

neth and Seyla Benhabib) on the one hand, and a range of critics representing poststructural-

ism (Foucault), feminism (Nancy Fraser), conservatism (Hans-Georg Gadamer), and systems

theory (Niklas Luhmann) on the other.[22] At the same time, a debate involving similar themes

went in Anglo-American political theory between liberal universalists such as John Rawls

and so-called communitarians, like Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, and Charles Taylor,

who viewed ethical norms as indissolubly linked to particular ethical communities.[23]

Since the 1990s, a new twist in the relationship between universalism and its critics

has arisen with the emergence of renewed interest in cosmopolitanism. For much of the 20th

century, cosmopolitanism has been commonly used as a term of abuse. In the argot of both

fascism and communism, the accusation of cosmopolitanism implied an overt or thinly veiled

antisemitism (for instance in the common Nazi reference to "the wandering Jew"). Fascist

anticosmopolitanism highlighted the ties to localized ethnic, racial, and national communities

which Jews, according the fascist ideology, lacked. Connections to the national community

were more complex and ambivalent in communist ideology, with its commitment to interna-

tional proletarian solidarity. Nevertheless, particularly during the last years of Stalin's rule,

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[21] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 378-83.

[22] An introduction to many of the main critical approaches to Habermas's work can be found in the special issue of *New German Critique* devoted to the topic (#35, Spring/Summer 1985) as well as in John B. Thompson and David Held, eds., *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press,1982). The main interventions in Habermas's extensive debates with Foucault are reprinted in Michael Kelly, ed. *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press,1994).

[23] Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988). Contributions from a range of perspectives are presented in David M. Rasmussen, ed. *Universalism vs. Communitarianism: Contemporary Debates in Ethics*, 1st MIT Press ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press,1990).

cosmopolitanism came to be deployed as a code word for Jewish influence.[24] In the 1990s, cosmopolitanism came to be employed by ethicists, social theorists, and philosophers seeking a means of grounding universally inclusive norms while avoiding the perceived essentialism of humanistic language. One important strain of this new cosmopolitanism shares an interest in Kantian philosophy with Habermas and other critical theorists.[25] A second strain of cosmopolitan thinking focuses on issues relating to the fragmentation and hybridization of cultures in a globalized modernity.[26] This version of cosmopolitanism sees itself as an opponent of resurgent nationalism in a world that is experiencing dramatic processes of reconfiguration caused by the spread of post-Fordist capitalism. It is, as one of its partisans has described it, "an ideal project and a style of consciousness that overcomes nationalist particularism."[27] In this respect, modern cosmopolitanism involves another attempt to negotiate the binary distinction between the universal and the particular which was such a prominent feature of European intellectual life in the years immediately following the Second World War.

The philosophies of the human that functioned so prominently in the intellectual life of postwar Germany were attempts to reclaim the territory of universalism in the wake of the radical particularism of the National Socialist regime. Their importance both a matter of the political necessities of the times and as elements of a longer struggle in the intellectual life of the West between universalism and particularism in ethical thought. The impulses of Western

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[24] The use of the term cosmopolitan as a code word for Jewish was closely linked to developments leading up to the "exposure" of the so-called Doctors Plot and the show trials that followed it in 1953. See Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*, 1st ed. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 496-503.
[25] Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, *The Cosmopolitanism Reader* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2010). One impetus for the resurgence interest in the connections between Kant and cosmopolitanism was the 200th anniversary of the publication of Kant's essay "Perpetual Peace" in 1995. On this topic see James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, eds., *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press,1997).
[26] Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,1998).
[27] Pheng Cheah, "The Cosmopolitical – Today" in ibid., 21.

humanism and of Marxist humanism, in the sense of respect for and defense of the inherent dignity of human beings were carried over into critical theory and into the Kant-influenced cosmopolitanism of later decades. While the critical interventions of poststructuralist stripped away the essentialistic residues of both Western humanism and classical Marxism, the under-lying ethical thrust, the positing of norms that applied to all human beings irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, or other particularities, remained, and remains, a crucial element of modern ethical philosophy.

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