

Nazi Modern

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Soon, the twentieth century will be put into a museum. Its curators will face many difficult tasks: how to arrange its galleries and exhibits, and where to put the horror of Nazism? In one scenario, the museum might be dominated by a long corridor, a spatial counterpart to a time line, with the central gallery culminating in a triumphant display of democratic political systems, market-oriented economies, and thoroughly global communications, a display whose artifacts might include the "Good War," the Internet, and the Kronos Quartet. Approaching these objects through the central gallery, one would pass a series of other corridors diverging to the left and the right, corridors housing shrill political manifestos, uniformed youth brigades, and pale-colored ration cards, all recalling the once confident enemies of liberalism: the communists, the fascists, the Nazis, and other political "utopians." The central gallery would serve as a reliable moral compass, celebrating the righteousness of the West (France, the United States, and Great Britain), drawing attention to the once wayward East (Germany and Russia). The defining event of the century would be World War II, one that put in proper place and perspective the entire century. National Socialism, in particular, would provide a frightening, anachronistic contrast to the political liberty and social emancipation that Europe has achieved in the last decades. Yet such a marvelous museum might well be too perfect. Outside, the furies of nationalism, the prospect of wholesale ecological degradation, and persistent economic fears would continue to assault the certainties on display inside. **[End Page 1]**

Alternatively, to acknowledge the indeterminate aspects of our own fin de siècle, the gallery could be laid out less strictly, less confidently. Instead of a central gallery with diverging corridors to regulate the flow of impressions, the building would house a shifting configuration of clusters and nodes, and exhibits from the same decade might be widely scattered and juxtaposed with apparently alien materials. The artifacts would be assembled not to reveal the twentieth century's progressive advance, but to trace and dramatize its curious collaborations, the collusions that made the century possible: the different histories that it drew upon, the glorious nostalgias that it fashioned, and the various futures that it imagined. Whereas the first museum would house the displays of liberal modernization, celebrating the enhanced ability of individuals to mobilize resources in the context of a highly differentiated capitalist economy and an open political democracy, the second would chart the genealogies of modernism, tracing the different ways that people and institutions have tinkered to make themselves secure in the dangerous zones of a constantly changing world.¹ Obviously, Nazism has a claim for inclusion in such a retrospective exhibition because it provided one, albeit extreme, answer to the economic and political crises of post-World War I Germany. Its claim is compelling not because National Socialism bears resemblance to the modern democracies of the period after World War II, or because it adopted and celebrated automobiles, airplanes, and other futuristic technology, but because it conceived of Germany as both the object of the social and economic forces of industrialization and, thanks to those same forces, as a potential subject that possessed the capacity to reorganize political life and prosper amid dangerous conditions. The Nazis were modernists because they made the acknowledgment of the radical instability of twentieth-century life the premise of relentless experimentation.

For most historians, Nazism has been regarded as the improbable outcome of disastrous political and economic conditions. Germany's precipitous military defeat in 1918, the near civil-war conditions that followed the revolution, the hyperinflation of 1922 and 1923, the long-

winded recession in the mid-1920s, and finally the devastation of the Great Depression all added up to a worst-case scenario in which the rise of Hitler becomes comprehensible. Almost any textbook on the Weimar Republic will take readers through this house of horrors and lead them straight to the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933. (Indeed, Nazis and neo-Nazis are routinely regarded as the most reliable register of the troubles of both the first and the second German republics; Nazism, seen in this way, stands for system failures of one sort or another.) Once in power, the National Socialist regime gained the acquiescence of the majority of the German people, but never enjoyed outright support. Faced with the costs of developing an incipient consumer-oriented economy, it chose instead to engage in increasingly spectacular and dangerous foreign policies to distract the public. For most Germans, the Nazi leaders were experienced as bosses and pashas of varying degrees of corruption. While the regime's most important ideological goals--the elimination of the Jews from German life and the subjugation of eastern [End Page 2] Europe--were pursued consistently, they were also pursued without popular consent. The combination of day-to-day venality and less discernable ideological scheming has encouraged historians to make distinctions between the "Nazis" and the "Germans," collective nouns whose overlap is never denied, but whose juxtaposition suggests mutual exclusion rather than degrees of equivalence.²

Against the grain of conventional historiography, two kinds of arguments have been advanced that attempt to trace the traffic between National Socialism and modernity. Over thirty years ago, Ralf Dahrendorf and David Schoenbaum maintained that the Nazis must be seen as modernizers, who, willfully or not, made Germany significantly more modern in outlook and laid the foundations for the Federal Republic (*Bundesrepublik*) that would follow.³ Yet this well-known argument, which continues to be elaborated (and furiously countered), unduly restricts the notion of the modern to terms derived from the consumer economies of the post-World War II period; it slights the specific character of the Nazi exchange with modernity and forces it into a mold that was made much later, a *bundesrepublikanisch* mold. A more sophisticated approach has been developed by Detlev Peukert and Zygmunt Bauman, but has received less attention from historians. It eschews the Federal Republic as a model for assessing Nazism and instead examines the degree to which Nazism was invested in the renovative or therapeutic traditions of western civilization. These arguments are not without their own problems, some of which I shall explain more fully below, but they offer grounds for further development. In the first set of arguments, Nazis are claimed to be simply modernizers; in the second, they are, even if only potentially, modernists.

Accounts that emphasize the modernizing nature of the Nazi regime entail that we reject the notion that Nazism was simply reactionary, merely defensive, or altogether unlikely, a spectacular creature unique to the tumultuous interwar years. At the same time, too much in the way of historical specificity is lost if we consider the Hitler regime as solely a developmental dictatorship, a mere stepping-stone to the more thoroughgoing modernization of the Federal Republic. Such a view places too much weight on the unintended consequences of Nazi politics and too much emphasis on the explicit contents of specific social policies. Furthermore, it can also lead, and in fact unfortunately has led, to a "mainstreaming" of the National Socialists, turning them into first-generation progressives and effectively consigning their racism more and more to the margins. Finally, the concept of modernization is too normative, encouraging observers to look at the past in terms of the present. The notion of modernism, in contrast, offers a more open-ended way of mapping the initiatives, blueprints, and experiments by which contemporaries tried to build lasting, possibly illiberal structures in the circumstances of radical instability. It requires that we focus less on unintended consequences, more on underemphasized premises, and that we view National Socialism as a distinctive, horrifying, but nonetheless plausible version of social renovation. That is not easy, for it makes the Nazis much more familiar, much more like us; it undermines cherished notions of how different "they" [End Page 3] are from "us" or "we" are from "them," eroding the congenial assumption that modernizers leave racism behind as anachronistic. It suggests that we might have to consider the Nazis a genuinely popular political force, rather than merely a symptom of system failure.

And if the Nazis are regarded as modernists and tinkerers who built a racial utopia in accordance with the scientific spirit, then the enlightenment tradition looks much more strange and ambiguous, a strangeness that insinuates itself into our own surroundings. Much, in fact, is at stake in this debate.

The Third Reich as Prehistory to the Federal Republic

According to Ralf Dahrendorf and David Schoenbaum, the Nazis accelerated the transformation of Germany into a modern, highly differentiated industrial economy by mobilizing vast resources in pursuit of their political goals. Their aim was not the creation of a liberal republic; yet they fashioned its foundations by mobilizing citizens in an increasingly totalitarian manner, so destroying the basis of traditional authoritarian institutions such as the Prussian state, the military, and the aristocracy; eroding exclusive allegiances to political and cultural subgroups, such as socialists and Catholics; and weakening the hold of parochial structures, such as the family. In a precise turn of phrase, Axel Schildt summarizes Dahrendorf's argument: "Once there had been a '*Volksgenossen*' [people's comrade] there could be no return of the '*Untertan*' [traditional subject]." ⁴ In other words, national mobilization forever foreclosed the authoritarian subject. After twelve years of the Third Reich, including six difficult war years, Germans increasingly interacted as individuals rather than social types, and lived according to the standards of a mobile, achievement-oriented consumer society, rather than by the customs and habits of enclosed social milieus.

Even if, on David Schoenbaum's closer examination, the Nazis did not effectively break down social barriers and class divisions, as Dahrendorf had claimed, the regime profoundly reshaped the way people thought about themselves, and thus anticipated in the realm of attitude and expectation the more consequential transformations of the 1950s. For both Dahrendorf and Schoenbaum, however, modernization during the Third Reich was not a willful project, but an unintended consequence of the drastic mobilization in the name of antimodern, "blood and soil" dreams. The war, more than anything else, uprooted the "nation of provincials," laying the foundations for the much more homogeneous and mobile society of the postwar years. ⁵ This functional reading of twentieth-century change assigns to the Nazis leading roles as modernizers, even though the Nazis themselves, despite the continuities that span the year 1945, have long been seen as complete strangers to the consumer society of the Federal Republic. ⁶

The modernization that earlier scholars had regarded as unintentional, a younger generation of historians now insists was a central component of Nazi ideology. Rainer Zitelmann and Michael Prinz, in particular, have argued that Hitler and the Nazi **[End Page 4]** elite actively sought to fashion a more modern Germany, one that effectively constitutes the prehistory to the Federal Republic by virtue of its social-welfare planning, economic rationalization, and technocratic leadership. Defining modernization in terms of the social mobility and technological capacity of post-1949 Germany, Zitelmann draws a picture of Hitler as a nationally minded reformer whose intentions were very nearly realized. Thanks to the energetic efforts of Robert Ley, who headed the German Labor Front, the vision of "an equal-opportunity, upwardly mobile society purged of the old class and caste differences and encased within the framework of an extensively developed welfare state" was in fact translated into Nazi versions of the Beveridge Report, which were kept under wraps only due to the exigencies of total war. ⁷ Ley's biographer, Ronald Smelser, has more sensibly noted that this "equal-opportunity" society was presupposed only in the name of German imperialism and only for racially acceptable Germans. While Zitelmann and Prinz do not ignore the racial context of these laws, they do treat Nazi social policy as wholly distinct from Nazi racial policy, and as a result their efforts to portray Hitler as a revolutionary modernizer leave out the most radical aspects of National Socialism, namely, racism and anti-Semitism. Moreover, their model of modernization excludes the political attributes--enhanced participation of freethinking individuals in the public sphere--with which it has always been associated. Indeed, Zitelmann deliberately severs social and

economic progress from political liberalism. By rejecting normative approaches, he claims to encourage a more "value-free" discussion of modernization, a process he sees taking place in both totalitarian and liberal regimes. The tag of illiberalism, in other words, should not disqualify a candidate for the title of "modernizer."⁸

The principal problem with Zitelmann's thesis is that it mistakes the means for the ends. Central to Hitler's worldview was the desirability of creating a racial state, and Nazi social policy was designed to advance this goal insofar as it created a healthier, more efficient, and more strictly gendered community of prospective soldiers, workers, and mothers. The wars against the Jews and the Slavs were not, as Zitelmann suggests, the Führer's sideshows to the main effort to make the German people more prosperous, nor were they, as Götz Aly and Susanna Heim argue, the result of postwar planning to modernize and rationalize German capitalism. They were meant to reorder the biological hierarchy of the nation and the continent.⁹ Scholars have also criticized both Zitelmann and Prinz for taking too seriously the relentless initiatives of the German Labor Front and its wartime planning institute, the Arbeitswissenschaftliches Institut (the Ergonomics Institute), which, after all, owe as much to Ley's fantastic ambition as they do to an underlying ideological consensus among Nazi leaders. Yet the argument for intended modernization can be indulged because it rests mainly on intentions, not on results, the test by which Dahrendorf's and, to some extent, Schoenbaum's arguments have to be judged. To claim, therefore, that Nazi Germany remained divided by class or that social welfare provisions were inadequate, as critics do, does not invalidate Zitelmann's central **[End Page 5]** point about the Nazi leadership's conceptualization of itself.

The debate over whether modernization (intended or not) did take place is likely to continue for some time. For the moment, it has reached a stalemate. On the one hand, some clarity has been provided by the careful macrosociological soundings of Jens Alber, who indicates that the Third Reich did not accelerate the long-term trends consistent with modernization (urbanization, expansion of the service sector, percentage of women working) and in some cases counteracted them (working-class access to higher education, professionalization in the civil service, religiously mixed marriages). Alber's argument has been underscored by historians who emphasize the absence of any meaningful social mobility, the prevalence of low wages among blue-collar workers, the largely illusory world of consumption, the deleterious effects of social-Darwinist polycracy, and the regime's hostile and self-destructive attitude toward scientific research. In the end, Alber draws a picture of German society in which the erosion of social life and the tentative nature of national consensus weakened the ability of the regime to mobilize citizens.¹⁰ On the other hand, local studies continue to lend plausibility to the argument in favor of modernization. Rüdiger Hachtmann, for example, maintains that shop-floor rationalization, improved working conditions, and service in the war combined to "deproletarianize" industrial workers. Numerous scholars also take seriously Nazi claims to honor workers, and argue that efforts to integrate them in the national community were not without effect. The German Labor Front, once again, has been credited with improving the status of workers, while analyses of the Hitler Youth or the social-service activities of middle-class women suggest that the regime's social policies enjoyed substantial support. The National Socialists were surprisingly popular insofar as they were identified with a new national mood that emphasized national integration, social reform, and economic prosperity.¹¹

Schoenbaum's distinction between social reality and interpreted social reality is perhaps the best way to make sense of the contradictory evidence. In the years 1933-45, Germans lived in two worlds. Amidst a familiar universe of stable links to family, region, and social milieu, the Nazis constructed a "second world" out of "a network of organizations" in which "the traditional criteria of social worth and social placement had no validity."¹² Schoenbaum, Hans Mommsen, and others dismiss this fascist public sphere as merely "happy illusion" (*schöner Schein*) but it is worth considering just how consequential was the impact of Nazi policies on social identity. To what extent did Germans regard themselves as *Volksgenossen*, as people's comrades? The degree of self-mobilization into the Nazi sphere is impressive: in each of the last years

before the war, over one million volunteers participated in the annual *Winterhilfe* (winter help) charity drive; several million more young people were happily recruited into the Hitler Youth; more than two million workers enrolled in German Labor Front apprenticeship programs; as many as eight million Germans joined local civil-defense leagues; and an astonishing fifty-four million had, by 1938, participated in some sort of *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy) activity.¹³ Wartime service only strengthened the role of National Socialist institutions and the validity of its **[End Page 6]** pitiless worldview in daily life.¹⁴ Germans, without relinquishing established ties to family, workmates, and neighbors, apparently moved relatively easily from one world to the other, adopting as they did the vocabulary of national integration, the messianism of the Führer cult, the terms of constant struggle, and eventually the identities of Aryan overlords vis-à-vis conquered civilians and foreign workers.¹⁵

That the National Socialist world crumbled so quickly in 1945, to the point that the 1949 elections appeared to revive the electoral parochialisms of the Weimar era, surely revealed the limits of the fascist dream world.¹⁶ But given the few years in which the Nazis had to mobilize--Ley's German Labor Front, for example, did not begin its vast reëducation effort until the end of 1934--and the half-life that the collective experiences of National Socialism continued to lead in the 1950s and 1960s, it would be a mistake to assume that this world was superficial because incomplete. In this context, the well-known postwar surveys, in which even lower-income groups readily admitted that Nazism had positive aspects, are worth remembering.¹⁷

If the Nazis were modernizers, it was less on account of their efficacy in destroying traditional social milieus, as Dahrendorf claims, than of their capacity to manufacture an alternative public sphere in which Germans identified themselves increasingly as *Volksgenossen*. At least at certain times and places, they accepted Nazi premises about the equality of opportunity, responded to appeals in the name of the nation, and internalized many of the regime's hideous racial distinctions. There is considerable evidence that this fascist arena "deproletarianized" workers and validated individual achievement and thereby anticipated the consumer society of the 1950s. To confine the discussion of modernization to these terms, however, and so to regard National Socialism as a foundation for the Federal Republic, is to miss completely the first principle of Nazi politics, which was the construction of a racial "utopia" in Europe, not the establishment of a modern welfare state in Germany. Racial and social policy cannot be separated, as if the regime's efforts to eradicate whole peoples were tangential to otherwise beneficial policies on behalf of individuals. Even so, Zitelmann and Prinz have identified a crucial aspect of National Socialism that the historiographical emphasis on Nazi propaganda, Nazi terror, and Nazi genocide has missed: the degree to which the Nazis were committed to renovating German society. Although the Hitler regime cannot be adequately described as merely a German version of Beveridge's England or Roosevelt's America, the Nazis operated in the subjunctive tense, experimenting, reordering, reconstructing, and it is this spirit of renovation that qualifies National Socialism as modern.

Nazis as Modernists

The Nazi project was unabashedly racist. When Hitler's National Socialists came to power in January of 1933, they believed they stood at the very edge of history, poised to redirect the nation to fit the grooves of an envisioned Aryan future. The whole previous itinerary of Germany, in which a liberal sphere had been elaborated, in which **[End Page 7]** public claims had been put forward by political parties and interest groups, and in which various ethnic groups, provincial identities, and religious communities had survived and commingled, was to come to an abrupt halt. From the perspective of the Nazis, the year 1933 marked a sharp break. In place of the quarrels of party, the contests of interest, and the divisions of class that had so heavily compromised the ability of the nation to act, the Nazis proposed to build a unified racial community.

On the one hand, the National Socialists sought to nurture the biological inheritance of Germans by putting in place an elaborate pronatalist social-welfare edifice and refurbishing the work place in a more rational manner. All the busy activity to promote family health, to reward parents with tax allowances, to extend young people technical training, and to provide workers with vacations and other diversions, may at first glance resemble an attractive "New Deal," but in fact was put in place to prepare Germans to assume roles as productive members of the national *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community). The emphasis of social policy was always on the enforcement of discipline in the name of the community, not the provision of opportunity for the individual. On the other hand, this constructive program of national health was accompanied by a stern eugenics administration that sought progressively to weed out alleged biological dangers to the German *Volk*. From the very beginning, the regime applied measures to identify, segregate, and eradicate debilitating or supposedly foreign matter. Mental or physical disabilities, homosexuality, alcoholism, and even promiscuous or "asocial" behavior marked millions of Germans as candidates for surveillance and sterilization. Local health boards eventually cleared the way for the sterilization of at least half a million men and women. At the same time, so-called *artfremd* (alien) groups, particularly Jews but also Gypsies, were progressively banished from German public life. By 1938, the Third Reich was committed to completely eliminating Jews from Germany, a policy that shifted in the war years to the elimination of all Jews in Europe. The ultimate result of racial nurturing and racial weeding was to be a well-regulated *völkisch* society, strong and homogeneous enough to prosper in the dangerous era of world wars. The long-term well-being of the German *Volk* would be ensured by a vast empire in eastern Europe, one that would provide Germans with the space, raw materials, and slave labor necessary to survive the coming planetary struggles. With the massive deportation of Polish villagers from designated German core areas, the arrival of thousands of German colonists to reclaim "ancestral" lands, the conscription of local labor in those efforts, and the concentration, ghettoization, and finally outright murder of Polish Jews, occupied Poland after 1939 was the site where the Nazi utopia was realized to a large degree.

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The broad outlines of this racial order have never been in doubt. For the most part, however, the "Final Solution" has been studied in isolation. As a result, the obsessive anti-Semitism of leading Nazis has emerged as a central motif in the explanation of Germany's twentieth-century barbarism. The racial utopia of the Third Reich appears as a flight from modern history, contemporary but atavistic. Yet when social welfare, genocide, and foreign conquest are regarded as parts of a whole, Nazi **[End Page 8]** racism appears less anachronistically demonic and more connected to contemporary social practices. To see only the provisions the Nazis made to ensure national health and national efficiency or only the terroristic administration of the sterilization, deportation, and mass killing is to miss the central role that the *Volkskörper*, or the "body" of the nation, played in National Socialism. The Nazis were neither mere social-welfare innovators nor simply obsessed racial fanatics; rather, they were committed to an ambitious program of racial reclamation in which they drew liberally on the premises of modern social planning.

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The notion of the *Volkskörper* stands at the intersection where the confidence of experts in the ability of science and technology to solve social problems confronted the growing acknowledgment of the limits to such engineering. By the end of the nineteenth century, advances in epidemiology, in particular, had established a new paradigm of biomedical therapy in which the illnesses of industrial civilization could be identified and cured. As the number of social-welfare and medical professionals grew and the scope of social services expanded, the population became increasingly regulated by distinctions based on value and worth. The establishment of psychiatry, the professionalization of youth and social services, the administration of public health and public hygiene, the rationalization of the workplace, the emphasis on the rehabilitation of criminals, and the propositions of eugenics all suggested ways in which the biological quality of the nation could be improved by techniques of nurturing, selection, and eradication. Seen in this light, the advances of modern science realized the most

cherished assumption of the enlightenment, namely that this worldly existence could be perfected by human design. Indeed, Zygmunt Bauman characterizes modern existence as the articulation of an activist or, as he puts it, the gardener's approach to life. To one degree or another, he argues, the reproduction of social life involves "separating and setting apart useful elements destined to live and thrive, from harmful and morbid ones, which ought to be exterminated." For Bauman, the garden does not stand for paradise. It is a place where the ideals of self-perfection encompass the techniques of extermination, where classical proportion has been exploded by the frenzy of wild flowers and fiendish experiments.²⁰ Bauman regards modernity not as "a civilizing process (Elias), or as a process of the progressive rationalization of all spheres of social life (Weber)," but as a startlingly value-free culmination of routines of cultivation.²¹

Detlev Peukert and the historians who have been influenced by him have advanced arguments similar to Bauman's around the Foucauldian theme of a therapeutic state that invests more and more resources to intervene and ostensibly reform social life. However, Peukert points out that the normative standards by which the interventions of social policy are formulated and justified are not, by themselves, sufficient to account for the murderous regime of National Socialism. Even considering the mounting frustrations of twentieth-century social planners as they bumped up against limits to reform, the persistence of illness and old age, or the intractability of juvenile delinquency, it took the harsh fiscal realities of the Great Depression to disassemble the grand optimism of universal health into various techniques of triage. **[End Page 9]** "In times of crisis," Peukert writes, the *Volkskörper* was defined in increasingly "negative, restrictive terms. The central concern now becomes that of identifying, segregating, and disposing of those individuals who are abnormal or sick" ("GFS," 241).²² For Peukert a lethal combination of racism, abstract criteria of "value" and "nonvalue" in therapeutic practices, and high-technology solutions based on Depression-era cost-benefit analyses indicate that the "Final Solution" was "one among other possible outcomes of the crisis of modern civilization" ("GFS," 236).

What is frustrating about the pathbreaking analyses of both Peukert and Bauman is their insufficient appreciation of the fantastic vision of the National Socialists. The drive to renovate Europe along racial lines cannot be summed up either in the strict, delimiting terms of cost-benefit calculations or simply as one (horrible) version of the western ideal of self-cultivation. On the one hand, Peukert's emphasis on the Great Depression seems to me to be too narrow and, on the other, Bauman's generic vocabulary of improvement too broad a description of the Nazi racial project.

A useful way of thinking about the links between the administration of modern reform and the extraordinary measures of National Socialism is to consider modernism in aesthetic terms. In literary criticism and art history, modernism encompasses new ways of looking that emerged at the turn of the century. The turbulence of metropolitan life pushed individuals onto uncertain pathways, undermined the ability of coherent story lines to narrate the topsy-turvy fullness of sensations and impressions, and put into doubt the practices of mimetic representation. It is this determination of impermanence that has characterized the idea of modernism. Not only was the present increasingly experienced as brand-new, completely different from the confines of even the recent past, but it was itself doomed to be merely transitory. Fashions, fads, and all ideas of the moment were thus typically modern creatures, bursting onto the scene with great energy before falling into disuse, persisting for a while as ruins, then disappearing again. It followed that any attempt to capture the essence of the age had to focus on these occasional features that Baudelaire described as "*le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent.*"²³ To track the merely transitory was to represent the enduring nature of the age.

The epistemological and aesthetic dimensions of modernism signal the discontinuous nature of social experience in the last centuries. Rather than a progressive articulation of power and possibility, civilization records the merely tentative security achieved in the face of inherent dangers. The rise of capitalism, the introduction of industrial technology, the establishment of

central state administration, and the proliferation of military power that Anthony Giddens, for one, associates with the "created environment" of modernity, did not automatically advance the security of Europe.²⁴ The threshold of risk advanced as well. Moreover, an increasingly well-regulated society generated new phobias as the definition and scope of social responsibility expanded. As a result, the practices of discipline that Peukert, Foucault, and many others see coalescing around the regulation of "the social" at the end of the nineteenth century were accompanied by revived premonitions of disaster. The **[End Page 10]** experiments and initiatives that were so confidently proposed were themselves only temporary measures, sure to give way to the fluctuations of time and to more novel and even more strenuous efforts at renovation. In light of the contingency of reform, modern social practices have often been scaled back, but the punctuation of catastrophe has also armed the imagination and emboldened experimentation. Over the last two hundred years, the identification of social debilities has led repeatedly to the creation of new therapeutic regimes. The National Socialists emerge as modernists because they made the acknowledgment of the discontinuity of history the premise of their fantastic political and racial designs. In what follows I want to explore more fully crisis and renovation as characteristics of the modern and of the Nazi modern.

States of Emergency

The mastery over nature, which is the central tenet of modernization, increased the ability of men and women to manipulate the environment, but it also cast the natural world in ever more inimical and dangerous terms. In the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon and the master builders who followed him rewrote the nature they tried to rework, describing floods and storms and, later, emotions in increasingly chaotic and terrifying terms.²⁵ Steadily subduing but also suddenly exposing so many previously unrecognized dangers, the enlightenment appeared self-subverting and suspect from the outset. This ambivalence grew more serious over time because the potential of the industrial revolution revealed both the malleability and the fragility of the world. If nineteenth-century Europeans served the general cause of improvement, surveying wilderness, clearing forests, draining swamps, and digging mines, they also worried about the imminence of revolution, the fragility of the social order, the disease and poverty of the new industrial cities, and the biological degeneration of the modern individual. The insight of the engineer, the recognition of the sheer plasticity of the material world, always carried with it the acknowledgment of the impermanence of all thing--material edifices, market relations, social orders, moral persuasions. Especially after 1848, as the failures of liberal reform became clearer, corrosion came to be regarded as characteristic of industrialism as manufacture. "Social evolution," Ferdinand Tönnies wrote toward the end of the nineteenth century, "takes the form of continual disintegration."²⁶

The desperate dynamism of capitalism and industrialism furnished observers such as Tönnies with multiple visions of chaos and dissolution. However, the fugitive formations he identified did not preclude efforts at stabilization. On the contrary, the recognition of crisis gave nineteenth-century projects of reform their urgency. In the face of cholera epidemics, working-class revolution, and urban poverty, the modern experience added up to a relentless struggle to regulate and renovate civil society. Late nineteenth-century notions of national solidarity dramatized the importance of renovating the social body. Forward-looking statesmen envisioned the nation as a factory in which all hands worked together for the common good. They accordingly **[End Page 11]** propounded ambitious programs of national efficiency, trade protectionism, political enfranchisement, social hygiene, and overseas expansion. Not to take the road to reform was to renounce economic prosperity and risk social disintegration and national decline. Social pathology and social experimentation thus went hand-in-hand. Emile Durkheim, perhaps the most famous diagnostician of the social ills of modern civilization as a result of his work on suicide, compared the statesman to a physician: "He prevents the outbreak of illness by good hygiene, and he seeks to cure them when they have appeared."²⁷

To come to terms with what Peukert has portrayed as the Janus face of modernity--the

techniques of amelioration and the circumstances of degeneration--was to admit both the necessity and the provisional nature of reform.²⁸ For the civil servant or the public health official, as much as for the artist, the enduring aspect of the modern age was instability. Modernism, which has usually been conceived in literary or artistic terms, has remarkable social and political implications. It is the apprehension of the malleable: the dark acknowledgment of the fragility and impermanence of the material world allied with the conviction that relentless reform could steady collapsing structures. In this perspective, modernism breaks with the past, manufactures its own historical traditions, and imagines alternative futures. Indeed, by being reflexive and making instability the explicit premise for its practice, modernism is hospitable not only to anarchic individualism but also to authoritarian designs.²⁹ In my view, it is the premises rather than the attributes of modern projects that need to be examined more closely. What makes the twentieth century so promiscuous is not the content of the identities people have fashioned or the designs they have erected, but the presumption that contingency abounds and has to be managed, that chaos is about to take over and has to be negotiated. Again and again, modernists staged history as a boundary situation. The most spectacular displays of modernism are not to be found in a museum of expressionist art or a collection of prose poetry, but in the avant-garde political collaborations that sought to come to terms with a brand-new world regarded as unstable and dangerous. With every step, the political adventurer as much as the modernist poet or painter revealed ground that was tremulous, breaking apart, unclear. Liberal certainties that proposed to reveal the coherence of the world appeared completely inadequate. But whereas the latter made manifest the disenchantment that had been revealed, the former proposed more fearsome designs to overcome it.³⁰

The social experimentation of the nineteenth century was only a preamble to the hyperimaginative technologies of the twentieth. World War I, in particular, strengthened immeasurably the links between jeopardy and renovation. Leaving behind a landscape of ruins, it prepared the future as a vast site for experimentation. Although World War I is generally described in terms of immobility--four long years of irresolution, the war of attrition in the trenches, the scarcities on the home front--it cannot be fully understood without taking account of its astonishing mobility: not simply the battles beneath the ocean and above the ground, not just the dramatic movements on the eastern front in 1917 and 1918, but the extraordinary mobilization of **[End Page 12]** industry, the dramatic rearrangements of the domestic balance of power, the carefully choreographed production of civilian morale, and, mostly, the disruption of millions of private lives. Again and again, witnesses recounted how the war and its rebellious aftermath were experienced in terms of extreme discontinuity. Literary accounts of the war, argues Samuel Hynes, were overwhelmingly "descriptive rather than narrative: like the war itself they do not move in any direction."³¹

If any single event overturned accepted assumptions about the steady, accumulating course of history it was the Russian Revolution in 1917. In the two years that followed, revolutions broke out in Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest, and militant strikes pulled the shadow of revolution across the rest of Europe. At the same time, the influenza epidemic killed off more people than the ten million the war had and invited comparisons to the Plague. War, revolution, and plague all raised apocalyptic expectations about the end of time. So startling were the rapid-fire events of the years 1914-19 that the remembered past had little to offer in the way of guidance. History had truly become a delinquent. Derailed by war and revolution, it no longer seemed to run along the straight and predictable railway tracks of the nineteenth century. One historian took stock of the postwar years when he prefaced his 1934 *History of Europe*: "Men wiser and more learned than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave."³² Military defeat, the end of the monarchy, and the unsteady political and economic fortunes of the Weimar Republic gave this general sense of disorientation a particularly sharp edge in Germany.

However, the German experience of the present as catastrophic and of even the recent past as irretrievable was not simply the premise for nostalgia. In the years after the war, the aesthetic categories of modernism--shock, disruption, discontinuity, and transience--profoundly shaped the way intellectuals, artists, scientists, and politicians regarded time and approached the future. A remarkable consensus characterized Weimar culture: the twentieth century had invalidated the governing lines of development that had held until 1914; World War I, in particular, marked a major break, but did so not simply by destroying a familiar world, but by undermining conditions of stability altogether. Harsh economics, nearly continuous ideological warfare, and a pervasive culture of cynicism contributed to a postwar state of emergency that not only exerted a powerful aesthetic appeal by generating image after image of extreme "boundary" situations, but provided the necessary qualifications for unprecedented experimentation in postliberal design. Catastrophic thinking appeared to reopen the possibilities of history that the "routinized, bourgeois conduct of political life" had previously foreclosed.³³ The rough politics of the post-1918 years--the technocratic impulses of organized capitalism, the rise of fascism, the insurgency of communism, and the killing ground of Auschwitz--rested on the dizzying assumption that history was malleable and could be reworked and reshaped in hitherto unimagined ways. Again and again, German thinkers on the Left and the Right linked emergency with renewal, tradition and convention with decadence.

[End Page 13]

What made post-1918 Germany so classically modern was the central role that catastrophe played in its cultural apprehensions and political perspectives. Germany was the "modernist nation par excellence of our century," writes Modris Eksteins in his important book, *The Rites of Spring*, because it was "starkly future-oriented." A flight forward would resolve the anxieties of the present. Even the war was fought to change rather than preserve the world.³⁴ Three aspects of this apocalyptic vision stand out: the conviction that the grand narrative of "History" as it had developed over the course of the nineteenth century had been invalidated; the belief that these circumstances had been clarified by the extreme instability of private autobiographies and public institutions, particularly in the war; and the notion that this development and its recognition now permitted the wholesale renovation of the body of the nation. Characteristic postwar images of crippled veterans, unemployment lines, tumbledown metropolitan facades, and marauding armies all testified to the impermanence of the material world, but also to the tractability of its reconstruction. In other words, Germany stood outside "History," exposed to the anarchy of national and international politics, but also poised to reinvent itself. The future had never appeared so dangerous or so open-ended as when viewed from among the ruins of the postwar years.

The prevalent feeling of discontinuity sustained a reckless politics manufactured to meet the challenges and opportunities that crisis seemed to imply. The formulation of Moeller van den Bruck, a conservative critic who was posthumously adopted by the Nazis, is apt. He repeatedly referred to the "*Revolutionsgewinn*," the revolutionary yield, of the year 1918.³⁵ Catastrophe had given the Germans the latitude to gamble. After their capitulation on the western front and their humiliation at Versailles, the Germans had become a "*Gefahrvolk*," a people of danger, better able to prosper in conditions of extreme danger than a "tired, matured" France or England, nations whose opportunities and revolutions had long since passed.³⁶ Here was the modernist subject par excellence.

Much of the political and cultural thought of the postwar years revolved around tooling techniques of mobility by which Germany could reinvent history. The long-range bombers, high-powered lasers, and other military technologies that patriotic pulp-fiction writers invented to revise the Versailles settlement were only the most fantastic features of the wholly "altered world" (*veränderte Welt*) that Ernst Jünger and others claimed modern-day technology had in fact fashioned. Technology introduced new levels of danger, wrecking the once unassailable certainties of the bourgeois epoch, but also equipping a new generation of uniformed and disciplined machine-men with unrivalled power. Danger and energy were the two sides of the

twentieth-century manufacturing process that had literally stamped the planet with an unmistakable geometry.³⁷ It is no surprise that America, as the most technologically marvelous nation, fascinated Weimar Germany, not only because it offered such an authoritative version of the created environment, but because its exuberant liberation from tradition corresponded most closely to Germany's calamities in the [End Page 14] 1920s.³⁸ In much the same spirit, *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) architects and Bauhaus designers envisioned thoroughly functionalized spaces in place of the "chaos" of the marketplace and big cities. The alternative to revolution, as the influential Le Corbusier put it, was architecture, the "regulating line" of the plan.³⁹ In other fields of study, geographers and geopoliticians redrew a "heroic earth" in which previously unrecognized features promised Germany dynamic political opportunities.⁴⁰ For their part, biomedical professionals continued to operate with broad Lamarckian assumptions, drawing attention to the deleterious consequences of mismanaged reproduction but, at the same time, looking forward to the possibilities of cultivating a superior *Volkskörper*.⁴¹ Weimar culture added up to an industrious invention of the future.

The stress in all these visions was on the authoritative management of contingency: architecture promised a regulative geometry, geopolitics essential capacities, and biology genetic destiny. On the Left and on the Right, thinkers such as Ernst Bloch and Carl Schmitt groped for a new totality.⁴² Nonetheless, the very premise on which these new social compacts were built introduced new dangers. The very delinquency of history had authorized the redemptive utopias of the machine-builders, architects, and eugenicists, but eventually it also withheld the crucial element of stability each sought. On the imaginary horizon, new technologies emerged to imperil the social order, emboldened enemies continued to mobilize along Germany's borders, the *Volk* remained vulnerable to inherited pathologies. In this state of permanent emergency, renovation was a state of mind, a process rather than a destination.

Renovation was the hallmark of National Socialism as well. The Nazis approached the twentieth century as a dangerous, unstable terrain that required relentless mobilization but also offered the Germans prospects for grandeur. This approach was obviously self-serving since the Third Reich used one emergency after the other to consolidate power. The extraordinary exertions it demanded, especially during the war, released the enormous social energy fueling the regime. To forego mobilization was to risk reviving the divisive quarrels of civil society and thus eroding the Führer's legitimacy. But the catastrophe of global war and the apocalyptic struggle the Nazis waged against Jews and other racial "enemies" were much more than ruses. Central to the Nazi worldview was the conviction that Germany was extremely vulnerable to biological deterioration. "He who leaves the plants in a garden to themselves," warned Walther Darré, the future Nazi Minister of Agriculture, "will soon find to his surprise that the garden is overgrown by weeds." As a result, "questions of breeding" and social modeling in general had to be "at the center of all considerations."⁴³ Unless the national destiny was forcefully managed, the parasitical influence of Jews and the disintegrative effects of democracy would proliferate.

These emergency conditions of jeopardy created the conditions for renovation, however. If Germany embarked on far-reaching racial mobilization, it would be in a position to dominate the European continent. History was no guide, since the leaders of both Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany had failed to fashion an embracing [End Page 15] *Volksgemeinschaft* or introduce necessary social and hygienic reforms. Again and again, the insinuation of the extraordinary dangers of the present, the fabulous prospects for the future, and the ceaseless necessity for struggle developed a basically nonlinear view of history. What scholars have long recognized as apocalyptic features in the National Socialist worldview, which invalidated the predictable "story line" of historical development since 1789 and postulated the commencement of "new time," rested on a thoroughly modernist sensitivity to the discontinuous punctuation of crisis and opportunity.⁴⁴ Although the Nazis referred frequently to eternal laws of history, they did so mainly to undermine the historical legitimacy of the Weimar Republic. It is highly significant that once in power the Nazis did not attempt to restore or

preserve an authentic Germany. Instead, they sought to recast the nation in the newly fashioned mold of a high-performance racial society that encouraged social mobility in the name of national discipline.

Not only the "blood and soil" vision of the Third Reich but also the anti-intellectual premises of the regime have been overstated. In the sciences, for example, technocratic impulses came to prevail. The so-called Aryan sciences were pushed to the margins as engineers, architects, and scientists mobilized to take advantage of the Nazis' "aggressive cult of feasibility." University research institutes, corporate laboratories, and military planners collaborated to fashion quite achievable "big science" projects. The unmistakable victory of the technocrats in the late 1930s underscored the spirit of renovation that prized improvisation, application, and practicality in difficult situations. Technocratic ideas thrived in this twilight zone of danger and possibility, the effects of which were only heightened by the conscripted labor, barbed wire, and utmost secrecy at sites like the Peenemünde missile complex.⁴⁵ The struggle to renovate and arm the national *Volkskörper* was in no way incompatible with the spirit of modernism or the technocratic practice of scientists. Michael Burleigh's and Wolfgang Wippermann's insistence that modernism cannot possibly be racist is entirely unconvincing.⁴⁶

To be sure, there was a long *völkisch* pedigree to Nazi racism. The rise of biological anti-Semitism at the end of the nineteenth century, the eugenic utopias of Alfred Ploetz, Willibald Hentschel, and Walther Darré, and Germany's long-standing imperial ambitions in eastern Europe indicate that the Nazis were not original thinkers. Nonetheless, the project of racial construction they pursued had few precedents. In the name of racial hygiene, the Third Reich segregated Germans into categories based on "worth" and "value," embarked on far-reaching eugenics programs to "weed out" undesirables, and made provisions for a social-welfare administration to nurture and improve the health of the majority. Moreover, the Nazis mobilized in the name of a distant "Thousand-Year Reich," the foundations for which required relentless reform. In their view, struggle did not eliminate, but only contained the marauding movements of history, so that Germans had to prepare vigilantly for war as much as they had to cultivate their genes. At every step, successful conquest provided the precondition for further mobilization. In the *Generalplan Ost* (the General Plan for the East), for example, occupied Poland and parts of the Soviet Union became the vast **[End Page 16]** site of an envisaged *Neureich*, a modern empire planned according to exact demographic, economic, and urban requirements in order to renovate the *Altreich*, pre-1938 Germany.⁴⁷ The destruction of one half of European Jewry is stark testimony to the degree to which visions of a Germanic *Neureich* were implemented.

The Nazis saw the world as a totally mobilized, pitiless landscape. The catastrophes of recent history had wrecked the edifices of the liberal age and exposed Germany to the predations of the Allies, the insurgency of the Bolsheviks, and, most dangerous of all, the prospect of biological deterioration. At the same time, however, the Nazis presupposed the ability to renovate the world. Grand imperial designs and well-ordered racial hierarchies would lay the foundations for previously unimagined German prosperity. The surprising contingencies of history had configured both the unpredictable terrain of danger and the very tractable zone of design. The features of modernism described both places. Defining itself in the machine-age terms of crisis and renovation, National Socialism constructed a totalitarian version of the modern. The Third Reich is, as Zygmunt Bauman concluded of the Holocaust, "a rare, yet significant and reliable, test of the hidden possibilities of modern society."⁴⁸ There is perhaps no artifact of the "Nazi Modern" better suited for inclusion in the museum of the twentieth century than the gas mask, a tool that acknowledges the extreme jeopardy of the moment, but holds out the possibility of survival as long as the wearer enrolls in a stern regimen of uniformity and discipline, ready for relentless onslaughts and murderous counterattacks.⁴⁹ In the end, as we know, the regime self-destructed. The total mobilization Nazism envisaged is no longer a credible response to the perils and possibilities of the twentieth century. Hopefully, we live more easily with indeterminacy and understand more clearly the costs of managing

contingency. Nonetheless, the complicity of Nazism in the premises of modernism is haunting.

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nostalgia.

Notes

All translations into English, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

[1.](#) This is drawn from Marshall Berman, who defines "modernism as any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it" (Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982], 5). But, in my view, the circumstances of danger and the possibly illiberal outcomes of these efforts are not sufficiently emphasized by Berman. For a better sense of the range of modernisms, see Russell Berman, *The Rise of the Modern German Novel: Crisis and Charisma* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986); Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980); Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989); and Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989). The different ways the past can be reassembled is the subject of Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994).

[2.](#) See my argument in "Where Did All the Nazis Go? Reflections on Collaboration and Resistance," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 23 (1994): 191-214. The best surveys of public opinion in the Third Reich are Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and Ian Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth." Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[3.](#) See Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York: Doubleday, 1967); and David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (New York: Doubleday, 1966).

[4.](#) The original reads: "Die Rückkehr des 'Untertans' war nicht mehr möglich, nachdem es einen 'Volksgenossen' gegeben hatte" (Axel Schildt, "NS-Regime, Modernisierung und Moderne. Anmerkungen zur Hochkonjunktur einer andauernden Diskussion," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 23 [1994]: 6).

[5.](#) See Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[6.](#) See Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*; and Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution*.

[7.](#) Ronald Smelser, *Robert Ley: Hitler's Labor Front Leader* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 305. See also Rainer Zitelmann, *Hitler: Selbstverständnis eines Revolutionärs* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986); and *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, ed. Rainer Zitelmann and Michael Prinz (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991).

8. See Zitelmann, "Die totalitäre Seite der Moderne," in Zitelmann and Prinz, *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, 2-4. The normative approach is acknowledged and defended in Horst Matzerath and Heinrich Volkmann, "Modernisierungstheorie und Nationalsozialismus," in *Theorien in der Praxis des Historikers. Forschungsbeispiele und ihre Diskussion*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1977), 86-106.
9. See Götz Aly and Susanna Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung. Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1991); Dan Diner, "Rationalisierung und Methode. Zu einem neuen Erklärungsversuch der 'Endlösung,'" *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 40 (July 1992): 359-82; and *Vernichtungspolitik: Eine Debatte über den Zusammenhang von Sozialpolitik und Genozid im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, ed. Wolfgang Schneider (Berlin: Junius, 1991).
10. See Jens Alber, "Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 41 (June 1989): 346-65. See also Günter Könke, "'Modernisierungsschub' oder relative Stagnation? Einige Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis von Nationalsozialismus und Moderne," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 20 (October-December 1994): 584-608; Schildt, "NS-Regime, Modernisierung und Moderne"; and Hans Mommsen, "Nationalsozialismus als vorgetäuschte Modernisierung," in *Der historische Ort des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Walter H. Pehle (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1990), 31-46.
11. See Rüdiger Hachtmann, "Thesen zur 'Modernisierung' der Industriearbeit in Deutschland 1924 bis 1944," in *Norddeutschland im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Frank Bajohr (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1993), 414-51; and John Gillingham, "The 'Deproletarianization' of German Society: Vocational Training in the Third Reich," *Journal of Social History* 19 (spring 1986): 423-32. The popularity of the regime among workers is discussed in Gunther Mai, "Arbeiterschaft zwischen Sozialismus, Nationalismus und Nationalsozialismus," in *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit: Impulse zur Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Uwe Backes, Eckhard Jesse, and Rainer Zitelmann (Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1990), 195-217; Ulrich Herbert, "Arbeiterschaft im 'Dritten Reich.' Zwischenbilanz und offene Fragen," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 15 (July-September 1989): 320-60; and Alf Lüdtke, "'Ehre der Arbeit': Industriearbeiter und Macht der Symbole. Zur Reichweite symbolischer Orientierungen im Nationalsozialismus," in *Arbeiter im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Klaus Tenfelde (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), 343-92. See also Arno Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf: Dietrichs, 1982); Herwart Vorländer, *Die NSV: Darstellung und Dokumentation einer nationalsozialistischen Organisation* (Boppard: Boldt, 1988); Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987); and my "Where Did All the Nazis Go?"
12. The original reads: "Den Nationalsozialisten gelang es, neben der weitgehend stabil gebliebenen überkommenen Sozialordnung eine 'zweite Welt' mit einem Netzwerk von Organisationen zu errichten, in der die traditionellen Kriterien sozialer Geltung und Platzierung keine Gültigkeit hatten" (Alber, "Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung," 348). Alber develops this point, which remains undeveloped in Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution*, 283-88.
13. See Smelser, *Robert Ley*, 191-216; and Vorländer, *Die NSV*.
14. See Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
15. See Smelser, *Robert Ley*, 302-303; Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth"*; Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 125-55; and Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, esp. 144-78.
16. See Jürgen Falter, "Kontinuität und Neubeginn. Die Bundestagswahl 1949 zwischen

Weimar und Bonn," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 22 (September 1981): 236-63.

[17.](#) See Saul Friedländer, *Reflections on Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, trans. Thomas Weyr (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Mai, "Arbeiterschaft zwischen Sozialismus, Nationalismus und Nationalsozialismus," 209, 212; and Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 7-8, 112-13.

[18.](#) See Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986); Hans Mommsen, "The Realization of the Unthinkable: The 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' in the Third Reich," in *The Policies of Genocide*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986); and the recent overview by Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[19.](#) See Detlev J. K. Peukert, "The Genesis of the 'Final Solution' from the Spirit of Science," in *Reevaluating the Third Reich*, ed. Thomas Childers and Jane Caplan (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1993), 234-52; hereafter abbreviated "GFS."

[20.](#) See Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 70.

[21.](#) See Moishe Postone, review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by Zygmunt Bauman, *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (March 1992): 1521-23.

[22.](#) See also Elizabeth Harvey, *Youth and The Welfare State in Weimar Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Cornelia Osborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); and Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[23.](#) Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in his *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. J. Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), 13. See also Michael W. Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), 18.

[24.](#) See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 55-60.

[25.](#) See Carol Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980); and Rolf Peter Sieferle, *Die Krise der menschlichen Natur: Zur Geschichte eines Konzepts* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989), 14-34.

[26.](#) The original reads: "l'évolution sociale prend la forme d'une désagrégation spontanée" (quoted in David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985], 46).

[27.](#) Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895); quoted in Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 169.

[28.](#) See Detlev J. K. Peukert, "Das Janusgesicht der Moderne," in his *Max Webers Diagnose der Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1989), 55-69.

[29.](#) On the reflexivity of modernism, see Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, 38-45.

[30.](#) The importance of ambivalence and ambiguity has been stressed by Zygmunt Bauman, although he sees the elimination of ambivalence rather than its acknowledgment as typically modern (see Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* [Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991]). Several excellent cultural histories explore the ways in which modernists question the epistemological status of vision, demystify "common sense," and seek to problematize perception, but hardly appreciate how this postliberal survey might rearm the political imagination. See, for example, Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986); and Andreas Huyssen, "Fortifying the Heart--Totally: Ernst Jünger's Armored Texts," *New German Critique* 59 (spring-summer 1993): 3-23.

[31.](#) Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (New York: Atheneum, 1991), 115-16. See also *Kriegserlebnis: Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen*, ed. Klaus Vondung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1980); and Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1-72.

[32.](#) H. A. L. Fisher, quoted in Modris Eksteins, "History and Degeneration: Of Birds and Cages," in *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*, ed. J. Edward Chamberlin and Sander L. Gilman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 21.

[33.](#) From Richard Wolin, "Carl Schmitt, the Conservative Revolutionary: Habitus and the Aesthetics of Horror," *Political Theory* 20 (August 1992): 432. See also Karl-Heinz Bohrer, *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens. Die pessimistische Romantik und Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk* (Munich: Beck, 1978); Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Peter Sloterdijk, *The Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); and my "Landscape of Danger, Landscape of Design: Crisis and Modernism in Weimar Germany," in *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, ed. Thomas W. Knieche and Stephen Brochmann (Columbia, S. C.: Camden House, 1994), 29-46.

[34.](#) See Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, xvi, 73, 119.

[35.](#) Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, "Wir wollen die Revolution gewinnen," *Gewissen*, 31 March 1920, 1.

[36.](#) See Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, *Germany's Third Empire*, trans. E. O. Lorimer (1922; London: Allen and Unwin, 1934), 17; and Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, "Die Ideen der Jungen in der Politik," *Der Tag*, 26 July 1919, 1.

[37.](#) See Peter S. Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). Ernst Jünger's key text is *Der Arbeiter* (Hamburg: Hanseatischen Verlags-Anstalt, 1932), but also see the scrapbooks that document Jünger's conception of the "second nature" of the twentieth century in *Der gefährliche Augenblick: Eine Sammlung von Bildern und Berichten*, ed. Ferdinand Bucholtz (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1931); and *Die veränderte Welt: Eine Bilderfibel unserer Zeit*, ed. Edmund Schultz and Ernst Jünger (Breslau: Korn, 1933). The discussions by Matthew Biro, "The New Man as Cyborg: Figures of Technology in Weimar Visual Culture," *New German Critique* 62 (spring-summer 1994); and Walter H. Sokel, "The 'Postmodernism' of Ernst Jünger in his Proto-Fascist Stage," *New German Critique* 59 (spring-summer 1993): 33-40, are also valuable. *New German Critique* 59 (spring-summer 1993) is entirely devoted to Jünger.

[38.](#) See Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of*

Germany (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[39.](#) See Adelheid von Saldern, "'Statt Kathedralen die Wohnmaschine.' Paradoxien der Rationalisierung im Kontext der Moderne," in *Zivilisation und Barbarei: Die widersprüchlichen Potentiale der Moderne*, ed. Frank Bajohr et al. (Hamburg: Christians, 1991), 168-92; Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London: Rodker, 1931); and Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977), 163-263.

[40.](#) See David Murphy, "The Heroic Earth: The Flowering of Geopolitical Thought in Weimar Germany," (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1992); and Ewald Banse, *Expressionismus und Geographie* (Braunschweig, 1920).

[41.](#) See Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*; and Osborne, *Politics of the Body*.

[42.](#) See Wolfgang Essbach, "Radikalismus und Modernität bei Jünger und Bloch, Lukács und Schmitt," and Michael Makropoulos, "Haltlose Souveränität. Benjamin, Schmitt und die klassische Moderne in Deutschland," in *Intellektuellendiskurse in der Weimarer Republik: Zur politischen Kultur einer Gemengelage*, ed. Manfred Gangl and Gerard Raulet (Frankfurt: Campus, 1994), 145-59, 197-211. See also Norbert Bolz, *Auszug aus der entzauberten Welt: Philosophischer Extremismus zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Munich: Fink, 1989); and Norbert Bolz, "Charisma und Souveränität," in *Der Fürst dieser Welt. Carl Schmitt und die Folgen*, ed. Jacob Taubes (Munich: Fink, 1985), 249-62.

[43.](#) Walther Darré, "Marriage Laws and the Principles of Breeding," in *Nazi Ideology before 1933*, ed. Barbara Miller Lane and Leila J. Rupp (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 115; cited in Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 27.

[44.](#) See, for example, James M. Rhodes, *The Hitler Movement: A Modern Millenarian Revolution* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1980).

[45.](#) See, for example, *Science, Technology and National Socialism*, ed. Monika Renneberg and Mark Walker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, "'Keinerlei Untergang': German Armaments Engineers during the Second World War and in the Service of the Victorious Powers," 30-50, and Michael J. Neufeld, "The Guided Missile and the Third Reich: Peenemünde and the Forging of a Technological Revolution," 51-71.

[46.](#) See the prefatory remarks to Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*.

[47.](#) See "Der Generalplan Ost," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 6 (July 1958): 281-325; Czeslaw Madajczyk, *Die Okkupationspolitik Nazideutschlands in Polen, 1939-1945* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1988); Aly and Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung*; and *Der "Generalplan Ost": Hauptlinien der nationalsozialistischen Planungs- und Vernichtungspolitik*, ed. Mechtild Rössler and Sabine Schleiermacher (Berlin: Akademie, 1993).

[48.](#) Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 12.

[49.](#) See my "Machine Dreams: Airmindedness and the Reinvention of Germany," *The American Historical Review* 98 (June 1993): 685-709.