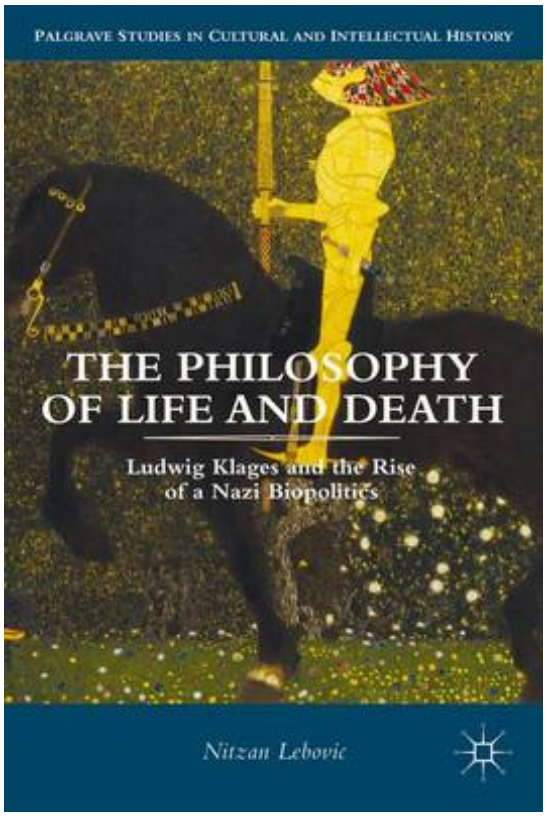
The Philosophy of Life and Death

Ludwig Klages and the Rise of a Nazi Biopolitics

Nitzan Lebovic



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Preface

This book would not have been possible without the help of a few dear friends, colleagues, and my close family. Their encouragement and support also gave me, the grandson of Jewish refugees from central Europe, the courage to research the origins of much of the Nazi rhetoric without adopting a series of assumptions about how this rhetoric took hold and advanced.

The key to this book is a plea for openness, especially about topics we find abhorrent or would prefer to keep hidden. For decades, Walter Benjamin's interest in reactionaries such as Ludwig Klages and lifephilosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*) caused even Benjamin's closest friends to doubt his political judgment and philosophical reason. It is only in the last two decades that an independent and a somewhat marginal philosophy, leading from Michel Foucault to Giorgio Agamben, made an attempt to step outside the normative, linear history of ideas that divided the world into pro-Nazis and anti-Nazis, reactionaries and progressives, and enabled a richer and more sophisticated look at the unintentional shift that spurred this process.

The philosophical interest in radical and reactionary movements such as *Lebensphilosophie* followed a broader historical research of this movement, mostly affiliating it with Nazi ideology. This book represents another attempt to bring the philosophical and the historical worlds together, on their own terms, and in the service of all past, present, and future introspection. During the many months of research for this book I discovered documents—letters, manuscripts, pamphlets—that were never published or even read before. Many of them are quoted here. I owe the kindness and warmth of Thomas Kemme, at the Klages Nachlass, a great debt. He and his colleagues at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach supplied me with material and advice that were badly needed for a young scholar who was taking his first steps into an unfamiliar world. Dr. Ulrich von Bulow and Prof. Dr. Heinrich Raulff, the general archivist and the director of the archive, enabled the use of many historical documents and gave me the authorization to quote from many of them, for the first time. A few families gave me a similar authorization to quote from private letters. I would like to thank Erika Seesemann who opened her father's archive for me, herself reading those letters for the first time, one table behind me. I am grateful also to Peter and Sigrid Deussen, Christa Gauss, and Ulrich Bode for the permission to quote from their family's archives. I found their commitment to historical factuality and fairness very touching and honest, even where it shed some problematic light on the history of their families. Those private archives testify to the great importance of Lebensphilosophie to the lives of many thinkers, writers, politicians, and artists in Germany, since the early 1900s and

up to the present. The permission to quote freely from those archives allowed me to shape a well-balanced narrative. Nevertheless, as the archive requires, I should state that in spite of all the trouble I have taken to locate the owners of rights, I might have an owner who was not listed anywhere. If so, I alone am responsible for whatever use has been done with the material according to the customary law of fair use and copy rights.

The good advice of my advisers at UCLA—Saul Friedlander, David Myers, Peter Reill, Andrew Hewitt, and Samuel Weber—encouraged me to develop this freedom of opinion and intellectual sophistication. The remarkable generosity of Anson Rabinbach helped me greatly along the way and assisted me in giving this manuscript its final shape. This group of scholars, first and foremost my two advisors, taught me not only the secrets of academic life and erudite study, but also the personal ethics of caring as a teacher and an open, boundless love of ideas. I was lucky enough to get the advice of some of the leading scholars in contemporary intellectual history; I greatly profited from the introspective comments I received from John McCole, Benjamin Lazier, Samuel Moyn, and Ethan Kleinberg, and the anonymous reviewers of this manuscript. Good friends such as Zvi Ben-Dor, Avner Ben-Zaken, Hillel Eyal, Igal Halfin, Shaul Katzir, Thomas Meyer, Ofer Nur, Glili Shahar, and Eugene Sheppard accompanied the process of writing this book with a good word during hard times. My colleagues and friends at Lehigh University—Edurne Portela, John Savage, and Laurence Silberstein—read parts of this manuscript and encouraged me to complete its revision. Stephen Cutcliffe and my colleagues at the history department at Lehigh University supported me with the means and time to complete the task. Sam Gilbert helped me with this text at different stages along the way and invested much time in improving its style. His friendship and advice became so dear to me that I could not imagine myself writing this book without him. Joanne Hindman helped me in the final stages of preparation and was efficient and smart in correcting and refining the text.

Finally, this book owes its very existence to my parents, Raphael, Ilana, and Chava. It owes its soul to my loving wife, Avigail, and my two children, Asaf and Yael. Parts of the book were written when my loving and supporting parents-in-law were dying of terminal cancer, and my family was going through a hard time. It is with the irrevocable memory of the past and with the endless hope for and love of the future that such projects come to be. Seeing my family coping with our new situation was an important life lesson.

Finally, it is with the painful memory of my grandmother, Gertrud Lebovic nee Fleischer, who died shortly after I finished my dissertation, that I end this preface. The sole survivor of a family murdered by the Nazis, but quoting Schiller to her very last days, she taught me a lesson about endless kindness and open-mindedness that I vowed to emulate.

Introduction: Where It All Began

This book started from an intense reading in the work of Walter Benjamin and the interest I took in one recurring reference in his writings—the texts of the anti-Semite Ludwig Klages (1872-1956). Behind this relatively unknown figure (to twenty-first-century readers), I found a whole network of references to a philosophical movement known at the time as the philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*), and I discovered that Klages was one of its outspoken representatives. This turn-of-the-century movement bloomed during the 1920s and was later integrated into the Nazi rhetoric as biopolitics. Biopolitics will be understood here in the most general sense, characterized by Roberto Esposito as that in which "life becomes encamped in the center of every political procedure,"[1] a definition closest to the Nazi use of the concept in 1932. As a Nazi discourse, it disappeared after the Second World War, to be revived in the past ten years in a very different cloth. This book traces the origins of this discourse of life, its politicization, Nazification, and later transformation. In so doing, I make a plea of relevance to everyone interested in the rise of Nazi biopolitics, but more than that, to everyone interested in the radical *critique* of biopolitics, as shown in Walter Benjamin's writings and by recent critics of democracy from the left—for example, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri—who adapted Benjamin's reflections to our present-day reality. In this book, I call for historians of anti-Semitism to pay attention to the aesthetic theories that lie at the core of right-wing politics, and I ask left-wing critics to take more seriously the right-wing critique of Enlightenment dogmatism. The aim of this book, in other words, is to explain and rehistoricize the 1920s' "Weimar syndrome" or "Weimar-complex" still so prevalent in our culture and political thinking.[2] Much of our contemporary thinking about democracy and totalitarianism still owes its framework of conceptualization to this period of revolutionary thinking, on both ends of the political spectrum.

I started following the surprising relationship between Benjamin and Klages shortly after the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, when the growing popularity

[1] Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 15.

[2] For recent, post-1945 research on the Weimar syndrome, see Dirk Moses, "The Weimar Syndrome in the Federal Republic of Germany: Carl Schmitt and the Forty-Fiver Generation of Intellectuals," in Holer Zaborowski and Stephan Loos, eds., *Leben, Tod und Entscheidung: Studien zur Geistesgeschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2003), pp. 187-207. For the Weimar complex, see Sebastian Ullrich, *Der Weimar-Komplex: Das Scheitern der ersten deutschen Demokratie und die politische Kultur der fruhen Bundesrepublik 1945-1959* (Gottingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009).

of the antiglobalization movement, the failure of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and the deep disappointment over any form of American involvement in the Middle East—on either side of the political map—heightened a need for new solutions. A sense of urgency pushed both conservative and progressive critics to pursue unconventional political philosophies in order to justify either a more aggressive policy of intervention or a critical politics of suspicion of intervention or the interests that motivate it. The most apparent outcome, in these terms, was a new critical philosophy that attacked both ends of the political spectrum, and—much as the German radicals did in the 1920s—distanced itself from all forms of conventional politics. Best known among a few—now famous—figures, was Giorgio Agamben, the editor of Walter Benjamin's oeuvre in Italian. It is hard to miss the consistent tribute given in Agamben's work to German intellectuals of the 1920s and more specifically to those who transcended the usual political lines. Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Hannah Arendt are known to readers of European history or culture. Add to that list Jacob von Uexkull, Kurt Goldstein, Stefan George, Ludwig Klages, Ernst Cassirer, Gershom Scholem, and Martin Buber to identify just a few of those intellectuals of the 1920s who star in the writings of biopolitical critics a century later. German Jews and German Aryans, liberals and conservatives, anti-Semites and Semites, men and women were writing about contemporary politics embedded in a deep sense of crisis and were searching for radical alternatives to it. More than that, they all suspected that conventional parliamentary politics could not handle well the explosion of revolutionary energy. All of them lived through the First World War spectacle of damaged and eviscerated bodies, predominant in the broken art (and heart) of the European 1920s. All identified it as the uninviting opening to a different, bloody period. All of them wrote obsessively about life as a central political concept flung as a critical weapon against liberal utilitarianism, technological innovation, economic growth, legal norms, and a failed democratic praxis. From a political perspective, the cluster of life concepts (life form, life force, living experience, life stream) served radicals on both the left and the right, and they both used this cluster to radicalize their own camp.

This book is not the first to point out the curious revival of the biopolitical philosophy of the German 1920s at the heart of contemporary political philosophy. In fact, biopolitical philosophers marked it out themselves, usually without historicizing their interest. The biopolitical obsession with life, as Roberto Esposito shows, "is organistic, anthropologist, and naturalist . . . Here what is spoken about," he continues, "is not any state but the German state, with its peculiar characteristics and vital demands."[3] In a rare moment of historical reflection for this theory, Esposito shows in three chronological steps that the timing moved from the German 1920s to the French 1960s and finally to the contemporary "Anglo-Saxon world,"[4] which is "still ongoing."[5] Esposito,

[3] Esposito, *Bios*, pp. 16-17.
[4] Ibid., p. 19.
[5] Ibid., p. 21.

like Agamben and other biopolitical critics, identifies figures such as Jacob von Uexkull, Ludwig Klages, Rudolf Kjellen, Georg Simmel, and Henri Bergson as *Lebensphilosophers* of the early 1900s. But again, like others—including Michel Foucault—Esposito neglects to identify the shared basis for this movement. Even the partial awareness of the importance of Germany in the 1920s is usually described as an appealing call for radical thinking. Little if any attention is given to the shared discursive grounds that are so common to the individuals on both ends of the political map.

The first major task of this book, then, is to do exactly that: identify and describe the discourse of life, a "jargon of life" as some called it during the 1920s. Identifying better the roots and development of life philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*, or vitalism[6]) will help us understand better both the past—the pre-Nazi and Nazi understanding of life—and the present. As Donna V. Jones summarizes in her recent book about the impact of Bergson's *elan vital*: "As a radical or renegade discourse, vitalism represents protest, disillusion, and hope. Life often grounds opposition today, after the political disappearance of a subject/object of history and skepticism . . . Life has become the watchword of today's extraparliamentary politics."[7] Eugene Thacker followed a similar history and politics of life from Aristotle, to Heidegger, Bergson, and Deleuze, while arguing that "the question of 'life' is the question that has come to define our contemporary era."[8] As this book shows, if the question of life is so pertinent to us, so

[6] *Lebensphilosophie* is usually understood as both life philosophy and vitalism. As Peter Hanns Reill demonstrated, the two concepts were put together during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, the first from the context of the German romantic nature philosophy, the second from the French vitalistic biology. A few historians and thinkers tried—in vain—to differentiate the two, but the identification has lasted to our own day. *Lebensphilosophie*, as will be shown below, is also taken to mean or signify life force, living experience, or wholeness. For comprehensive discussions of the terminology, see Gudrun Kuhne-Bertram, *Aus dem Lebenzum Leben: Entstehung, Wesen und Bedeutung popular Lebensphilosophien in der Geistesgeschichte des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Lang Verlag, 1987). See also more specific discussions in Hans Freyer, *Die weltgeschichtliche Bedeutung des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Kiel: Kommissionsverlag Lipsius and Tischer, 1951), p. 19; Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1998), p. 66; Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996); Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 292-293; Peter Hanns Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 220.

[7] Donna V. Jones's book presents an ever-growing tendency to perceive the modern idea of life as a product of the previous century's discourse of life and its political developments. Jones's topics of discussion are broad: from Bergson's life philosophy to postcolonial theory and its actual realization in three different continents. In theoretical terms, her arguments range from a very general discussion on the background of the philosophy of life at the end of the nineteenth century to a contemporary discussion of Foucault, Agamben, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Elizabeth Grosz, and, in particular, Gilles Deleuze and postcolonial theorists such as Echille Mbembe. See Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Negritude, Vitalism, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 17.

[8] Eugene Thacker, *After Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010), p. xiii.

is the discussion of the German 1920s and its obsession with *Lebensphilosophie*. Indeed, this particular hurly burly is far from being done, or won.

1. The intellectual history

Very little of the literature that mentions the impact of life philosophy on both Nazis and their enemies, on pre-1933 and post-1945 political culture, explore it in depth. This weakness does not imply any lack of attention. On the contrary, intellectual historians, sociologists, and philosophers have been able to identify correctly the strong impact that life philosophy had on the European culture during the early 1920s.

As Heinrich Rickert, the acclaimed neo-Kantian philosopher, warned, *Lebensphilosophers* formulated a comprehensive, aesthetic discourse of "naked life [*blossen Leben*]," turning it into the "fashionable philosophical trend of our time."[9] A mere decade after it was considered fashionable, life philosophy was co-opted by the Nazis. In a review written in 1930, Walter Benjamin identified "those habitues of the chthonic forces of terror, who carry their volumes of Klages in their packs."[10] In 1935 Thomas Mann attacked *Lebensphilosophie* as the core of "fascist" rhetoric and named Ludwig Klages as a representative of this philosophy and a prefascist thinker himself. A well-known conservative and mystic, Klages was also seen by his opponents as an early proponent of national socialism, or as Mann put it, a "criminal philosopher," a "pan-Germanist," "an irrationalist," a "Tarzan philosopher," "a cultural pessimist . . . the voice of the world's downfall."[11] From then on, *Lebensphilosophie*—and Klages as a leading *Lebensphilosopher*—would be identified with Nazism, racism, and anti-Semitism. The earlier positive reception of *Lebensphilosophie* among radicals on the left was ignored and suppressed.

In *The Destruction of Reason*, published first in German in 1954, Georg Lukacs—a well-known neo-Marxist who was educated in Germany—identifies *Lebensphilosophie* with "the dominant ideology of the whole imperialist period in Germany,"[12] and, furthermore, with the type of irrational and antiparliamentary "belligerent preparation for the impending barbaric reaction of the Nazi regime." "Herein," he continues, "lies

[9] Heinrich Rickert, *Die Philosophie des Lebens: Darstellung und Kritik der philosophischen Modestromungen unserer Zeit* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr Verlag, 1920). Rickert implied in this book his deep disagreement with Georg Simmel, his own protege and the father of modern sociology, who had died two years earlier. It is worth noting that Rickert defended and helped Simmel to receive an academic position in Strasbourg, one Simmel failed to attain in Germany before, due to his Jewish origin. See David Frisby, *Georg Simmel* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[10] Walter Benjamin, "Theories of German Fascism," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, part 1: 1927-1934 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 321.

[11] Thomas Mann, *Tagebucher 1935-1936*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1978), p. 195 (entry dated October 27, 1935). See also GerdKlaus Kaltenbrunner, *Der schwierige Konservatismus: Definitionen, Theorien, Portrats* (Herford and Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1975), p. 247, and Alfred Rosenberg, *Gestalt und Leben* (Halle and Saale: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1938), p. 18.

[12] Georg Lukacs, *The Destruction of Reason*, trans. Peter Palmer (London: Merlin Press, 1962), p. 403.

the significance of the philosophy of Ludwig Klages."[13] Lukacs pays tribute to *Lebensphilosophie* as a whole—and to Ludwig Klages in particular as the one "who actually transformed vitalism into an open combat against reason and culture."[14] "Klages's whole philosophy," Lukacs argues, "is only a variation on this one primitive idea. His significance lies in the fact that never before had reason been challenged so openly and radically."[15] Lukacs—and a generation of postwar historians—names Klages as a founder of modern vitalism. The implication of his vitalism cannot be undermined, for "Klages's polemics were directed against the future,"[16] which Lukacs identifies with rationality, progress, and social ideals.[17] In his view, *Lebensphilosophie* in general and Klages in particular declared an all-encompassing war against the very existence of temporality itself; for Lukacs, irrationalism was inherently stagnant or reactionary.

Disregarding life philosophy in general and Ludwig Klages in particular is symptomatic of a whole historiographical approach. George Mosse, a German-Jewish refugee and one of the founders of cultural and intellectual history, depicts life philosophy as the intellectual basis of what he identifies with the "irrationalism" of the fascist "third force." In *Masses and Men*, in a chapter titled "The Mystical Origins of National Socialism," Mosse identifies Julius Langbehn, Alfred Rosenberg, and Ludwig Klages with a mystical neoromantic movement that opposed civilization and modernity. He writes, "Ludwig Klages, the Munich philosopher, told [the youth movement] that modern civilization was 'drowning the soul of man.' The only way out for man, who belonged to nature, was a return to mother earth. Such ideas led naturally to a deepening of the cult of the peasant."[18] In fact, Mosse knows very well that "drowning the soul of man" refers to a late romantic legacy that Klages shared with many progressive thinkers, including Walter Benjamin, Georg Simmel, and even Friedrich Engels before them. But he ignores that, in light of the later use the Nazis made of such quotes.[19] What matters most to Mosse is a phenomenon that Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben place at the heart of all forms of totalitarian thinking, whether capitalistic, Marxist, or fascist: that is, the "total politicization of life" and the erasure

[13] Ibid., p. 523.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., p. 524.

[16] Ibid., p. 525.

[17] Interestingly enough, Lukacs himself was drawn to such circles and ideas during his earlier career. For more about the topic, see Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukacs and his Generation, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

[18] George Mosse, *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1980), p. 199.

[19] Mosse traces a course that leads from the reception of romantic ideas by *Lebensphilosophers* like Klages to race theories: "H. F. K. Gunther, later to become a chief racial expert of the Third Reich, . . . [and] Klages believed that the course of a victorious Christianity was plotted from 'a center' inimical to the Aryans." Ibid., pp. 206, 208.

of boundaries between the private and the public.[20] "The boundaries between public and private were abolished," Mosse writes, "just as the dividing line between politics and the totality of life had ceased to exist."[21] Mosse, like Lukacs, sees a direct course that led from the early 1900s to the rise of national socialism. In contrast, the purpose of this book is to reject the temptation of explicative anachronisms, and understand *Lebensphilosophie* on its own terms. A closer examination of this "world-view" reveals the critical potential of *Lebensphilosohie* and its growing affiliation with affirmative forms of biopolitical control.

In my first chapter, I develop Mosse's path by exploring Klages's role in a small group of bohemian artists and poets that shaped the modern discourse of *Lebensphilosophie*. During the early 1900s most of them surrounded the poet and guru Stefan George. Mosse draws a direct line between the romantic "organic human being in contact with cosmic forces,"[22] the terminology of this group—part of which called itself "the cosmics"—and Hitler: "Hitler's aim was to construct an organic society in which every aspect of life would be integrated with its basic purpose."[23] My discussion in chapter 1, however, demonstrates that there was much more to the group than a pre-Hitlerian demagogy. In fact, half of the group were Jewish scholars; moreover, before the mid1920s there was little in this group that would indicate either a general left-wing or right-wing orientation in political matters. Its organicism was developed as an alternative to bourgeois culture on either side of the political spectrum.

Mosse, like Lukacs before him, failed to appreciate that there was more to irrationalism than the arbitrary appearance of romantic concepts— especially "life force, which corresponded to the emotions of man."[24] Such concepts were part of a larger discourse of aesthetics and philosophy and, even more than that, a discourse that avoided linearity, introductions, and closures. The few historical interpretations of *Lebensphilosophie*, mostly uncritical and often anachronistic, tended to emphasize Klages as a leading thinker but failed to identify clear roots or possible effects of his controversial innovations within a distinct discourse. Wilhelm Dilthey's empathic historicism and experiencing (*Erleben*), Friedrich Nietzsche's rejection of historicism, or Bergson's *duree* (duration, translated to German as *Dauer*) were rarely measured against the vocabulary of life as a relevant political discourse.[25] This oversight led those who attempted

[20] For an excellent analysis of "the total politicization of life" in Agamben's biopolitics, see Andrew Norris, "Giorgio Agamben and the Politics of the Living Dead," *Diacritics* 30:4 (2000): 38-58.

[21] George Mosse, *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich,* trans. Salvator Attanasio and others (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1966), p. xx.

[22] Mosse, Masses and Man, p. 205.

[23] Ibid.

[24] George Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York: Howard Fertig, 1998), p. 15.

[25] The allusion to Bergson is not coincidental. As Klages's literary remains (Nachlass) show, Klages read Bergson's books carefully and annotated them with many comments. See Klages's private library at the Deutsche Literaturarchiv am Marbach (henceforth, DLA), Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Bibliothek. For a more general history of the German Bergsonism during the 1910s, see the comprehensive but

more ideological readings of *Lebensphilosophie* to emphasize those contributions opposed to modernism and Enlightenment thinking, ignore all others, and explain the movement's success by underlining the ignorance, backwardness, or absolute irrationality of the period. If these accounts acknowledged that Walter Benjamin, Ernst Cassirer, or Thomas Mann were heavily invested in the vocabulary of *Lebensphilosophie* or in Klages's philosophy, they mentioned their interest, at best, as a bizarre anecdote. As a result, Klages's archive was never fully opened, and many letters were never published. Even more intriguing is the fact that German life philosophy never garnered the close attention that would have explained its wide and deep impact.

In his well-known *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, published originally in 1962, Kurt Sontheimer names Klages as one of the prime representatives of "the vulgar *Lebensphilosophie* of the twentieth century."[26] He mentions Thomas Mann's notion of the " *Verhunzung der* Lebensphilosophie*" (rebuke of* Lebensphilosophie*) and then moves into a short and sober description of the philosophical problems addressed by Theodor Lessing, the well-known German-Jewish* Lebensphilosopher*, and his childhood friend and philosophical muse, Ludwig Klages. Sontheimer admits that "Ludwig Klages made a great impression on his contemporaries," but faults him for his "passionate rejection of technical civilization, which [Klages saw as] bound to abandon the rational spirit."*[27] *Sontheimer never advances much beyond the conclusion that this cultural and critical pessimism (*kulturkritische Pessimismus*) was the product of a crisis.*[28]

A more sophisticated reading of pre-Nazi rhetoric developed only with the next generation of scholars. They noticed the close relation between *Lebensphilosophie* and modern philosophy, be it Nietzsche's, Dilthey's, or Bergson's. My second chapter focuses on that background, necessary to the understanding of the development of *Lebensphilosophie*. Jeffrey Herf's *Reactionary Modernism* (1984), Steven Aschheim's *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany* (1992), and Martin Jay's *Songs of Experience* (2005) historicize crucial elements in *Lebensphilosophie* that led from the fin-de-siecle philosophy to the rise of fascism in Germany. These historians emphasize the central role of *L ebensphilosophie* in the general radicalization of political philosophy before and during the Weimar republic.[29] However, all three books characterize certain motifs *within* Lebensphilosophie *while abstaining from a comprehensive argument concerning it as a whole. Narrowing the scope to how* Lebensphilosophie *understood technology (Herf), how it realized a set of Nietzschean ideas (Aschheim), or how it functioned*

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sole work in this field: Rudolf W. Meyer, "*Bergson in Deutschland. Unter besonderer Berucksichtigung seiner Zeitauffassung,*" in *Studien zum Zeitproblem in der Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Ernst Wolfgang Orth (Munich: Karl Albert Verlag, 1982), pp. 10-64.

[26] "Auch es war Teil der vulgaren Lebensphilosophie." Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimar Republik* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1994), p. 48.

[27] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[28] Ibid., p. 53.

[29] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

within a new notion of experience (Jay) does not support a comprehensive argument about Lebensphilosophie*. Steven Aschheim chooses to tackle a generational history that follows on Friedrich Nietzsche's impact. Jeffrey Herf approaches the topic from a high discussion of modernism and its irregular movement between progression and reaction. Jay looks at* Lebensphilosophie *within the discourse of its time, but limits his discussion to another modernist hesitation between the legacy of the Enlightenment and its opponents. Hence, for Herf,* Lebensphilosophie*— and Klages within it—represents a comprehensive plan to bring together modern technology and reactionary politics. "'Life,' he writes, 'was the first and last thing,' freed from any program or system. It displayed a 'profound order.'"*[30] *For Aschheim, Klages is a representative of a general bias in* Lebensphilosophie*, "a post-Nietzschean in every sense of the term."*[31] *Aschheim characterized Klages as an heir to the Nietzschean "elemental ecstasy" and "erotic rapture" who had not been left any of "Nietzsche's individualism," terms that contrast those used by Herf. For Jay, Klages represents the "frankly counter-Enlightenment defense of pseudo-sciences like graphology, . . . [whom Benjamin found as] an ally in the struggle to realize a redemptive notion of experience."*[32] *The three meet at a point that intersects with George Mosse: "For Klages," writes Aschheim, "the Dionysian realm was important because there life manifested itself." Klages, he concludes, "was the most radical German exponent of irrationalist* Lebensphilosophie*."*[33]

Recent histories of philosophy follow a very similar path to the one marked by historians. Karl Albert, a well-known philosopher in Berlin, interprets Klages mostly through the eyes of Georg Lukacs, who "sees in Klages 'one that used *Lebensphilosophie* in the open struggle against reason [*Vernunft*] and culture [*Kultur*].'"[34]

Likewise, a large majority of historians and philosophers missed the magnitude of *Lebensphilosophie* as a cultural and political "jargon" or what I call a discourse. Historians have missed the language of enthusiasms and the superlatives of life—which made life much more than a causal chain of events—judging the antihistoricist *Lebensphilosophie* to be utterly nonsensical. As a result, a few questions were left unanswered: Why is *Lebensphilosophie* so closely linked with a certain negative approach to politics and ideology? What made this specific jargon the best critical tool against reason and culture?

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[30] Ibid., p. 52.

[31] Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 80.

[32] Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 325.

[33] Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, p. 80. Aschheim admits that another branch of interpretation counted Klages's *Lebensphilosophie* in the emancipatory-anarchistic legacy of Nietzsche, rather than the authoritarian, but at the end of the day it is the right-wing, counter-Enlightenment version that won.

[34] Karl Albert, *Lebensphilosophie, Von den Anfangen bei Nietzsche bis zu ihrer Kritik bei Lukacs* (Freiburg and Munich: Karl Albert Verlag, 1995), p. 135.

For Lukacs and Mosse, as for their later disciples, *Lebensphilosophie* existed because Nazism did, not the reverse. They ignored the radical and critical origins of *Lebensphilosophie* during the early 1900s, its gradual formation as a discourse during the 1910s, its own politicization at the outbreak of the First World War and during the Weimar republic, and, finally, the reluctance by most *Lebensphilosophers* to accept the Nazi racial interpretation of life during the early 1930s or the rejection of almost all *Lebensphilosophers* by Nazism during the late 1930s. Their oversight does not remove responsibility from *Lebensphilosophie* or *Lebensphilosophers*, but it does mean that Nazism cannot be taken as an explanation for *Lebensphilosophie*. A recent revival of interest in *Lebensphilosophie* is telling enough: a group of highly sophisticated Benjamin scholars, on the one hand, and a group of radical biopolitical critics, on the other hand, are ample proof for that.

2. Benjaminia

In 1930 Walter Benjamin recommended to his close friend, Gershom Scholem—a Kabbalah scholar living in Jerusalem—that he read Klages's philosophical work. "I took a rather perfunctory look at the first volume; to study it thoroughly would take many weeks. It is, without a doubt, a great philosophical work, regardless of the context in which the author may be and remain suspect."[35] Shortly thereafter, responding to a complaint from Scholem, who found Palestine an excessively "Nietzschean" place, Benjamin counseled him to read Klages's interpretation of Nietzsche.[36] This exchange with Scholem followed almost two decades of Benjamin's intense interest in the *Lebensphilosopher*, and psychologist Werner Fuld, perhaps the first to touch on Benjamin's curious interest in Klages, explains it by repeating Scholem's observation concerning Benjamin's interest in the "subversive radicalization of reactionary authors."[37] More recently, a group of Benjamin experts cited this relationship as one of the more significant from the perspective of Benjamin research. John McCole, Ansgar Hillach, Horst Bredekamp, Irving Wohlfarth, Michael Jennings, Joseph Mali, and the late Miriam Bratu Hansen, among others, have all pointed out the importance of Klages's *Leben-*

[35] Walter Benjamin to Gershom Scholem, March 15, 1930, in Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, eds., *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, trans. Manfred R. and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), pp. 366-367. For the full German edition, see Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, vol. 4: 1931-1934, ed. Christoph Godde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), p. 537. A note about translation: I tried to keep the English translation where I could. In some cases, whether because the letters were not mentioned in the English translation, because they were shortened, or because I disagreed with the translation, I translated the text myself. In those latter cases I mention only the German title.

[36] Walter Benjamin to Gershom Scholem, June 1, 1932, in Scholem and Adorno, *The Correspondence*, p. 394. See also Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, vol. 4, p. 100.

[37] Werner Fuld, "Walter Benjamin Beiehung zu Ludwig Klages," in *Akzente, Zeitschrift fur Lieteratur* 28:3 (June 1981): 274.

sphilosophie to Benjamin's critical philosophy and politics. The major voices among literary theoreticians, as in the case of historians and philosophers, could be divided between those reading Benjamin's interest in *Lebensphilosophie* with or against the legacy of rationalism and the Enlightenment: a group that reads Benjamin's interest in *Lebensphilosophie* as a subversive political tool and a group that sees it mostly via the prism of radical aesthetics. None of the researchers has ever contemplated the thought of *Lebensphilosophie* as a discourse that stands in the middle of a wider political reality with different ramifications. Nevertheless, some of them have made excellent interpretations in this field. John McCole's *The Antinomies of Tradition* was among the first to portray and analyze Benjamin's interest in Klages in a systematic way. McCole historicized Benjamin's interest in different marginal thinkers during his studies in Munich, between 1915-1917, and his interest in "draw[ing] precise distinctions among the various members of the [George] circle," focusing on Ludwig Klages.[38] McCole argues that Benjamin developed a two-pronged response to Klages's stress on a mythical vitalism, and "both were at the center of his concerns in this period: One . . . was not to deny the existence or power of mythic images but to develop a theory capable of permeating them with historical knowledge."[39] A second response was "to articulate a positive theory of *Technik* that would transcend the crude dualism on which *Lebensphilosophie* was founded. Benjamin suggested several times that a detailed reckoning with Klages remained a desideratum."[40] McCole is correct to identify that Benjamin did not see Klages "as the only target of this argument,"[41] but rather made an attempt to answer *Lebensphilosophie* via Klages. Irving Wohlfarth writes that Benjamin "was a discriminating reader of Ludwig Klages"[42] and used Klages as a critical tactic: "Benjamin identifies the medium within which the encounter between modern man and the cosmos is to take place . . . To cross Klages with Kant, Hegel and Marx—with *Aufklaerung* [Enlightenment]— . . . and to cross the Enlightenment with Klages: this is the way to the planetarium. Benjamin steeps himself in Klages's and [Johann Jakob] Bachofen's worlds of myth, aura, and ritual, the better to distance himself of them."[43] Ansgar Hillach emphasized the intense interest Klages and Benjamin shared in relation to images and action: "Ludwig Klages, whom Benjamin had read and, at least for a time, regarded highly, calls this expressive movement the 'metaphor of action,' . . . [which] tends toward a general characteristic—e.g., opposition—which is sought as an impression or an experience." The form of expression of fighting transforms this relation into its opposite; it is "fulfilled by the breaking of opposition . . . in a vitalistic sense,

[38] John Joseph McCole, *W alter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 176.

[39] Ibid., p. 178.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., p. 179.

[42] Irving Wohlfarth, "Walter Benjamin and the Idea of a Technological Eros: The Way to the Planetarium," in *Benjamin-Studien* 1:1 (May 2002): 74.

[43] Ibid., p. 79.

[and] such an impulse can be understood as a general life force or as the will to destruction."[44] Michael Jennings reminded us that the context for Benjamin's interpretation of Baudelaire was "the structures of historical time" from an unexpected perspective, mostly mediated via Georg Simmel's interpretation of origin and life (in Goethe) and Klages's and Jung's interpretation of phantasmagoria as "collective psychology."[45]

Miriam Bratu Hansen followed another track of Benjamin researchers, which is the idea of the aura. Her explanation and clarification of this interest is worth our attention, as it unpacks beautifully this surprising relationship between Benjamin and Klages. Benjamin, according to Hansen, was interested in the quality of the "aura" as a "transgenerational symbol-space" that allowed Benjamin "to recognize the new once again and the incorporation of new images," all leading in her eyes to "how substantially he was thinking at one with, through, and against Klages."[46] Klages's writings, "properly fragmented," provided Benjamin with not only an abundance of insights and motifs, but also a foil and catalyst that helped him formulate his own approach to technological modernity. Central to this theory of experience was Klages's concept of the image or *Bild*, epitomized by the so-called *Urbild*, the "daemonically enchanted image that transforms ordinary objects into visions or epiphanies."[47]

My third chapter discusses the relationship between Benjamin and Klages in detail, as well as how a discursive understanding of *Lebensphilosophie* could contribute to our understanding of the different political and philosophical variations, and where Benjamin himself is located within it. The frame for this particular story is the "Bachofendebate" of the mid-1920s. As Joseph Mali explained it in *Mythistory*, Benjamin considered the contribution of Klages and Bachofen—Klages helped to revive him during the early 1920s—to be central to his own thinking: "Benjamin duly saw that Bachofen's 'regressive' attempt to ascertain the mythological compulsions in modernity did not necessarily entail reactionary political ideology; rather, it was . . . a critical attempt."[48] A careful examination of the discourse, during the mid1920s, demonstrates that while Benjamin was indeed interested in the progressive and subversive elements of it, Klages was interested in a more conservative (albeit not less subversive) version of it. Finally, a third, more political strand evolved out of this exchange, a chapter that was transformed into the core of Nazi rhetoric. *Lebensphilosophie* marks the paradoxical point of convergence as well as separation of those worlds.

Biopolitical thinkers have extended this discussion of Benjamin from their particular fields—whether modern culture, science, politics, or the image—to an interdisciplinary

[44] Ansgar Hillach, "Aesthetics of Politics: Walter Benjamin's 'Theories of German Fascism,'" *New German Critique* 17 (Spring 1979): 104-105.

[45] Michael Jennings, "On the Banks of a New Lethe: Commodification and Experience in Benjamin's Baudelarie Book," in *Boundary 2* 30:1 (2003): 89-104.

[46] Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Benjamin's Aura," *Critical Inquiry* 34:2 (Winter 2008): 364.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Joseph Mali, *Mythistory: the Making of a Modern Historiography* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), p. 272.

investigation that placed at its core a present theory of law and its inherent relation to the concept of life. Agamben analyzed different texts by Benjamin in his *Man without Content* (1997) through *The State of Exception* (2005). Together with Eric Santner, Mladen Dolar, Eva Geulen, Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, Kenneth Reinhardt, and others,[49] he repositioned Benjamin as a current post-postmodern thinker who enables us to reconsider the politics of life in the post-9/11 world. Benjamin's "thesis opposes a 'real' [*wirklish*] state of exception, which it is our task to bring about," writes Agamben, "to the state of exception in which we live, which has become the rule . . . Law that becomes indistinguishable from life in a real state of exception is confronted by life that . . . is entirely transformed into law."[50] If, as Agamben notes, "today there is not even a single instant in which the life of individuals is not modeled, contaminated, or controlled by some apparatus," our first task is to document and map both the models and the critical responses.[51] Our second is "to bring to light the Ungovernable, which is the beginning and, at the same time, the vanishing point of every politics."[52] Only a careful history of the 1920s discourse—which still hovers above us—could expose the weak spots and the positive potentialities of life and its politics, the suppressed and the "Ungovernable." Klages and Benjamin's insistence on the ur-image, on the one hand, and the Nietzschean *Rausch* (ecstasy) on the other, indicate a conscious attempt to do so.[53] Agamben drew much attention with a general claim: "In the 'politicization' of bare life—the metaphysical task *par excellence*—the

[49] Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Mladen Dolar, "Kafka's Voices," in *Polygraph: An International Journal of Culture and Politics* 15/16 (2004): 109-130; Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, "Homo sacer, das blofie Leben und das Lager: Anmerkungen zu einem erneuten Versuch einer Kritik der Gewalt," in *Babylon. Beitragezurjudischen Gegenwart*21 (2006): 105-121; Eva Geulen, "Form of Life/forma-di-Vita. Distinction in Agamben," in *Literatur als Philosophie-Philosophie als Literatur*, ed. Eva Horn, Bettine Menke, and Christoph Menke (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005), pp. 363-374; Eric Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[50] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 55.

[51] Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 15.

[52] Ibid., p. 24.

[53] As will be explained in the first chapter, Klages was considered by many intellectuals of his time as the founder of a modern theory of ur-images (*Urbilder*). As Hansen argues, this was the principal inspiration for Benjamin's theory of images: "Central to [Benjamin's] theory of experience was Klages's concept of the image or *Bild*, epitomized by the so-called *Urbild*, a primal or archaic image, and his life long insistence on the 'actuality' or 'reality of images.'" Hansen, "Benjamin's Aura," p. 364. It is interesting to see how Benjamin and Theodor Adorno consider Klages's *Urbild* when they weigh the relationship between images and memory. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Walter Benjamin: The Complete Correspondence: 1928-1940*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 61. I am using here *The Complete Correspondence* rather than the 1994 edition of *The Correspondence* edited by Scholem and Adorno, which does not include the letter in question.

humanity of living man is decided."[54] But Agamben's own analysis never historicized this claim properly.

The second task of this book, then, is to try to identify the present and future of this discourse, its dead ends, and its revolutionary potential.

3. Characterology and anti-Freudian Lebensphilosophie

Werner Fuld suggests that Benjamin's interest in Klages during the 1920s was an outcome of his agreement with Klages's rejection of Freudian psychology.[55] This rejection and its remolding by Klages and other *Lebensphilosophers* occupies my fourth chapter. In it I focus on the contribution of *Lebensphilosophie* to an anti-Freudian psychology, identified with a post-Nietzschean "depth psychology" or a Klagesian "characterology," itself the careful elaboration of a late romantic discourse. In a review written in 1938 Thea Stein-Lewinson introduced Klages's graphology and psychology to the English reader. Her conceptual synthetic evaluation of Klages's contribution is still one of the best ever written.

Stein-Lewinson opens her review by stating the most important factor of Klages's system as a whole: "His philosophy is not logocentric but biocentric; the world of man is a battlefield between soul and mind."[56] Stein-Lewinson was the first non-German to explain in a methodical way how, according to Klages, "there is unity of character in all the volitional movements of any individual,"[57] and how this unity is related to the living principle: "Every state of the living body is the expression of an impulse system."[58] Klages's ability to tie together psychology, character, representation, expression, and impression made him the leading graphologist of his generation: "As a result of Klages's leadership, graphology has been used as a psychodiagnostic method in Europe for the last three decades and has found practical applications."[59] Still, the scarce historical work done in this field was not able to expose the intricate ties among different psychological schools, Klagesian characterology, graphology, "psychodiagnostics," and contemporaneous politics, and art. A few excellent works explored in depth such topics as Gestalt psychology and the reception of anti-Freudianism in Germany. The first to remind us about German psychology and the heavy investment of *Lebensphilosophie* in it was the historian of psychology, Ulfried Geuter, during the early

[54] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 8.

[55] Fuld, "Walter Benjamin Beiehung zu Ludwig Klages," p. 277.

[56] Thea Stein-Lewinson, "An Introduction to the Graphology of Ludwig Klages," in Character and Personality 6:3 (1938): 163.

[57] Ibid., p. 170.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid. p. 176.

1980s.[60] Geuter's narrative follows mostly the division between a postenlightened psychology and the postromantic psychology in Germany; the psychological chapter of *Lebensphilosophie* naturally fell into the latter. Jacob Golomb, a philosopher from Jerusalem who worked extensively on Nietzsche's philosophy, helped to place much of Klages's post-Nietzschean psychology as the inheritor of Nietzsche's depth psychology. Mitchell G. Ash identified this worldview as "the dynamic flow of interrelationship between the 'totality of human nature' and the world Dilthey called simply 'life' or 'life itself.'"[61] Ash's contribution, now considered a standard text in the history of psychology, also portrayed the close relationship between 1920s psychology and life philosophy via the development of characterology and psychodiagnostics. "From outside the university came yet another challenge," writes Ash, "from proponents of so-called 'scientific graphology' and 'characterology,' led by Ludwig Klages. With the help of handwriting analysis, Klages and his followers claimed to discover people's true inner lives behind their 'masks of courtesy.'"[62] As other historians of psychology demonstrate, anti-Freudian life philosophy was driven by a small set of key references, among them Dilthey, Nietzsche, and Bachofen, the latter a popular reference during the 1920s, mostly due to Klages and his disciples. Werner Bohleber and, most recently, Anthony Kauders have focused on the anti-Freudian psychology that covered some important strands within *Lebensphilosophie*.[63] Kauders found quite a few of Klages's disciples among those vocal opponents of Freudian psychoanalysis who rejected it in favor of "life that confronts us in all of its animated varieties" and "the special 'power of life.'"[64]

In spite of growing attention given to such elements as these converging with *Lebensphilosophie*, no systematic attempt was made to unpack this convergence between *Lebensphilosophie* as a political, aesthetic, psychological, or biopolitical philosophy. One of the contributions of this book is to follow such ties as part of the general history of *Lebensphilosophie* and its corresponding integration into the Nazi system, not as an independent psychological system, but as part of an alternative view of life and its inherent relation to death, the inhumane, and the transsubjective. Klagesian *Charakterologie*—adapted later by key elements in the Nazi regime (a plan to train SS officers in characterology was in the making during the 1940s)—was meant to shape a different human temporality based on biological potential, not the evolution of qualities in a dynamic personality.

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[60] Ulfried Geuter, Die Professionalisierung der deutschen Psychologie im Naztionalsozialismus (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984).

[61] Mitchell G. Ash, Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 76.

[62] Ibid., p. 290.

[63] *Werner Bohleber, "Psychoanalyse, romantische Naturphilosophie und* deutsches idealistisches Denken," in *Psyche, Zeitschrift fur Psychoanalyse und ihre Anwendungen* 43:6 (1989): 506-521.

[64] Anthony Kauders, "'Psychoanalysis Is Good, Synthesis Is Better': The German Reception of Freud, 1930 and 1956," in *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences* 47:4 (Fall 2011): 385.

4. Biocentrism

A book published in 1933 under the title *Biologie, Nationalsozialismus und neue Erziehung* (Biology, national socialism, and education*)* summarized the achievements of the previous decades: "All relevant powers of the people, for the importance of life and the shaping of fate, are biological."[65] Countless publications aimed at educators and functionaries throughout the Third Reich repeated that same point. Any understanding of the collective and the individual must pass through the biological. More than just a system, the biological here meant a principle of operation.

Biocentrism—a concept popularized during the 1920s—was seen as the "apparatus" carrying any form of life into the psychology of the individual, the politics of the collective, the aesthetics and temporality of any order and existence.

A growing contemporaneous interest in biocentrism, bio-information, bionics, biotechnology, depth ecology, and different aspects of biopolitics and bioethics brought much attention to the heavy legacy of *Lebensphilosophie* in general and of Ludwig Klages in particular. Chapter 5 of this book reviews some of the relevant history of biocentrism and traces its path from a popular postromantic worldview to a modern Nazi science of race. The "micro-history" of the Klages group— including mostly journalists or enigmatic, forgotten thinkers—and of its gradual involvement with the Nazi regime traces the more general process occurring to *Lebensphilosophie*.[66] Read against the general history of the elitist German conservative revolution, in which many of the life philosophers—Klages included—were usually placed by historians, this chapter follows life philosophy beyond it. In the years since Hermann Rauschning's treatise, *The Conservative Revolution*, was published in 1941, three works on biopolitics and the conservative revolution have appeared. Roger Woods's *Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic*, Stefan Breuer's *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution*, and Jeffrey Herf's *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* are just a few of the better examples of comprehensive historical works on what became a well-known term relating to such figures as Klages, Ernst Junger, Gottfried Benn, Martin Heidegger, and Carl Schmitt.

In contrast, my close reading of *Lebensphilosophie* shifts the center of attention of a generational, political emphasis to a discursive one. Rather than discussing many of these figures in terms of their national or generational loyalties, this book views their discursive loyalty as precedent to their political affiliation. The demands made

[65] F. Donath and K. Zimmermann, *Biologie, Nationalsozialismus und neue Erziehung* (Leipzig: Verlag von Quelle and Meyer, 1933), p. 9.

[66] Carlo Ginzburg—the historian identified with the methodology he names "micro-history"—argues: "To explain 'similarities' simply on the basis of movement from high to low involves clinging to the unacceptable notion that ideas originate among the dominant classes." Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 126.

by *Lebensphilosophie*— and only later those made by personal loyalty—forced Klages to support national socialism. Such an emphasis does not clean Klages or his support group of their ingrained anti-Semitic worldview, but it identifies this anti-Semitism with their general notion of life. The result was an agreement with the Nazi identification of the self with life and the Jew with death, even when disagreeing with how the Nazis carried this plan forward, that is, to the death camps.

A different sort of confusion characterizes how we understand biopolitics today. Chapter 6 returns to the more general discussion of biopolitics and traces the first appearance of the term "biopolitical" in those circumstances and that specific discourse of life forms. Biopolitics was created, as a thought, during the high days of *Lebensphilosophie*, after it was politicized by the Nazi regime. As Sheila Faith Weiss writes, "The politicization of biology education was not an invention of Nazi pedagogues and was not merely imposed from above after 1933."[67] After all, a history of *Lebensphilosophie* traces the growing identification between this corpus of life concepts and what the German education system came to see, during the 1920s, as the proper "*Lebenskunde*, the 'teaching of life' or 'science of life'—a name that seemed to support the broader philosophical outlook long since held by most biology teachers."[68]

By adapting *Lebensphilosophie* into their view of biopolitics, the Nazis kept the revolutionary instinct of this philosophy while applying it in a reactionary political context. From our perspective, a careful separation of earlier uses of biocentrism by *Lebensphilosophers* and the later understanding of the term points out the semantic change.

In a sentence, biocentrism is shifting from an aesthetic context to a political one. The course of Klages's *Urbild* is a good illustration of this change. If during the early 1900s it was used mostly for aesthetic purposes, since the late 1920s it was gradually taken by Nazi theoreticians and applied in a genetic and exclusionary context. The concept of biocentrism was coined and shaped during the period of change by a few *Lebensphilosophers* and adapted by the later Nazi biopolitics.

The very few texts dedicated to biocentrism have pointed out the necessary relation between the 1920s discourse of life, the radical critique of normative politics, and the different aesthetic experiments. Nicholas Agar describes it in a short text: "Life," he writes, "does not seem to be similarly connected to normative concepts."[69] Biocentrism represents, from this perspective, a "rejection of any hierarchy in nature" and a "revolution in moral thinking, . . . much more radical than that urged on by the animal welfarist."[70] In short, the biocentrist core pushes our limits beyond the usual identification of a post-Nietzschean animalism and instinctiveness toward a new world

[67] Sheila Faith Weiss, "Pedagogy, Professionalism, and Politics: Biology Instruction during the Third Reich," in *Science, Technology and National Socialism*, ed. Monika Renneberg and Mark Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 184.

[68] Ibid., p.189.

[69] Nicholas Agar, "Biocentrism and the Concept of Life," in *Ethics* 108:1 (October 1997): 147.

[70] Ibid., p. 148.

of meaning based on the ontological power of human temporality, or finality, and its representation: "According to this approach a representation is a structure whose biofunction is to directly modify or funnel the impact of environmental forces through to movement or behavior."[71]

A recent book dedicated to biocentrism and experimental arts focuses again on the German 1920s and the unique relation between radical politics, political philosophy, and different experiments with aesthetics. According to Oliver Botar, one of the editors,

The transposition of the scientific debate to the metaphysical plane and the search for authentic expression was most famously and most radically carried out by Klages in his 1929 magnum opus, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* [Intellect as the Enemy of the Soul]. Following the critiques of Bloch and Georg Lukacs, Klages's book was received curiously as a John the Baptist-like preparing of the way for Hitler's messianic anti-rationalism, or alternatively, it was praised as a searing critique of the instrumental modern consciousness before even Heidegger engaged in it. As Fellmann has pointed out, a more nuanced view of Klages and his thought would be helpful.[72]

For Botar, biocentrism should be understood as "Nature Romanticism updated by the Biologism of the mid-to-late nineteenth century" and part of the modern fascination with "philosophical worldviews and cultural concepts of Biocentrism, Bioromantik, and Biomorphism, . . . [s]haped by the *Lebensphilosophie*" of Nietzsche, Bergson, Simmel, and

Klages, or by a related group of German scientists such as Ernst Haeckel, Hans Driesch, and Raoul France.[73] It was the last and the least known, France, who invented the concept of biocentrism in 1920, as part of his Munich-based Biocentric Institute and his biocentric philosophy, typically describing a long list of "types," "life configurations," and "primary forms of being."[74]

5. For a better definition of Lebensphilosophie

It is crucial to conclude this introduction with a more consistent attempt to define and historicize *L ebensphilosophie.*

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[71] Ibid., p. 156.

[72] Oliver A. I. Botar, "Defining Biocentrism," in *Biocentrism and Modernism*, ed. Oliver A. I. Botar and Isabel Wunsche (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), p. 27. See also Ferdinand Fellmann, *Lebensphilosophie. Elemente einer Theorie der Selbserfahrung* (Hamburg: Reinbeck Verlag, 1993). Botar supplies the translated title of Klages's work. In my own translations I prefer the word spirit rather than intellect, due to Klages's stress on all dimensions of this Idealist term.

[73] Ibid., p. 5.

[74] Rene Romain Roth, *Raoul H. France and the Doctrine of Life* (Bloomington: First Books Library, 2000), p. 116. See also Oliver Botar, "Raoul France and National Socialism: A Problematic Relationship," a paper given to the Fifth International Congress of Hungarian Studies, Jyvaskyla, Finland, 2011. I thank Professor Botar for sharing with me this unpublished paper.

Lebensphilosophie—the philosophy of life (*Leben*) or living experience (*Erleben*)—was rooted in bodily experiences seen as extending and perhaps contradicting the conventional interests of philosophy. Largely speaking, the chronology of *Lebensphilosophie* should trace its course from the early anti-Enlightenment origins to romanticism, the Dilthey-Nietzsche period, early modernism, political radicalism, and finally to Nazism and the fusion of *Lebensphilosophie* with biopolitics.

The first *Lebensphilosophers* were identified with the late eighteenthcentury, provegetarian *Diatatiks* and early environmentalism.[75] But not until the turn of the nineteenth century did *Lebensphilosophie* become a widely shared vocabulary. The first journal dedicated to *Lebensphilosophie* was established during the 1790s, and by the 1830s a few books attested to the popularity of the new approach, often trying to gain legitimacy from classical sources in Greek and Roman philosophy.[76] In 1827 the Jena romantics did much to further the aestheticization of *Lebensphilosophie*, and the most notable work that emerged from this milieu was Friedrich von Schlegel's *Vorlesungen uber die Philosophie des Lebens* (Lectures about the philosophy of life, 1827).[77] Schlegel attacked the systematic philosophy of the day and advocated "*einheit der Gesinnung*" (unity of conviction) against the Kantian separation of cognition and analysis from the world. As Robert J. Richards shows in his comprehensive *Romantic Conception of Life*, the majority of the romantics in Germany shared this inclination to freedom outside scientific and materialistic boundaries; they would rather focus on the concept of life, or "life force" (*Lebenskraft*), as they liked to call it, an idea that suggested, "at least according to Schelling, that nature could act freely, without constraint of natural law."[78] Peter Reill's stimulating *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* demonstrates that the romantic science of nature—*Naturphilosophie*—created a new worldview at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and should be understood as a new "'dynamic language' of nature . . . [that] stood in stark contrast to the language of change evolved by Enlightened vitalists."[79] In the German *Naturphilosophie*, science-oriented romantics such as Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869)—one of Klages's sources of inspiration—placed the soul above any matter and the image above the object. "Carus, as all of the *Natur-*

[75] *Lebensphilosophie* should be identified with popular philosophy. It was initially discussed as an Enlightenment paradigm, especially when thinkers like J. G. H. Feder tried to make categorical observations popularized by the *Diatatiks* and eighteenth-century protectors of nature. The most comprehensive historical study of *Lebensphilosophie* was written by Gudrun Kuhne-Bertram. According to her periodization, it emerged in the period between 1770 and 1830 and was closely related to ancient Greek and Roman philosophy. See Kuhne-Bertram, *Aus dem Lebenzum Leben*, p. 85.

[76] Kuhne-Bertram indicated that Dilthey often mentioned the "romische Lebensphilosophie." Ibid., p. 72.

[77] The book has been translated as Friedrich von Schlegel, *The Philosophy of Life and the Philosophy of Language: In a Course of Lectures* (New York: AMS Press, 1855).

[78] Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 292-293.

[79] Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment*, p. 220.

philosophen," writes Reill, "did not consider the body the determinant of the psyche, but rather the vessel of its spiritual principles."[80]

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Novalis (the pseudonym of Friedrich von Hardenberg), Ignaz Paul Vitalis Troxler, and Lorenz Oken can all be considered contributors to a philosophy devoted to ur-images and to the soul of nature, often contrasted with the post-Kantian motivation for *Bildung* (education, cultivation, and civilization). After the contributions of Friedrich Nietzsche and Wilhelm Dilthey, German philosophers took another step away from empirical and measured nature, deeper into the unquantifiable soul, both collective and individual. As Anne Harrington shows in her work on holism in German science, the metaconcepts of *Ganzheit* (whole), *Leben* (life), and *Erleben* (living experience) stood above all, demonstrating how tropes of life served both consciously or unconsciously, both constructing a sense of reality and simultaneously used as tools for understanding it, portraying both the collective as a complete, united, harmonious form and the individual soul as its seed, letter, image.[81] Supplying an ideal—often fictive—notion of the past, *Naturphilosophie* and early *Lebensphilosophie* stood against the more authoritarian voice of historicism. The gap was bridged with Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics of life. Hans-Georg Gadamer, looking back at the process that led from the early nineteenth century's organic and empirical language to Dilthey's hermeneutics, concludes that "[Dilthey's] coined word *Erlebnis*, of course, expresses the criticism of Enlightenment rationalism, which . . . emphasized the concept of life [*Leben*]."[82]After rebelling against the Enlightenment rationality, *Lebensphilosophie* rebelled against the conventional voice of nineteenth-century historians who depicted history as a clear story line, made up of facts, known events, and a chain of great figures. *Lebensphilosophie*'s version of history argued in favor of a factual but nonlinear and anti-enlightened storyline. During the nineteenth century, then, *Lebensphilosophie* chose the path of resistance to consensual forms of thinking. This rebelliousness became its credo during the early 1900s.

The editors of the *Historisches Worterbuch der Philosophie* (The historical dictionary of philosophy) identified early twentieth-century *Lebensphilosophie* with German or German-educated thinkers such as Ludwig Klages, Theodor Lessing, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Oswald Spengler, and Richard Muller-Freienfels. These names mean little if anything to readers of our own day, but they were known to every reader of the early 1900s newspapers. These men brought the philosophy of life into the heart of the artistic community, popularized the philosophy as a weltanschauung, and, most importantly, helped rework the vocabulary as a political and a temporal tool. "Totality, whole, organism—these are the leading concepts of this perspective on life . . . The

[80] Ibid., p. 233.
[81] Harrington, *Reenchanted Science*.
[82] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 62.

development of reality would be judged here not as progress or development, but as eternal cyclical rotation [*Kreislauf*]."[83]

The *Historisches Worterbuch* defines *Lebensphilosophie* as a cluster of concepts and describes it as a uniquely German phenomenon, unknown to Anglophone or Francophone cultures.[84] Its principal advocates, according to the editors of the dictionary, made up the school of life hermeneutics that sprang from Wilhelm Dilthey during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The movement, they argue, developed in a few directions, united by an emphasis on resistance. An alternative to normative culture, the movement mostly focused on the relationship between biology (or psychology) and the philosophical understanding of life. What, then, was the source of its power?

If a lesson has to be drawn here, it concerns the power of words. "I take the world to be a vast symbolic language," Klages wrote as early as 1910, "which must be deciphered by speculative absorption. We do not observe facts, but look them in the face and ask what vital pulse, what secret constructive impulse, or what evolution of the soul, seems to speak in these lines."[85] Unfortunately, Klages did not have the courage to look his own words "in the face" at the end of World War II. He peered back to the early 1920s, a period of radicalism and openness to Jews, and then he performed a series of surgical operations on his own archive and his post-1933 correspondence. Many letters from those years are missing; some entire years are gone. Sometimes it is just one line here or there blacked out with pen, but one can still manage to make out the humiliating passages about Jewish erudite "apes" and American efficient "murderousness."

The end was not pretty for Klages. Still, it was his *Lebensphilosophie* that seduced both the educated (*gebildet*) and the intellectual elite, before the Nazi butchers pounced on it, and it is that early discourse that is still very much present in our intellectual surroundings. By refusing to accept responsibility for their own mistakes, which included making *Lebensphilosophie* the sole reservoir of metaphors for German right-wing reactionaries, *Lebensphilosophers* who survived the war guaranteed its suppression. That earlier *Lebensphilosophie* flourished, thanks to the Jewish intellectuals who carried it across the borders of Germany. Walter Benjamin was only the best known among them. The current

stress on life within the context of biopolitical critique closes a circle by bringing the present back to a set of terms and emphases of the 1920s. As argued in the following

[83] "Totalitat, Ganzheit, Organismus sind die leitenden Begriffe dieser Lebensanschauung . . . Die Entwicklung des Wirklichkeit wird nicht als Fortschritt, als Entwicklung, sondern als ewiger Kreislauf aufgefasst." G. Pflug, "Lebensphilosophie," in *Historisches Worterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 5, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Grunder (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), p. 135.

[84] *Historisches Worterbuch der Philosophie*, s.v. "Lebensbezug," "Lebenserfahrung," "Lebensreformen," "Lebensgefuhl," "Lebenskategorien," "Lebenskraft," "Lebenskreis," "Lebensphilosophie."

[85] Ludwig Klages, *The Science of Character*, trans. W. H. Johnston (Cambridge: Sci-Art Publications, 1932), p. 35. Originally in Klages, *Prinzipien der Charakterologie* (1910). I have modified the translation.

chapters, we are still trying to come to terms with the radical aesthetics of that period and its impact on our politics and ethics.

In 1933 Eric Voegelin wrote in *Race and State*, "In general we recommend that those who have so much to say about spirit and soul read, among other things, some works by Klages—not in order to adopt his theories but simply to learn what they are actually dealing with."[86] Let us, then, examine some works by Klages.

[86] Eric Voegelin, *Race and State*, trans. Ruth Hein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), p. 82.

1. From the Beginning of Life to the End of the World

In May 1932 Ludwig Klages, a pioneer of modern vitalism and of graphology, published the third and final volume of *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (Spirit as the adversary of the soul). An autodidact, Klages compiled in this book almost 20 years' worth of research and publication. Developing a system he hoped would remedy a world gone mad, Klages began by rejecting all limits and boundaries, proposing in their stead a philosophy based on "life's flow" (*Strom des Lebens*) and "the reality of images" (*Wirklichkeit der Bilder*). The two concepts were heavily embedded in the jargon of *Lebensphilosophie*, a concept identified with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), and Henri Bergson (1859-1941) in the late nineteenth century. All three philosophers, and Klages in turn, tried to reassess the contribution of German idealism to contemporary culture. In so doing, they rejected the notion of a scientific telos and idealist truth value in favor of an "aesthetic fundamentalism."[1] While Nietzsche, Dilthey, and Bergson are considered to be "serious" philosophers, Klages is considered by the historians and thinkers discussed in this book as the principal father of Nazi rhetoric and a vital promoter of the irrational opposition to Enlightenment values.

Klages's case is a paradigmatic one. Like other radical conservatives, he observed Nazism as a movement of the masses that served as a temporary transporter of much deeper philosophies. Like other opportunists, he considered using Nazism for his own purposes, and then found himself cheated by it and betrayed by his fellow party representatives. As I will show in this chapter and beyond, the heart of Klages's agreement with the Nazi credo rested in its anti-Semitic messages. Klages identified Judaism and its forms as objectionable on a biological basis but also as a philosophy and a form. His philosophical interest did not make his virulent anti-Semitism easier to absorb. He

[1] I use here the concept Stefan Breuer explored in a book under this title. Unlike Breuer's claim that "aesthetic fundamentalism is not to be separated from particular preand meta-theoretical assumptions; above and beyond this, it always aspires to a praxis" (*der a sthetische Fundamentalismus ist von bestimmten pra - und metatheoretischen Vorgaben nicht abzulo sen und zielt darilber hinaus immer schon auf eine Praxis*)," fundamental aesthetics in *Lebensphilosophie* would be viewed as the result of an immanent cosmology that sees all aesthetic forms as the expression of a cosmic temporality. These are not empty words, in spite of their pompous tone. A cosmic temporality implies a flow and immediacy and the result of a matching ontology of images, out of which all forms are viewed as concrete and fundamental simultaneously. See Stefan Breuer, *Asthetischer Fundamentalismus, Stefan George und der deutsche Antimodernismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), p. 6.

adopted the stereotypes of Jews readily enough, but he was willing to ignore those stereotypes when he found individual Jews to be more faithful to the discourse of *Leben*, against their "Molochism."[2] Interestingly enough, on the occasions when Klages expressed intellectual admiration, it was more often for Jews than for non-Jewish Germans. Three Jews— Theodor Lessing, a childhood friend, and Karl Wolfskehl and Richard Perls, two Jewish disciples of Stefan George—made the most radical impression on him during the first three decades of his life, and he admired Melchior Palagyi, a Hungarian Jewish philosopher and physicist, in the second half of his life. Indeed, anti-Semitism seems too simple an answer in his case. Not because it is not a possibility at all, but because it cannot be comprehended from its later interpretation and application by national socialism. The defining conflicts of Klages's early adulthood, with Theodor Lessing and Stefan George, indicate just how important this issue was for Klages, well before he encountered a more disciplined theory of race.

This significance, however, has no bearing on the question of political and moral responsibility; in what follows I shall attempt to historicize and move *with* Klages and his thought, not against it, as if from the point of view of an anachronistic judgment. As a result, this chapter, and the book as a whole, will illustrate a set of themes by way of Klages's relationships with those whom he thought were representing them: Stefan George and his circle;[3] Theodor Lessing, the faithful Jewish and idealist childhood friend; and the love affair with the Bohemian feminist Franziska zu Reventlow and her ironic commentary about the "jargon of life superlatives" in Munich.[4]

If Klages can be taken to represent *Lebensphilosophie*, an historical and theoretical peek is required to pursue the gradual politicization and Nazification of Germanic life. Otherwise, one could easily miss the intensity and gravity with which Klages and his fellow *Lebensphilosophers* used the concepts of life and form, whole and immanence, lifetime and living experience.

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[2] As K. Kluncker explained about Klages and others: "The concept [of] Molochis[m] signified every advocate of life-adversary, or the principle of [abstract, empty] intellectualization. In 1900 this was not yet the mark of anti-Semitic racial doctrine . . . Yet Klages . . . identified Molochist admiration with the cult of the Jewish divinity." Karl Wolfskehl Friedrich Gundolf Briefwechsel, 1899-1931, ed. K. Kluncker (London: University of London, 1977), p. 277.

[3] By the George circle I mean the close group of admirers who worked with George during the first half of the twentieth century. This group has been identified and well researched by scholars, beginning in the late 1910s and continuing to the present. The list of contributors to this research is way too long to be fully indicated here, so I mention only a small selection of the most recent work: Breuer, *Asthetischer Fundamentalismus*; Robert E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Jens Rieckmann, ed., *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005); Thomas Karlauf, *Stefan George. Die Entdeckung des Charisma* (Munich: Blessing Verlag, 2007); Ulrich Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister: Stefan Georges Nachleben* (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 2009).

[4] Grafin Franziska zu Reventlow, *Herrn Dames Aufzeichnungen; oder, Begebenheiten aus einem merkwurdigen Stadtteil* (1902; reprint, Munich: Albert Langen, 1913), p. 32.

1. The life before the life: Klages, Lessing, and George in the 1890s

Born in Hanover in 1872, Ludwig Klages lived most of his youth with a younger sister, an authoritative father, and a sentimental aunt.[5] His mother died giving birth to his sister. His father, a salesman and a former military officer, tried to provide Klages with the education and discipline that would allow him to climb the social ladder. According to Klages's later recollections, his father relied on a tough approach in dealing with his intelligent son. Perhaps because of the trouble he had communicating with his father, in childhood Klages developed a fantasy world largely shaped by the romantic literature of the period. In the unpublished notes for an autobiography, he proudly described his childhood visions, narrating his tale in the third person: "When he was far from other people, and away from school assignments, . . . the cloth of his body was torn and filled with his magical soul: the chairs in the room started to talk, the tapestry on the walls was cut into faces."[6]

At his high school, Klages befriended Theodor Lessing, a young Jewish student strongly drawn to romanticism. (Lessing already possessed a remarkable intellectual curiosity and would later become an important contributor to *Lebensphilosophie* himself.) The literary and fantasy world the two shared blurred the social differences between them. Lessing's family was richer, thanks to his father's medical clinic; Klages did better at school. But society would intrude. According to Lessing, "Ludwig's father did not view his son's fraternization with '*Juden*' [Jews] as acceptable."[7] In spite of their own rocky relationship, Klages later came to agree with his father's anti-Semitism. He commented on Lessing's memoirs, published after his old friend's death, "The most grotesque statement made by Lessing is that he was a 'friend of the house.' In fact, he was never welcomed, and finally was prohibited from visiting. Klages senior could not tolerate—'smell' was his expression—Lessing."[8] The correspondence between the two confirmed Klages's recollection. In a letter to Lessing written in 1890, Klages announced: "Your name is banned in our house. It is seen as a satanic residue of hell

[5] For the following sketch of Klages's childhood, I have relied heavily on the information in Hans Eggert Schroder, *Ludwig Klages; die Geschichte seines Lebens*, vol. 1: *Das Jugend* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1972), pp. 3-47. See also Schroder's vol. 2: *Das Werk*.

[6] "Wenn er fern von allen Menschen, wenn er frei von Schularbeiten, von Sitten und Erinnerungen, wenn er ganz mit sich allein, dann zerreisst und verraucht dies Korperleid seiner Magierseele: die Stuhle im Zimmer beginnen zu sprechen, die Tapeten schneiden Gesichter." Deutsche Literaturarchiv am Marbach (henceforth DLA), Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konvolut: "Aufzeichnungen von Klages aus den Jahren 1943-54," Sig. 61.6380, p. 20.

[7] Theodor Lessing, *Einmal und Nie Wieder* (1935; reprint, Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Sachbuchverlag, 1969), p. 181.

[8] "Kl. Senior konnte den Lg., wie man zu sagen pflegt, 'nicht riechen.'" DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv. Prosa:, Bemerkungen zu Theodor Lessings 'Einmal und Nie Wieder,' Sig.: 61.3796, comment no. 16, Kilchberg, dated October 23, 1946.

Figure 1.1 The portrait of Ludwig Klages as a young man, *ca.* 1895. Photo: Veritas Munich. DLM: Ludwig Klages Nachlass.

itself, a despicable stain."[9] Here and in other letters written during the early 1890s, Klages tells Lessing how he fought to preserve their friendship in spite of his father's disapproval.

In 1891 Klages moved to Leipzig, where, following his father's instructions, he decided to study industrial chemistry. But the lively artistic and philosophical scene in Munich presented an irresistible temptation. Upon arriving in Munich in 1893, he lived for a short while at the same boardinghouse as Stefan George. George, a decade older than Klages and already beginning to enjoy the local fame his poetry and mysticism brought him, befriended the new arrival. Two years later, Lessing followed Klages to Munich. Klages had showed George some of his friend's writings, but the response was not positive: "Stefan George thinks that there is too little that is positive in your book."[10] In a slight every author feels keenly, George remarked: "The author must be very young."[11] Lessing wrote about the strain of their friendship in his autobiography, "Klages's friendship with Stefan George was the first cause of our alienation."[12] Rebutting another section of Lessing's posthumous book, Klages insisted, "Lessing's report about his meetings with George is full of lies. It was Klages that showed Lessing's writings to George; the latter was nauseated and utterly refused to meet the author."[13]

As Klages's study of chemistry—inspired equally by his father's insistence as by Goethe's metaphors—could not serve as a vehicle for the ideas he developed under the influence of Stefan George, he switched to a program in psychology and philosophy. His academic mentor was Theodor Lipps (1851-1914), a philosopher and expert in psychology and aesthetics, who theorized an understanding of empathy on the basis of its psychological appearance or expression. In developing his aesthetics, Lipps focused on the need to systematize the notion of inner experience (*Wissenschaft der inneren Erfahrung*) on the basis of physical and apparent forms.[14] Klages translated this inner experience first in pure, aesthetic terms; even as he caved to his father's pressure and prepared his thesis in chemistry, he contributed a number of poems and brief articles to George's journal, *Blatter fur die Kunst* (literally, Pages for the arts) that reflected

[9] "Dein Name darf hier im Hause nicht mehr genannt werden, Das ist Abschaum der Holleleibhaftiger Statnverruchter Verderber." Klages to Lessing, Hannover 1890, letter 4, quoted in Elke-Vera Kotowski, *Feindliche Dioskuren, Theodor Lessing und Ludwig Klages; das Scheitern einer Jugendfreundschaft (1885-1899)* (Berlin: Judische Verlaganstalt, 2000), p. 110.

[10] Lessing, *Einmal*, p. 303. (This is an undated letter.)

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 420.

[13] "Aber Gg. Fuhlte sich von Lg.s Versen angewidert un lehnte es durchaus ab, mit dem Verfasser in Beruhrung zu kommen." DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv.: Prosa, "Zu: Einmal und Nie Wieder = E'," Sig.: 61.3796, comment no. 30.

[14] "Two points of view must be necessary for the shaping of the primary concept of philosophy, the practical and the historical . . . Both perspectives realize the definition of philosophy as a humanities [*Geistwissenschaft*] or a science of inner experience. The inner experience is grounded in psychology, logic, aesthetic, ethic of the relevant discipline, and finally metaphoric ...Their objects are the imagination, the sensation, the act of will, and what separates them from other sciences." Theodor Lipps, *Grundtatsachen des Seelenlebens* (Bonn: Max Cohen and Sohn Verlag, 1883), p. 3.

the great interest he took in both Lipps's philosophy and George's poetry. Lipps and George served as authority figures—Klages had little use for his father, who deeply resented his son's academic rebellion. Nevertheless, on July 1, 1900, Klages received his doctorate in philosophy, after altering his topic to suit a philosophical discourse and against the explicit wishes of his father.

Klages's friendship with Lessing was a casualty of Klages's intense commitment to the new ideas he encountered in Munich. Lessing's description of the end of the relationship bears all the marks of the sort of romantic schoolboy alliance familiar to readers of Thomas Mann's stories: "When we separated in 1900, I sent back many of Klages' letters . . . He later destroyed every sign of our friendship . . . It is his great pride that made him see that all he hated in himself, the entirety of his will to power [*seinen Willen zur Macht*], his indoctrinated pride, his cold drive . . . everything was related to my name and the sign of my blood and what is called the marks of my race. And the more Ludwig Klages felt that this friendship had been an error, [the more he wished to] rip off this holy bond, and the more he felt he needed to forget me."[15] As Elke-Vera Kotowski has recently shown in the only comprehensive narrative of the relationship, the friendship managed to survive until their radically different political and social paths drew the men apart. Close friendship, strong competitiveness, self-distancing, and enmity characterized the course of Klages's relationship with Lessing. A close attachment ended in radical expressions of hatred and racial stereotyping.[16] A very similar course would also characterize his relationship with Karl Wolfskehl, the best-known follower—Jewish and pro-Zionist—of Stefan George.

Klages appears to have been happy to let his new Munich acquaintances blot out all thought of Lessing. Later, when he was asked about this friendship, he either ignored the question or explained it as a youthful error. But in time two disturbing events joined Klages's name to that of Lessing. The first was the incident known in the press as the Lessing case. The second was Lessing's murder and the posthumous publication of his memoirs.

In April 1925, while teaching at Hannover's Technische Hochschule (technical college), Lessing published an article against Paul von Hindenburg's presidency in a Prague journal. Hardly an exercise in sober reasoning, the article described Hindenburg as "a servant . . . a symbol of representation, a question mark, a zero. One might say: better to have a zero than a Nero. Unfortunately history shows us that behind every zero a crafty Nero is always hiding."[17] The Hannover newspaper picked up the article, revised it in a sensationalist vein to emphasize the more scandalous passages, and silently omitted the more reasoned parts. The reactions were outraged and violent.

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[15] Lessing, *Einmal*, p. 416.

[16] Kotowski, *Feindliche Dioskuren*. See also Rainer Marwedel, *Theodor Lessing 1872-1933. Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt: Luchterhand Verlag, 1987), and E. Jain, "*Der Humanitatsgedanke bei Theodor Lessing.* Auf der Suche nach den Prinzipien des Lebens," in *Prima Philosophia* 15:3 (2002): 351-362.

[17] Lessing's article is quoted in August Messer, *Der Lessing Fall, Eine objective Darstellung und kritische Wurdigung* (Bielefeld: Gustav Wittler Verlag, 1926), pp. 20-21.

Hannover's local administration encouraged the student organization to respond to Lessing's diatribe. The chancellor at the school kept his distance from the affair for fear of being incriminated as an assistant to an unpatriotic Jew. With the support of the vice chancellor, who orchestrated much of the protest, the students called on the chancellor to fire Lessing immediately. After a final meeting with the reluctant chancellor, Lessing decided to leave Germany for Prague. Minutes kept at the student meetings and at Lessing's meeting with the chancellor reveal strong anti-Semitic undertones, as do the reports about the affair published in the German newspapers. Gangs of students gathered to march in front of Lessing's house and the school, and his house was vandalized by a student gang, with the blessing of the school administration and the town's police. As Lessing reported in his diaries, the chancellor finally yielded to the growing pressure and sent a letter to the student organization, arguing that "Lessing cannot be considered an educator of German youth." Lessing, deeply hurt, commented: "This was told about a fifty-three-year old scholar who has . . . dedicated all his time [to the German youth] for thirty years, and was removed as if [he] knew nothing."[18] According to Lessing's own account, more than 400 newspapers reported on the affair. Hans Driesch, the most important biologist in Germany, himself a proponent of *Lebensphilosophie*, called the affair a case of the "German Dreyfus," but where, he asked, would Germany find its "German Zola"?[19]

In fact, one candidate did aspire to the job; among the small number of people willing to defend Lessing publicly was another *Lebensphilosopher* from Giessen, August Messer (1867-1937). He sent an article protesting Lessing's treatment to the Hannover paper, but it was rejected on the grounds that Messer had "misunderstood Lessing's arguments."[20] Messer then decided to publish the article in his own review, *Philosophie und Leben* (Philosophy and life), and later expanded it into a book.[21] In the book he republished not only Lessing's article and his own, but also Lessing's later reflections about the scandal, including a strong protest against the anti-Semitic tone of the incident. The book, *Der Fall Lessing*: *Eine objective Darstellung und kritische Wiirdigung* (1926), did not win much public acclaim, and—unlike Lessing's attack—was quickly forgotten.

Lessing escaped from Germany immediately after Hitler was appointed. He assumed, correctly, that his life was in danger. In February 1933 Lessing had moved to Prague and then to Kurbad Marienbad (Marianske Lazne) and published articles against anti-Semitism and the radical German nationalism from there. His articles, often presenting a SocialDemocratic interpretation of *Lebensphilosophie*, were viewed as a serious threat to the regime, and he was finally murdered by three Nazi agents, shot through the windows of his study. The murderers quickly returned to Germany and were never

[18] Quoted in ibid., p. 23.

[19] Quoted in Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 191.

[20] Messer, *Der Lessing Fall*, p. 40.

[21] Messer's journal was shut down in 1933 by the Nazi regime.

brought to trial, in spite of a quick and thorough investigation by the Czech authorities, which exposed their identity. Although he was said to have been angered by the crime, Klages nevertheless continued to contest fiercely the account of their friendship that appeared posthumously in Lessing's book. His rebuttal includes much anti-Semitism and deep scorn for "the Jew Lessing," or even, the year after the Kristallnacht pogrom, referring to Lessing as the typical "ghetto Jew."[22]

In his autobiography, *E inmal und Nie Wieder* (1935), Lessing describes accepting Klages as the dominant figure in their relationship. It appears that he continued to admire him to the day of his death, as a photograph of Lessing's study taken after his murder in Marienbad shows a number of pictures that were arranged one above the other on the wall. The highest is a picture of Ludwig Klages; underneath are Arthur Schopenhauer, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Wilhelm Jordan.[23] From our perspective it is difficult to imagine a Jewish socialist admiring such an awkward mixture of characters and their ideas. As indicated by Lessing's readings in *Lebensphilosophie*, such a mixture made enough sense for a veteran of the 1920s.

Lessing never denied the strong influence Klages had on his thought, in spite of his sympathy and commitment to the political left. Though he had studied with Theodor Lipps and Edmund Husserl, Lessing seems to have been incapable of producing philosophical writings that did not echo the style and approach of Klages. In October 1925, when the storm over his Hindenburg article was bearing down on him, Lessing submitted a short text to the journal *Junge Menschen*, an organ of the German youth movement. In this text, Lessing employed the Klagesian dichotomies of *Geist* (spirit) and *Seele* (soul), temporary and eternal, and rejected the Cartesian notion of extension as the expression of the godly universe. "The spirit that strove to extension can be called flat," he wrote. "It flattens the soul into loneliness, [to] the unsocial . . . All that is human is historical, temporal. I, however, consider myself in terms of other powers, . . . the clouds, the sea, the wind, the mountains, the forests."[24] Even in this text, possibly Lessing's most personal and explicitly confessional, he employed the language he had gleaned from his old friend and from their youthful obsession with Wilhelm Jordan (1819-1904)—the liberal thinker who advocated a "gesunden Volksegoismus" (a healthy national egoism) and popularized the Niebelungen myth—and Schopenhauer. For both Klages and Lessing, the most fundamental elements of existence common to those three thinkers transgressed all possible forms, most importantly, linearity.

No study of Klages could be complete without an appraisal of his antiSemitism, and no study that acknowledges the connections between life and thought can ignore the trajectory of Klages's relations with Lessing. When the friendship cooled, Klages

[22] Klages wrote but never published a series of comments in response to Lessing's autobiography, which apparently bothered him much. DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv: Prosa, "Zu: Einmal und Nie Wieder = E'," Sig.: 61.3796. See his comment from the year 1939.

[23] See Kotowski, *Feindliche Dioskuren*, p. 124.

[24] Quoted in Messer, *Der Lessing Fall*, p. 12.

convinced himself that his interest in Lessing had been quite "scientific."[25] After his rejection from the George group, Lessing saw himself dissected in an essay on the "psychology of idealism" that Klages published in 1906; the subject was "Ahasver, a poet."[26] In the essay Klages described the stereotypical Jew, clearly implied by the allusion to Ahasver, the traditional German wandering Jew: "He is emotional . . . with little self-assurance . . . His behavior is utterly formless and immediate, . . . yet he is a 'poet,' a man who aspires to the highest morality . . . This poet is an 'idealist.' . . . He cannot live without the appearance of greatness."[27] Only years later did Klages admit that "Ahasver" was indeed the description of Lessing. (Lessing was accurate when identifying himself with this "type.") Writing of himself in the third person, Klages revealed, "In this essay, Klages is 'Peer Gynt, a philosopher,' and Lessing the idealist 'Ahasver.' . . . The essay was first published in 1906, but existed already in 1895, which shows only . . . the extent to which Klages had seen through his friend."[28] If accurate, Klages's later recollections prove the existence of his anti-Semitism— still cultural and nonviolent but nevertheless virulent—in place during the height of this period of friendship. The year 1895, we recall, was a time when Klages and Lessing were reunited in Munich and under the influence of George.

In a manner similar to that in which he confronted other problematic issues connected to his past, Klages employed a strategy of suppression and erasure when he transformed his erstwhile friend into a generalized type. More important, he equated Jewishness with idealism. The implication, in discursive terms, is that Klages equated resistance to idealism with resistance to the social status of Jews. The opposition he created was thus a clash between two systems of narratives.

As time went on, circumstances obliged a formally apolitical Klages to clarify the political implications of his philosophy, especially with regard to the categories of life (*Leben).* The period between 1899 and

1904 was crucial for this process. Ludwig Klages tormented himself with two paranoid obsessions: he worried constantly about being pursued and persecuted by the Jewish press, and he saw himself as the victim of a widespread conspiracy of his own epigones, from Schwabing to Berlin. Lessing, in his mind, was only the most obvious among them. Though he never acknowledged it, these two fears involved a great deal of overlap. Perhaps the disciple Klages feared most, we learn in *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, was Lessing, whom Klages constantly accused of recycling ideas he had pioneered. Needless to mention, Klages utterly denied any value to Lessing's contribution to *Lebensphilosophie* and refused to admit any positive effect from him. The

[25] DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv: Prosa, "Zu: Einmal und Nie Wieder = E'," Sig.: 61.3796.

[26] Both Lessing and Klages's comments are quoted at length in Lessing's book. See Lessing, *Einmal*, p. 419.

[27] Ludwig Klages, *Zur Ausdruckslehre und Charakterkunde* (Heidelberg: Niels Kampmann Verlag, 1927), pp. 151-157. Quoted passages appear on pp. 152 and 156.

[28] "Wie weit schon zu jener Zeit Kl. den Freund durchschaut hatte." DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv.: Prosa, "Zu: Einmal und Nie Wieder = E'," Sig.: 61.3796, comment no. 49.

rebellious socialist turn this philosophy took with Lessing stood for an active act of "betrayal."[29]

From the existing state of the Klages archive, it is clear he made a conscious effort to erase any trace of interest in Lessing or to ignore him during the later part of his life. He makes no mention of Lessing in his extant letters and the only mention of Lessing was by another of Klages's correspondents, Hans Prinzhorn, one of his major disciples and a well-known theoretician of psychology. (I will return to Prinzhorn and the "Deussen case" in chapters 4 and 6.) Prinzhorn called the matter "wretched" but confessed to be "confused," an ambiguous assessment that implies some political sympathy for Lessing's critique but a resentment of its bearer.[30] The issue was clarified verbally, because there is no further discussion of it in their exchange. The only exception to the rule came in 1936, when a young and rebellious disciple of Klages named Julius Deussen mentioned Lessing as a source of inspiration for Klages and his philosophy. The other Klages disciples launched a vicious counterattack, with Klages himself pulling the strings. They informed the Gestapo that Deussen was half Jewish, a rather serious accusation at this time. The episode forced Deussen to quit his hometown and abandon all of his philosophical aspirations.

2. A comment about Klages's early (cultural) anti-semitism

Klages's anti-Semitism is one of the clear characteristics that appear throughout the different periods of his life and philosophy and unite them. But it is covered with different mantles in different periods. As shown in his relationship with Lessing, his anti-Semitism was present in the relationship from a very early stage of the friendship, first in latent forms—presented by Klages's father—and then becoming more and more explicit, as Klages repositioned himself vis-a-vis his father, his colleagues, his childhood friend, and, most importantly—as will be shown in later chapters—his philosophical and political context. His anti-Semitism was veiled by differentiating the individual from the group and by the historical typology that linked Judaism to Christianity—

[29] DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv: Prosa, "Zu: Einmal und Nie Wieder = E'," Sig.: 61.3796.

[30] In a letter to Klages written in June 1926, Prinzhorn wrote: "The whole wretched affair is very confusing . . . I distinguish the political from the academic and the scientific . . . It sends one back to Munich in 1900 and to Franziska Reventlow's correct notion of intuition . . . The whole thing is rather risky." [Die durchaus klagliche Affare Lessing und die Desorientiertheit der Menschen, die sich damit beschatigten, veranlasste mich zu einem Aufsatze "Problemverwirrung, zeitgeshichtliche Glossen zum 'Fall Lessing,' in dem ich getrennt behandelte das politishe, das akademische, das wissenschaftliche, das personliche Problem und bei dem wissenschaftlichen auf die Munchner Zeit um 1900 zuruckgriff, um unter Hinweis auf Franziska Reventlow das wahre Verhaltnis zu Intuition, produktiver Kraft und betriebsamer Geschicklichkeit ohne eindeutiges Muss und ohne Personlichkeitsgewicht darzulegen. Die Sache ist etwas riskiert.] Prinzhorn to Klages, June 24, 1926, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv.: 24.6.1926, Sig.: 61.11624, letter no. 17.

both "religions of the spirit" had undermined the grounds for a new beginning, said Klages.[31] Not the Jew, but Judea and Judas possessed the primal Jewish character; the modern Jew was not biologically determined but culturally conditioned. Yet, even when Klages spoke in terms that scholars characterize as "cultural anti-Semitism,"[32] his store of images was taken from the philosophy of biology and closer, then, to racial anti-Semitism. During the fin-de-siede heyday in Munich, while shifting his loyalties from Lessing to George, Klages started to rationalize his anti-Semitism in a physiognomic and graphological research. If one's handwriting expressed one's cultural attributes—it was possible to find out about the typical Judeo-Christian *geistlichkeit* (spirituality, intellectuality), according to Klages—it also revealed the influence of "roots" and "origin," or bodily characteristics. Though there was variety among the Jews, all evinced a certain hysteria, materialism, and decadence, and Klages proceeded to find those Jews who proved the exception. Lessing became an object of research and observation, a "type."

Klages grounded his first observations in a more systematic system than his own. During the late 1890s, Klages became interested—even obsessed—with the writings of the philosophical critic Eugen Duhring (1833-1921), the Prussian critic of Marx and advocate of "heroic materialism," known to English speakers mostly from Friedrich Engels's *Anti-Diihring* (1878); there is hardly any reason to doubt Klages's own statements on the subject.[33] As shown by his library, Klages acquired all of Duhring's books. He even succeeded in convincing Theodor Lessing of Duhring's genius, about whom, Lessing wrote, "there is no light without shadows, and no shadows without light."[34] Duhring was also known as a founder of scientific anti-Semitism and the author of *The Jewish Question as a Question of Race, Morality, and Culture* (1881).[35] Klages, like his hero before him, tried to match racial stereotypes with erudite research on types.

In *From Prejudice to Destruction*, *Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933*, the historian Jacob Katz mentions Eugen Duhring as a major source of modern anti-Semitism: "In Duhring's view, Jews were a unique human species with marked physical and moral characteristics. All those were negative, and they were evident in their record ever

[31] The term "Religionen des Geistes" appears in the context of the "priests and prophets cults" that strive to tackle the notion of death and promise eternity, that is, the opposite of experience and life. Klages calls it the "Wunsch nach Entwirklichung des Todes" (the desire to de-realize death). Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, book 3, vol. 1 (Bonn: H. Bouvier Verlag, 1972), p. 448.

[32] Donald L. Niewyk and Francis R. Nicosia, eds., *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 215.

[33] Schroder, *Ludwig Klages*, vol. 1: *Das Jugend*, p. 103.

[34] Theodor Lessing, *Philosophie als Tat* (Gottingen: Otto Hapke Verlag, 1914), p. 264. This depiction carries some irony, a favorite device of Lessing's. Duhring had succumbed to blindness at the age of 29.

[35] For a short synopsis of the book, see Alex Bein, who identifies it as "[a] classic, fundamental work of anti-Semitism based on the principle of race." Alex Bein, *The Jewish Question: Biography of a World Problem*, trans. Harry Zohn (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990), p. 239.

since the Jews had appeared on the scene of human history."[36] According to Katz, Duhring's type of anti-Semitism has been incorrectly called an "anti-Christian anti-Semitism" because his "did not mean that this anti-Semitism derived from opposition to Christianity."[37] Katz's principal thesis—that antiSemitism at large was the byproduct of "a *continuation* of the pre-modern rejection of Judaism by Christianity"—maintains that Duhring's antiSemitism and anti-Christianity formed an obstacle that had to be downplayed.[38] Katz contends that Klages, like Duhring, believed that the Jew was marked by physiognomic characteristics whose implications were visible in behavior recorded in the Bible.[39] But Klages also moved one step further. If modern culture was the evil conspiracy of a JudeoChristian deadly spiritualization and historicization, *Lebensphilosophie* found the cure, shaping an alternative language.

3. The life jargon in Schwabing

In *Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich*, David Clay Large portrayed the bohemian groups in Munich in the 1890s with "a life of daily rebellion against the conventions and restrictions of bourgeois society."[40] The acclaimed historian of German Nazism, George Mosse, described the bohemian George circle, in the Munich neighborhood of Schwabing, as the important spiritual center, where *volkisch* (folk nationalism) blood and race ideology took hold and thrived. Its two central figures were "the poet Stefan George . . . [and] a promising young man named Ludwig Klages, later to be one of the

ornaments of German philosophy."[41] For Mosse, that was the historical origin of Nazi rhetoric. For the purpose of this book, this meeting of bohemians and artists in Munich marks the origin of a new form of *Lebensphilosophie*.

Geographically the center of the new world Klages had discovered was Cafe Luitpold in Munich's Schwabing district, north of the university.[42] There and in Cafe Stefanie, the city's artistic avant-garde met to feast at the table of ideas set by Stefan George (1868-1933), the "*Meister.*" By the mid-1890s the group adopted a semiotic code that included a metaphysical jargon and mock-Roman attire. Among the leading anticos-

[36] Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 265.

[37] Ibid., p. 266.

[38] Ibid., p. 319 (emphasis in original).

[39] Ibid., p. 265.

[40] David Clay Large, *Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), p. 20.

[41] George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1964), p. 75.

[42] Schwabing became a symbol for later avant-garde circles, as shown in Gerdi Huber, *Das klassische Schwabing, Mu nchen als Zentrum der intellektuellen Zeitund Gesellschaftskritik an der Wende des 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Miscellanea Bavaria Monacensia, 1973).

Figure 1.2 "The Cosmic Circle." From left to right: Karl Wolfskehl, Alfred Schuler, Ludwig Klages, Stefan George, Albert Verwey. Photo: Karl Bauer. DLM: Ludwig Klages Nachlass.

Figure 1.3 Franziska (Fanny) Grafin zu Reventlow, *ca.* 1893.

mopolitan modernists of Schwabing, Large mentions "the ex-Berliner" Theodor Lessing; the "queen of Schwabing," the Countess Franziska zu Reventlow; and the "cosmic circle" or the "criminals of the dream," revolving around Ludwig Klages. Schwabing, to Klages, was "the world suburb in which the fate of the next generation will be decided."[43]

Together with his fellow Georgianers Alfred Schuler and Karl Wolfskehl, Klages developed an obsession with death dances, pagan cults, open eroticism, matriarchy, and anti-Semitism.[44] From an anachronistic perspective "it was culture that generated not only outstanding works of the modernist spirit . . . but also an internal critique of cosmopolitan modernity and political liberalism that could easily be embraced by the Nazis and their *volkisch* allies."[45]

In more precise terms, the process began at the point of fusion of the concept of life (as a philosophical view), the creation of a new poetic language, a social-geographical center, and a well-shaped context. The heroes of Franziska zu Reventlow's novel, *Herrn Dames Aufzeichnungen; oder, Begebenheiten aus eimem merkwiirdigen Stadtteil* (The notebooks of Mr. Lady, or occurrences in a certain quarter, 1902), which was inspired by George's group, speak much about a new language of enthusiasm and insist that the alternative culture they belong to has a geographic specificity:

"My dear man," said the philosopher, "'enormous' is a superlative. The superlative of all superlatives. In time you will notice that true Schwabing bohemians [*Wahnmochingers*] speak a special jargon, which you must learn to master if you want to fit in."[46]

As Reinhard Falter shows, Klages identified the countess herself, his lover, as a pure "element of life," as the "fundamental soul" or the "rotating swastika" (drehende Swastika).[47] His own philosophical career was tightly connected with this affair, and the heavy symbolic language of Schwabing. This "jargon" had to be mastered by all who wanted to participate in the cafe culture, and it drew on a lexicon Klages would later exploit in his philosophical writings. Even chitchat was likely to involve talk of *Leben* (life), *Kosmisch* (cosmic), and *Erlebnis* (living experience). "Here *Leben* is so much discussed, and so constantly, as if no aspect of it is self-evident,"[48] wrote Reventlow. Life became so broad a concept that it blurred the boundaries between life and death, aesthetics and actual experiencing, the ancient and the present, the primordial Ur and its fulfillment in the present. In her roman a clef Reventlow presents Klages under the name "Hallwig" and assigns him responsibility for much of this metaphysical jargon, especially that which related to the "cosmic experience of life":

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[43] Large, *Where Ghosts Walked*, p. 26.

[44] Ibid., pp. 27-34.

[45] Ibid., p. xxviii.

[46] Reventlow, *Herrn Dames*, p. 32.

[47] Reinhard Falter, *Ludwig Klages: Lebensphilosophie als Zivilisationskritik* (Treuenbreitzen: Telesam Verlag, 2003), p. 26.

[48] Reventlow, *Herrn Dames*, p. 32.

"Hear me well, Maria," said the philosopher . . . "As your friend Hallwig teaches, it is not we who act, compose, dream, and so on, but the primary substances [*Ursubstanzen*] that are embedded in us. On the topic of the hierarchical order of historical substances [*Rangordnung der historischen Substanzen*], he and Delius appear to disagree, since the latter seems to think they are all Roman, while the first thinks that they are all cosmic."[49]

This perplexes Mr. Lady (the author's stand-in), who is told, "'Mr. Lady, please do not look at me so skeptically . . . The cosmic is what we would call the experiencing [*Erlebnis*], which originated in principle. Dreams, too, would play an important role here.'"[50] Reventlow's irony cannot disguise the fact that the new jargon captivated the imagination of the young and rebellious elite. In particular, it offered the George circle an ultimate and new way to think of reality as nothing but images, an endless play with prehistorical images taken straight from myths and fairy tales. The psychological and social challenge was great: it offered a full exposure of the social and artistic limits of conventions. "Life" became a code word for a new aesthetic agenda, inherently embedded in everyday life and thought. "Praxis" was nothing but an image of its most extreme ends.

In addition to mastering the jargon of the George circle, recent arrivals also had to cope with the intricacies of cafe seating. Many who have written about the period mention the politics of seating, which the group seems to have understood as a tactical and a meaningful declaration about the arts, politics, love, and hate. Stefan George, for example, liked to sit a bit apart so that he might observe without being involved—though in reality he was always the cynosure, even when he did not speak. In his autobiography Lessing recorded a scene rich in detail about the politics of seating:

"I was sitting in [Cafe] Luitpold when George showed up with his inseparable shadow, Karl Wolfskehl. Right after that, my Klages entered the room and, seeing the two poles of his friendship, . . . stood in the middle, between the two tables . . . Wolfskehl invited us to George's table, but I replied that they could come to mine, if he so desired . . . When Klages accused me of foolishness, I answered that it had nothing to do with foolishness: it was a symbol."[51]

By 1897 the mutual influence George and Klages exerted on each other's thinking was clearly recognizable in both their published and unpublished texts. During that period George published a series of books that strove to change the whole poetics of the German language and reshape the relation between word and matter, signifier and signified. The poems reflected the obsession with life and human finality.

From *Das Jahr der Seele* (*The Year of the Soul, 1897)* to *Der Teppich des Lebens und die Lieder von Traum und Tod* (The tapestry of life and the songs of dreams and death, 1899), the vocabulary of the poems owed much to the *Lebensphilosophie*

[49] Ibid., p. 70. Delius in Reventlow's novel represented Stefan George.

[50] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[51] Lessing, *Einmal*, p. 304.

discourse of the time. The latter book gave George the reputation he longed for and made him the bestknown poet of that generation, the *Meister* or the spiritual *Fuhrer.* These honorific titles do not appear to have been applied to George in jest; they referred in all seriousness to a seer at the height of his spiritual powers.[52] In an introductory note to George's poetry journal, *Bla tter fur die Kunst*, from 1896, Karl Wolfskehl referred to George as "the priest of the spirit," capable of discovering a new "*Reich*" of artistic creation. When George declared, "The path to life has been found," his admirers took him seriously and—as Wolfskehl did—integrated it into their own poetic voice.[53] Not satisfied with merely dictating matters of aesthetics and philosophy to his followers, George often had strong opinions on their individual lives and sometimes even their sexual preferences.[54] George's influence and appeal were immense: Georg Simmel and Max Weber—the founders of modern sociology—and the poet Rainer Maria Rilke attended his readings and expressed their admiration. The young Walter Benjamin admired his verse so much that he visited Heidelberg in 1914 just to wait for hours on a bench in order to catch a glimpse of the poet taking his daily walk. One of George's collections, *Der Stern des Bundes* (The star of the covenant, 1913) would later become *the* war book, the one that many soldiers of that generation carried on their way to the trenches of World War I.

The group surrounding George got used to identifying the world with literary phenomena and symbolism with reality. Interestingly, this group also identified such high aestheticism with a revolutionary instinct, an antibourgeois tactic of exposure—via literature—of the artificiality of oppressive norms. Klages often referred to this time as the "*Ibsenzeit*," since everybody was reading Henrik Ibsen, and, via Ibsen, the world. The writings of Nietzsche were also a subject of an intense and enthusiastic debate.[55]

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[52] Several studies of George's poetry and his circle exist. The most recent is the scholarly yet highly readable Norton, *Secret Germany.* For a briefer description of the circle and George as "a poet-seer, a herald of change," see chapter 11 of Mosse, *T he Crisis of German Ideology*, p. 209.

[53] Karl Wolfskehl, "Der Priester vom Gieste. Dichtungen," in *Blatter fur die Kunst* 3:1 (January 1896), in a collection titled *Blatter fur die Kunst, Eine Auslese aus den Jahren 1892-1898* (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1899), p. 125.

[54] George's homosexuality revived the ancient fixation with young boys as an aesthetic value, accompanied by both strong attraction to matriarchalism and deep scorn for women, which will be elaborated later in this chapter. Both Norton and Stefan Breuer (in his *Asthetischer Fundamentalismus*) dedicate much to the revival of Bachofen's late-romantic philosophy.

[55] Ibsen's name keeps recurring in relation to the historicization of the *Jugendstil*, the German equivalent to the French art nouveau. Theodor Adorno discusses Ibsen in relation to his and Benjamin's theorization of the image and the history of the *Jugendstil.* See his letter to Benjamin dated August 2, 1935, in Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. 502. Benjamin referred to Ibsen in *The Arcades Project* as the necessary complementary side to Nietzsche's "philosophy of the noontide." "It is certainly legitimate to ask whether this apperception of time was not an element of *Jugendstil.* If in fact it was, then we would perhaps better understand how, in Ibsen, *Jugendstil* produced one of the greatest technicians of the drama." Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), sec. J74a, 5, p. 360.

Both writers were identified during the early 1900s with an explicit young rebellion against the bourgeois elite and the stasis of Prussian politics. Max Scheler (1874-1928), at that time a young scholar already showing great promise, tended to observe the George circle from a nearby seat, and referred to this utter rejection of conventions as an expression of "aesthetic exasperation."[56] It was certainly a time of searching—searching for that which would permit radical change, searching for a new language that would not surrender to the rules of the aristocratic Wilhelminian period or those of the new bourgeois class, searching for new human types, the ideal society. New and esoteric sciences, as well as mystical philosophies, would figure in the search.

If the group exhibited a sort of orthodoxy in its heterodoxy, one of the features of the orthodoxy rejected by Klages was patriarchy. Much as George longed to assume the role of father figure, Klages insisted on distance.[57] George articulated some of the ambivalence he and Klages both had about the relationship in a poem entitled "L. K.," in which George expresses his yearning, erotic and intellectual, for Klages, accompanied by a bitter complaint about his young friend's unreliability: "And that I often search for you as much as you / arouse in me and to me belong? Do not betray / Can you deny you fly from me more the more I am in you?"[58]

While he could hardly escape from George's strong influence, Klages tried to forge an independent voice on the margins of the group. He began to see George as un-German and rejected George's symbolism because it seemed too French. In contrast to George, Klages argued, he himself emphasized the Germanic image and the German language that led him to try to eliminate the gap between symbol and reality, representation and object. To resolve the paradoxes with which he wrestled, Klages looked into alternative sciences such as graphology and physiognomy. He hoped that these hermeneutic systems could help him show that images were not part of reality or a representation of reality, but reality itself. Fact and image were not interrupted by any process of mimesis. For Klages, aesthetics did not exist in an exterior dimension to the facts, but an inherent aspect of reality. They shaped and created reality, rather than reacting to or describing it.

4. Hallwig and Molochism

In 1897, the same year George published his *Tapestry of Life*, Klages published a short essay in *Blatter fur die Kunst* entitled "Vom Schaffenden" (On creativity). In this early attempt at a theory of poetic creation, Klages contrasted *Leben* (life) with *Verstehen* (understanding), a term coined by Wilhelm Dilthey to stand for the basic

[56] Schroder, *Ludwig Klages*, vol. 1, *Das Jugend*, p. 154.

[57] Ibid., p. 126.

[58] "Und dass ich oft dich suche wie die viel/ In mir erregst und mir gehorst? Verrat nicht/ Dass du mich fliehst wie sehr ich in dir bin?" Stefan George, "L. K.," in *Das Jahr des Seele*, in *Werke*, vol. 1 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p. 151.

connection between life and history as the motto of his philosophy of life, shown by those who "are striving to understand themselves from within themselves."[59] Klages continued to develop this relationship in two later versions of the text and in his later psychological work. Never published, the revisions show much greater theoretical independence—they amounted to a radicalization of Dilthey's *Lebensphilosophie*—and reflect the growing personal tension between Klages and George. In the final version, dated 1899, Klages wrote:

The poetic is not based on different passions, as is generally thought . . . It is also not [a result of] the character of the poet, since many poets were lacking character [*charakterlos*]. Poetry is, rather, the effect of two components: the radical life instinct of youth, which the Greeks called the Dionysian stature . . . and the joy of naming . . . Here we observe the poet's joy in naming. What poetry awakens in us is not the same world that was stolen from us by the language of naked understanding [*blossen Verstandes*]. It is the world of the intricate and it took form within.[60]

In "Vom Schaffenden" Klages limited himself to a general observation concerning the borders between external and internal forms. "The form," he wrote, "is unlearnable as an exact *essence* [*Wesen*] or *temperament.* Only in artistic creation would it take [the shape of] a clear expression."[61] Later he opposed the puritan artistic expression with the idealistic *Geist* [spirit] or the intellectual drive to differentiate and classify, as he put it in 1898, the "manner of the actor and the liar: the Jew,"[62] and as he wrote in 1899, clearly echoing Nietzsche, "The imageless will to power [*Wille zur Macht*] is the true principle of life's enemy, namely, Judaism."[63] Judaism and its ban on iconography expressed to Klages a pure contrast to the essence of things. This position extended beyond Judaism, as two years later he associated the *Geist* with the very principle of monotheism: "The *Geist* is monotheism itself, in the action of the scholar, who subsumes under it all other principles. The *Geist* wishes to control everything. It unites the world in the 'I' or the Logos . . . [I]t fights all over the world and places the tyranny of formula over the ur-powers."[64] If Klages was indeed a typical post-Nietzschean, as most historians contend, this position was not a very faithful teaching of Nietzsche. Klages detested the will to power, as will be shown in the next

[59] "Das Leben aus ihm sleber verstehen wollen." Wilhelm Dilthey, *Die geistige Welt, Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5 (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990), p. xii.

[60] DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, "Vom Schaffenden," third version, 1899, Sig.: 61.3790a, p. 2.

[61] Ibid., p. 4: "Die Form slebst dagegen ist ebenso unerlernbar wie ein bestimmtes *Wesen* oder *Temperament*" (emphasis in original).

[62] Ibid., p. 2.

[63] Ibid., p. 6.

[64] "Der Geist ist monotheistisch selbst noch im Tun des Gelehrten, der alles einem Prinzip unterordnen mochte. Der Geist will Alleinherrschaft: er eint die Welt im Ich oder im Logos . . . Der Geist duldet gewalthaberisch nichts neben sich. Uber die Welt der kampfernden und garenden Urkrafte stellt er die Tyrannei einer Formel." Ludwig Klages, "Monismus des Geistes" (1901), in *Rhythmen und Runen, Nachlass Herausgegeben von Ihm Selbst* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1944), p. 306.

chapters, and often equated it with Western and Jewish materialism, a betrayal of Nietzsche's own emphasis on multiplicity and perspectivism.[65] In a collection of notes later added to the same file and dated between 1902 and 1906, Klages goes further still, characterizing as Jewish that which emphasizes the uniqueness of the concept of truth. He argues that this "is typical of the monotheistic religions as a whole. This is Yahwehism [*Jahweism*] (in other words a system arising from the unspeakable name of the Jewish god), since it tries to burn [into us] an image of God."[66] This assertion is echoed in a passage from Reventlow's *Herrn Dames Aufzeichnungen:* "Hallwig is responsible for the concept known in our jargon as 'Molochism.' . . . Moloch, my dear Mr. Lady, was, as you know, the ancient god who was nourished by the flesh of young children . . . We call 'Molochic' everything that is opposed to life, life-annihilating—in short, the opposite of the cosmic, . . . [of] the Aryan representation of the constructive, cosmic principle, which the Semites have destroyed, the anti-Molochic."[67] These are images that, indeed, dispel all suspicion of insecurity.

Was it then Klages who forged the connection between the life discourse and anti-Semitism? Can he be considered the one who politicized the notion of *L eben* or the Jewish opposition to it? Is that not stretching his influence too wide? Let us provisionally say that Klages was apparently successful in convincing some that his historical and philosophical perspective on the world and its forms was novel, that he possessed, as the quite biased Reventlow often notes, special powers and "light." In her diary she wrote: "I am often with the Klages circle . . . The best is being with K. alone; then light is everywhere."[68] Reventlow cannot be assumed to have written out of an emotional state alone. As her 1902 novel proved, she was capable of demonstrating sharp irony about Klages's cosmic jargon or his mystical views. Her diaries show a self-determined, passionate, and intellectual personality who was admired for her beauty but chose to rebel against the expectations associated with gender. Reventlow raised a child as a single mother, which was not a simple matter in the aristocratic circles she came from. She shared her bed with numerous lovers, smoked obsessively, wrote in support of feminism and the avant-garde, and declared herself a female "gladiator." "I have read Marie Bashkirtseff to the end," she reported on February 18, 1895, "and although I find it stupid, I must compare my life with hers . . . [S]he said herself: *'/J/e ne suis ni peintre ni sculpteur ni musicien ni femme ni fille ni amie.*'(I am not a

[65] For a short history of Nietzsche's perspectivism, see Tracy B. Strong, "Text and Pretexts: Reflections on Perspectivism in Nietzsche," in *Political Theory* 13:2 (May 1985): 164-182. For a lucid theoretical reading, see the second part of Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (New York: Zone Books, 2001).

[66] DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, notes to "Vom Schaffenden," p. 1.

[67] Reventlow, Herrn Dames , p. 72.

[68] Grafin Franziska zu Reventlow, *Tagebucher 1895-1910* (Munich: Langen Muller Verlag, 1971), p. 117. (The entry is dated August 26, 1899.) See also Richard Farber, *Mannerrunde mit Grafin: Die "Kosmiker" Derleth, George, Klages, Schuler, Wolfskehl und Franziska zu Reventlow* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Verlag, 1994), p. 11.

painter, a sculpture, a musician, not a woman, a man, not a friend) . . . Nothing is too terrible for us when we wish to be gladiators."[69]

Judging from her comments, mixing admiration and frustration, Reventlow's affair with Klages seems to have been a heroic attempt to grasp the ungraspable. She often expressed her admiration to Klages, but her irony shows she never believed she was his inferior. Writing to Klages in December 1901, she distinguished herself and Klages from the other members of the George circle: "While I looked at all of them, I thought about you. It was clear to me that between you and them lies an abyss. I am perhaps terribly arrogant to speak so, . . . but for the same reason I am not moved to speak about the G-book. I know that I do not understand some of it . . . It is as if a stream of living blood [*lebendem Blut*] is rushing beneath, and all these people hear perhaps something of the sound but do not know what the blood and the stream are. You are another world."[70] The "G-book" to which Reventlow refers is Klages's first book, *Stefan George*, published a few months after the letter was sent. The book was dedicated to George, though with the same kind of ambivalence apparent in the later versions of "Vom Schaffenden."

5. The cosmic circle

As Klages reconstructed his worldview, his philosophy started to affect his personal life. This culminated in a conflict with Karl Wolfskehl (1869-1948) in 1904 that shook Schwabing's bohemian culture and forced Klages's implicit rejection of George's authority in an open challenge. At the heart of the feud was Wolfskehl's support of the Zionist movement and George's refusal to expel him for that support. This, for Klages, was the point of no return.

To understand the conflict itself, however, we must outline the formation of and relationships within the famous Munich "cosmic circle," made up of Alfred Schuler (1865-1923), Klages, Wolfskehl, George himself, and Ludwig Derleth (1870-1948); the Countess Franziska zu Reventlow—who became Klages's lover for a short period—attended some of the meetings as well. At the center of the small group stood Schuler, Klages, and Wolfskehl. The establishment of the cosmic circle (*Kosmische Runde*) in Schwabing provided an alternative to the George circle, though George was quick to claim some authority in the new group for himself. Robert Norton writes about the ideas espoused by the group:

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[69] "Nichts ist fur uns furchtbar, wenn wir Gladiatoren sein wollen." Reventlow, *Tagebucher,* p. 27. Marie Bashkirtseff (1858-1884) was born to an aristocratic Russian family and became known for her painting and feminist activity. Her paintings emphasize the role of women.

[70] "Es ist, als ob ein Strom von lebendem Blut darunter rauschte. Und all diese Menschen horen vielleicht etwas von dem Klang, aber sie wissen nicht, was Blut und Strome sind. Du bist eine andere Welt." Grafin Franziska zu Reventlow, *Briefe der Gra fin Franziska zu Reventlow* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1929), p. 99. Letter dated December 26, 1901.

While George was more than happy to entertain the suggestion that salvation may be attained through an ideal hermaphroditic pederasty, and was averse to Schuler's rejection of modernity as a sump of soulless materialism and dead rationality, he was less certain of Schuler's belief that the answer lay in [the] magical return to a previous state of being. At bottom, George was too much a pragmatist, and too dedicated to the notion that unforeseen possibilities still lay in the future, to surrender himself entirely to Schuler's desire to cancel the present by voyaging to the past.[71]

If George and Wolfskehl promoted a radical reform of the poetic language advocating a future-oriented vision, Klages and Schuler dived deeper into the far past, in search of relevant myths they could revive and reconstitute. According to Klages's later recollections, part of this effort had to do with a conscious attempt to battle the Judeo-Christian civilization. While the fascination with ancient myths was shared by all members of the George group, the purpose of studying them was still different; rather than erasing the Western civilization as a whole, Wolfskehl wanted to reform it.[72] Karl Lowith, the well known historian of philosophy, described Wolfskehl in his autobiography as a "powerful, tall and important man [who] was one of the founding members of the George circle . . . [and] knew German and Romance literature better than many a specialist, an excellent translator."[73] Many years later, a deeply anti-Semitic Klages still acknowledged Wolfskehl with a mixture of sarcastic envy and admiration, as the "*Alleskenner*" (the know-it-all). And in the introduction he wrote in 1940 for Schuler's collected writings, Klages could not resist a note of pure admiration for Wolfskehl: "After [Wolfskehl] finished his Germanic studies, I have seen him amusing himself with philology [*Altphilologie*], . . . with archeology, . . . with Egyptology, . . . arguing with musicians about the history of music, with very learned aesthetes about Laconte de Lisle, Francois Coppee, Huysmans, Henri de Regnier, Rimbaud, Wilde, Beardsley, and every time he gave the impression of being a professional or at least highly knowledgeable scholar."[74]

Schuler, who was far too passive to lead a philosophical movement by himself, accepted Klages as an equal and perhaps as his superior, though he was seven years older.[75] Wolfskehl joined their circle after Klages and Schuler had given their ideas

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[71] Norton, *Secret Germany*, pp. 301-302.

[72] An interesting anecdote in that context is the short debate between Georg Simmel and Karl Wolfskehl regarding the use of the term "Enlightenment" (*Aufkl a rung*) during the heydays of World War I. Wolfskehl admitted the legacy and impact of the Enlightenment but debated its value for the future. See Karl Wolfskehl to Georg Simmel, October 17, 1914, in Georg Simmel, *Briefe 1912-1918*, ed. Otthein and Angela Rammstedt (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008), p. 427.

[73] Karl Lowith, *My Life in Germany before and after 1933*, trans. Elizabeth King (London: Athalon Press, 1994), p. 23.

[74] In Alfred Schuler, *Fragmente und Vortrage aus dem Nachlass, mit Einfu hrung von Ludwig Klages* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1940), p. 52.

[75] Until the death of his mother in 1916, Schuler shared her house and lived off of her pension and savings. He never published anything and refused to find work, though at times this meant going hungry. After Mrs. Schuler's death, Klages helped his friend find a patron. Schuler's principal talent

a coherent identity; at the time his Jewishness did not seem to bother either party. During this period Klages appears to have been willing to accept Jews as friends, provided they had the "right" aesthetic and cultural beliefs. In his recollections about the group of cosmics, the author Roderich Huch argues that it was Schuler who was most obsessed about Judaism (at least before 1904).[76] In 1900 Wolfskehl still appeared to be more of an "acceptable" Jew to Klages's circle than Lessing, as Wolfskehl's wife, Hanna, described Klages and Schuler, in a January 1901 letter to Stefan George, as "friends of the house."[77]

When the cosmic circle was established, Schuler was 33 years old, Wolfskehl 29, and Klages 26. Of the three, Wolfskehl had the closest ties to George; according to Klages, "Wolfskehl was sent [to spy] by George himself."[78] Klages and Schuler carefully maintained their distance from the master and tried to develop their own ideas away from his charismatic critique. The two conducted a comprehensive search into the heart of ancient myths and mystical traditions, guided by Schuler's obsession with the Roman Caesars and pagan cults before the rise of Christianity. As Klages wrote during the heyday of the Nazi regime, "Schuler discovered the ancient Indian symbol of the swastika already in 1895. He was the one who made this symbol into the center of a prehistorical humanity and taught it as what signifies the 'inner perception' [*i nnere Wahrnehmung*]."[79] Yet Wolfskehl, with his immense knowledge, contributed much to the "cosmic" effort. He was the one who discovered Johann Jakob Bachofen's texts about classical matriarchy and death symbols, which proved crucial to the group's thinking. As Klages's biographer put it: "After reading Bachofen, Klages was filled with sadness about the lost world of Pellas."[80] As I will demonstrate in the third chapter, the discovery of Bachofen's matriarchy completely changed Klages's thinking, and in some ways defines the whole relationship of *Lebensphilosophers*, shortly before the rise of a distinct fascist *Lebensphilosophie*. It will suffice to say, here, that after reading Bachofen Klages attempted to reconstitute a version of *Lebensphilosophie* that would distinguish itself from the Judeo-Christian tradition as a whole. ("As Bachofen shows, . . ." wrote Klages, "it was first southern Europe, later Europe generally, which

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lay in the crafting of fervently mystical rhetoric. The only collection of texts published under his name was the posthumous fragments of his *Nachlass*, edited and published by Klages in 1923 and again in 1940. In his recollections of George and his circle, Robert Bohringer described Schuler as "a confused and weak person, who lived with his 'mama' and concealed his distance from the fulfillment of his dreams under different forms" ("ein verworrener und schwacher Mensch, mit seiner 'Maman' lebte, den ungeheueren Abstand zwischen Wunsch und Erfullbarkeit seiner Traume unter formen verbarg"). See Robert Bohringer, *Mein Bild von Stefan George* (Dusseldorf: Helmut Kupper Verlag, 1967), p. 103.

[76] Roderich Huch, *Alfred Schuler, Ludwig Klages, Stefan George, Erinnerungen an Kreise und Krisen der Jahrhunderwende in Mu nchen-Schwabing* (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini Press, 1973), p. 34.

[77] Quoted in ibid., p. 103.

[78] Ibid., p. 50.

[79] Ibid., p. 2.

[80] Schroder, *Ludwig Klages*, vol. 2: *Das Werk*, p. 237.

annihilated a few nations and enslaved others, in the shapes of Judaism or, one could say, Christianity."[81])

If Wolfskehl differed in any way from "typical" Jews, it was not for political apathy. When he witnessed the growth of anti-Semitism in fin-de-siecle France and Germany, Wolfskehl placed his remarkable intellectual powers at the disposal of the Zionist movement. He served as an official representative of Munich's Jews, participated in the sixth Zionist Congress in Basel in 1903, and met Theodor Herzl.[82] As late as 1940, Klages struck a clearly apologetic tone when explaining his anti-Semitic accusations against Wolfskehl, without ever doubting the validity of the stereotypes themselves:

"The reader might think it [Wolfskehl's Zionism] is the same thing that it was in 1896! There was even then enough anti-Semitism (and it was not the stupidest either), which strongly supported the [Zionist] view that [it is] 'better for the Jews to be in Palestine than among us'. We see it [in 1904] in a different light; Wolfskehl showed his belief in Yahwehism via his Zionism. The wondering Jew [*Juda*], so generally the reason behind it [Yahwehism], marks an unreliable figure, . . . One sees him as a rootless Jew [*bodenlose Jude*] . . . the law of the Yahwehism tries to renew itself and to revenge the past suppression of its people."[83]

As the years passed, the image of the cosmic circle changed, thanks greatly to Klages's later recollections and editing of Schuler's work. The work that raised Walter Benjamin's curiosity in 1926 was seen as a clear statement of racial politics in 1940. Klages testified in his introduction to Schuler's posthumous book, "When Schuler revived this ancient mystical symbol [of the swastika], he was aware that it was not just a general cross, . . . but one aimed specifically against Jewishness [*Jahwismus*] and the Yahweh of Saul and Paul [i.e., Christianity]. It was a cross meant to oppose the culture of martyrdom."[84] When Klages revealed the leading part played by Wolfskehl in promoting the use of the swastika, together with the Judeo-Christian bond which in his eyes was opposed to it, he insisted, "It would be too simplistic to speak of anti-Semitism."[85] Yet the consistent appraisal of Jewish symbols as the symbols of the "enemy" at every juncture in Klages's life resists any other interpretation. Schuler's investigations into ancient cults were driven by his general fascination with the ancient Roman world and with the history of aesthetic symbols. His interest appears to have had no political motivation, though clearly Schuler was obsessed with Judaism as a historical phenomenon. But at the time of his death in 1923, Schuler had never had any contact with the Nazi party—his life was remarkably devoid of political entanglements. It now seems likely that the intermediaries between Schuler, or his legacy, and the Nazis were Hugo and Elsa Bruckmann, a couple who supported Hitler from

[81] Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, book 5, vol. 2 (Bonn: H. Bouvier Verlag, 1972), p. 1240.

[82] Norton, *Secret Germany*, p. 305.

[83] Schuler, *Fragmente und Vortrage,* p. 53.

[84] Ibid., p. 55.

[85] Ibid.

his early days as the leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP, i.e., Nazi). The Bruckmanns were acquainted with Schuler and took an interest in his research; in fact, in 1930 they financed an early edition of Schuler's literary estate, collected and edited by Klages and Gustav W. Freytag, a professor at Munich University and the son of the well-known novelist Gustav Freytag. The Bruckmanns could easily have shown Hitler Schuler's papers about the swastika during one of his frequent visits to their house in the early 1920s. The two were also friendly with Klages and took a particular interest in the circle around Klages after it was formed in the early 1930s. Elsa Bruckmann remained an important supporter of the biocentric circle formed by Klages's disciples in 1932, which fused biological and medical research with Klages's philosophy.[86]

When we scrutinize the conflict among Klages, Schuler, Wolfskehl, and George, we find that its content and language prove to be the result not of any biological notion of race, but of Germanism and what people make of it. At the time, race was still a metaphor for the artistic and cultural understanding of language, which impinged on the construction of different kinds of anti-Semitic thought and on their gradual politicization and actualization. If we compare this conflict with that which arose between Lessing and Klages, we find that the later one came to be an overall conflict that divided Klages's world into two camps—the supporters and the enemies of Molochism, that is, the supporters and enemies of life itself. From Klages's perspective, if the result of the early conflict was the end of a personal friendship, the result of the later one was the end of a certain collective, first and foremost the one around Stefan George. The first sign of the importance of George behind the conflict appeared in April 1899. After many delays, Schuler had finally invited a few friends to his house for a Roman dinner: Klages, Wolfskehl and his wife, and George. Robert Norton refers to the event as a "spiritual ambush."[87] After dinner, Schuler read some of his recent poems. His turbulent and theatrical recitation shocked George and deeply impressed Klages. Here is Klages's account from his introduction to Schuler's *Fragmente and Vortrage*:

In the middle of Schuler's none-too-clean room were plates and candles . . . After the meal he started to read from his strongest fragments, with much pathos. He wanted to create, to form, so one felt, a magical surrounding . . . The old mother [Schuler's] is completely immersed, dropping down; Wolfskehl's immune spirit and soul draw back to absorb, while his wife sits motionless, since for her it is all "too lofty." George is restless, petulant, and irritable, [but] manages to control his agitation, . . . though he loses control of his demeanor. The atmosphere of tension is unbearable. No one could grasp exactly what Schuler was trying to do, but from his mouth came a volcano, lava . . . When it ended, everyone was left frozen, [grateful] only that it was over . . . All of a sudden I find myself alone with George and feel a hand taking mine: "This is

[86] For more about the biocentric circle, see chapter 6.

[87] Norton, *Secret Germany*, p. 302.

madness! I cannot bear it! What were you doing when you brought me here! This is madness! Take me away, take me to some pub, where people, absolutely simple people, can smoke a cigarette and drink beer! I cannot bear it!"[88]

That evening, Klages related in his introduction, sealed his convictions of Schuler's importance and allowed him to overcome George's influence.

In a recent study of the George circle's "aesthetic fundamentalism," Stefan Breuer remarks that "in contrast to the magical thought of the cosmic circle, George strove for a more sorted notion of the past."[89] It seems to me that the difference in interpreting the past reflects a more general understanding of the term "aesthetic fundamentalism." Delving with all their being into the past, near and far, is the most common characteristic of the cosmics, often expressed in almost farcical terms. George, in that respect, seemed to be more careful and methodologically disciplined, but also more engaged with his own status as a cultural guru, than with the realization of his mythic life vocabulary. If he was an aesthetic fundamentalist, George kept his fundamentalism within the well-protected boundaries of the artistic Schwabing area. As a rule, he refused to take sides in conflicts, as shown in the argument between the cosmics and Wolfskehl in 1904 or in the Nazi enthusiasm for his poetry. In both cases, George took sides only once he was left with no other option.

In discussions of aesthetics, Klages referred to George as a "symbolist," by no means a compliment: "The whole symbolism business [*Symbolisterei*] is nothing but the usurpation of kings' thrones by bankers' sons. It amounts to choosing the ornamentation before building the house or laying down the floor. George belongs to that kind."[90] For Klages, Schuler represented a step toward the full actualization of the living past, not merely a representation of the past; he proved that the barriers could be razed.

In 1904 Klages's anti-Semitism finally severed his connection with George. During a private conversation with his erstwhile mentor, Klages asked, "What connects us to Judas?" by whom he meant Wolfskehl. And he went so far as to wonder whether George himself was purely German—after all, wasn't George's growing international fame based on his cultivation of Jewish publishers?[91] Later he partially excused Wolfskehl for his Zionist activities, remarking that "since no Jew stands by himself," Wolfskehl had done little but shuttle ideas to and fro. He suspected George of exploiting a secret global Jewish network.[92] Klages and Schuler concluded their indictment of George by noting that in addition to Wolfskehl he fraternized with Friedrich Gundolf, another disciple of Jewish descent, even though he had shortened his name to sound more German and

[88] Klages, "Einfuhrung," in Schuler, *Fragmente und Vortrage,* p. 73.
[89] Breuer, *Asthetischer Fundamentalismus*, p. 40.
[90] Klages, "Einfuhrung," in Schuler, *Fragmente und Vortrage*, p. 74.
[91] Ibid., pp. 75-76.
[92] Ibid., p. 80.

had stoutly refused Wolfskehl's attempts to enlist him in the Zionist cause.[93] Ulrich Raulff reminds us how Klages interpreted the Jewish disciples around George: "Klages proceeded with a wondrous introspection to identify who *really* stands, for George, behind the divine Maximin (Maximilian Kronenberger, who Klages identified [with the Jewish name] 'Kronfeld'): that was no other than Jahwe! . . . Wolfskehl was the puppeteer wire-puller of Zionism and George [served] as his poetic tool: What Klages surmises in 1940 is absolutely absurd, a paranoid absurdity."[94]

6. Stefan George, 1902

After the ties had been broken, Klages often denied ever having taken a serious interest in either Stefan George or his circle. Except for the introduction to Schuler's texts, he never mentioned Wolfskehl again. In a letter he sent to his disciple Werner Deubel on November 14, 1922, he went so far as to ask that the relationship with George not be mentioned.[95] Then, when George's canonization left Klages in the shadows during the second half of the 1920s, he changed tactics and described the relationship as one between equals. Writing again to

Deubel, he referred to the depiction of his friendship with George as a "myth," suggesting that "it should be George as a 'youthful Klages,' the same as Klages was a 'youthful George.'"[96] His frustration over the recurrent references to him as a former disciple of George became quite emphatic, as he referred to it as a "legend" that would be "shattered" by the pending publication of a book by Hans Naumann.[97] If he was not to escape from that construction quite so quickly, Klages did eventually earn his own reputation as a separate and distinct voice. Over time George's shadow faded, but then the question of Klages's anti-Semitism returned to resurrect the forgotten affair of 1904.

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[93] Breuer concludes his description of Klages's confrontation with George as follows: "Klages expressed his resentment as 'a typical interference on the way to expression and the essence of hysteria,' a collection of popular anti-Semitic cliches." See *Asthetischer Fundamentalismus*, p. 112.

[94] Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, pp. 93-94.

[95] "Wenn Sie mir einen Gefallen tun wollen, so erwahnen Sie nicht meine ehemalige Sonderbeziehungen zum sog. Georgekreise, die auch heute noch nur allzuviel umherposaunt werden, ungeachtet ich vor nunmehr schon 18 Jahren mit diesem sog. Kreise auf schroffste angebrochen habe" (emphasis in original). Ludwig Klages to Werner Deubel, November 14, 1922, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.4471, letter no. 10.

[96] Ludwig Klages to Werner Deubel, September 9, 1926, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.4472/4.

[97] Ibid. A few years later, Hans Naumann helped to organize the group of 51 professors who openly called for the intellectual support of national socialism, and he delivered an enthusiastic speech during a book burning in 1933. Despite his hopes for Naumann's book, Klages was mentioned in it, along with Wolfskehl, as one of George's disciples. See Hans Naumann, *Die deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart, 1885-1924* (Stuttgart: I. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), p. 309.

In May 1933, in response to an inquiry from Deubel about George, Klages alluded contemptuously to both George's lack of formal education and his homosexuality, referring to him with the sarcastic "Dr." and the cruel "Stefanie"[98]:

Behind this relationship with Dr. George is a critique of the man who turned the larger and better part of the German youth into our enemies. Stefanie's family tree, which I possess, and suspect [that he is not German], shows that the family has been in Germany for only two generations . . . Stefanie himself was called in his youth Etienne George and initially wrote only French poetry. As to the "youth" of my time, at least seventy percent [of the circle] seemed to be Jewish. In the big cities his headquarters was always in the home of rich Jews: Lepsius in Berlin, Wolfskehl in Munich. All this is known already.[99]

Twenty years after the publication of his first book, Klages was preparing an edition of Bachofen's travel book about Greece with the Basel professor, Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, and wrote a letter in which he compared it to the book he had dedicated to George:

When I wrote the George book, I wrote freely in a "Delphic style." . . . I spent about seven years under the influence of [George's] "secret circle" [*Geheimkreise*] and lost track of how much of that was open to middlebrows [*gebildeten*] and how much was not.[100] I was therefore amazed when a highly cultivated person [*hochgebildeter Mann*] in Hamburg told me: "Your book is an attempt to bring George closer to us"—note that at the time George was considered as nothing but [an exemplary case of] difficult reading!—"but it is far more difficult than George's, much harder and more esoteric than his!" I needed fifteen years to free myself from the terrible concision of the "Delphic style" and am more convinced today than ever that for the middlebrows there is more and more that is considered esoteric.[101]

The anecdote illustrates the gap that existed between Klages and George during the early 1900s, as well as the strong influence that Bachofen had on Klages, in content as well as in style. At the time, Klages portrayed the middlebrows as a pathetic, judgmental group with a limited horizon of expectations. One of fate's great ironies is that this esoteric prose Klages adopted from George added significantly to Klages's popularity during the 1920s. To challenge and frustrate the cultivated bourgeois was an honor, since it implied, he thought, that his writings were all the more subversive.

Beyond the social-bohemian dynamic, Klages's interest in George had an actual value for his own philosophical and psychological system. In his study *Stefan George*

[98] The insult is even richer, as a frequent meeting place for the George group, as Klages knew, was the Cafe Stefanie (as well as the Cafe Luitpold) in Schwabing.

[99] Letter from Ludwig Klages to Werner Deubel, May 11, 1933, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig: 61.4474, letter no. 13.

[100] Literally, the cultivated. For Klages this word always possessed some of the negative connotation today associated with "bourgeois."

[101] Letter from Ludwig Klages to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, March 20, 1923, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig: 61.4141, letter no. 30, p. 1.

(1902), Klages used George's poetry and its assumptions to develop a new theory of appearance. At the core of the theory is a postromantic discussion of *Leben*, treated as George's great contribution to the arts. Even at this early stage, one can trace all the central topics that would form Klages's *Lebensphilosophie* as a whole: the absolute value of the image, the artistic creation, and the rejection of evolution, progress, and development. It is, to take a current cosmological term, the dark matter, scattered everywhere, that testifies to the assortment of universal phenomena. On top of George's poetic images Klages added his own philosophical classifications and measurements.

The book opens with a long explanation about physiognomy, starting with Johann Kaspar Lavater's (1741-1801) study of faces, to which Klages had dedicated a short article the previous year.[102] As I will show in detail in my later chapters, physiognomy was used by Lavater (and his many followers) to interpret the human face as a combination of character traits. Klages went further, including physiognomy in a larger cluster of theories that treat the human body as the outer manifestation of an inner essence. He cited "characterology" (*Charakterologie* or *Charakterkunde*) and graphology as physiognomy's allies, though physiognomy was an early romantic science, graphology a late romantic science; characterology, or the theory of expressions, was Klages's own invention. Klages honored this historical series in his portrayal of George. During the period when he originated his ideas of *Lebensphilosophie*, and in the context of the George group, Klages developed his well-known trademarks: his philosophy of life, his reliance on physical expressions of the body and the face, and his willingness to politicize all of those in order to gain more personal power. Contesting the ideas of one of the best German poets of his time and a cult figure of many youth was an excellent strategy meant to win some popularity and recognition.

All that said, Klages made certain that this public challenge was constructed on the basis of philosophical principles and not personal rivalry. In the 1902 interpretation he rejected—in alliance with George—the idea of "development" and "progression," and he took seriously the task of interpreting George's poetic production. From the motto of the book to its conclusion, Klages followed George's poetics, only to make them subservient to his own methods.

The two parts of the book's motto are taken from the Jena romantics: Friedrich von Schelling's "heavenly music" in *Bruno* and Friedrich Holderlin's "movement of the heart" in *Hyperion*.[103] George, Klages declared in the first page of the essay proper, was "the only restorer of faith among German poets since romanticism." Klages saw the raw material that occasionally escaped from the collective unconscious as essentially visual and therefore present only implicitly in our language: "Only rarely would

[102] Klages's article, entitled "Prinzipielles bei Lavater" (1901), was republished in Klages, *Zur Ausdruckslehre und Charakterkunde*, pp. 53-66.

[103] Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Bruno; oder, Uber das gottliche und natiirliche Princip der Dinge: ein Gesprach* (1802; reprint, Berlin: G. Reimer, 1842). Interestingly enough, Friedrich Holderlin's plan for *Hyperion* came to him after he had made a special journey to meet Lavater, in December 1791.

the unspiritual forces that motivate growth rise into the consciousness."[104] George's poetics was depicted as a chthonic force of language that enabled the old to resurface and make itself apparent. Constructing his essay on the basis of an historical aesthetic explanation, Klages presented the historical movement that is revived in George as the movement between naturalism and imagism, or the active forming of the landscape via symbols and the "reality of images" (*Wirklichkeit der Bilder*). It is significant that the idea most identified with Klages and his revolutionary *Lebensphilosophie* was mentioned first in the analysis of George and as early as 1902. The context demonstrates the totality of imagism, shaped already in relation to the poetics of the group and utilized later for different purposes. As he explains in the opening pages to the book:

The reality of images: One can repeat here three claims made by George. First he says that his art stands in opposition to any school of thought, which "formed any false perception of reality [*einer falschen auffassung der wirklichkeit entsprang*]." Second, [that] "we see in every event, any time period only the means to reach an artistic excitement [*Wir sehen in jedem ereignis, jedem zeitlater nur ein m ittel kiinstlischer erregung*]." Third, "the value of poetry decides the form, not the meaning, or it would become mere erudition [*Den Wert der dichtung entscheidet nicht der sinn, sonst ware sie etwa weisheit, gelahrtheitsondern die Form*]."[105]

If the reality of images takes over life and its language, there is no more open space between past and present, fact and imagination, the inner and the outer.

The reality of images was to prove the most important philosophical idea of Klages's career. Although he returned to it obsessively, never again would he connect the idea with Stefan George. He hoped to show that the diffusion of reality and images showed the unity of aesthetic markers (symbols and images, the referential, speech acts, and so on) with the thing itself, galvanized by the gushing flow of time in the universe, or the coursing flow of blood through the human body. "The work of art itself," he explained, "is affected by the influence of the time, [while] the world of things [*Sachwelt*] pales and dissolves in the unifying powerful reality. Life is no longer molded into meaning but pounds in the blood along with every 'deep excitement in mass and sound.'"[106] For Klages, mass and sound were often juxtaposed with space and time in a sort of equation. The implication was that any hermeneutic of understanding would fail to grasp the transformation of the ecstatic rhythm of an endless flow into the actuality of *Leben.* Michael Grossheim, a disciple of Klages, wrote that for Klages (in contrast to Dilthey), "the life experience [*Lebenserfahrung*] is not the historical-cultural experience."[107] Klages's elementary life forms (*Lebensformen*), according to Grossheim,

[104] Klages, *Stefan George* (Berlin: Georg Bondi Verlag, 1902), p. 7.

[105] Ibid., p. 11 (emphases in original).

[106] Ibid.

[107] Michael Grossheim, "Auf der Suche nach der volleren Realitat: Wilhelm Dilthey und Ludwig Klages (zwei Wege der Lebensphilosophie)," *Dilthey Jahrbuch fur Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften* 10 (1996), p. 164.

"are not allowed to search for 'analogies of the understanding of the one united life.'"[108] Analogy, for Klages, represented just another useless process of symbolization and conceptualization—another tool for the alienated middlebrow.

But why is this intricate—often muddled—metaphysic important here? The significance of Klages's thinking cannot be comprehended in historical terms without the context of his thought and his relationship— implicit and explicit—to preexisting philosophies and aesthetics. In the case of Klages and his followers, the question of intellectual affiliation and reaction takes on a special urgency because they cultivated their aesthetics, they thought, within the arena of the Dionysian agon, in the field, running, hunted. All of their foes—Dilthey and his school, the neo-Kantians, the historicists, the formalists—would deny the reality of the underworld, and this underworld was rising up, against everyone, soon to drown the world. Thus, the existence of a deep ontological crisis could not be denied; it had to be acknowledged and fought against. Alas, epistemology had to pay the price: the "joy of naming" he was writing about in "Vom Schaffenden" in 1899 meant the creation of a new reality of images, turned into the voluntary act of self-unnaming in the early 1910s. Klages turned from writing lyrical sonnets and poetic eulogies to a typology that recognized humans only in groups. According to Klages's theory, George earned his fame at the expense of losing his individuality.

In his study of Stefan George, Klages suggested a change that he would repeat in different texts: "Symbols are [like] axes . . . Aesthetics . . . [is] the geometry of feelings. Plato erred in 'positing beauty as an [unattainable] idea.'"[109] Only by returning to "the silver shells of primal time" could change take place.[110] The poetic language of George and other romantic poets brings men closer to that primal image. We should learn from Pindar, Dante, Shakespeare, Holderlin, and George, says Klages, but no less should we learn from Galileo, Kepler, Botticelli, and Fra Angelico.[111] In other words, one should, Klages argues, attach the pure image-making with the careful study of the cosmos. George, he concluded, "must be understood as part of the lineage that also includes Goethe and Nietzsche," thinkers whom Klages identified with an absolute comprehension, both artistic and scientific.[112]

In George Klages was hoping to find the same "insomniac awareness" (*Schlafwanderliches Wesen*) of the earlier being (*Sein*).[113] It is the restoration of the early Germanic style of unity, the Gothic style, which George helped to revive. Yet he was doing so—wrongly, says Klages—for the sake of a better future. Past, present, and future are merged in a poetic moment of creation.[114] George used the right compass and still

[108] "Nach Analogie des Eigenlebens verstehen." Ibid., p. 162.
[109] Klages, *Stefan George*, p. 16.
[110] Ibid., p. 17.
[111] Ibid., p. 32.
[112] Ibid., p. 48.
[113] Ibid., p. 59.
[114] Ibid., p. 69.

took the wrong direction. Klages's book ends with a recommendation of George's *Der Teppich des Lebens*, which Klages sees as filling the goblet of "blazing wine of the strongest life."[115] Klages's interpretation does not end with approval, though; it ends with a question mark: "Is the poet moving toward the earlier exhilaration [*Rausch*] or does he turn to the rising path?"[116] Klages's question allowed him to cultivate his own version of life and the life jargon. His work on *Stefan George* allowed him to rework his fragments and ideas from the time into a coherent manifestation of a cosmic worldview that used ancient Germanic metaphors to chop away the superfluous, the non-German, that is, George himself, or his Jewish disciples.

7. The end of the world, 1904

In 1904 Klages published a short work of fiction entitled "Das Ende der Welt" (The end of the world) under the anagrammatic name Edward Gleska.[117] A lyrical, poetic, and somewhat mystical work, it appears to have emerged from the same feelings he very often revealed in his letters to Franziska Reventlow, and it marks a time of both personal and collective transformation:

He had crossed the Elysian fields of night and neared the coasts of decline, . . . the doors of utter silence. A member of the flow [*Fluss*] of moribund [*totgeweihten*] things, . . . so has that of him which is human [*Menschenteil*] broken apart, so that no remains could be saved of the waves of silence: the craft of hope and longing . . . and thus the forest opened itself and he stood on the shores of the finality of his being [*Dasein*]. With one look, which rendered everything obvious, he saw the unified distances of the world and the abyss of decline [*die Weiten der Welt und den Abgrund des Niederganges*].[118]

No doubt the chronic insomnia from which Klages suffered terribly throughout his life contributed to the imagery of hopeless nocturnal wanderings. When one reads his travel reports, his letters, or his literary fantasies, the notion of a deep falling darkness or never-ending nights is always present. In a letter he sent much later to another wellknown *Lebensphilosopher* and the father of *Begriffsgeschichte* (history of concepts), Erich Rothacker, he reported: "As a result of a case of emphysema, I suffer from severe insomnia. For the past sixty-four years I have used every possible drug

[115] Ibid., p. 67.

[116] Ibid., p. 77.

[117] DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv.: Zeitungen, no signature. The article was originally published in the journal *Die Freistatt* in 1904. Many Schwabing bohemians and members of the George circle contributed to *Die Freistatt*; among its better known authors were Rainer Maria Rilke, Else Lasker-Schuler, Frank Wedekind, and Stefan Zweig. It was edited by the poet and alchemist Alexander von Bernus (1880-1965), who also published *Das Reich* between 1916 and 1920, to which his close friend Rudolf Steiner often contributed.

[118] Ibid.

on the market—German, Swiss, American, and French, the strongest and the weakest, even homeopathic. All failed completely."[119]

Klages's sickness and his reliance on drugs—nothing exceptional in the circles in which he moved—explains only the most superficial reasons for his intensive interest in catastrophic downfall and the somber aspects of reality—or its image. As I shall show later, Klages knew how to exploit his illness and would deeply impress Walter Benjamin in the early 1920s with a theory of the state between dream and waking. In the early 1900s Klages's voyage to the end of the night did not go beyond a metaphorical view of decline, not much different from the familiar fin-de-siecle atmosphere of a world rotten to the core and in need of revolutionary change. His main innovation was in attaching, even at this early stage, a strong immanent vocabulary of life that blurred the boundary between life and death, fighting not an actual enemy as an antagonist system of knowledge, but a *Geist* (spirit) that was inherently opposed to an independent reality of images and a poetic-creative world without boundaries.

8. Conclusion

The course Ludwig Klages made as a young man, from Hannover to Munich, from the petit bourgeois context of his father's house to the bohemian artists of Munich, from chemistry to philosophy, and from his early admiration of Ibsen, Nietzsche, and George, to independence, depicts a strong personality that mirrors his surrounding as much as he contributes to it. Klages's most apparent contribution was his *Lebensphilosophie* and his detailed classification of bodily types.

In spite of his close relationship with Jews since his youth, he always considered them outsiders. Part of his personal biography—which we must consider—contains the integration of anti-Semitism to his views of language, bodily expression, and finally his *Lebensphilosophie*. In terms of the history of anti-Semitism or the history of biopolitics, Klages's anti-Semitism was not yet political during the early 1900s. His struggle to separate himself from Lessing, and later from Wolfskehl and George, forced him to gradually politicize it and give it a systematic and later a scientific form. During this early stage it expressed an attempt to reorganize the world around him, more than it expressed a consistent worldview.

As we know from Foucault, "The notion of life is not a scientific concept; it has been an epistemological indicator of which the classifying, delimiting, and other functions had an effect on scientific discussions, and not on what they were talking about."[120] "Biopolitics," Roberto Esposito writes, after quoting this passage by Foucault, "doesn't refer only or most prevalently to the way in which politics is captured— limited, com-

[119] Letter from Ludwig Klages to Erich Rothacker, December 4, 1953, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.6788, letter no. 2.

[120] Michel Foucault, "Human Nature: Justice versus Power," in *Michel Foucault and His Interlocutors*, ed. A. I. Davidson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), p. 110.

pressed, and determined—by life, but also and above all by the way in which politics grasps, challenges, and penetrates life."[121] The jargon of life during the early 1900s tried to unpack the full potential of humanity before it was cultivated and rationalized. That is why *Lebensphilosphers* explored the ecstasy of cults, the ur-image, or the uncontrolled physiognomy of one's face and the uncontrolled signs of one's handwriting. Those are all storage bins of signs for an early image-body relation that is closer to nature and part of the immediate "life flow." This relation, then, as part of an aesthetic-poetic corpus, is where we see the Jew as the mark of one's boundary. For Klages, Lessing and Wolfskehl mark where this undercurrent stops.

In contrast to how they are currently depicted, the origins of biopolitics during the heyday of *Lebensphilosophie* are not necessarily "conservative." There is nothing chauvinistic or patriarchic about the Georgian or Klagesian jargon of life. The opposite is true; George and Klages, Lessing and Wolfskehl sound often like postmodern radicals in their attack on patriarchy and "phalogocentrism," a term invented by Bachofen and adapted by Klages for his own *Lebensphilosophie*. Walter Benjamin, writing in 1926 after reading about Bachofen, noted the similarity, contending that "a confrontation with Bachofen and Klages is unavoidable."[122] It is certainly so for those interested in Benjamin or his opponents, the Nazi *Lebensphilosophers*.

[121] Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 30.

[122] Walter Benjamin to Gerhard Scholem, January 14, 1926, in *The Complete Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, p. 288.

2. Living Experience, Expression, and Immediacy between 1895 and 1915

Du sagst *leben* laut und *sterben* leise Und wiederholtest immer wieder: *Sein.* Doch vor dem ersten Tode kam der Mord.

—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Das Buch vom Monchischen Leben,* 1899[1]

1. Dilthey and the concept of Erlebnis

The wave of intellectual pessimism that swept through Europe at the start of the twentieth century does not explain the power of Klages's aesthetic system, so heavily entrenched in romanticism's natural symbolism. Here one can certainly concur with George Mosse's depiction: "For the romantics, nature was not cold and mechanical, but alive and spontaneous. It was indeed filled with a life force which corresponded to the emotions of man."[2] Yet this passage fails to capture the weight and magnitude of romanticism and the fervor Klages and his fellow *Lebensphilosophers* brought to it. The political theorist Hans Freyer viewed the nineteenth century as a long process of transformation that led from Holderlin to Kierkegaard and, finally, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, to Nietzsche. Instead of a romantic life force unfolding and realizing its own plan, Freyer saw it as a true revolution, in which philosophy unified "the earth and its world history [*Weltgeschichte*], . . . freeing men from their old life world [*Lebenswelt*] and grounding them in a new, more abstract sense, by empowering them on the basis of the organic mass."[3] At the center of this revolution stands the inherent relation among the aesthetics of living forms, the body, and the politicization

[1] "Aloud you talked of living, softly of dying, / and your perpetual refrain was: being. / However, before death, murder came, rending the circles of your sureties." Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Book of Monkish Life," in *The Book of Hours*, trans. Susan Ranson (Rochester, NY: Rochester House, 2008), p. 11.

[2] George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1998), p. 15.

[3] "Er raffte die Erde und die 'Weltgeschichte' zum ersten Mal zur Einheit zusammen . . . er machte den Menschen aus seiner alten Lebenswelt los, versetzte ihn in eine neue, indem er ihn in einem hochst abstrakten Sinne frei und uber jedes organische Mass hinaus machtig werden liess." Hans Freyer, *Die*

of this link in early modernism. Looking at the change with the eyes of a historian of science, one sees a similar process occurring at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, where a shift from the preromantic vitalism to the romantic *Naturphilosophie* and its stress on pure "life forces" was then philosophized as a deductive and "organic," imagistic notion of life.[4]

The transformation created by the life sciences was not limited to the life force but extended to its role in history and politics. The individual body became a "sign" or a signifying system that was then seen as a representative in a much larger system, based on the "living experience" (*Erlebnis*). In my fourth chapter I will demonstrate how the process created modern disciplines such as graphology and characterology. Yet the crucial element behind both the philosophy and the physical sciences that recaptured the life force was, as Ute Planert showed, the classification and regulation of the body in its surrounding. The reconsideration of the body as "experiencing" or a "medium of expression" (*Ausdrucksmedium*) enabled, in turn, the rise of biopolitics. "The regulation techniques of 'the bio-politics of population,' as Foucault describes them," writes Planert, "are the expression of the Janus-head of the 'power to life' [*Macht zum Leben*] as the disciplined training of the human body."[5] As will be shown in the last chapter of the book— dedicated to the biocentric circle Klages established in Leipzig during the mid-1920s—its main organ was titled "Janus," and the intention behind it was to recapture a similar observation to the one Foucault makes, only from an opposite political end.

But before exploring biopolitics, let's consider the process that prepared its rise, that is, the post-Diltheyish understanding of *living experience*, *expression*, and *immediacy*. By the end of the century, as Freyer and Planert demonstrate, the crowning romantic *Naturphilosophie*— image of the body and its expression—marked by the "immediacy of self-consciousness," was translated into the more essential collective experience of history, people, or, in some cases, the cosmos and *Gesamterlebnis* (total experience).[6] Historians such as Mosse, from the one end, or Nolte, from its opposite, either confused the history with its outcome (Mosse stressed the irrational myth leading to the right wing, while ignoring the genuine critique of historicism on the left wing) or reduced it to a narrow politics of the *Volk* (people) and its totalization (Nolte's relativization of the racial element can be seen in his attempt to place Klages and Lessing, or Marx and Hitler, in the same boat), missing both revolutionary potential suggested by a radical critique of norms, on the one hand, and the gradual adaptation by racial policy makers,

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weltgeschichtliche Bedeutung des 19. Jahrhunderts (Kiel: Kommissionsverlag Lipsius and Tischer, 1951), p. 19.

[4] For a careful history of this paradigmatic—yet forgotten—shift, see the fifth chapter in Peter Hanns Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[5] Ute Planert, "Der dreifache Korper des Volkes: Sexualitat, Biopolitik, und die Wissenschaften vom Leben," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26:4 (2000): 544.

[6] Kurt Flasch, *Die Geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 2000), p. 77.

on the other. A careful historicization of the three concepts—*Erlebnis*, *Ausdruck*, and *Unmittelbarkeit*—then, is necessary for the understanding of this movement and its impact.

The later confusion of the historians stems from the path *Lebensphilosophie* itself took. In 1905 Wilhelm Dilthey forged the connections between *Erlebnis* and *Leben*, insisting both were "purely epistemological,"[7] in spite of the teleological structure they shared.[8] In *Experience and Poetry* (1906),[9] his most brilliant elucidation of this idea, the linkage was represented most compellingly in the concept of aesthetic experience, described by Hans-Georg Gadamer as "not just one kind of experience among others, but the essence of experience per se, . . . an *Erlebnis* removed from all connections with reality."[10]

Shortly before his death, Dilthey told his friends:

Thus the theorem: thinking cannot retreat behind life. Life as mere appearance is a *contradictio in adjecto*, for it is in the process of living [*Lebensverlauf*], in growing out of the past and stretching into the future, where the realities lie that make up the effective context and value of our life. If behind life, which flows into past, present, and future, there was something timeless, then this would be an antecedent of life: then this antecedent would be the condition for the process of living in its entire context: this antecedent would be what we do not experience [*erleben*] and thus a mere realm of shadows [*Schattenreich*]. In my introductory lectures to philosophy there is probably no other theorem as effective as this.[11]

Dilthey expressed his central idea in the following words: "The grounding concepts for all of the separate forms and systems that come from this concept [of life are] our living experience [*Erleben*], understanding [*Verstehen*], and expression [*Ausdruck*]."[12]

Wilhelm Dilthey did not predict the way his philosophy would be politicized. His philosophy overflowed the banks of academic philosophy, reaching a broad audience. As stated by the neo-Kantian Wilhelm Windelband, in a book Klages read carefully and annotated, "At the end of the nineteenth century the principal ideas moved from the epistemology [*Erkenntnistheorie*] to the 'reality of the outer world,' portrayed by the idealist consciousness that Dilthey brought to wider circles. [Dilthey's arguments]

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[7] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1998), p. 66.

[8] Ibid., p. 61.

[9] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung: Lessing, Goethe, Novalis, HoIderlin* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1906).

[10] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 70.

[11] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Abhandlung zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaft*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, part 1, of *Die geistige Welt, Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens* (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner Verlag, 1990), p. 5.

[12] Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 229. For a comparison of Dilthey's system with the later interpretations of *Lebensphilosophie*, phenomenology, and especiallyHeidegger's ontology, see GeorgMisch, *Phanomenologie und Lebensphilosophie: Eine Auseinandersetzung der Dilthey'schen Richtung mit Heidegger und Husserl* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1931), p. 70.

affected how we thought about the basic experience [*Erfahrungsbasis*] of our reality consciousness."[13] Windelband, a moderate, liberal neo-Kantian, noticed how Dilthey enabled the transformation of the discourse of life from a post-Kantian awareness to the objective but easily manipulated physical reality and its expression. More faithful Diltheyists explained *Erlebnis* in immanent structural terms, rather than comparing it to reality consciousness or external experience (*Erfahrung*). "The meaning of lived experience," Michael Ermarth writes, "is not transcendent but is immanently constituted in the coherence of life itself."[14] Such immanence did not negate a structural emphasis. Take, for example, Jacob Owensby's explanation: "Lived experience [*Erlebnis*] receives a more precise and less subjectivist definition than that found in the psychological writings and is defined structurally in relation to its objective expression . . . [E]ach lived experience is a 'structural nexus' whose components are representational, volitional and emotional acts."[15] One should not, however, assume that the structure of living experience works from the inside out, rather than the outside in of *Erfahrung.* Dilthey's impact was tremendous: his notion of *Erlebnis* and his typology and psychology of *Weltanschauung* constituted much of the discourse of the new philosophy, based on images of existence.[16] The new language and ideas spread so quickly that a decade later they were considered orthodoxy. In 1915 fifteen professors from Berlin gathered to lay an academic foundation for the new nationalism sparked by the war, and "[t]he beginning point of many [of their] speeches was the terminology of Dilthey's *Erlebnis.*"[17] Reality was measured by how one felt about it, and not for what it had to propose on its own terms. More disturbingly, it was measured against its service to the collective.

Klages's ascendancy roughly coincided with the apotheosis of Wilhelm Dilthey, shortly before his death in 1911 and at the first explicit indications of a politicized and regulated experience and life. The elder philosopher had taught the younger generation of *Lebensphilosophers* a great deal, particularly the importance of empirical data in the service of any life force, conveyed both through Dilthey's own work in descriptive psychology and through Theodor Lipps's work in aesthetic perception. Lipps, who acknowledged Dilthey's influence, had been Klages's teacher in Munich. Though Klages frequently switched disciplines and methods, he labored to preserve a core of Diltheyan teachings as the root of his consistent message of unity and harmony, and

[13] Wilhelm Windelband and Heinz Heimsoeth, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1957), p. 594. Klages owned an early edition of the book. See Deutsche Literaturarchiv am Marbach (henceforth, DLA), Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv.: Bibliothek.

[14] Michael Ermarth, *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 113.

[15] Jacob Owensby, "Dilthey and the Historicity of Poetic Expression," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46:4 (Summer 1998): 503.

[16] According to Heimsoeth, it was based on "the problem of the organism (biology) and the questions regarding soul or spirit reality (psychology and *Geisteswissenschafte*)." Windelband and Heimsoeth, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 595.

[17] Flasch, *Die Geistige Mobilmachung*, p. 79.

he referred to Lipps's philosophy for the rest of his career. We will return to Lipps in our discussion of anti-Freudian psychology in the fourth chapter.

We have now a better grasp of how conditions allowed the creation of *Lebensphilosophie* and its politics shortly before World War I. But what exactly is this Diltheyish life? Dilthey is often considered the founder of *Lebensphilosophie*,[18] and in his early texts he "subjected human expression mainly to a morphological description in terms of a biologically rooted notion of fixed types."[19] Klages's own efforts—similar, in that respect, to direct students of Dilthey—could be described in close terms, since he attempted a unification of the typology and the duration of experience. Nevertheless, Klages's commitment to romanticism led him neither to Dilthey's historicism nor to Hegel's idealism. He was quite determined to find romantic-poetic alternatives to both and present them in a philosophical language.

The shaping of alternatives, however, did not preclude an intense preoccupation with those he tried to overcome. As part of the romantic project of "overcoming all boundaries," Klages tried to activate Dilthey's critique of Kantian epistemology and popularized many of his concepts, transforming them into a practical psychology of "types."[20] Before 1914 Klages was busy translating such notions to his diagnostic work, yet after 1918 he moved to a philosophical discourse and to shaping his opposing and independent voice. In contrast to Dilthey, Klages saw the individual not only as an integrated and structural living form, but as a performance, or, to use his language, the *Erscheinung* (literally, appearance)—in other words, a living storage of signs that the appearance carries beyond structural relationships. His was one of the first expressions of a poststructuralist hermeneutics.

Klages was not alone in his effort to read Dilthey's *Lebensphilosophie* beyond its own boundaries. Dilthey's importance as a *Lebensphilosopher* is evident in his impact on both Husserl and Heidegger.[21] Even more concretely, one views the formation of an actual *Lebensphilosophie* school. Georg Misch (1878-1965), a key philosopher of the first half of the twentieth century, was Dilthey's chief student, as well as his son-in-law. Misch edited Dilthey's collected writings and wrote much about him, becoming the head of the Dilthey school and propagating one of the most influential doctrines in twentieth-century Germany. Early on, Misch identified Dilthey as the founder of

[18] Gertrud Kuhne-Bertram has shown that the vocabulary of *Lebensphilosophie* began in the eighteenth century with what Dilthey himself later called the *"romische* Lebensphilosophie*" of 1730-1830. However, Dilthey was the first to conceptualize this as a philosophical movement. See Gertrud KuhneBertram,* Aus dem Lebenzum Leben: Entstehung, Wesen und Bedeutung popular Lebensphilosophie in der Geistesgeschichte des 10 Jahrhunderts *(Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1987).*

[19] Rudolf A. Makkreel is relying here on the work of Frithjof Rodi. Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Dilthey, Philosopher of the Human Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 12.

[20] On "overcoming all boundaries," see Eva Fisel, *Die Sprachphilosophie der deutschen Romantik* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), p. 6.

[21] For a general discussion of the influence of Dilthey's life concepts on phenomenology in general and on Husserl in particular, see Hans Blumenberg, *Lebenszeit und Weltzeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), pp. 9-68. For

Lebensphilosophie, and in his introduction to Dilthey's collected essays he spoke of "a positive philosophical tendency, which he [i.e., Dilthey] called *Lebensphilosophie*—'the life determined to understand itself out of itself'—and applied scientifically."[22] Dilthey's influence became so substantial in the late 1890s that his writings became part of the standard curriculum for all humanities degrees, influencing not only professional philosophers but also the more general philosophical and intellectual language of the early 1900s. In a letter to a friend, written July 24, 1919, Walter Benjamin noted that he had never read Dilthey's popular *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* and that he had been quizzed about Dilthey's theory of psychology in his final exams.[23] Yet a few years later Benjamin not only demonstrated a deep knowledge of Dilthey, he also considered his *Lebensphilosophie*—as described by Klages, Jung, and Bergson—to be the most important and accurate conceptualization of modern experience.[24]

The three concepts so central to Dilthey's understanding of life— living experience (*Erleben*), understanding (*Verstehen*), and expression (*Ausdruck*)—were also crucial to Klages's later *Lebensphilosophie.* The two thinkers agreed about experiencing and expression, but they differed over understanding, which Dilthey tied to empathy.[25] To avoid the humanist approach to understanding and empathy, Klages used the concept of the form. He believed that humans had to be deciphered according to their aesthetic image. (This approach would later be combined with that of Dilthey in Gestalt psychology, itself a progeny of Klages's philosophy and psychology, as acknowledged by its inventors.[26])

Otto Friedrich Bollnow, another Dilthey student and later an important exponent of *Lebensphilosophie*, warned that *Lebensphilosophie* could well become too popular and lead to undue power over the masses. Because of Dilthey's influence, *Lebensphilosophie*'s rather poetic and lofty mid-nineteenth-century form became, during the 1910s and 1920s, the source from which works of popular psychology emerged in a constant stream. In 1932, a bit too late to affect any change, Bollnow protested the wrong reception of Dilthey's *Philosophie des Lebens:* "The appearance of this volume seems

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[22] "Das ist nichts bloss Personliches mehr und dann negatives—Mangel an Gestaltungskraft oder Begriffskunst—, sondern hangt an seiner positiven philosophischen Tendenz, die er Lebensphilosophie nannte—'das Leben aus ihm selber verstehen wollen'—und deren wissenschaftlicher Wendung." Georg Misch, Introduction to Dilthey, *D ie geistige Welt*, p. xii.

[23] Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, ed. Christoph Godde and Henri Lonitz, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996), p. 37.

[24] See Benjamin's "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939), which will be discussed in detail in my conclusion; find this essay in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 1938-1940 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 314. See also *Illuminationen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), p. 186.

[25] Dilthey was working in the romantic tradition of an aesthetic of empathy. See Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, "Introduction," in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. and trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), pp. 1-84.

[26] For two arbitrary instances of acknowledgement, see Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 12, 300.

especially important in a time in which concepts of type and *Weltanschauung* have so strongly determined thinking, not only in philosophy but also in the humanities, that one must speak of this as a danger . . . For although I view forms of human expression as expressive of typical elements of attitude, I have continually lost the immediate reference [*unmittelbaren Bezug*] to these forms."[27]

A few years after his protest Bollnow himself would become a Klagesian. In a later study of *Lebensphilosophie* he portrayed Klages as the most important *Lebensphilosopher* after Dilthey and Bergson, noting that Klages's thinking about time owed a heavy debt to Bergson,[28] who had learned about "concrete time" and "real time" from Dilthey.[29] The heart of Dilthey's philosophy, according to Bollnow, was its notion of time: "The dependence of the past on the present is one of the more important contributions of Dilthey's philosophy."[30] In other words, a philosophical line led from Dilthey through Bergson to Klages, and this line was focused on the philosophy of time.

Looking at this history of philosophy with some perspective, one notes that after Dilthey, two roads appeared. Theodor Lessing, Georg Simmel, and Georg Misch set out to correct Dilthey—and with him Hegel and Kant—by expanding *Lebensphilosophie* into a historical hermeneutics. This, in Klages's view, would imprison *Lebensphilosophie* in the academy.[31] The other road, chosen by Klages and the eccentric Count Hermann Keyserling, founder of the popular "school of wisdom,"[32] would pit *Leben-*

[27] "Das Erscheinen diese Bandes erscheint besonders wichtig in einer Zeit, in der die Begriffe, Typus und Weltanschauung nicht nur in Philosophie und Geisteswiss., sondern auch im taglichen Leben das Denken so start bestimmten, dass man von einer Gefahr sprechen muss . . . Denn indem ich menschliche Ausdrucksformen auf das Typische der sich in ihnen aussprechenden Haltung betrachte, habe ich schon immer den unmittelbaren Bezug zu ihnen verloren." Otto Friedrich Bollnow, "Diltheys Lehre von den Typen der Weltanschauung," in *Neue Jahrb u cher fu r Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung* 4 (1932): 2. The article was reprinted in *Philosophie und Leben* 8, no. 2 (February 1932).

[28] Bergson's writings were published by the radically nationalist Diederichs publishing house, also responsible for the patriotic journal *Die Tat*. Klages bought early German editions of Bergson's texts; in the margins are many comments and a careful analysis of the argumentation. Yet in private letters Klages denied having read Bergson and never mentioned him in his books.

[29] Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Die* Lebensphilosophie *(Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1958), p. 19.*

[30] Ibid., p. 20.

[31] Dilthey's stress on a post-Kantian vocabulary and post-Enlightenment considerations, always keeping science and humanism in sight, had made him a problematic source of inspiration. Klages dealt with the issue in his usual way: he avoided any explicit discussion of Dilthey and his influence. Latter-day Klagesians have tried to present their hero as a Diltheyian who surpassed his role model, but they lack any concrete reference by Klages himself. According to Michael Grossheim, Dilthey focused on *Nacherleben*, or empathic experience, yet Klages went deeper, delving into the "pure notion of experience itself." Grossheim presents his comparison in terms that clearly favor Klages's perspective, suggesting that Klages got closer to the primal notion, to the soul, or ontology, and bypassed the interpretative *Geist* and its epistemology. See Michael Grossheim, "Auf der Suche nach der volleren Realitat: Wilhelm Dilthey und Ludwig Klages (zwei Wege der Lebensphilosophie)," *Dilthey Jahrbuch fur Philosophic und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften* 10 (1996): pp. 161-189.

[32] Hermann Graf Keyserling (1880-1946) was the founder of the "school of wisdom" (1920) and one of Klages's competitors in the popularization of *Lebensphilosophie*, according to Klages's own let-

sphilosophie against history as a system of mythological hermeneutics. Klages fought all his life against *Weltgeschichte* (world history), the methodology underpinning German historicism, canonized by Hegel and practiced by such well-known historians as Barthold Georg Niebuhr, Theodor Mommsen, and Leopold von Ranke, the fathers of modern historicism. Klages held in high esteem those who took up the weapons of romanticism to do battle with historicism. In his 1920 introduction to *Mensch und Erde* (Man and earth), discussed later in this chapter, Klages preached: "Undeterred from the consecrated lies of world history [*Weltgeschichte*], [one] looks only at the ever-present drives."[33]

2. Experiencing: Affair with a 12-year-old

The close relationship between *Erlebnis* and fundamentalist aestheticism can be gleaned from Klages's and his friends' language, expressing itself in radical and puritan terms when it came to the aesthetic mission. In a section of his *Nachlass* that Klages dated 1890-1891 are a few poems; one is entitled "Das Leben" (Life). Ostensibly a love poem, it is in fact a poem about the romantic understanding of time. Klages goes beyond individual passions to sketch the temporalization of the universe on the basis of a repetitive movement, the purest aesthetic form, for it leads nowhere and has no obvious message, other than itself. Its own *Erlebnis* is being extended into the cosmos as pure beauty.[34]

The poem takes up a romantic theme treated in such works as Robert Browning's "Meeting at Night." "Separation, . . . Separating again, . . . and . . . return"—or the notion of repetition that is even more evident here than it was in Stefan George's poetry. If George strove to apply to his everyday life his ideas about artistic creation, archaic festivities, and sexual freedom, in Klages an ontological state of flow develops out of the theme and is projected onto the cosmos, only to return to the individual to guide his life.

In other poems Klages obsessively returns to the metaphor of the in-between state of consciousness, conveyed by vapor and heavy fog between the sea and the sky, the earth and the treetops. The value of comprehension is anchored in the unity of the One, an essence that is external to human perceptions of the real.

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ters. In correspondence with Keyserling during the mid-1920s, Klages accused the count of plagiarism. Keyserling argued in favor of an interdisciplinary and mystical view of life, opposing any attempt to systematize or professionalize it. See the Klages-Keyserling correspondence, attached to a report Klages sent Hans Prinzhorn, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, August 29, 1923, Sig. 61.6582, letter no. 9.

[33] "[U]nbeirrt von den 'geheiligten Lugen' der 'Weltgeschichte,' nur auf die jederzeit gegenwartigen Triebkrafte blickt." Ludwig Klages, *Mensch und Erde, Sieben Abhandlungen* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1933), p. 8.

[34] Klages published parts of his *Nachlass* in Ludwig Klages, *Rhythmen und Runen, Nachlass herausgegeben von ihm selbst* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1944), p. 166.

Klages did not separate the individual from the collective, or ur-beginnings from end times. From 1896 onward, he wrote a number of poems, gathered and titled "Runen" (runes), literally a reference to old Nordic alliterative dialects, but which he often also used as an allusion to "Ruinen" (ruins). These allusions convey the destruction of reality and, more than that, the destruction of signification as a whole. Light gives way to the long night of chaos; reason is destroyed with its names and comprehension. The modern world becomes a place devoid of interpretation and interpretability. In a place where nature has been destroyed by the polluting force of modernity, there is no more true signification: when "the fog rises, the world is far away."[35] After reading the "Runen" poems, one is tempted to question the value of epistemology as a whole. The poetic image is that of a single survivor left after a dreadful destruction; all that remains is an abstract flow—not gods, not humans, but the principles of movement, which is to say, life. It is important to note, however, that Klages's plea for a revival of life does not imply a reconstitution of a language of rights. This gap, the aesthete's omission of politics, is noticeable in Klages's poetry and prose. As we have seen, it eventually surfaces in his philosophy.

Klages's *Nachlass* proves how important the images and conventions of romanticism were for his philosophy from its earliest stages. The romantic vocabulary is evident throughout, beyond any specific period and theme. Even after he had shifted to a more modernist notion of politics and action, Klages's epistemological basis remained romantic, whereby intuition meant far more than intellect. But to trust in romanticism did not, in this case, entail a life of pure abstraction.

The mantle of romantic expression gave Klages license to indulge in behavior that would otherwise be considered unwholesome at best. For example, in 1895 he moved to a new apartment in Munich. His landlady, one Frau Bernhard, had three sons and a daughter, "through and through a child, but highly developed for her age."[36] The impression this girl made on Klages was so powerful that he initiated a sexual affair with the 12-year-old, whom he dubbed "Putti." The relationship was approved by her mother, Frau Bernhard, whose hope that Klages would one day marry her daughter defied common sense. Sure enough, Klages kept Putti's admiration for him burning for almost two decades, without ever advancing beyond the purely sexual relationship he favored, a fact that even Klages's loyal disciple and authorized biographer could not deny.[37]

To justify his actions, Klages quoted from Gottfried Keller's masterpiece, *Der grime Heinrich* (Green Heinrich, 1854-1855),[38] that tells the story of a young Swiss boy

[35] Ibid., p. 227.

[36] Hans Eggert Schroder, *Ludwig Klages; die Geschichte seines Lebens*, vol. 1: *Das Jugend* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1972), p. 171. Schroder does not indicate the source for this statement ascribed to Klages.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Klages must have adopted the model of Novalis's relationship with the 12-year-old Sophie von Kuhn (1782-1797), which ended with her death, shortly after the engagement.

laboring to fulfill his artistic vocation and to experience romantic love. Structured as a bildungsroman, the novel raises many questions about individual morality, nationalistic sentiments, and social awareness, all set against a romantic landscape full of artistic intuition. Heinrich, the protagonist, crosses the Swiss Alps to Munich, where, as Klages put it, "the aroma of Munich's soul infuses the form of adolescent working-class girls."[39] While we are likely to make allowances for a naive young man like Heinrich, it is surprising that Klages, whose letters to the countess Franziska zu Reventlow suggest a certain sexual maturity, saw fit to sleep with a young girl. But for Klages all talk of morality, in this context, was nonsense. What had romantic aesthetics to do with ethics? Klages's affair with Putti, his notion of sexuality, his own self-justification, reflect more on his philosophy than on his morality.

Poetry was the best form for expressing the complex imagery that flooded his mind. So Klages attached it linguistically to everything he wanted to honor. For example, movies had to be more than the mere play of images or a narrated vision. They had to become "movie poetry" (*Filmdichtung*), encompassing and celebrating life.[40] Poetry allowed Klages a literary style suitable to his *Lebensphilosophie*. Metaphors, biological or cosmological, allowed him to enfold and transcend the limitations of rationalism and science. He gradually applied a lyrical and somewhat anachronistic style to his philosophy. In a short fragment from 1900 he wrote, "Poeticizing as [a] form of living (*Lebensform*)—poeticizing as a way of ecstatic living (*Lebendigkeit*). The life of the poet is inner poeticizing. Poetic experience is magical language experience."[41]

Klages's intuitive, quasi-scientific, amoral, and antilinear philosophy developed from this early commitment to the ideals of romantic poetry. Much of it had to do with a search for a direct and immediate relation between language (expression) and life (experiencing).

As one inspects Klages's career and philosophy, the connections between *Lebensphilosophie* and the quest for a "perfect language" become almost inescapable.[42] The aestheticization of the One (meaning the cosmological language, not God), resonated with a number of esoteric approaches to truth: curtained monads, neoplatonic shadow plays, the long romantic nights of terrifying dreams followed by the short days of visions encouraged by pipes and draughts, or the eschatological narratives of catastrophe and revival. In pure aesthetic terms, Klages divided the world into clear dichotomies only to reattach them. If one takes life and death as a case in point, the unity of the poles would be located outside opposition; the cosmic looks at both as a phenomenon

[39] Schroder, *Ludwig Klages*, p. 172.

[40] In a letter to his disciple Erwin Ackerknecht, dated September 11, 1917, Klages explained the concept of "Filmdichtung." See Schroder, *Ludwig Klages*, p. 722.

[41] "Dichten als Lebensform—Dichten ist eine Weise ekstatischer Lebendigkeit. Das Leben des Dichters ist inneres Dichten, Dichterisches Erlebnis ist magisches Spracherlebnis." *Rhythmen und Runen*, p. 243.

[42] Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994).

and characterizes the relationship between the two poles from the outside. For example, the relationship between the life-death opposites is one of absolute rejection and simultaneous integration. There is no life without death, and no death without life. Klages was researching such oppositions from both the outside (the cosmological) and the inside (*Erlebnis*). As Marshall Brown demonstrated, such configurations of polarity belong to the romantic tradition and the attempt to reach a point where "the center of time has opened."[43]

Klages found such open thresholds not only in his own life, enabling him to justify a pedophiliac tendency (as pure living experience), but also in the lives of others around him. Morality did not matter, nor did any sense of progress or any actual division of self and world. The implications, he admitted, could be severe: in the early 1900s few suspected what was to come in 1914 and after. Yet in a short fragment dated 1900—one could call it pessimistic—Klages described a present dominated by a strong feeling of absence and a process of decay and destruction. Under the title "Uber die Spaltung der Substanz" (On the division of substance), Klages defined his aesthetic in terms of the gap inherent in any structural view.[44] His post-1914 *Lebensphilosophie* will rely on this early combination of two principles: the cosmological and the internal, the most extreme externality and the most internal integrality. One is the idea of repetition as a "cosmic" idea and its appearance in typological forms, or repetition contrasted to those events that take place along a linear scheme (for example, development, cause and effect, evolution). The other is the essentialism of the temporal threshold between life and death, organic and inorganic, and its integration into an inner sense of a divided One.[45] In his later work, during the early 1930s, Klages would utilize the aesthetics of thresholds—*Grenzqualita t* (quality of thresholds)—to tie typological psychology with biology and both with mass politics.[46] As Walter Benjamin observed later, in a letter to Gershom Scholem, "I would never have imagined that the kind of clumsy metaphysical

[43] In a study of German romanticism, Marshall Brown placed the romantic man between the "divine sun" and an animal driven by instincts. In the romantic's world, subjective human temporality (memory, organic understanding, the world as a process) replaced all ideas of space and boundaries: "Human temporality is not something given [but] . . . an emotional state, the restlessness of eternally unfinished business, . . . a 'wavering' of bipolar *temporality." See Marshall Brown, The Shape of German Romanticism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 191, 195.*

[44] "Von der Einheit der lebendigen Substanz fuhrt uber viele unterscheidbare Stufen der Weg zur Zweiheit . . . weiter zum tranzendentalen oder zum materiallen Ich. Nur im Zwischenreich der Zweiheit, im Reich des schopferischen Idealismus, ist Rausch . . . 'Sentimentalitat' ist die Sehnsucht nach Ruckkehr in das unwiederbringlich Verlorene: in die *Einheit des Seins.*" Ludwig Klages, "Uber die Spaltung der Substanz," in *Rhythmen und Runen*, p. 479 (emphasis in original).

[45] In the language of disciplined philosophers, the concepts of repetition and the One are allied with the transcendental. But transcendentalism belongs to the vocabulary of idealism, which Klages rejected. Therefore, both concepts refer here metaphorically to the aesthetic form that unifies two poles, not to the strictly biological, organic, or physical life cycles.

[46] Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, in *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 1 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1969), p. 238.

dualism that forms the basis of Klages's book [*Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*] could ever be conjoined with really new and wide-ranging conceptions."[47]

3. Signifiers: Physiognomy and graphology

Another source of romantic inspiration for Klages was the physiognomer Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801),[48] whose ideas influenced Dilthey's typology, among others. Whereas Dilthey saw in physiognomy only a bookish tool for historical characterization—witness his description of Edward Gibbon's face as emblematic of "the modern man"—Klages found physiognomy standing at the threshold between life and death, the internal and the external, as an essential signifier of eternal qualities.[49] For Klages, physiognomy stood close to graphology. Both systems mixed a set of empirical observations with philosophical conclusions. Based on such empirical collection of samples of handwriting and face types, Klages established in 1896 the Deutsche Graphologische Gesellschaft (German Graphology Association), with the physician Georg Meyer and the sculptor Hans Busse, the latter also the founder of the Institut fur wissenschaftliche Graphologie two years prior to that. The three agreed on a set of concepts and an aesthetic position that interpreted the appearance of facial and graphological signs as the appearance of psychological drives. As Meyer wrote in the opening pages to his *Scientific Foundations of Graphology* (1901), "[Graphology] stands among those different means of expression [*Ausdrucksmittlen*] that demonstrate the unwilling appearance of expression *(unwillkiMchen Ausdruckserscheingen*) . . . The psychodiagnostic purpose is to deliver the news of our fellow man's inner life (*Innenleben*) in a general and reliable way."[50]

From physiognomy and its system of correspondences, Klages carved during the early 1900s the sciences of character, verbal expression, and handwriting—a range of hermeneutical systems based on unchanging signs in a universe of secret underworlds. Most important to both physiognomy and graphology was the focus on the phenomenon as a medium between the inside and the outside, psychology and the world. As Conrad Wandrey, the George disciple and Fontane scholar, reflected in an essay about Klages's system, "The whole issue of psychology hangs on the question of

[47] Walter Benjamin to Gershom Scholem, August 15, 1930, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940*, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. 366.

[48] Theodor Lessing acidly commented, "In order to receive a word of gratitude from K, one had to be dead." Lessing, *Einmal und Nie Wieder* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Sachbuchverlag, 1969), p. 429.

[49] For the comment about Gibbon's face, see Wilhelm Dilthey, *Zur Geistesgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts, Portraits und biographische Skizzen*, ed. Ulrich Herrmann, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 15 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 1970), pp. 77-78.

[50] Georg Meyer, *Die wissenschaftlichen Grundlangen der Graphologie* (Jena: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1901), p. 2.

whether one sees the meaning in the world of appearance (*Erscheinungswelt*), especially in the physiognomy which is supposed to reflect a person's inner core."[51]

The pseudoscience of physiognomy is understood today as a quintessentially romantic phenomenon, a set of connections between material phenomena and abstract aesthetic structures.[52] In *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern*, Corinna Treitel places physiognomy and graphology in the context of a postromantic attraction to irrationality and occultism: "Klages, a pioneer of applied psychology, was also a vocal proponent of scientific graphology, a field that had not yet shaken its occult roots."[53] As Treitel shows, the attraction was shared by thinkers from both left and right (she mentions Walter Benjamin and Hans Driesch as two other examples on the same page).

Klages identified his heritage with a rebellious system that overcame normative divisions: Lavater's exercises in the reading of faces, Carl Gustav Carus's study of landscapes, Johan Jakob Bachofen's physiognomy of historical symbols, and Eugen Duhring's science of race. Stereotypes, which are easily projected onto the body and the face, even against one's will, allowed Klages to finesse structures. They allowed him, paradoxically, an interpretative scheme free of such external concerns as nineteenth-century rationality. Gernot Bohme calls physiognomy the study of a "potential of impression" (*Eindruckspotential*).[54] This is not the study of the human face as the expression of character, but of the traces of character after its appearance, its action, or its performance. It is a science of the afterlife, the trace, the specter, grounded in the phenomenology of faces. Klages's 1901 essay on Lavater displaced the hub of his method from the life force, still tied to one's actions and thoughts, to the inherent organic qualities of the race. The romantic person became an "Aryan," even when outside Germany or debating Germanic signs of identification.

Eventually Klages concluded that its dramatic appearance had led the practice of physiognomy into a methodological dead end. He decided to reassign his cultural investments to graphology that struck him as more empirically defensible.[55] Helmut Lethen, a well-known theoretician in Germany, has commented, "Klages's ousting of the theatrical, masks and all elements of self-enactment, reminds us that unfalsified feeling and pure expression remain part of his relentlessly exclusivist fundamentalism, that he sub-

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[51] Conrad Wandrey, *Ludwig Klages und seine* Lebensphilosophie *(Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth Verlag, 1933), p. 17.*

[52] See, for example, Ellis Shookman, ed., *T he Faces of Physiognomy: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Johann Caspar Lavater* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993).

[53] Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 140.

[54] Gernot Bohme, "Physiognomie als Begriff der Asthetik," in *Perspektiven der Lebensphilosophie, Zum 125. Geburtstaf von Ludwig Klages*, ed. Michael Grossheim (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1999), p. 51 (my translation).

[55] Klages did not abandon his physiognomy but merely recalibrated the hierarchy between the sciences. Lampert shows that Lavater's work was part of a growing body of literature about the close relationship between the anatomical and anthropological.

jects all the same to an extreme formal discipline."[56] Klages chose graphology because it had an "individual notion of space" that was "not merely accidental."[57] In other words, even if it was based on irrational premises, it could still be systematized. In a comment on the theories of his teacher Theodor Lipps, Klages connected graphological "form" and the feeling of being alive (*Lebensgefiihl)*: "While one's own feeling of being alive either has a positive or negative relation to the life of forms, the impression [*Eindruck*] of these forms must free or disturb [*verstimmen*] us, according to Lipps's theory."[58] At the heart of being alive stands the living experience, unpredictable and not linear. What is grasped in handwriting, or the wrinkles marked on one's face, is related to this feeling of life, which is "a representative symbol of a line that *encircles* the body of the word and so *isolates* it in space."[59] This observation had a crucial impact on Klages's ideas about peoples, as well as on his ideas about space and time. By intuiting the "physiognomy of functions" (or "morphology of characters"), one grasped the key underlying the study of symbols, the hermeneutics of facial expressions and the expression of character in handwriting.[60] This was meant to be the ultimate German science, constructed on a different notion of space and time than other scientific systems that came from the Enlightenment or the Judeo-Christian tradition. From Klages's perspective, if JudeoChristianity created the linearity of world history, as expressed in idealism and the modern state, he strived to reach the language of pure signs. Biblical linearity he considered a progressive abstraction and therefore corrupting, while a pure language was stable and imagistic, and therefore true. For Klages, there was a line connecting the traces of a biblical theology with the modern scientific systems and the Enlightenment. In that sense, Klages agreed with Hermann Cohen and other neo-Kantians of the early 1900s. Both neo-Kantians and *Lebensphilosophers* agreed that the Enlightenment was trying to change the relationship between the individual, the collective, and the law, in all its forms.[61] The major difference was that neo-Kantians accepted and broadened it, whereas *Lebensphilosophers* rebelled against it. In between the two camps stood exceptional thinkers who were critical of neo-Kantianism, as well as of

[56] Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 78.

[57] Ludwig Klages [Dr. Erwin Axel, pseud.], "Graphologische Prinzipienlehre," *Graphologische Monatshefte* 10 (1906): 69.

[58] "Indem dann das eigene Lebensgefuhl zum Leben der Formen ein entweder positives oder negatives Verhaltnis hat, muss uns ihr 'Eindruck' erfreien oder verstimmen, Soweit vorerst die Theorie von Lipps." Ibid., p. 70.

[59] "Ein stellvertretendes Symbol einer Linie, die den Wortkorper *einkreist* und damit raumlich *isoliert*." Ibid., p. 71 (emphases in original).

[60] "Physiognomik der Funktionen" or "Morphologie der Charaktere." Klages, *Die Probleme der Graphologie: Entwurf eine Psychodiagnostik* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1910), p. v.

[61] Dana Hollander put it succinctly: "In endorsing Kant's criticism of the 'volunteer of morality,' Cohen links it to a Jewish tradition of respect for the law." Dana Hollander, "Some Remarks on Love and Law in Hermann Cohen's Ethics of the Neighbor," in *The Journal of Textual Reasoning* 4:1 (November 2005); http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/tr/volume4 /TR_04_01_e03.html (last accessed on June 8, 2012).

Lebensphilosophie. Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger are two opposing examples for the camp of "outsiders."

In 1907-1908, Hans Eggert Schroder tells us, Hans Busse, Klages's friend and co-editor, became so sick and depressed that Klages decided to cease publishing his journal, *Graphologische Montashefte.* Instead he directed his energies into a "psychodiagnostic seminar" held in Munich. The seminar turned the romantic sciences Klages utilized into a system of diagnosis, giving them a practical and future-oriented allure. A good diagnosis could predict a person's future action on the basis of his or her character and the unwilling or unconscious signs of one's handwriting and face lines. Klages's understanding of graphology and physiognomy was not only used to portray a temperament but also to describe the hidden drives behind it, both individual and collective. Germanness and Jewishness were seen as qualities expressed unwillingly by individuals who were forced by their own bodies into unconscious acts. Leaning back deep into the collective past, Klages predicted a close individual future.

In his summary of the work done during the early 1900s, Klages wrote, "The attempt to evaluate traces of an expression in physiognomy has been continued since Lavater . . . [T]he practical interest in human awareness via graphology or the physiognomy of movement [*Bewegungsphysiognomik*] did not gain credibility [up until my work] . . . [and] the attempt of the French to discuss the driven life [*Triebleben*] [in the context of] 'the civilized' [*zivilisierten*] was absolutely groundless."[62] In other words, a deep motivation behind the formation of this science was Klages's antiEnlightenment and anti-French standpoint.

If such ideas sound bizarre to contemporary ears, they did not to many interesting thinkers and artists of the early 1900s. Among those who attended the seminar were Ernst Glockner (1885-1934), the Stefan George disciple, historian of literature, correspondent of Thomas Mann, and partner to Ernst Bertram (1884-1957); Norbert von Hellingrath (1888-1916), a pioneering Holderlin scholar who was killed in the battle of Verdun at the age of 28; Rudolf Alexander Schroders, founder of the Insel publishing house; the famous philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969); Walter Friedrich Otto (1874-1958), the great scholar of religion; the author Heinrich Steinitzer (1864-1945); Erich Rothacker (1888-1965), the *Lebensphilosopher*, theoretician of *Begriffsgeschichte* (history of concepts), and director of the Institute of Psychology at the University of Bonn; Elizabeth Forster-Nietzsche (1846-1935), who enthused to Oswald Spengler—the author of *The Decline of the West* (1918, 1922)—about the lectures;[63] and the great art historian Heinrich Wolfflin (1864-1945), who maintained a lively correspondence with Klages until his death. Among the many people who sought an acquaintance with Klages at the time were the neo-Kantian Max Dessoir (1867-1947) and the fa-

[62] Ludwig Klages, *Ausdruckskunde*, in *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 6 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1964), p. 107.

[63] Spengler appears to have taken a real interest in Klages's ideas. See Oswald Spengler, *Briefe, 1913-1936* (Munich: Ch. Beck Verlag, 1963), pp. 180, 347, 516, 537, 604.

mous conductor Wilhelm Furtwangler (1886-1954), later to be identified with the Nazi regime.[64]

Furthermore, the influence of Klages's ideas on the sciences and philosophy was wider than this small group of intellectuals. At the same time he was giving his seminar in Munich, Klages worked on a lecture tour to introduce German audiences to characterology. The journey was reported widely in the newspapers, and Klages became an intellectual celebrity, his teachings the basis for a recognizable school. The lecture tour drew massive audiences by academic standards, and Klages did not hesitate to use popular techniques of "enchantment." He was an early exploiter of projected images as accompaniment to scientific discourse, and his illustrative examples were drawn from mass culture. The Braunschweig newspaper ran a story about a Klages lecture in its " *neueste Nachrichten*" (Recent News) section on December 4, 1908: "Ludwig Klages spoke yesterday in Durerbund Braunschweig, to a completely packed auditorium, about temperament and character . . . As he explained it, character and personality are one—as Goethe already noticed . . . Talent is shaped in silence, as character is in the flow of the world."[65] It was especially the "flow" that directed one back to a system of signs that froze it and enabled the researcher to capture it. Connecting such secret worlds of "talent" to individual preferences of language and traits made a great impression on Klages's listeners.

In a review she wrote in 1938 about Klages's graphology, aimed at the English-speaking world, Thea Stein-Lewinson explained the system in the following way: "For Klages, handwriting is, above all, the 'sediment of living,' of character; it is a rhythmic movement condition, in which each single movement reflects the entire personality, the sum total of the writer's intellectual, emotional, and physical tendencies. Handwriting is an agent of psychodiagnostics that can be used for the most varied purpose."[66] What does it actually mean to tie character with graphology and psychodiagnostics? Stein-Lewinson clarifies: "The criteria which Klages uses for the interpretation of handwriting are regularity and harmony, the *Formniveau*, spaciousness, speed and pressure, width, slant and pastosity, forms of connection and degree of connection, copiousness and character of direction, initial emphasis, overlining and distribution of the movement,

[64] Fragments from Dessoir and Furtwangler's letters to Klages were published in Hans Eggert Schroder, ed., *Centenar-Ausstellung 1972 Ludwig Klages 1872-1956* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1973), p. 162. Forster-Nietzsche is mentioned in Schroder, *Ludwig Klages*, vol. 1, p. 427; see also *CentenarAusstellung*, p. 163. For Wolfflin see Klages's report to his disciple Werner Deubel, explaining that Wolfflin attended his lectures in 1914 and "must have been impressed, because he immediately worked some of the principles into his book about the principles of art science." Klages to Werner Deubel, May 22, 1923, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.4471, letter 15.

[65] "Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille, durch ein Charakter in dem strom der Welt." Klages apparently saved many of the reviews and reports about him. This one can be found in DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Conv.: Zeitungsausschnitte. No sig. number.

[66] Thea Stein-Lewinson, "An Introduction to the Graphology of Ludwig Klages," in *Character and Personality* 6:3 (1938): 171.

spacing of the writing as a whole and related features, also the indications of the so-called

'acquired' handwriting."[67] There is not enough space here to explain how each criterion works, so let me focus on one of them, again from Stein-Lewinson's excellent summary:

Another point of interest is the manner in which the principle of representation, the "guiding image," effects handwriting—and its interpretation. Certain channels of expression for the impulse for representation are the conspicuous places in the writing field, such as the beginning of letters, paragraphs, and words; this is initial emphasis. Emphasis of the initial letters originates in a desire for self-estimation; in certain characters, it develops into a desire for greatness. The most favorable condition is a state of equilibrium between the self-confidence of a person and his self-estimation. In writing, this is expressed by a proportionate relationship between the width and the height of the initial letters, and the rest of the writing. The positive meaning of initial emphasis is the desire for significance; its negative meaning is vanity. The initial emphasis is the graphological indication of a driving force.

I should like to mention briefly at this point, that each graphological indication is in itself either an indication of the releasing of lifeforces or of the binding life-forces (i.e., releases: speed, spaciousness, irregularity, etc.; bonds: slowness, smallness, regularity, etc.).[68]

Klages did not invent graphology; rather, he systematized it as a branch of *Lebensphilosophie.* Armin Schafer described recently the history leading the science of graphology to its modern appearance as an immanent and performative expression of life science: "Since the seventeenth century the written words have stood for the writer herself. One looked at the handwriting in order to find her origins, her secret wishes and high intentions."[69] During the eighteenth century the handwriting brought "the expression of the man as a whole and reflected his soul like a mirror. For much of the nineteenth century, the handwriting was integrated to the life sciences and one begins to look at the handwriting for symptoms of illness, for brain malfunction, and nervous system. In this history of the psyche, the hand [itself] plays only a secondary role."[70] The major role was given to the system of signs, independent of the individual will, even when it expressed it: "Graphology sees in the handwriting not the hand but 'the signs of the human' [*Zeichen des Menschen*]."[71] Klages, in that respect, was one of the first to understand, as Schafer writes, that "the man writes with the whole of his

[67] Ibid., p. 172.

[68] Ibid., p. 176.

[69] Armin Schafer, "Lebendes Dispositiv: Hand beim Schreiben," in *Psychographien*, eds. Cornelius Borck and Armin Schafer (Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2005), 241.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., p. 265.

moving body, not only with the right hand."[72] Much like a person's face, handwriting expresses an essential inclination to the innermost

core of every human, uncontrolled and hardly free-willed, closer to the drives and instincts than to any cognitive capacity. The hand-written letters function that way as a system of psychological signs. Walter Benjamin was among the first to understand this potential of graphology as a semiotic system,—a map of the unconscious,—an idea he adopted from Klages, as he was criticizing him.[73]

4. From expression to biopolitics

In his analysis of the Weimar republic, Helmut Lethen describes the strong influence Klages had on the language of the 1920s, as noted by such figures as the acclaimed theoretician of language, Karl Buhler (1879-1963). Lethen portrays the 1920s as the decade of a new objectivity (*neue Sachlichkeit*) marked by "a rhetoric of visible behavior, of physiognomy and pathology."[74] Klages, in that respect, was seen as "the first consistent relativity theorist of expression,"[75] as Buhler put it, and as one who strived to achieve "pure expression" by asserting that, in Buhler's words, "genuine expression takes place in a manner just as unmediated as changes in the physical digestive processes."[76] What interests Lethen is not so much the purity of expression as its radicalization during the 1920s and its replacement by a language of gestures. The national socialists' "barbaric" campaign evacuated the conventional space assigned to gesture and assaulted pure expression in favor of "pure action." As Lethen describes it, "The proponents of fusion gather in the right wing . . . The logic of extremes dominates the literature of the avant-garde."[77] At this stage, Klages had far more in common with the goals of this avant-garde than with those whom Lethen calls "barbaric."

Klages interpreted the threats to a specific condition of thinking. His *Lebensphilosophie* is built holistically around a coherent linkage of symbolic forms, often biological metaphors—which Klages insisted on calling *Bilder*—images starting with the cell, its circulation in the blood, moving on to the human, man's circulation in the community, and climaxing with a harmonious human collectivity in alignment with cosmological principles. A threat on one of the elements carried significant implications for the others. Time and movement were woven together. In his theoretical work on human character, *Prinzipien der Charakterologie* (1910), Klages preached this gospel: "The concept of the cell [is] a part of the totality of life. There are equivalencies between the cell and the soul, the soul as part of the inner life. The concept of the cell grew out of

[72] Ibid., p. 245.

[73] Sarah Ley Roff, "Benjamin and Psychoanalysis," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, edited by David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 124.

[74] Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, p. 74.

[75] Buhler is quoted and discussed in ibid., p. 76.

[76] Ibid., p. 79.

[77] Ibid., p. 102.

abstraction."[78] Every part of the human face reflects the massive power of the planets. Everything is related to everything. No opposition frees itself from its metaphysical context.

More than a rhetoric of extremes, this is a rhetoric that tries to recapture the principles of repetition and movement in a certain "substitutive reversal" of all structures.[79] When warning his fellow Germans about annihilation, Klages was usually referring to the process of mechanization that destroys the symbolic values of nature. Neither political nor apolitical, he was an aesthete, but one who acted against all forms and figures. Forms were too constant and too rigid.

But Klages's notion of the cell and his historical analysis of images existed within a specific context of time and place. In Klages's words, "The impulse of psychological investigation is most active in that epoch of German spiritual life which is called the *romantic*."[80] For him, the German soul owed its greatest debt to Carus and Nietzsche—Carus for his theory of pictures and landscapes, Nietzsche for his "devaluation not only of ethics but, to an even greater extent, of intellect: for the first time in the known history of the world [*Weltgeschichte*] . . . the disposition of the biological value is scrutinized, without prejudice or favor, by the eye of spiritual hostility."[81] In other words, during the early 1910s Klages started to see German culture itself as the expression of pure forms, images of the soul, a reflection of the cosmos. His holism was German not only because of geography and context, but because that which was German was quite close to the universe in its original form. This approach apprehended time within and denied the existence of progress even as it examined the past. Klages was politicizing and biologizing his own aesthetic principles.

In this context, one needs to invert Walter Benjamin's interpretation of fascism as the aestheticization of politics. If fascism followed some of Klages's ideas, as Nolte and others have argued, it is surely thanks to the (bio)politicization of aesthetic principles, applied to a human typology, and not the other way around. I will try to explain this by looking at the close ties between Klages and the youth movement, for it is there that Klages's ideas had their first clear politicization, both internal and external to Klages's own theory.

[78] The book had been translated into English in 1929. See Klages, *Science of Character*, trans. W. H. Johnston (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1929), p. 26.

[79] *Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 103-118.

[80] Klages, *Science of Character*, p. 31.

[81] Ibid., p. 32.

5. Klages at the Hohe Meissner, 1913

For Klages, the final turn from aesthetic creation to political realization took place around 1913. This was roughly when Klages decided to leave Germany. He soon found that he was not alone in his pessimism.

Beginning with a speech he wrote for the youths gathered at Hohe Meissner—the dramatic peak in the middle of Hessen—late in 1913, Ludwig Klages took a profound interest in the *Wandervogel* movement. This coalition of youth movements pleading for a return to nature, freedom, and emancipation from the norms of a declining bourgeoisie greatly influenced Klages. And, contrary to some scholarly evaluations, the liberal segments as well as the nationalistic segments of the youth movement immediately embraced Klages's ideas. For example, after reading the reports about Klages's text, in 1914 Walter Benjamin, then aged 22, traveled to Munich in order to invite Klages to lecture to his fellow Free German Students, the liberal branch of *Wandervogel*.[82] The younger man found the elder one "forthcoming and polite."[83]

Parallel to Klages's growing interest in politics and the youth movement, Theodor Lessing, Klages's childhood friend, became during the early 1900s an important educational reformer who dedicated—and ultimately sacrificed—his life to democratic reforms. In 1897 Lessing read *Emlohstobba*, a utopian novel written by the important pedagogue Hermann Lietz. The novel's titular school was based at Abbotsholme, an experimental school founded by the British reformer Cecil Reddie (1858-1932) in 1889 near Derby, England, and Lietz had been one of the school's first teachers. Lessing responded enthusiastically to Lietz's depiction of an ideal educational community, wrote to Lietz, and later joined the staff of his German experimental school, Haubinda, established in 1901. In his teaching Lessing wrought a synthesis of Kantian ideals, *Lebensphilosophie*, and a combination of idealism, modernity, and, especially, naturalism. Such curricular innovation was welcomed at Haubinda.[84] The school's curriculum included modern languages as well as the languages of antiquity, and the faculty taught crafts in order to produce fine carpenters, metalworkers, and other artisans.[85] Less-

[82] Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin: A Biography*, trans. Malcolm R. Green and Ingrida Ligers (London: Verso, 1996), p. 64.

[83] Walter Benjamin to Ernst Cohn, June 23, 1914, in *T he Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940*, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 69.

[84] The school exists to this day, still advocating such ideas as "Children should acquire one thing before anything else, and that is the understanding of how to live [*Lebenskompetenz*]." See Hermann-Lietz-Schule at http://www.lietz-schulen.de/ident.html.

[85] "As cultural psychologists (for example, Vierkandt) explain," wrote Lessing about the school's principles, "just as among so-called people in a state of nature *[Naturvolkern*] the irrational dictates an aesthetic type of life [*Lebenshaltung*], so should the child's life be shaped according to the aesthetic anthropomorphism of egocentrism. [In contrast,] the intellectual ability [of the student] should be developed gradually, by an emphasis on meaning." SeeJorg Wollenberg, ed., *Theodor Lessing, Bildung ist Sch o nheit, Autobiographische Zeugnisse und Schriften zur Bildungsreform* (Bremen: Donat Verlag, 1995), p. 141.

ing's program emphasized the naturalistic ideals of the *Lebensreformbewegung* (the reform movement of life), such as attention to nature, the inculcation of simplicity and modesty, and great attention to crafts and sports. According to Lessing, the guiding figures for this system would be Rousseau, Nietzsche, and (surprisingly) Eugen Duhring.[86] Lessing and his associates considered the school and its program the most revolutionary German educational experiment of its time, and many who became notable thinkers passed through it. It was there that Walter Benjamin met and became a follower of Gustav Wyneken, the founder and leader of Free German Students. Lessing taught at the school until a racist comment from Lietz convinced him that Jews were not welcome.

Klages followed a path quite similar to that of his former friend. He associated with the chief German youth movement of the day, notable for its nationalistic and romantic qualities. *Wandervogel*, the original of the many youth organizations, was founded by Karl Fischer in a back room in a western suburb of Berlin in 1901. It combined a "literary revolt against the repression of individual emotions and the canons of classicism" with patriotic ideals.[87] The first large meeting occurred on the Hohe Meissner, in October 1913, on the one-hundredth anniversary of Napoleon's defeat in the Battle of the Nations. The organizers of the meeting aspired to unite all the youth groups. "Many leading figures of the day," Walter Laqueur wrote, "declared their support for the Freideutsche youth, among them Gerhard Hauptmann and Gertrud Baumer, Ferdinand Avenarius and Friedrich Naumann . . . Others were more prolix, like Ludwig Klages, who filled eighteen pages with savage condemnation of the ideas of progress and reason as guiding principles of life."[88] Describing Klages's "considerable and pernicious influence on the youth movement for many years," Laqueur singled out a disdain for morality and conscience, which he said "paved the way for fascist philosophy in many important respects."[89] Many thinkers acclaimed by the members of the youth groups presented ideas that look suspiciously fascistic when viewed from our current perspective. For example, Paul Natorp, the well-known neo-Kantian and pedagogue, was among the frequent contributors to the movement's journals, often speaking and writing excitedly of Germany's mission in the world, in using Darwinist metaphors to justify the politics of power. "The [German] youths need to learn," he wrote, "that death and life are attached to each other, and that life is defined by its moments of great risk. Youth need to grow up to participate in the struggle of life [*Kampf des Lebens*]."[90]

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[86] Ibid., p. 131.

[87] Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1984), p. 5.

[88] Ibid., p. 32.

[89] Ibid., p. 34.

[90] A speech given at the Comenius Society in Berlin, on December 6, 1913, and published on November 9, 1919. Paul Natorp, "Hoffnungen und Gefahren unserer Jugendbewegung," *Tat-Flugschriften* 36 (1919): 10.

It took Klages a few years to appreciate the importance of these new developments. The youth movement was for him another expression of radical thinking, propelled into existence by the decline of the state. In 1913 Klages still thought about the movement as a vehicle for his philosophy, not as a political phenomenon. The speech he wrote for the meeting at Hohe Meissner, entitled "Mensch und Erde,"—later extended to a full book—can be seen as a turning point. There he expressed the necessity of working within a community organized by the principle of political action. Gradual advances toward politicization reflected a much wider perception of the collective and its relation to politics, itself identified with modernity. In Thomas Mann's words: "The twentieth century is exploring the [concepts of] character and its propensities . . . [In contrast to the nineteenth century,] it is not pessimistic, skeptical, cynical, or ironic . . . It is more activist, voluntary, melioristic, political, and expressionistic."[91] As historians of the German youth movement agree, the meeting at the Hohe Meissner failed in organizational terms, but nevertheless succeeded in creating an image of mobilization and politicization.[92]

Though Klages was not present himself at the *Wandervogel* meeting on the Hohe Meissner, his address was delivered and eventually published in the celebrated *Festschrift of the Hohe Meissner* (1914).[93] In this address mourning the death of forests and deserts, Klages mentioned a "foreign race occupying Germany in the name of progress," but this implicit racial slur received far less attention than did his strident attack on progress. At the time, appeals to youth bolstered by nationalistic, communitarian, and even racist language were remarkably seen as apolitical: they were the plea of the revolutionary younger generation for action against the old system. Klaus Vondung agreed with this rebellious estimation, which he related to the unique apocalyptic mood in Germany: "As early as 1913, Ludwig Klages passionately denounced civilization's progress, whose destructive effects everyone can see today . . . Klages viewed the destructive tendencies of technological progress not as a concomitant feature, . . . but as the central feature of Western Christian civilization, as the expression of its will to subdue the earth, . . . the destruction of what is essentially human."[94]

Laqueur describes another scene that conveys this clearly: "The Austrian comrades protested that it [i.e., the united youth movement] must insist on racial purity in its

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[91] Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 2002), p. 48.

[92] "After problematic preliminaries to the meeting, and the subsequent meeting itself—attended by rather less than 3,000 youth movement members along with adult sympathisers—the Free German Youth proceeded to work along the lines of the 'Meissner Formula.' . . . What resulted was an undoubtedly much more self-consciously political type of youth movement." Michael Tyldesley, *No Heavenly Delusions? A Comparative Study of Three Communal Movements* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), p. 19.

[93] Willibad Karl, *Jugend, Gesellschaft und Politik im Zeitraum des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Munich: Miscellanea Bavarica Monacensia, 1973), p. 97.

[94] Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, trans. Stephen D. Ricks (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p. 284.

ranks . . . [A]fter that came this remarkable *non sequitur*—'We regard with contempt all who call us "political."'"[95] A professedly apolitical youth movement allied itself with aesthetics, a practical notion of everyday style and anarchism.[96]

All this sounds quite confusing. Was the youth movement politicized or not? Was it mobilizing the youth? If so, how did it do so in the name of *a*politicism? One way to think about the question is to understand that during that period the absolute outsider was the professional politician, the man who aspired to represent the system while the youth movement identified its own politics with a purist, nonpolitical collective interest. Frank Trommler, in his study of this period, sees the aestheticization of life piercing the hearts of German youths as they attempted to join the communal political movement of 1914.[97] This aesthetization, he explains, was achieved by developing a cult of youth whose mythical unity would resist any connection with the old institutions of the state, just as it abjured all things political. "In the Meissner celebration of 1913," he writes, youth abandoned the old ideas about qualities inherently German in favor of "a new political and social relevance that was committed exclusively to informing society with an ideology, while insisting that it was utterly apolitical itself."[98] The models were mostly literary, and many youths turned to the writings of Stefan George and his coterie.[99] According to Trommler, the youth culture's radical aesthetization of society and politics broke with the everyday precepts of bourgeois civilization—and particularly bourgeois models of time—to set its epistemology on a foundation of images and symbols, not structures. One should carefully note and contextualize this change, because if true, it marked a new and revolutionary type of politics, a new model of *apolitical politics* that strived to change the very core of the political discourse on the basis of the totalization and identification of politics with life.

Klages's influence is most apparent exactly where an aestheticized notion of life meets a revolutionary form of politics, in the embrace of images and the rejection of structures. One youthful attendee of the Hohe Meissner gathering declared in 1925: "What made us a movement can be framed as images and symbols: to live without joining a world in which people are hungry, . . . in which there is violence and injustice. Our secret longing was and remained to take over political life, to struggle for it, thereby shaping the spirit of the world and controlling it. No party wanted us."[100] It was more than anything else the "enthusiasm of the youth that created the new ethos. In content it was divided into thousands of forms, sometimes pacifistic, sometimes nationalistic, sometimes conflicting and radically destructive. But the 'breakthrough'

[95] Laqueur, *Young Germany*, p. 33.

[96] Ibid., p. 7.

[97] Frank Trommler, "Mission ohne Ziel, uber den Kult der Jugend im modernen Deutschland," in *Mit uns Zieht die neue Zeit, Der Mythos Jugend*, ed. Thomas Koebner, Rolf-Peter Janz, Frank Trommler (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985).

[98] Ibid., p. 16.

[99] Ibid., p. 22.

[100] Ibid., p. 26.

of the separated, the uninhabited stream of life [*Lebensstrom*] thrown into the forms of culture, was the ability to stand and support *all*."[101] Is it possible that Klages's metaphysical *Lebensphilosophie* resonated more forcefully in the hearts of German youths than did the more conventional and normative thinking of Paul Natorp? Is it possible that a marginal, esoteric thinker would help to substantiate one of the most important discursive revolutions of the twentieth century?

Laqueur did not exaggerate in his assessment of the meeting at Hohe Meissner, which became one of the most important moments in the evolution of a new Germany. It was there that the notion of industrial progress was challenged most forcefully, and there that an imminent and radical change seemed most compellingly announced, almost without regard for questions of location, context, or possible implication. Richard Wolin describes it in similar terms: "Because of its provocative anticivilizational and ecological themes, [Klages's] lecture subsequently acquired canonical status among youth movement members. [As a result,] Benjamin visited Klages in Munich the next year and invited him to speak to the Berlin youth movement group (the Free Student Society) over which Benjamin presided."[102]

Appropriately for this momentous occasion, "Mensch und Erde" was the first political tract Klages ever wrote. (In some ways, it was also his last.) It was acknowledged by the public and has been assigned a key place in the histories of the period. Many of the texts that emerged from the youth movement echo Klages's celebration of nature and condemnation of corrupting civilization, and they contrast the soul with the spirit. Hans Bluher, a political activist and historian of *Wandervogel,* picked up a derogatory term Klages repeated several times in his piece, *Zivilisatwnsgiirtel* (the modesty belt of civilization), and acknowledged "life as the key to all styles . . . the sign that permits one to see the whole notion of youth."[103] Among those who assessed the significance of the youth movement in the formation of a more general political consciousness was August Messer, the *Lebensphilosopher* whose defense of Lessing was mentioned in the previous chapter. Messer considered the most urgent message of the youth movements to be *Lebensreform*, the admiration of nature and its symbols, the emphasis on the organic, the contempt for materialism and scientific rationalism.[104] The *Lebensreform* movement tried to organize and mobilize the youth for these ends. Despite the youth movement's disavowal of political intentions, such intentions existed, often taking the form of "a plea for individual responsibility."[105]

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[101] Ibid., p. 30 (emphasis in original).

[102] Richard Wolin, introduction to the revised edition, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. xxxi.

[103] Hans Bluher, *Der Charakter der Jugendbewegung* (Elbe: Adolf Saal Verlag, 1921), p. 6.

[104] August Messer, *Die freideutsche Jugendbewegung (Ihr Verlauf von 1913 bis 1922)* (Langensalza: Beyer and Sohne, 1922), p. 17.

[105] "Eine solche Jugend konnte nicht politisch, geselsschaftlich und beruflich missbraucht und vermarktet werden. 'Die Meissner-Formel is ein Anruf zur Person.'" See Rudolf Kneip, *Wandervogel ohne Legende, Die Geschichte eines Padagogischen Phanomens* (Heidenheim, Brenz: Sudmarkverlag, 1984), p. 106. Two recent additions to the bibliography of the *Lebensreformbewegung* are the fascinating Michael

6. Leaving Germany, 1914-15

In 1915, after two years of hesitation and at the age of 43, Ludwig Klages decided to leave Germany for good and move to Switzerland. In Kilchberg, a small community near Zurich, he rented two rooms in the house of one of his literary idols, the poet Conrad Ferdinand Meyer. The house was set on the crest of a hill, and from his windows Klages looked out on a typically romantic scene: the Zurich lake spread below him and the snowy Alps beyond. A few meters behind the house a long green valley beckoned Klages to the daylong strolls he loved and which he often described in letters during this idyllic period. Why did he retreat to this bucolic place?

Klages's journey to Switzerland and his decision to settle there reflect two simultaneous decisions. His private correspondence shows that by 1913 he had decided to leave Germany because of what he saw as a precipitous cultural and social decline. At the same time he had grown fascinated by the thought of inhabiting a place that suited his romantic ideals, a land still untouched by the pollution of urbanization and mechanization. Juxtaposing those two decisions with Klages's extravagant trumpeting of Germanic superiority suggests a more problematic relation than that proposed by such historians as Ernst Nolte, who was eagerly trying to demonstrate Klages's Germanic extremism— along with Theodor Lessing's "Marxism"—as the intellectual opposition that ended with the rise of Hitler.[106] Nolte refers to Klages as an individual and active agent of radicalism, but as shown below, Klages's role was less personal than discursive. In contrast to how Nolte sees it, the outbreak of World War I in the summer of 1914 only accelerated Klages's plan to leave Germany and find refuge in Switzerland. This retreat was not coincidental; for the rest of his life, whenever Klages felt insecure when visiting Germany, he quickly left it in favor of the peaceful Swiss mountains, often while continuing to preach patriotism and heroism to his disciples and friends.

Nevertheless, this period did not leave Klages unscathed. In December 1914, after returning home for a few weeks, and at the end of a year he had spent soul searching and arguing with himself, Klages wrote to a friend that he was busy organizing his

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Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), and Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics and the Paths of German Modernity: AntiPolitics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[106] How can one read the following passage—in which Nolte condemns those "predecessors of Nazism," Klages and Nietzsche, while underscoring their connections to the two Jews, Lessing and Marx—without wincing? "What Adolf Hitler meant, then, by *Jew*, was identical to what almost all thinkers of the nineteenth century called—approvingly—progress . . . First Nietzsche and then such *Lebensphilosophers* as Ludwig Klages and Theodor Lessing explained that this was a threat to life. For Hitler, life is identical with the natural order, that is, the peasantry and the warlike structure of society . . . Hitler considered the same world-historical process [*weltgeschichtlichen Prozess*] as Marx, the same progress and decline, processes that one could call the intellectualization of the world." See Ernst Nolte, *Der europaeische Burgerkrieg 1917-1945: Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus* (Frankfurt: Propylaen Verlag, 1987), pp. 514-515.

literary estate. Evidently he was preparing to leave Germany to start a new life.[107] In August 1915, as Germany was battling in the trenches of World War I, he received official military permission to leave the country because of a bronchial condition; he had no intention of returning and left almost all he had behind, including his estate, his sister and niece, friends and admirers.[108] Many of his friends were drafted into the army, volunteers defending the sacred *H eimat* (homeland). Some learned about Klages's departure only after returning from the war.

How could Klages, who had deserted the homeland when it was sorely challenged by war, come to serve as a figurehead for radical nationalism during the 1920s? Was Klages really the ideologue behind Hitler's transcendental views, as Ernst Nolte argues?

Surely Klages's own view of politics, very much in keeping with the *Lebensphilosophie* tradition, provides insights into the relationship between *Lebensphilosophie* and radical right-wing ideology. *Lebensphilosophie*, in turn, can serve as an exemplary case study of the rise of what Nolte identifies as the organic community and which Foucault would later identify as biopower, biohistory, and biopolitics, the underpinnings of modern politics in his theory.[109] Klages's own understanding of *l ife* did not freeze during this period; rather, it shifted from his early 1900s understanding of the concept in terms of aesthetic expression and revived mythologism to a set of demographic considerations, in keeping with Foucault's claims regarding the change of the discourse during the late eighteenth century.[110] His earlier conflicts with Lessing and Wolfskehl started to seem to Klages like fundamental collective conflicts over the meaning of life itself.

Klages's move and thought prove important in the context of *Lebensphilosophie* and its gradual politicization. The relocation meant that Klages had erected a boundary between two periods of his life, the first of which was now over. Crossing the border to Switzerland meant also crossing a disciplinary and discursive boundary. After a long and unsuccessful attempt to find a leading role among the bohemians, artists, and philosophers in Munich, using graphology as his principal tool, Klages changed to philosophy. During the new period, he would try to fuse ancient Germanic myths and new forms of graphology and characterology into a synthesis of the dead and the living as a philosophical system. His new *Lebenslehre* (doctrine of life), as he explained it in a letter written in July 1918, was his new "biological philosophy," a new voice that used the language of biology to enter the sealed world of both living and dead.[111]

If Klages was for a time the crown prince of *Lebensphilosophie* (now united with biophilosophy), it was because of the various disciplines he connected to it: romantic cosmology, physiognomy, graphology, the science of expressions (*Ausdruckslehre*), char-

[107] Hans Eggert Schroder, *Ludwig Klages*, vol. 1, p. 629.

[108] Ibid., p. 645.

[109] Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualite* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

[110] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended," Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador Books, 2003), p. 242.

[111] The letter is quoted in Schroder, *Ludwig Klages*, vol. 1, p. 771.

acterology, and, finally, his metaphysics, as historians of philosophy and psychology have indicated.[112]

What sustained Klages's science was a passion for philosophical contemplation, not politics. The "pope of German graphology"[113] left much of the practical work in that discipline to his sister, who wrote graphological analyses under his name for years.[114] In Klages's philosophical worldview, the sciences, no matter how empirical, had no absolute truth value; they functioned merely as lists of signs, a hodgepodge of references to the essences that produced them. Klages's ideas were derived from a philosophy that presented itself as an intuitive form without structure, a system resentful of systems, an anti-idealist perception, itself deduced from a harmonious and well-ordered model of the universe, an optimistic notion of the whole linked to a world marked by chaos and decline. In short, Klages's sciences functioned to support aesthetic ideas, not enlightened scientific progress.

A chronological review of Klages's thinking about these sciences, from within his *Lebensphilosophie* perspective, will show how such a paradoxical system came into being. In outlining Klages's biography, my review moves from his discovery of aesthetic principles, heavily influenced by Stefan George's totality, to his acquisition of the relevant philosophical understanding, and, after World War I, his encounter with the romantic sciences focused on bodily signs, concluding with his purposeful politicization of all of his intellectual achievements. This last stage arrived only during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Ernst Nolte associated Hitler and his predecessors—Klages and Nietzsche, Marx and Theodor Lessing—with the reaction to transcendental philosophy and *Weltgeschichte* (world history), yet in this chapter I argue that, although the popularization of *Lebensphilosophie* did indeed mark the rise of modern biopolitics, it rose as an aesthetic avant-garde, favoring a pure art of living or living style above any form of politics, or as its only expression. From this perspective, life *is* politics and every political act is the expression of life. The aesthetic radicalism Klages promoted was embedded in the Nazi rhetoric of life, as shown in the recurrent stress on the Nazi "life style" and its fusion of the private and the public into one total form.[115] *Leben-*

[112] After Bergson, "the example in the German-speaking world of *Lebensphilosophie* is usually the one of Ludwig Klages." Herbert Schnadelbach, *Philosophy in Germany 1831-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 150. For "Klages's metaphysics of character," see Heinz Hartmann, *Essays on Ego Psychology, Selected Problems in Psychoanalytic Theory* (New York: International Universities Press, 1964), p. 422.

[113] Eva Horn, "Der Mensch im Spiegel der Schrift. Graphologie zwischen popular Selbsterforschung und moderner Humanwissenschaft," in *Literatur und Anthropologie*, ed. A. Assmann, U. Gaier, and G. Trommsdorf (Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2003), p.182.

[114] "The analyses were made not by me but by my sister! This is naturally a business secret, since I have fewer than four assistants. Personally, I have not written any for over half a decade," Klages wrote in a letter to his close disciple and friend, Kurt Seesemann, December 30, 1932, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.7133, letter no. 15.

[115] "Der Lebensstil des deutschen Volkes und damit der Lebensstil der deutschen Jugend ist von der Gemeinschaft her bestimmt." Information sheet distributed to members of the Hitlerjugend youth

sphilosophie insisted on the untimely, sometimes simultaneous, presence of ingenious symbols. In this sense, the continuity between the *Lebensphilosophers* and Hitler was one of vocabulary—in many cases of ideas as well—but not one of direct ideological implementation. The transformation of *Lebensphilosophie* into a racial and pro-Nazi vocabulary came only later, after the mid 1920s, but the basic temporal order was there already during the decade before the Nazis adapted it.

7. Conclusion

In his seminal work, *The Problem of Knowledge*, Ernst Cassirer describes the history of "organic forms" from Aristotle's form to the modern concept of life, or "how the 'outer' and 'inner' conditions mutually respond to and determine each other," to create a "biological universe."[116] In Cassirer's history there is a necessary link between life and how we perceive it, as it is mediated through forms or *Urbild* (ur-images), so that "all that seems to us so self-evident disappears."[117] The process Cassirer describes has more than one possible outcome. In fact, it has many, one of which becomes the impact of biology on "the drama of political life."[118] Written in the summer and fall of 1940, Cassirer's work grounded his scientific observations in a surprisingly open way: "What we call 'life,'" the neo-Kantian Cassirer observes at the conclusion to the chapter, "is a system arranged in hierarchic order."[119] The attempt to revolt against the order by mobilizing life and experience began with the nineteenth-century holistic rebellion against teleology and against "an older and traditional idea of purposiveness."[120] It ended with the posthistoricist and postmetaphysical world of the early 1900s: "[M]etaphysics in its old dogmatic form could never rise again."[121]

Accordingly, the long line drawn in this chapter—between Klages's pre-1914 and post-1914 interest in *Erlebnis* and other living forms— suggests the gradual growth from aestheticism to philosophy, sciences, and politics, albeit an opposite one to Cassirer's. The common ground for all three forms of expression is the concept of life and the radical tone that accompanies its use. This radicalism and its accompanying plea to immediacy and action became the leading element of *Lebensphilosophie*, no

movement, dated October 1938 (no publishing details are supplied), p. 13. See also Alfred Rosenberg's recurrent attempts to identify the Nazi life style as a fusion of the individual and the "state structure": "*Die eine innere Wendung, eine Bejahung oder verneinung entscheidet, millionenfach ausgesprochen, den Lebensstil, das Staatsgefuge, die Rechtsformen der Rasse oder eines Volkes*." Alfred Rosenberg, *Gestaltung der Idee: Reden und Aufsiitze von 1933-1935* (Munich: F. Eher Verlag, 1936), p. 249.

[116] Ernst Cassirer, *The Problem of Knowledge: Philosophy, Science, and History since Hegel*, trans. William H. Woglom and Charles W. Hendel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 191.

[117] Ibid., p. 202. The last line is a quote from Jacob von Uexkull, one of Klages's idols.

[118] Ibid., p. 316. Cassirer refers here, in the final lines of his book, to Mommsen's *Romische Geschichte*.

[119] Ibid., p. 216.

[120] Ibid., p. 212.

[121] Ibid., p. 324.

matter where it turned (as I will show in the following chapters). With it arose a form of *a*politics that *Lebensphilosophers* identified with the rebelliousness of a living, nonrepresentative, ur-community.

Another historical line, this time chronological, leading from Lavater's invention of the science of physiognomy to Klages's set of bodily signs, character types, and racial stereotypes, suggests a historical phenomenon closely linked to the growing interest of politics in individual bodies. As a recent and well-researched book by Michael Hau suggests, this was not an accidental development, but part of a much larger shift in political rhetoric.[122] Yet physiognomy, its later evolution into racial sciences, and the accommodation of different typologies into the state portray the political from its negation as an absence; it stresses the artificiality of norms but does not supply an alternative. For Klages life was the lack of rational order *before* it was created, but also *after* rationality and structure, a nostalgic recreation of the fundamental conditions of living. It is the extinguishing of the subject-object distinction in favor of the One. What this One is is never explained.

Finally, the process that led *Lebensphilosophie* in general and Ludwig Klages in particular from the Diltheyish empathic understanding to the youth rebellion against all forms of representation is the same process that led Klages to build philosophy on aesthetic principles, partially avant-garde, partially romantic. This dynamic was politicized in two different ways. First, there was a growing notion of the urgency and importance of the political, experienced by Klages himself. Second and more important, as our story proceeds into the 1920s and 1930s, there was the political use, the politicization of Klages's ideas, at times against his will. A closer look at Klages's own language suggests an interesting development. In 1913 he applied the word *Vernichtung*, which means "annihilation," largely to a threat on nature,[123] but by 1930 *Vernichtung* was applied mostly to a threat on Germans and Germany.[124] The organic and ecological were drafted in the service of the nation and the race.

Klages has a certain relevance. The *Lebensreform* movement, Klages's championing of nature against industry,[125] and the youth movement's insistence on experiencing nature directly (*Erlebnis*) still have an important message for today's environmentalists. In *The Environmental Movement in Germany*, Raymond Dominick identifies the early 1900s as crucial to the rise of ecological consciousness. He asserts that the movement would eventually develop in two opposite directions, propelling the right-wing, reactionary *Heimat* ideology as well as the leftwing Green Party.[126] Gestalt psychol-

[122] Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany.*

[123] Klages, *Mensch und Erde*, p. 13.

[124] Letters from Ludwig Klages to various correspondents, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv.: Seesemann, letters from August 4, 1930, and September 1, 1931, Sig.: 61.7133.

[125] Thomas Rohkramer, *Eine Andere moderne? Zivilisationskritik, Natur und Technik in Deutschland 1880-1933* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoningh, 1999), p. 170.

[126] Raymond H. Dominick III, *The Environmental Movement in Germany: Prophets and Pioneers, 1871-1971* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

ogy, created during the 1910s and referring often to Klagesian principles,[127] enjoyed tremendous popularity, and graphology became a popular form of personality assessment. *Lebensphilosophie* took over the popular communal discourse because it offered the only authority one could rely on: the horizontal, nonhierarchical experience of life.

[127] See Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935), p. 635.

3. Ecstasy and Antihistoricism: Klages,

Benjamin, Baeumler, 1914-1926

Wir brauchen Historie, aber wir brauchen sie anders, als sie der verwohnte Mussigganger im Garten dees Wissens braucht.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Von Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie fur das Leben*[1]

As Germany's wartime atmosphere of violence and fear yielded to a hopeful season of revolutionary ideas in 1918, a new firestorm ignited postwar philosophy, burning inward. Germans had lost faith in all political systems, opening a wide gap that was quickly filled by revolutionaries of all kinds, prewar aesthetic revolutionaries among them. Within this context a high-ranking reactionary writer took an interest in a young Jewish philosopher, or, more precisely, a Nazi *Lebensphilosopher* took an interest in Walter Benjamin's own fascination with *Lebensphilosophie* as a tool to reach a total critique. This interest was registered in a still unpublished document that Alfred Baeumler, one of the key ideologues of the radical right wing, sent to Klages, while naming Benjamin as a mutual "foe."[2] (This document is analyzed in detail at the end of this chapter.) Baeumler's interest, negative as it may be, proves a direct response to the challenge of Benjamin's critique and a serious attempt to destroy it. At the center of this document, which may shed some light on an old debate concerning Benjamin's attraction to reactionary thinkers, as Gershom Scholem argued, stands the alternative counterhistory of the late romantic thinker Johann Jakob Bachofen.[3] The context surrounding Benjamin's elaborate commentary on the subject reveals his interest in Bachofen's matriarchical, antiimperialist, anti-Roman, and anti-Prussian theory of history. Bachofen's theories, as we shall see, were revived by members of the George circle and figure prominently in Klages's own *Lebensphilosophie*.

[1] "We need history, but our need for it differs from that of the jaded idlers in the garden of knowledge." Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Ian C. Johnston (New York: Cosimo, 2005), p. 3. Quoted as the epigraph for Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," thesis XII, in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4: 1938-1940, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 394.

[2] Alfred Baeumler to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, May 8, 1926, Institut fur Zeitgeschichte in Munich, Nachlass Alfred Baeumler, Mappe 23: Korrespondenz Manfred Schroter.

[3] Gershom Scholem, "Walter Benjamin," *Neue Rundschau* 76:1 (1965): 19.

While tracing the connections and disagreements among *Lebensphilosophers* and their internal conflicts, this chapter will also elaborate on the radical potential of *Lebensphilosophie* for both left and right political factions, and it will identify *Lebensphilosophie*'s key interest in an analysis of alternative temporal forms such as Nietzsche's principle of eternal recurrence.

1. Lebensphilosophie in the early 1920s

"For the beautiful is nothing but the onset of that Terror we can scarcely endure, and we are fascinated because it calmly disdains to obliterate us," wrote Rilke in his *Duino Elegies* (1911), describing a terror in which "each angel is terrifying."[4] As will be shown below, Rilke's angel was the herald of history and of Chronos, father of Zeus. The rise of futurism from the ruins left by the First World War, the growing power of the new biopolitics, and *Erleben*, the aesthetic experiencing of "new life," first articulated some years earlier, all encouraged and drew upon the heterogeneous and conflicting forces suppressed during the war years. *Lebensphilosophie* was drafted to the effort—but which effort? Strangely, one finds *Lebensphilosophers* united only in their plea for heterogeneity. The "most fashionable philosophy of the present," as Heinrich Rickert bitterly titled his book in 1920,[5] captured the interest of Ludwig Klages, the star *Lebensphilosopher*, Alfred Baeumler, the future representative of Nazi pedagogy, and Walter Benjamin, the most important Jewish intellectual of his time—all of whom contributed to the Bachofen debate from 1924 to 1926, marking a threshold in *Lebensphilosophie* that would conclude with an open break in the ranks.

In addition to the revolutions and counterrevolutions of the time, murders, mostly of left-wingers, took place routinely in the streets of every large German city. October and November 1918 brought the sailors' mutiny in Kiel and the communist rebellion in Munich. The newly appointed democratic government responded to both of these uprisings by unleashing the *Freikorps*, as the right-wing militias were known.[6] In January 1919 fierce fighting broke out in Berlin when radical right-wing activists

[4] Elegy no. 1 in Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, trans. Leslie Norris and Alan Keele (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), p. 2.

[5] Heinrich Rickert, *Die Philosophie des Lebens: Darstellung und Kritik der philosophischen Modestromungen unserer Zeit* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr Verlag, 1920).

[6] The Freikorps have been discussed by historians of fascism and Nazism. They are usually understood to represent the "demobilized soldiers, embittered and shocked by the suddenness of defeat, psychologically unprepared for peace, [who] flocked to join volunteer formations created by officers to maintain the organizational and spiritual continuity of the army . . . The fighers of the Freikorps helped set the tone for successive postwar iterations of soldierly identity . . . These fighters—formally unpolitical, heralds of restless action, embodying a brutal nihilism that had much in common with fascism—earned their notoriety in the postwar ethnic warfare on Germany's eastern frontiers and in the crushing of farleft risings in Berlin, Bavaria, and the Ruhr." Timothy S. Brown, *Weimar Radicals, Nazis, and Communists between Authenticity and Performance* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 23.

and the *Freikorps* joined forces against the rebelling Spartacists, a group of left-wing Marxists and revolutionaries. Three days after the fighting ended, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, leaders of the Spartacist organization, were abducted by the *Freikorps* and beaten to death. Suspected murderers often escaped conviction because of a hopelessly corrupt judicial system: many judges who had served over the course of the long war had come to believe that sometimes murder was both necessary and righteous—especially if it was the "murder of a pest" (*Schadlingsmord*).[7] Even the assassins of Walter Rathenau, Germany's Jewish foreign minister, received a shockingly light sentence: imprisoned in 1922, all were free again by 1930.

In this environment, *Lebensphilosophie* flourished. A mythological imagination was at work, connecting modern and primal existence: this was the only discourse that fused a radical aesthetic with a radical politics, better known to have denied its own "politicism." Although to us an "antipolitical w*eltanschauung*" seems like a contradiction, the movement was committed to a pure or naked life (*blossen Leben*)—everything that seemed soiled, less than pure, was rejected. Life was understood as an immanent force, transcending any conceptualization, even of the arts. As a fragment from the literary estate of Georg Simmel—the father of sociology and one of the earliest *Lebensphilosophers*—illustrated: "It is silly to try to turn life into an artwork. Life has its norms embedded in it, [as] ideal requirements which could be realized only in living forms, not imported from art, which has its own [norms]."[8]

In other words, the discourse of *Lebensphilosophie* saw itself as an isolated and immanent phenomenon, outside of a natural bond with any one particular political party, or even outside of a conceptualization as such, refusing any singular political or artistic identifier.

Nevertheless, during the mid-1920s *Lebensphilosophers* started to see themselves as the voice of the present, their philosophy as a call to action (*Tat*). Many who had previously acted as cultural critics shifted from the safe towers of philosophical and esoteric writing to stormy political and social debates. This shift, in turn, convinced other rationalists, neo-Kantians among them, to explore *Lebensphilosophie* as a new avenue of radical action. Among those new converts was Alfred Baeumler, a central figure in the somber narrative told here because of his central role in the debate that involved both Ludwig Klages and Walter Benjamin.

Klages, Benjamin, and Baeumler promoted different perspectives on life: for us, they represent three radical experimenters with the "creative life" of their time, as

[7] For a detailed description of the gradual corruption of the judicial system, see Michael Stolleis, *The Law under the Swastika: Studies on Legal History in Nazi Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). See also chapter 8 in George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 159-181.

[8] "Unsinn, dass das Leben zum Kunstwerk gemacht werden soll. Das Leben hat seine Normen in sich, ideale Forderungen, die nur an und in der Form des Lebens zu realisieren sind und nicht von der Kunst entlehnt werden konnen, die wieder die ihrigen hat." Georg Simmel, *Fragmente und Aufsiitze aus de Nachlass* (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1923), p. 24.

Nietzsche and other *Lebensphilosophers* after him called it.[9] As a post-Nietzschean phenomenon, this vocabulary of life and its three primary thinkers identified simultaneously with total aesthetics and critical politics. Klages himself was reluctant to serve immediate political considerations, but those who were interested in them often used his philosophy and name. The politicization and radicalization seemed to hover in the air. When Hans Freyer (1887-1963), the Leipzig sociologist and acclaimed cultural critic, published *Theorie des objektiven Geistes: Eine Einleitung in die Kulturphilosophie* (Theory of objective spirit: an introduction to cultural philosophy) he readily admitted his great debt to Klages and called for "organic action" on the basis of his philosophy:

[I]n the deliberate act . . . an involuntary, radiating manifestation of life, the entire unity of the life of the organism reaches interpretable expression . . . [The] most thoughtful, complete, and profound theory of expression that we have today [is] in the work of Ludwig Klages. His work grows out of a deeply applied metaphysics of life, of the mind and of history.[10]

Indeed, different *Lebensphilosophers* and those interested in the new discourse, Freyer among them, shared a deep interest in history, or, rather, counterhistory, and Freyer grounded his counterhistory—as Ernst Junger and other conservative revolutionaries did—in the "spectacularly aestheticized version of life."[11] Unlike Klages, however, Freyer called explicitly for the politicization of *Lebensphilosophie*.[12]

At this stage, during the early and mid-1920s, radical political forms could have been detected first as radical manifestations of aesthetic forms shared by a large group of intellectuals from different political and philosophical schools. Deep beneath the radical aesthetics of *Lebensphilosophie* one finds an interest in alternative, nonlinear temporality and the ensuing counterhistory. In contrast to positivist historicity, *Lebensphilosophie* developed an intense interest in such forms as the Nietzschean eternal recurrence. *Handbuch der Philosophie*, a philosophical journal launched in 1926 by Alfred Baeumler and Manfred Schroter, championed *Lebensphilosophie*, transforming it into an established school with a pronounced, occasionally strident, nationalistic flavor. One of the central philosophical commitments of the journal and its editors was a fundamental aesthetics of time and space, such as Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence, a perception of time based on the repetition of symbols and mythical narratives. For example, in the journal's second issue, Hans Driesch (1867-1941), the acclaimed Leipzig

[9] Rudiger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, trans. Shelley Frisch (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), p. 327.

[10] Hans Freyer, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Culture*, trans. Steven Grosby (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998), p. 39.

[11] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar* and the Third Reich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 172.

[12] In 1925 Freyer pleaded for the total aestheticized state, and during the early 1930s he embraced Nazism. In spite of his enthusiastic tribute to Klages, Freyer's more political view of life contradicted Klages's resistance to the will and to individual action.

biologist who contributed much to the modern forms of vitalism and *Lebensphilosophie*, discussed the history and praxis of eternal recurrence, tracing its roots to Anaxagoras, Epicurus, and Democritus.[13] The essence of the concept, Driesch wrote—attacking his own scientific discipline—resided in its freedom to experience simultaneity and multiplicity, the great promise it held for integrating novel forms of philosophical thought into scientific representations: "The one becomes the many, and from the many we return to the one."[14] From the mid-1920s this approach stood at the center of what would become the heart of the Leipzig school of philosophical anthropology, formed by Driesch, Freyer, Hans Gehlen, and Hugo Fischer.[15] Thanks to Driesch and Gehlen's contribution, assisted later by Max Scheler, this school became identified with an open and a more liberal form of *Lebensphilosophie*.[16] Yet theirs was not the only school to be identified with *Lebensphilosophie*, or, for that matter, the most important school at the time. Possibly better known and certainly as important in the German 1920s was the circle and publishing house identified with a philosophy journal, *Die Tat* (The Action), and its leading figure, the publisher Eugen Diederichs (1867-1930).

Explicit references to Klages in Diederichs's *Die Tat* and implicit ones in *Handbuch der Philosophie* were adornments to his growing fame among the German right wing. Yet even Diederichs's circle and journal were slowly moving away from their previous cooperation with progressive or avant-garde thinkers such as Georg Simmel. During the early 1910s Diederichs and Simmel shared a strong interest in Bergson's *elan vital*, and the two are responsible for his germanization of Bergson's vitalism during the early 1910s.[17] *Die Tat* was also one of the first journals to publish articles by Klages and his circle. The apparent confirmation of his grim prognostications about European

[13] Anne Harrington writes about Hans Driesch in the context of German holism. She demonstrates well the discontinuous continuity of his vitalism, when and where it concerns the Nazi language and culture: "A consistently useful resource for a range of holistic scientists with Nazi nationalist leanings . . . [against] his own attempts to make the language of wholeness and vitalism serve, not as a fascist ideology but a pacifist, democratic, *humanist politics. The roots of his convictions went back many decades." Anne Harrington, Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 191. More recently, Jane Bennett has written about Driesch and Bergson as the* sober vitalists, resisting the naive vitalism, and coming close to a form of "vital materialism." Bennett shows that both were popular in America, thanks to their emphasis on "a certain open-endedness to life." See Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 64.

[14] Hans Driesch, "Metaphysik und Natur," part 2, lecture 2, *Handbuch der Philosophie* 2 (1926): 69.

[15] See Elliot Yale Neaman, *A Dubious Past: Ernst Junger and the Politics of Literature after Nazism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 83.

[16] See Bryan S. Tuner, i*Regulating Bodies: Essays in Medical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 42.

[17] As Rudolf Meyer shows in his "Bergson in Deutschland," Georg Simmel was responsible for the integration of Bergson's *elan vital* in German *Lebensphilosophie* , mainly through ties with the George group and with none other than the right-wing reactionary and supporter of the Klages circle, Eugen Diederichs. Rudolf W. Meyer, "Bergson in Deutschland: Unterbesonderer Beriicksichtigung seiner Zeitauffassung," in *Studien zum Zeitproblem in der Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Phanomenologische Forschungen 13, ed. Ernst Wolfgang Orth (Munich: Verlag Karl Albert, 1982), vol. 13, pp. 10-89.

civilization had ensured Klages's supremacy among postwar German conservatives, and his vehement rejection of Judeo-Christian ethics only heightened his popularity. What had been a small circle of admirers became a school, a *Kreis* (school of thought) trying to dig its way out of a devastated Europe "crushed by the black wheel which now is master over earth."[18]

During the later 1920s, when Germany suffered one crisis after another, Germans of every political stripe came to believe that an answer to the political crisis, to what Walter Benjamin called "the piling of wreckage upon wreckage," could be articulated only within the vocabulary of immediate and actual *Leben*.[19] Leftist intellectuals proved incapable of harnessing the powerful concepts of *Lebensphilosophie* to a liberal philosophical program—the battle on this front was lost before it began. A philosophical-ideological vacuum, which the Social Democrats failed to fill, was soon occupied by the creations of *volkisch* thinkers. What finally integrated *Lebensphilosophie* with the political was the charismatic rhetoric of the One, the organic whole, the ideal number conveying both fullness and negation, the cyclical revival of the ancient that contradicts the notion of a beginning, middle, and end, of a gradual progression toward a catharsis. Ecstasy, catharsis—according to this philosophy they were there from the very start and required no narrative since they were sustained by the renewal of a mythical unity transcending all crises. The Bachofen debate of the mid-1920s is an excellent case study for the gradual radicalization and politicization of *Lebensphilosophie*.

2. Bachofen: Eros and the 1920s

Ludwig Klages, Alfred Baeumler, and Walter Benjamin all began with a shared vocabulary—*Leben, Erlebnis, Bild, Mythos*, and *Rausch* (life, living experience, image, myth, and ecstasy, respectively)—from which they drew sharply divergent conclusions about the power of renovation and *volkisch* mythology. As will be shown below, specific material proofs of the connection among the three thinkers open onto a new perspective of life philosophy, as well as onto their own legacies. I have

in mind Klages's plea for a pure and untimely meditation on existence; Baeumler's political interpretation and implementation of Klages's anti-institutional and anti-authoritative aesthetic; and Benjamin's radicalization of *l ife*, with the use and abuse of history, tradition, and even messianism.

A major cultural figure of his time, Klages appeared frequently in the pages of the daily feuilletons, the cultural supplements of newspapers; he accepted invitations to contribute articles for popular consumption and was often mentioned by other surveyors of the intellectual scene. It was his work on the concept of the eros, published in 1922, as well as his contributions to hugely popular pseudoscientific vogues (graphology

[18] Alfred Schuler, *Lectures*, quoted in Raymond Furness, *Zarathustra's Children: A Study of a Lost Generation of German Writers* (New York: Camden House, 2000), p. 89.

[19] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4: 1938-1940, p. 392.

Figure 3.1 Ludwig Klages with his niece, Heidi Klages, *ca.* 1924. DLM: Nachlass Ludwig Klages.

and so forth), that elevated him to this position. Every publisher, it seemed, from the most radical right-wing to the most liberal, vied for his articles. For an example of just one newspaperman's zest for publishing Klages, we find that in June 1922 Siegfried Kracauer published sections of Klages's *Vom kosmogenischen Eros* in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* feuilleton, adding a short introduction focusing on Klages's innovative notion of *Urbilder*, or primal images.[20] In October 1924 Kracauer reviewed a talk Klages had given on the *Frankfurter Zeitung* radio hour.[21]

The attention accorded to Klages by the mass media, both reactionary and liberal, was sprinkled with stardust. His book on Nietzsche's psychology, published in 1924, made him a leading exegete, and his lengthy introduction to Carl Gustav Carus's *Psyche* (1926) earned him a position as a key interpreter of Carus's understanding of the unconscious.[22] Yet there is little doubt that during this decade Klages's most important contribution to philosophy was the part he played in the revival of the late romantic interpreter of symbols, Johann Jakob Bachofen.

Klages collaborated with Carl Albrecht Bernoulli (1868-1937), the Basel theologian and philologist, on a new edition of Bachofen's complete works, a project begun after Klages sought out Bachofen's widow and was entrusted with the unpublished diaries Bachofen had kept during his travels in Greece. The huge project Klages and Bernoulli undertook turned Bachofen into a key Weimar figure and ignited the Bachofen discussion of the mid-1920s. His labors on Bachofen invigorated his own work on psychology, constructing a wider theoretical framework of language, history, and aesthetic theories. Radical notions of time helped integrate these various fields.

In 1919 Ludwig Klages wrote to Bernoulli, "What today is powerful, whether intellectually or politically, is not essential [*unwesentlich*], and what is essential has no power."[23] After a long complaint about the dispiriting times, Klages declared that the only antidote to the "dark, uncanny violence" spreading across the face of the earth was the philosophy of Johann Jacob Bachofen.[24] A few years later, in 1923, Klages wrote to Bernoulli about the importance of Bachofen's theory for the revival of authentic German culture, as well as for his own life: "My first priority is the reintroduction of Bachofen's mysteries and metaphysics . . . My own findings, both the theory of awareness and the metaphysics, are based on Bachofen's philosophy."[25] The most intrinsic ele-

[20] *Frankfurter Zeitung*, June 14, 1922, pp. 1-2.

[21] *Frankfurter Zeitung*, October 25, 1924, p. 2.

[22] Ludwig Klages, *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1926); Carl Gustav Carus, *Psyche* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1926).

[23] "Was heute (geistige oder politisch) Macht hat, ist unwesentlich; was wesentlich ist hat keine Macht." Ludwig Klages to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, July 18, 1919, Deutsche Literaturarchiv am Marbach (henceforth, DLA), Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig. 61.4141, letter no. 6.

[24] Much of this "dark violence" emerged from the fertile seedbed of the French Revolution, which Bachofen had viewed as the culmination of the Enlightenment. See Andreas Cesana, *Johann Jakob Bachofens Geschichtsdeutung: Eine Untersuchung ihrer geschichtsphilosophischen Voraussetzungen* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 1983), p. 49.

[25] Ludwig Klages to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, January 12, 1923, DLA, letter no. 23, p. 1.

ment of Bachofen's philosophy was his view of symbols and the accompanying notion of immediacy: "[Bachofen's] expression of *l ife* is the symbol, and the interpretation of the symbol is the myth . . . [The symbol] is, accordingly, the immediate wisdom [*unmittelbarer Weise*] of the visible powers of feelings and the higher intuition [*hohere Ahnungen].*"[26] In Klages's mind such "immediate wisdom" and "higher intuition," the cosmological *Rhythmus*, might combat the devilish and uncanny powers of modernity: materialism, destruction, and degeneration. Therefore, immediacy, intuition, and impulse were all coded in opposition to spatial forms in an attempt to overcome space and matter.

Because Bachofen's great enterprise had been the reconciliation of symbols and reality, his work had great importance for any subsequent theorizing of images. Klages himself said that his own "reality of images" (*Wirklichkeit der Bilder*) had been inspired by Bachofen's example. By 1922 this inspiration had borne fruit, and Klages published *Vom kosmogenischen Eros* (On cosmogenic Eros) that opens with a warm dedication to Bachofen.[27] But drawing attention to Bachofen was not devoid of danger: "I know, for example, that the well-known Afrika-Frobenius [Leo Frobenius, the collector and publisher of African myths] was struck by the appearance of my Eros book. As early as the beginning of November he gave a lecture on Africa to a group of philosophers in Munich; he cited Bachofen as a great researcher."[28] The danger went beyond Klages's perennial fear that his ideas were being plagiarized by his competitors. In Klages's mind Frobenius was surely perverting Bachofen's ideas in the name of academic knowledge and understanding of progress, a wrongheaded Judeo-Christian concept. Such fervent apprehensions pique one's curiosity: Who was Bachofen and why did he become such a key figure for *Lebensphilosophie* in the 1920s? How far did Klages take his interpretation of Bachofen? Was he faithful to Bachofen's ideas?

Johann Jakob Bachofen was born in Basel in 1815 and died there in 1887. He studied in Berlin under the well-known jurist and historian of law, Friedrich Karl von Savigny (1779-1861), mentor to the

Grimm brothers. As a student, Bachofen dreamed of writing an ambitious history of Roman law; he saw in Roman culture the symbolic clash between the pantheon borrowed from the Orient—the cults of Aphrodite, Demeter, and Dionysus—and a realm of reason whose initiates strove to build a world empire.[29] Bachofen believed that the cultures of both the Orient and the Occident originated with matriarchy, whereas he viewed patriarchy as a betrayal of the primal instincts of the Magna Mater (the magical and primordial "Great Mother"), who was cast aside in favor of an artificial and "logocentric" distinction between the mind and the soul. Following Bachofen, Klages

[26] Ibid. (emphasis in original).

[27] Ludwig Klages, *Vom kosmogenischen Eros* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1922).

[28] Ludwig Klages to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, January 12, 1923, DLA, letter no. 23.

[29] See Joseph Campbell, "Introduction" to Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen* , trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. xlviii.

would criticize—formulating a substantial term for the later *Deconstrucion* of Jacques Derrida—the logocentric (*Logozentrismus*) vision of the West, that rational and microscopic view of the world that discarded the expression of emotions, the soul, and the primordial state of humanity and nature.[30]

A bond between conservatism and radical critique is already apparent in Bachofen's reflections. After his first journey to Rome, in the mid-1840s, Bachofen wrote to his teacher, the acclaimed historian of Roman law Friedrich Carl von Savigny to describe his conversion: from a republican "who wished to hear no more of the seven kings, . . . an unbeliever who respected no tradition," he had become a political conservative.[31] Referring to his Roman sojourn, he said, "I see more and more that *one* law governs all things."[32] His essay on the symbolism of ancient funerary monuments was rejected and fiercely criticized by the academic community, as was his first work on matriarchy, *Mutterrecht* (Mother right), published in 1861. The poor reception of his books obliged Bachofen to resign his academic post; from that time onward he made his living as a judge. Decades after he died, Bachofen's books, never very widely read, were discovered by a few members of the Stefan George group. When Karl Wolfskehl showed these neglected works to Klages, he was immediately smitten. Klages in turn convinced Alfred Schuler—who showed real resistance at first—to read the books, and they became Schuler's guiding inspiration. The source of Schuler's obsession with Roman robes, or Schwabing's Roman feasts and the rumors about orgies, open feminine sexuality, or secret rituals, came out of Bachofen's principal critique of Roman Christianity and its Western, enlightened offspring.

For Bachofen, the source of all enlightenment was pre-Christian Rome, not Greece.[33] His focus lay less on the actual myth-making and more on its commemoration, ritualization, and symbolization. The primal moment for him came in the lost ancient cults of Cybele and Orpheus, whose practices were at odds with the principles underlying the modern power of the state. He refused to admit the centralizing authority of the modern state, but also refused to consider Hellenic democracy as an alternative. Instead of political solutions, he proposed an aesthetic solution because he was convinced that many ancient beliefs and mental habits survived in modern man, unextinguished by modern industrialization and technology. For example, he presented evidence that the attributes and worship of the Cybele cult had influenced the ancient Roman cults and subsequently had been transmitted unconsciously in afterimages (*Nachbild*) that

[30] Ludwig Klages, "Arten des Blickes," in *Rhythmen und Runen: Nachlass Herausgegeben von Ihm Selbst* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1944), p. 305. For the transfer of the concept of deconstruction from Klages to Derrida, see the critique by Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 154.

[31] Bachofen, "My Life in Retrospect," in *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, p. 15.

[32] Ibid., p. 16 (emphasis in original).

[33] In spite of an opposition he created between the matriarchal Demetrian and the patriarchal Hellenistic.

had become part of Western cultural memory.[34] In 204 BCE a black stone worshipped as Cybele was brought to Rome and installed on the Palatine, which as a result became the center of all Roman cults, a crucial symbol of Roman imperial power. The Cybele stone was worshipped by the priests who served the Olympian gods and Caesar Elagabalus.[35] Elagabalus, also known as Heliogabalus, was the Roman sun god that Bachofen identified at the center of many Roman rituals, before Christianity and the transformation of the pagan "One" to a divine monotheistic entity that required the centralization of power in political and patriarchic terms. Bachofen, two decades before he met Nietzsche at Basel, had already explored the Orphic rituals of the prehistoric east as the precursor of the Dionysian rituals. The last, he argued, was suppressed by modern Western philosophy after Socrates and Plato. Most essential to all ancient myths were the concept of life, the myths of life and death, and the visual imagination of the world, the categorical division of all images into white and black, the living and the dead.[36] The world seemed to Bachofen an answer to the laws of "eternal becoming" (*ewigen Werden*), a reflecting image of the gradual transformation from brightness to darkness or from darkness to light.[37]

After reading Bachofen, the George circle started to celebrate Elagabalus and the sun rituals to the point of obsession.[38] It was especially George himself and Alfred Schuler who promoted the ongoing carnival. These two men, both of whom were homosexual, saw in Elagabalus an ancient model of sovereignty in which were united androgynous sexuality and an unbounded, pure, and arbitrary violence.

Klages took to the rituals reluctantly, if at all. The revival of pagan rituals enabled him to rethink the limits of his own cultural norms. At the center of all aesthetic, political, and sexual issues, according to Klages, was a dynamic threshold. This was the point between the poles that illuminated both sides of any given opposition—structure versus chaos, democracy versus tyranny, male versus female. According to Bachofen and his followers, only by overcoming the opposition itself could one overcome the decadent epistemology of the West; a revival of pre-Western civilization was a first step in that direction.

Klages's extensive work on Bachofen, from the late 1910s onward, made Bachofen a canonical figure. But whereas Klages adopted many of Bachofen's ideas about the aesthetics of culture, he heeded little the context within which those ideas originated. He overlooked, for example, Bachofen's firm Christian faith, the subject that would later become central to his disagreements with Baeumler. Klages was a stubborn misreader:

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[34] Klages discusses Bachofen's theories of the Cybele cult and *Nachbild* in *Vom kosmogenische Eros*, p. 45.

[35] Ibid., p. 39.

[36] Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Versuch uber die Grabsymbolik der Alten* (Basel: Helbing and Lichtenhahn, 1925), p. 7.

[37] Ibid., p. 9.

[38] Katja Sommer, "Schulers Nero," in *Alfred Schuler: Der letzte Romer, Neue Beitrage zur Munchner Kosmik*. ed. Baal Muller (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini Press, 2000), pp. 5-16.

he radicalized Bachofen's critique of the West, translating it into an anti-Christian, rather than anti-Catholic, credo that Bachofen would never have accepted. Still, Klages succeeded in making Bachofen necessary reading for opponents of historical causality. It was Bachofen's circular ontology of life symbols, brilliantly illuminated by Klages that interested true connoisseurs of history and collectors of anecdotes. Key thinkers of the 1920s, like Walter Benjamin, kept returning to him long after his death to explain and theorize their own time.

3. Klages—Bernoulli—Benjamin

Klages popularized Bachofen and made his philosophy of symbols relevant to the general German public. If he indeed was the first to make Bachofen a well-known figure among Weimar intellectuals as well,[39] then the "Bachofen renaissance" of the mid-1920s owes much to Klages.[40] Benjamin was evidently uneasy with a process he feared might simplify very complex arguments, but in time he conceded the penetration of Klages's insights and engaged them.[41] Benjamin first mentioned Bachofen in a letter to Gershom Scholem in September 1922, no doubt after having read Klages's *Vom kosmogenischen Eros* that had been published a few weeks previously.[42] In a letter written in February 1923, Benjamin wrote to Klages to request a graphological analysis for a friend but went on to describe the great pleasure he had derived from Klages's book.[43] The attention paid to Bachofen's ideas in that book and to its evocation of collective consciousness and mythical time appears to have ignited Benjamin's interest. He featured Bachofen prominently in two essays; in the first, published in *Literarische Welt* in 1926, he critiques Bernoulli and Bachofen:

The book Kosmogenis der Eros by this great philosopher and anthropologist—a description which, despite Klages himself, I prefer to the inadequate term "psychologist"—is the first to refer authoritatively to Bachofen's ideas. His book depicts the system of natural and anthropological data that served as the subsoil of the classical cult which Bachofen identifies as the patriarchal religion of "Chthonism" (the cult of the earth and the dead).[44]

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[39] George Boas, "Preface" to Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, p. lvi.

[40] Ernst Karl Winter, "Bachofen Renaissance," *Zeitschrift fu r die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 85 (1928): 316-342.

[41] Walter Benjamin, "Theories of German Fascism," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, part 1: 1927-1934, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 312-321.

[42] Walter Benjamin to Gershom Scholem, September 11, 1922, in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, vol. 2, ed. Christoph Godde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1996), p. 326.

[43] Walter Benjamin to Ludwig Klages, February 28, 1923, in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, vol. 2, p. 319.

[44] Walter Benjamin, "Review of Bernoulli's Bachofen," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: 1913-1926, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 426-427. A

Though the essays were ostensibly devoted to Bernoulli's book, Benjamin used them largely as foils for lauding Klages, whose work on Bachofen helped Benjamin to reframe his view of language, images, and life. In Bachofen's words, echoed in Benjamin's texts, "Human language is too feeble to convey all the thoughts aroused by the alteration of life and death and the sublime hopes of the initiate. Only the symbol and the related myth can meet this higher need."[45]

Eight years after his critique of Bernoulli's book, Benjamin, now exiled in France, published a far more careful analysis of Bachofen's biography and intellectual development, as well as of his legacy and the debates surrounding his revival. Now, in 1934, the mythic subversive potential has been realized, and Bachofen's "method" has been revealed as that which reloads the past with the power of the present: "[I]t consists in attributing to the symbol a basic role in ancient thought and life."[46] After comparing Bachofen to Goethe and Nietzsche, Benjamin analyzes Bachofen's place among the radicals:

For Bachofen, the relevation of the image as a message from the land of the dead was accompanied by that of the law as a terrestrial construction, one whose foundations, extending to unexplored depths underground, are formed by the usages and religious customs of the ancient world. The ground plan and indeed the style of this construction were well known, but no one so far had thought of studying its basement. That is what Bachofen set out to do in his magnum opus on matriarchy . . . The mysticism in which Bachofen's theories culminated, as emphasized by Engels, has been taken to its extreme in the "rediscovery" of Bachofen—a process that has incorporated the clearest elements of the recent esotericism which signally informs German fascism.[47]

Benjamin concludes his essay with a few passages about the George group and Klages:

With Klages, these theories emerged from the esoteric realm to claim a place in philosophy—something that would never have occurred to Bachofen. In *vom kosmogenischen Eros*, Klages sketches the natural and anthropological system of "chthonism." By giving substance to the mythical elements of life, by snatching them from the oblivion in which they are sunk, says Klages, the philosopher gains access to "primal images" [*Urbilder*]. These images, although claiming to derive from the external world,

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note about translation: I quote the title as it is translated. Benjamin's reference to the title is the accurate one, and should be translated as "Cosmogenic Eros." See Walter Benjamin, "Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, Johann Jacob Bachofen und das Natursymbol. Ein Wurdigungsversuch," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, ed. Hella Tiedemann-Bartels (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), p. 44.

[45] Bachofen, "Symbol and Myth," in *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, p. 49.

[46] Walter Benjamin, "Johann Jakob Bachofen," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 3: 1935-1938, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 13. The article was originally written for the *Nouvelle revue franfaise.* In a commentary they affixed to the piece, the editors of Benjamin's *Gesammelte Schriften* argued that Benjamin recycled his ideas about Bachofen in his writings about Kafka, an idea no subsequent scholar has explored. See Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, book 2, 3:962.

[47] Ibid., p. 18.

are nonetheless quite unlike representations of it . . . It is a system that leads nowhere, losing itself in a menacing prophecy that chides humanity for having been led astray by the insinuations of the intellect. Despite its provocative and sinister side, however, this philosophy, through the subtlety of its analyses, the depth of its insights, and the level of its discourse, is infinitely superior to the adaptations of Bachofen attempted by the official exponents of German fascism. Baumler, for example, declares that only Bachofen's metaphysics are worthy of attention, his historical research being all the more insignificant since even a "scientifically exact work on the origins of humanity . . . would have little to tell us."[48]

During Benjamin's career the allusions to Bachofen are very consistent. From 1922 to 1934, references to Bachofen always contain the concept of myth and its contribution to a theory of history, language, and time, mostly seen from the perspective of an absence, or a "destructive character," characterizing Bachofen "in terms akin to those which he usually applied to himself."[49]

As an epilogue to this section, and before returning to the profascist interpretations of Bachofen, one should note that this was not the end of Benjamin's interest in either Bachofen or Klages. Benjamin's texts are suffused with allusions to Bachofen and very often to the Klagesian interpretation of his motives. For instance, in 1934, Benjamin named Bachofen as a key to the interpretation of Franz Kafka, no less.[50] Moreover, between 1935 and 1937 Benjamin tried to convince Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer to finance a book that would sketch a theory of the collective unconscious and fantasy, based on the writings of Klages and Carl Gustav Jung, but undoubtedly also extending the interest the two took in Bachoen. Whereas Adorno accepted the offer (the surviving letters hint that the original idea for the book may have been his), Horkheimer stoutly refused. In his response to Horkheimer, written in 1938, Benjamin acknowledged that Klages's anti-Semitism put him in the same camp as the anti-Semitic but highly stylized author Louis-Ferdinand Celine, a suggestion that Benjamin may have seen Klages's anti-Semitism as part of his aesthetic radicalism.[51]

The letter Benjamin sent to Horkheimer in March 1937 is the most instructive of this series. At the time, he still hoped to convince Horkheimer that the project had a much wider significance than Klages and Jung. Much like his reading in Bachofen, Benjamin emphasized here his commitment to an alternative science: He argued that such a book would advance the critique of pragmatic history, display the ability of cultural history to describe materialist phenomena, and demonstrate the utter failure of

[48] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[49] Joseph Mali, "The Reconciliation of Myth: Benjamin's Homage to Bachofen," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60:1 (1999): 178.

[50] I wrote about this specific text and Bachofen's value for Benjamin's interpretation in "Benjamins Sumpflogik: ein Kommentar zu Agambens Kafkaund Benjamins-Lekture," in Daniel Weidner, ed., *Profanes Leben: Walter Benjamins Dialektic der Sakularisierung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag), pp. 191-212. See also the wonderful essay by Joseph Mali, "The Reconciliation of Myth."

[51] Walter Benjamin to Max Horkheimer, March 7, 1938, in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, 6:40.

psychoanalysis to grasp this form of critique.[52] Most crucial here is Benjamin's attempt to transfer the revolutionary power of *Lebensphilosophie*'s radicalism to his cause as a "negative" power, that is, the source of a pure critique utterly different from the "positive" power of destructive wills. (For Benjamin, destruction meant something very different from what it meant for those Nazi post-Nietzscheans who aped the language of the *Ubermensch* without internalizing the critical and ironic spirit—for instance, Alfred Baeumler.[53]) Yet the intellectual enterprise that both Horkheimer and Scholem found terribly distasteful during the early 1930s continues to disturb many scholars in the present.

4. Rausch: An ontology of images, 1922

In order to understand the conditions that led to the Bachofen debate during the mid-1920s, one has first to explain the obsession of Klages and his fellow *Lebensphilosophers* with *Rausch* (ecstasy). From Bachofen and Nietzsche to Freud, Klages, Benjamin, and Baeumler, resistance to norms and cultural conventions ensured avoidance of one-way streets and a linear temporality. One popular way to resist was through the focus on ecstasy. Falling back on Goethe and the romantics, Nietzsche took *Rausch* as one of his principal concepts, a thread that united all of his writing, beginning with the theory of Dionysian ecstasy versus Apollonian order in his *Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and still much in evidence in *The Twilight of the Gods* (1889), written in his final year of sanity.[54] If in the earlier work Nietzsche referred to *Rausch* as a principle of separation—"the separate artistic worlds of dream and *Rausch*, opposed in psychological terms, as between the Apollonian and Dionysian"[55]—in the later work, *Rausch* is a key to the heroic storms of both Dionysus and Apollo, uniting them rather than separating them. In *The Twilight of the Gods*, Nietzsche wrote that "ecstasy is the outcome of all great desires, all strong passions; the ecstasy of the feast, of the arena,

[52] "Ich denke mir, dass der definitive und verbindliche Plan des Buches . . . aus zwei grundlegenden methodischen Untersuchungen hervorzugehen hatte. Die eine hatte es mit der Kritik der pragmatischen Historie einerseits, der Kulturgeschichte anderseits zu tun, wie sie sich dem Materialisten darstellt; die andere mit der Bedeutung der Psychoanalyse fur das Subjekt der materialistischen Geschichtsschreibung." Walter Benjamin to Max Horkheimer, March 28, 1937, in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, 5:490.

[53] In a letter to Gershom Scholem, Benjamin conveyed his firsthand impression of Baeumler, whom he found "impressive: his strength lies in copying Hitler to the very last detail, and his pig-neck fully complements the expression of the revolver's muzzle" ("Baumler ist eindrucksvoll: seine Haltung kopiert die von Hitler bis in das Einzelne und sein Specknacken ist das vollendete Koplement einer Revolvermundung"). Benjamin to Scholem, August 5, 1937, in *Gesammelte Briefe*, 5:561.

[54] For a full chronology of the concept, see Nitzan Lebovic, "Dionysische Politik und politisierte Dionysos: Der Rausch Diskurs zwischen Romantik und Lebensphilosophie," in *Rausch und Diktatur: Inszenierung, Mobilisierung, und Kontrolle in Totalita re Systemen*, ed. Arpad von Klimo and Malte Rolf (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2006), pp. 79-94.

[55] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragodie*, in *Schriften zu Literatur und Philosophie der Griechen* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1994), pp. 111-112.

. . . the ecstasy of cruelty; the ecstasy of destruction; the ecstasy following upon certain meteorological influences, as for instance that of spring-time, or upon the use of narcotics."[56] The early romantics presented *Rausch* as the transgression of all limits separating humans from nature or the rest of the universe and focused on the individual experience, whereas the late romanticism epitomized by Nietzsche used the individual as a symbol of a cosmic unity (but not the human collective). For late romantics, *Rausch* swept away all thought of boundaries, even the idea that one might transgress boundaries through a conscious decision. According to Nietzsche, there was nothing conscious, so no choice, about transgression; rather, the forces of existence itself led back into the primordial, the animalistic roots, a prehistoric source, before the birth of modern civilization, before human pains and pleasures were first classified by Socrates and Plato.

In a fragment he had written in 1884 on eternal recurrence, Nietzsche had discussed *Rausch*.

To us, and to nobody else, an all-encompassing gaze is allowed, above all beyond and ignoring [any] end. This gives us a feeling [*Gefiihl*] of enormous distance [*ungeheuren Weite*], but also of enormous emptiness [*ungeheuren Leere*] . . . In contrast to this feeling is *Rausch*, that sense that the world as a whole [*ganze Welt*] has been stuffed into us, that our suffering is the bliss of being full beyond repletion. Likewise, time takes on the most novel forms when *Rausch* is at the controls. We all know *Rausch*, whether as music or as self-blinding enthusiasm [*Schwarmerei*]; we know that the *Rausch* of tragedy is the cruelty of observation.[57]

In 1895, according to Theodor Lessing's memoirs, Ludwig Klages confessed bitterly: "I [always] failed in love, sympathy, competence to [human] fervor, simple human warmth. For me only one yearning was left: *Rausch* [ecstasy]."[58] The term, popular in both Nietzsche's and Bachofen's philosophy of living forms, also became a key concept for the Bohemian artists in Schwabing.

Rausch was a popular term among the Schwabing Georgianers, but especially for the two principal cosmics, Ludwig Klages and Alfred Schuler. It was especially Schuler, the other Bachofen enthusiast among the George circle, who transformed the concept for

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[56] Friedrich Nietzsche, *T wilight of the Idols with the Antichrist and Ecce Homo*, trans. Antony M. Ludovici (Herts: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2007), p. 52. "Gefolge aller grossen Begierden . . . aller extremen Bewegung; der Rausch der Zerstorung; der Rausch der Grausmakeit; der Rausch unter gewissen meteorologischen Einflusse, zum Beispiel der Fruhlingsrausch; oder unter dem Einfluss der Narcotica." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Go tzenD a mmerung*, in *S a mtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 B a nden*, vol. 6, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazinno Montinari (Munich and New York: de Gruyter, 1988), p. 116.

[57] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente: 1884-1885*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1999), p. 213.

[58] Theodor Lessing, *Einmal und Nie Wieder* (1935; reprint, Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Sachbuchverlag, 1969), p. 379.

the purposes of the radical right wing.[59] Klages's contribution came in 1923, when he, Gustav Willibald Freytag, and Elsa Bruckmann assumed responsibility for the literary legacy of Alfred Schuler, who had never published a word. The interest in Schuler's mysticism was shared by a surprising number of adherents of *Lebensphilosophie*. Among others, Walter Benjamin expressed interest in Schuler and complained after learning that Klages inherited Schuler's *Nachlass*.[60] Working on Schuler's *Nachlass* doubtless reinforced the chthonic-cosmic perspective Klages had already absorbed from Bachofen. Black suns, cults of "blood beacons" (*Bl i tleuchte*), and Roman disguises were part of a fantastic world that proceeded according to a strange and imagistic clock. This perspective, and Klages's return to the primordial, made him the darling of the right-wing journals of the time. Like Schuler, Klages never affiliated himself with any political party, though he was certainly sympathetic to some radical groups that worked against the system as a whole. One finds an odd mixture of anarchism and reactionary order in his rare political comments of the early 1920s. He was rather singleminded and seems to have been willing to tolerate any political order, so long as it fostered the condition he saw as crucial to any sort of true understanding: *Rausch*.

Vom kosmogenischen Eros fell heavily back on the Nietzschean, Bachofenic, and cosmic adaptation of *Rausch* against social conventions. Its most important innovation was the fusion of Bachofen's neopagan *Rausch* with Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. The rebellion against norms had a very precise meaning, and Klages ascertained that his own contribution to the topic would not be confused with any of the other George followers, who were obsessed with the same concepts and past thinkers. One way to distinguish himself was by rejecting the application of sexuality to the rebellion. Unlike many other members of the George circle, and in contrast to some accusations, most notoriously by Alfred Baeumler, Klages did not identify *Rausch* with open sexuality, nor did he even like sexuality as a concept. (As one commentator argued, even during the heyday of sexual feasts, orgies, and bohemian rebellion, "Klages struck most observers as strikingly clean and honorable in erotic matters."[61]) Uniting his personal preferences with his philosophy, Klages attacked the Platonic concept of Eros and with it nothing less than the entire Platonic tradition, whose great crime was the eradica-

[59] In his introduction to Schuler's collected texts, Klages himself admits the strong interest Schuler had taken in Bachofen, but argues that he had tried to convince Schuler to read Bachofen for two years before Schuler actually did so. However, once he did, Bachofen changed Schuler's whole perspective. Klages argues that Schuler integrated many ideas from Bachofen's *Mutterrecht*, especially in the first section of his five lectures about the sun child, "Sonnenkind und Korybantisis." Klages, "Einfuhrung," in Alfred Schuler, *Fragmente und Vortrage aus dem Nachlass, mit Einfuhrung von Ludwig Klages* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1940), p. 58.

[60] Walter Benjamin to Gershom Scholem, August 15, 1930, in *The Complete Correspondence of Walter Benjamin: 1910-1940*, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: Chicago University Press), p. 367.

[61] Martin Green, *The Von Richthofen Sisters: The Triumphant and the Tragic Modes ofLove* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. 94. "Clean" might seem an exaggeration here, as shown in the previous chapters, but Klages's libido was certainly not the principal aspect of his personality.

tion of the ancient cults of Orpheus and Dionysus. The exclusion of such cults implied the rationalization of the drives, or the externalization of sexuality, by separating it from other forms of *Rausch*. Klages tried to reunite and realign the gap, first made apparent in Bachofen's work.

The concept of *Rausch*, quite unimportant in Klages's earlier period, became the organizing principle of *Vom kosmogenischen Eros*.[62] For Klages, *Rausch* is a state of utterly unmediated experience, basically a state of ecstasy. In contrast to the Platonic Eros, or the modern concepts of ego and id, it was a concept that resisted systems and structures. Klages opened his book with a key argument from Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913) and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921). Like Freud, Klages insisted that the distinction between love and Eros was basic to understanding a group's identity.[63] In more radical terms than Freud's distinction in *Civilization and Its Discontents*,

Klages presented Eros as opposed to the Platonic abstraction of love and the later Christian *Karitas* (charity, compassion), that is to say, *agape*, love of the poor, evangelic love, love of the neighbor—all of these he saw as different forms of manipulation. All of those forms of love were opposed to the drives and intuitions that had dominated men's minds before the time of Christ. Eros (here equals *Rausch*) was identified with its pre-Platonic form, namely, a tribal rite, clearly recognizable in the state of trance that united the group in an unmitigated way. It was erotic, but it did not serve the libido. "It is this keen sensitivity," Klages wrote,

erotic in nature, to the unthinkable richness of colors, sounds, and smells, that conveys to us the wonders of Eros. In *Rausch* this wonder is fully realized, introducing the soul carrier to the essential image of the soul of the world . . . in his [i.e., the soul carrier's] eyes; only in the erotic *Rausch* does one achieve total emancipation.[64]

To ground his theory, Klages quoted from many myths and archeological findings. The mythical lineage of Eros, he pointed out, was "taken from the cosmogenic, which focuses on Eros and ends in the mythical teaching of the Orphic, in which the most important is Chronos, whose time never matures [*nimmeralternde Zeit*]."[65] Here, a moment before the ancient world of images was eradicated by modern civilization,

[62] The concept appears only rarely and marginally in Klages's 1914 work on dreams. See a discussion of the *Traumbewusstsein* in chapter 4.

[63] In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud defined the difference between love and Eros in the following terms: "Language has carried out an entirely justifiable piece of unification in creating the word 'love' [*Liebe*] with its numerous uses . . . Yet psychoanalysis has done nothing original in taking love in this 'wider' sense. In its origin, function, and relation to sexual love, the 'Eros' of the philosopher Plato coincides exactly with the love-force, the libido of psychoanalysis." Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1967), p. 23. Freud's interpretation is a humanist one: for him love is connected to the apostle Paul and his injunction to "love thy neighbor." Freud identifies psychoanalysis and Paul's message as the "wider" interpretation of love.

[64] Klages, *Vom kosmogenischen Eros*, pp. 57-58.

[65] Ibid., p. 61.

Chronos was the angel of time, not the angel of history. The distinction is that between ontology and epistemology, cosmology and the human *cogito*, eroticism (and *Rausch*) and the "mechanic" libido.

The most important aspect of *Vom kosmogenischen Eros* is its description of the relationship between the ancient cults and modern phenomena. Klages organized his presentation around two spatial concepts, *Fern* (distance) and *Nah* (nearness), both of which would be central to the theory of time—not space—which he articulated in his later work, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*.[66] In Greek mythology, Eros was the creator of the world: his epithet emphasized his nearness— *Eros der Nahe*.[67] As John McCole has pointed out, this vocabulary was the origin for Walter Benjamin's work on "tactical nearness," explicitly confronting Klages's nearness: "Benjamin recast Klages's pathic passivity of dreams as an inability to maintain perceptual distance."[68] Indeed, Klages concluded that in *Rausch* and in dreams, since Hellenic times, and "thanks to Eros, all gazes involved nearness."[69] In other words, the principle of Eros or the praxis of *Rausch* enabled the overcoming of the limits of space and erasing it. Klages's space did not refer to the Freudian psychoanalytical space, the one of ego and its attraction to other egos. Rather, space as the subcategory of movement in time (eternal and recurrent flow) expressed the body politic, much closer to the Foucauldian "body site."[70] *Rausch* and ancient cosmological Eros enabled one to acknowledge the political space and erase it simultaneously.

Endowing Eros and *Rausch* with the ability to form unconventional connections between time and space had both political and social effects. Take the concept of *oikos* (house), for example. The Greeks, who invented these conceptions, became—according to Klages— "conscious of *oikos*" (*Oikosbewusstsein*), that is, conscious of the "economy of the house," the sociopolitical identity of the group.[71] Klages pointed out that, in contrast to how we came to think of the household, the sources of modern economy and its expensive lust for all spheres—private and public—began in the *polis* before the spheres were separated, in its mythical notion of Eros and *Rausch*.[72] The

[66] "Nahe und Ferne sind die einander erganzenden Pole nicht nur des Raumes, sondern ebenso auch der Zeit." Ibid., p. 136.

[67] Ibid., p. 131.

[68] John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 246.

[69] "Allein es bezeichnet daneben doch auch das Verhaltnis der Nahe, welches das Augenmass hellenischer Sinnlichkeit zwischen himmlischer und der Landschaft der Erde fordert." Klages, *Vom kosmogenischen Eros*, p. 131.

[70] For a good history of Foucault's "site" of the body politic, see Daniel Punday, "Foucault's Body Tropes," *New Literary History* 31 (2000): 509-528.

[71] Klages, *Vom kosmogenischen Eros*, p. 134.

[72] Decades later, Hannah Arendt elaborated on this idea from a different angle; this attack on all efforts to enmesh the political and the social in the modern world was closely related to her view of the Bios: "[I]t is impossible to perceive any serious gulf between the two realms; and this *is not a matter of a theory or an ideology, since with the rise of society, that is, the rise of the 'household' (oikia) or of economic activities in the public realm, housekeeping and all matters pertaining formerly to the*

notion of *Rausch* did not separate the individual from the collective, the private from the public. It offered, beyond the living experience of individual ecstasy, a unity of time that connected people on a mythic-primordial basis.

Klages's notion of the *oikos* was a Bachofenic one. In his view, the earlier separation of the private and public spheres was the root of all evil, occupying the heart of Western metaphysics. Ancient images of body cults disappeared in the private household in the *polis*. All we were left with, according to Klages, were disturbed images of nucleus unity that only implied their earlier primordial origins. Only the Bachofenic unpacking of the image of the *oikos* permitted humanity to recognize those primordial images woven into the fabric of its everyday life and to link the birth of private and public into a first ur-image of the West. And here came the crux of the matter: In contrast to the private Greek household, "in ancient Germania, one used to wish the trees 'Good morning' every day, or one cordially informed them of the death of the master of the house."[73] In other words, the private sphere extended into raw nature. Politics belonged to storytelling. Ancient Germania offered a vision that classical cultures had all but forgotten about and suppressed, even in the form of collective memory.

The primal images, the images of the household, of the primordial *Heimat* (homeland) made possible the flow of time. Eros, which the Greeks depicted as the drive (*Trieb*) to draw close, was transformed into a dynamic sketch of time, the "firestorm of dancing stars."[74] Drives and primal images were only different names, in Klages's eyes, for cosmological time.

5. Klages—Baeumler—Bachofen

Two years after the publication of his Eros book, in 1924, Klages collaborated with Bernoulli on *Johann Jakob Bachofen als Religionsforscher* (Johann Jakob Bachofen as a researcher of religion), in which passages from Bachofen's writings were presented and critically examined.[75] In 1925 Bernoulli and Klages edited a new edition of Bachofen's *Versuch uber die Grabersymbolik der Alten* (Interpretation of ancient mortuary symbols), and in 1926 they published a collection of Bachofen's writings under the title *Johann Jakob Bachofen: Urreligion und antike Symbole* (Johann Jakob Bachofen: Primal religion and ancient symbols). In one of his last letters to Bernoulli that year, Klages mentioned a newly published collection of Bachofen texts, one published by others, "a work born out of resentment, drawn up by the firm of Baeumler and Schroter, which deserves to be rapped on the edge of the knuckles." Klages planned a thorough

private sphere of the family have become a 'collective' concern." Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 33.

[73] "Im alten Germanien wiinschte man dem Baum 'Guten Morgen' und sagte ihm feierlich den Tod des Hausherrn an." Klages, *Vom kosmogenischen Eros* , p. 25.

[74] Ibid., p. 112.

[75] See the correspondence between Klages and Bernoulli collected in DLA, letter nos. 1-47.

critique of this work but never followed through.[76] In his introduction to Bachofen's *Gra bersymbolik der Alten*, Klages had presented his own study of Eros as an extension of Bachofen's terms and theories. Bachofen examined "the whole prehistory of the West from the perspective of the conflict between *matriarchy* and *patriarchy*," said Klages, applauding Bachofen for retracing "the primal religion, whose social forms, whose legal concepts, whose morals, and whose depiction of the gods were contradicted by every conviction of those who championed rationality throughout the history of the world [*Weltgeschichte*]!"[77]

It is not easy to historicize an absence, to construct a history of an intellectual movement that keeps referring to an invisible point of destruction and pure violence. But even absences have their own *Urgeschichte* (primordial history), and for Klages and Bachofen the source predated Western culture. Signs of what preceded the logic of the Greeks were buried in the destruction of Rome and in its ruins. Bachofen saw his past and his future embedded in a language of ruins, where death and fallen buildings were the best markers of great political power. This language of myths and ruins made Bachofen appealing for theoreticians of fascism. Wilhelm Reich, for example, repeated Bachofen's observations about mythcal power and ruins in his *Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933): "Like the ruins of Rome, [modern monuments] suggest only that a necessary end is appointed to all things human . . . [T]hese ruins recall the strength rather than the weakness of mankind."[78] For Bachofen a vocabulary of traces and myths was embedded in the structural principle of oppositions, ideally presented in ancient myths. As Reich shows, such radical rethinking of the tradition changed the very understanding of life: "[The] product of a cultural period in which life had not yet broken away from the harmony of nature, it [life] shares with nature that unconscious lawfulness which is always lacking in the works of free reflection."[79] Bachofen's close readings of ancient symbols of myth and death, matriarchy and the cultural unconscious, made him a celebrated figure in the Weimar republic.

From the ranks of *Lebensphilosophers* two groups took up Bachofen in the 1920s and offered readings of his work that were sharply at odds. Ludwig Klages and Alfred Baeumler were identified as the leaders of the two camps.[80] Klages and Bernoulli read Bachofen through Klages's theory of images and the mystical writings of Schuler, and

[76] "Dieser Ausgeburt des gelehrten Ressentiment der Firma Baumler und Schroter gelegentlich ein wenig auf die Finger zu klopfen. Von meinem Zeitmangel wird es abhangen ob ich eine kirzere oder langere Kritik liefere. Jedenfalls werde ich Ihnen spatter eine Kopie zukommen lassen, da wir uns dergestalt in die kritische Arbeit einigermassen teilen konnten." Ludwig Klages to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, February 9, 1925, DLA, letter no. 46.

[77] Ludwig Klages, "Introduction" to *Versuch uber die Grabersymbolik der Alten* (Basel: Helbing and Lichenhahan, 1925), p. x (emphasis in original).

[78] Bachofen, "My Life in Retrospect," quoted in Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), p. 12.

[79] Bachofen, *Mutterrecht*, quoted in Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, p. 76.

[80] Hans-Jirgen Heinrichs, ed., *Das Mutterrecht von Johann Jakob Bachofen in der Diskussion* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1987), p. 12.

they were particularly interested in Bachofen's studies of prehistoric symbols and their value for a cultural critique. Klages saw Bachofen, as he did Nietzsche, as a critic of Western ethics who had subjected the JudeoChristian tradition to a radical challenge. Bachofen was an aesthete and a semiotician rather than a social or political thinker. In his introduction to *Vom kosmogenischen Eros*, the book that was dedicated to Bachofen, Klages announced clearly: "We are not pursuing any 'folklorist' goals, but, rather, so to speak, we are trying to protect an 'example from life,' [protecting it] from reality, mind you, and to enrich [it] with some drawn lines . . . [we] have laid the foundation: the theory of the reality of images [*die Lehre von der Wirklichkeit der Bilder*]."[81]

The Baeumler camp rejected Klages and Bernoulli's interpretation and inserted Bachofen's religious and political ideas into a historical context. As we can see when reviewing the details of his thought, Baeumler interpreted reality in more traditional terms, which he used in turn to criticize conventional norms.

Alfred Baeumler was born in 1887 in Neustadt, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Sudeten, to a deeply Catholic family.[82] He studied in Bonn, Berlin, and Munich, first with the art historian Heinrich Wolfflin, and then with the philosophers Oswald Kulpe, Max Dessoir, and Alois Riehl. He arrived in Munich in the winter of 1908, shortly after the conflict between Klages and the George circle and during the heyday of Klages's psychodiagnostic seminars. Baeumler received his doctorate in Kantian philosophy in 1914 under the direction of Max Dessoir and Oswald Kulpe, two commentators on Kant and on folk psychology. Both were interested in experimental psychology: Dessoir took an active interest in Klages's seminars on "psychodiagnostics" during the early 1900s, and Kulpe gained experience in experimental and folk psychology while studying with Wilhelm Wundt.[83] While working on his dissertation, Baeumler was also on the staff of the feuilleton (cultural supplement) of the daily *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the same liberal supplement that Siegfried Kracauer would edit during the 1920s. After the outbreak of World War I Baeumler was drafted into the German army. He served from 1915 to 1918 as an infantryman and an officer, and later fought in the east with the *Freikorps*, refusing to put down his weapon even after the formal announcement of the German defeat. Between 1920 and 1922 he worked for the elitist Kantian journal *KantStudien*,

[81] "[S]o werde zudem doch ausdricklich betont, dass wir keinerlei 'folkloristische' Zwecke verfolgen, sondern gewissermassen an einem 'Beispiel aus dem Leben,' allerdings der Vergangenheit, zu bewahren und um einige Linien zu bereichen versuchen . . . den Grund gelegt: die Lehre von der Wirklichkeit der Bilder." Ludwig Klages, "Introduction" to the first edition (1921), *Vom kosmogenischen Eros* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1941), p. 8.

[82] This short biographical description of Baeumler relies on different documents in the Alfred Baeumler Nachlass at the Institut fir Zeitgeschichte in Munich. I also rely on the comprehensive research done by Christian Tilitzki in *Die deutsche Universita tsphilosophie in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), pp. 185-194, 216-218, 545-591.

[83] See Kilpe's chapter about Wundt in Oswald Kilpe, *The Philosophy of the Preset in Germany*, trans. Maud Lyall Patrick (New York: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 193-220.

directed at the time by the leading neo-Kantian and chairman of the Kant Society, Arthur Liebert.

How does one shift from Kant to Nazi philosophy? Reviving the prehistory of the philosophical principle, via Bachofen, could offer a possible answer. The timing of the change, as we shall see, fits as well. In May 1924 Baeumler submitted his *Habilitation*, a continuation of his dissertation about Kant, to the Technical University in Dresden, and received his first formal position as a professor at the pedagogical institute of the university. In 1926 he edited with Manfred Schroter—concurrent with their work on the *Handbuch der Philosophie* (1926-1934)—a collection of Bachofen's texts, published as *Der Mythus von Orient und Occident: Eine Metaphysik der alten Welt* (The myth of the Orient and Occident: A metaphysics of the ancient world). As Tilitzki describes it, Baeumler shifted from Bachofen to the nationalization of Nietzsche, and became well known due to his popular *Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker,* that "broke with the Nietzsche tradition and, not without winning much critical attention, promoted a 'fascist' adapation of the works."[84] Baeumler's lengthy introduction to Bachofen, over 200 pages long, made him a celebrated public intellectual in Germany; among those praising him for the introduction was Thomas Mann.[85] In 1929 Baeumler was appointed a full professor of philosophy and pedagogy at Dresden University, where he would meet, among others, Victor Klemperer, and in 1931 he began assisting Alfred Rosenberg in shaping the new culture and ideology (Kampfbundes fur deutsche Kultur, KfDK) of the Nazi party. Baeumler formally became a member of the Nazi party in 1933, and in 1934 he was appointed director of the Office of Science in Alfred Rosenberg's office. Among other things, in 1933 he wrote a report rejecting "the assumption that Klages has, in any way, prepared the way for National Socialism [as he argues]."[86]

His mid-1920s analyses of Bachofen mark a turn in his career, moving from neo-Kantianism to *Lebensphilosophie*. This change was accompanied by a growing interest in politics and in the potential political uses of both history, which Baeumler identified with myth, and a certain simultaneity of past and present.

In many ways, Baeumler's interpretation of Bachofen—"the great mystery of life as the consciousness of the people is always present"—led to more radical political implications than did Klages's and Bernoulli's readings, but it relied on a more conventional methodology.[87] Baeumler's growing interest in Bachofen occurred the same year that he established his journal, the *Handbuch der Philosophie*. His carefully contextual-

[84] Tilitzki, *Die deutsche Universita tsphilosophie*, p. 192.

[85] The congratulatory letter led to a long correspondence that was cut off once Mann found out about Baeumler's extreme Nazi views. Baeumler's widow published the correspondence; see Marianne Baeumler, *Thomas Mann und Alfred Baeumler, eine Dokumentation* (Wirzburg: Konigshausen und Neumann, 1989).

[86] Undated report, Nachlass Alfred Baeumler, "Einleitung zum KlagesGutachten," MA 116/7, Institut fur Zeitgeschichte, Munich. See also the reference in Tilitzki, *Die deutsche Universitatsphilosophie*, p. 568.

[87] Alfred Baeumler, "Introduction" to J. J. Bachofen, *Der Mythus von Orient und Occident, eineMetaphysik der Alten Welt*, ed. Manfred Schroter (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlag, 1956), p. clxxxix.

ized and highly analytical close readings used Bachofen's writings to polarize Western civilization between the Orient and the Occident. In Baeumler's view, Bachofen had described a clash of civilizations that influenced religion, race, and cultures. Baeumler's careful and scholastic interpretation often failed to strike the sparks that fly from the pages Klages and Bernoulli devoted to Bachofen, but it was much more coherent and organized. His chronology advanced and analyzed Bachofen's anthropological research of the death cult as a metaphysical system of presence and preservation that consecrated myths "as the power of the mood of death" [*Macht der Todesstimmung*].[88] "Bachofen," he wrote, "did not historicize the myth. Quite the contrary: he mythologized history."[89] A true depiction of history, according to this view, could not distance the dead. When present in memory, they were more alive than any passive living being could be. German romanticism returned to Greece and Rome, Baeumler argued, in order to save the dead from oblivion.[90] Any countervailing attempt at depicting history would reflect "a cold scientific culture" that resists the mother "who gives life but also death—she is the embodiment of fate; the word 'nature' means to the romantics the same thing as fate."[91] Therefore, Bachofen's myth "reflect[ed] the law of life" [*spiegelt ein Lebensgesetz*] and its constant exchange with the cult of the dead.[92] This unity, in turn, "illustrates the experiences of the people [*Volkserlebnisse*] in light of its religious belief."[93] Provoked by Klages's strong anti-Christian reading of both Bachofen and Nietzsche, Baeumler's project can be read, to a large extent, as an anti-Klagesian thesis. Baeumler expresses his resistance to Klages in different forms, mocking all "erotic cosmologies" as overtly aestheticized euphemisms for religious contents. At the end of Baeumler's long introduction to the book, he expresses his strong resistance in two of the most detailed footnotes:

Bernoulli's book on Bachofen, because of his inspiration and flowing collection of material not unsympathetic, is in all essential matters an extension and reflection of the Klagesian misinterpretation . . . Klages interprets the idea of motherhood as the development of the mother from the female, the egg from the mother, and the living cell from the egg . . . Modern interpretation can be characterized by this marked descent from the sphere of historical-religious symbols into an area of "biological" and "sexual" problems! Bachofen sees nothing remotely sexual in motherhood because he has always located the mother within the female and the female within the mother.[94]

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[88] Ibid., p. cc.

[89] Ibid., p. cxc.

[90] "Fruher hatte man die Toten begraben und an ihre unmittelbare Gegenwart geglaubt." Ibid., p. xxxvii.

[91] Ibid., p. cxcv.

[92] Ibid., p. cxcii.

[93] Ibid., p. cxciii.

[94] "Das Buch von Bernoulli uber Bachofen, seiner Begeisterung und fleissigen Stoffsammlung wegen nicht unsympathetisch, ist in allen entscheidenden Fragen ein Vergrosserungsspiegel der Klagesschen Interpretati onsfehler . . . Klages interpretiert den Gedanken des Allmuttertums in der Weise, dass aus dem Weibe die Mutter, aus der Mutter das Ei, aus dem Ei schliesslich aber die Lebenszelle wird . . . .

6. Why Bachofen? Bios, myth, and Rausch

Bachofen's ideas possess many of the traits that Hannah Arendt later identified with totalitarian systems, most significantly the components of *bios* and life: "the individual life, a pu>g [bios] with a recognizable life-story from birth to death, rises out of biological life, Zorq [z6e]."[95] Arendt emphasizes the open nature of totality and action, the essential tools of all totalitarian systems—first and foremost, a terminology (life and death, existence and elimination) and its accompanying timeline (bursting out of terrestrial life and death to a preexisting moment of unity).[96] Arendt's pre-Foucauldian observation, intellectually alluring but more intuitive than systematic, needs to be better situated within the context and vocabulary of the system she was observing. Benjamin, Klages, and Baeumler were able to give it a more distinctive face when referring to Bachofen during the 1920s. All three were following the most fundamental opposition of existence, life and death, in order to radicalize it and then reload it—once radicalized—back into the everyday life.

Bachofen's theory, Benjamin commented, was a radical attempt to aestheticize life through the ancient principle of the "alternation between bright and dark colors, which expresses the constant transition from darkness to light and from death to life. This alternation shows us that tellurium-like creation is the result of an eternal becoming and decay, as its never-ending movement between two opposite poles."[97] Benjamin saw Bachofen as one of those who had succeeded "in isolating [historical] symbols . . . and through them penetrating to the depths of primal religions and cults," developing the notion of internal *Rausch* (ecstasy, enthusiasm) so important to Benjamin during the mid-1920s.[98] As Klages taught in his *Cosmogenic Eros*, reconstituting a notion of life on the basis of Bachofen's *Rausch* would enable the reconfiguration of time and space in modernity. Both Benjamin and Baeumler followed that advice, striving to reach as radical a result as possible. But how does Bachofen create the condition of possibility for this extreme challenge?

Bachofen felt that in order to grasp the organic and biological nature of being (*Dasein*), one had to eliminate the modern dichotomy between history and myth, external rationalization and internal intuition: "[T]oday's historical research in its one-

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Diese[r] tiefe Fall aus der Sphare der geschichtlich-religiosen Symbole in einen Bezirk, wo es 'biologische" und "sexuale" Problemstellungen gibt, ist fur moderne Ausdeutung bezeichnend! Bachofen liegt eine "Sexualisierung des Mutterbegriffs in der Tat vollig fern, weil er von Anbeginn im Weibe die Mutter und in der Mutter das Weib sieht." Ibid., p. cclxxiii.

[95] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Present* (1954; reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 42.

[96] Ibid., p. 87.

[97] "Der Wechsel der hellen und der dunkeln Farbe druckt den steten Ubergang von Finsternis zum Licht, von Tod zum Leben aus. Er zeigt uns die tellurische Schopfung als das Resultat ewigen Werdens und ewigen vergehens, als seine nie endende Bewegung zwischen zwei entgegensetzten Polen." Bachofen, *Gra bersymbolik der Alten*, p. 9.

[98] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 5:221-222.

dimensionality excludes everything but the determination of events, personalities, and temporal relations [*ZeitverhaItnisse*], and it has set up an opposition between historical and mythical time that rejects a deeper and contextual understanding. Whenever we engage with history, the conditions of the earlier *Dasein* are asserted: the absence of a beginning in favor of a continuation, the absence of a pure cause in favor of an effect."[99] History, in other words, suppresses only the *beginning*, the legendary origins of life, and ignores its own preconditions and presumptions, its earlier *Dasein*. If true, then history is much better in touching death than life.

Bachofen anticipated the modern antihistoricism and return of mythical symbolism, generally expressed in terms of dichotomies. After unearthing a radical structuralism, he eradicated it. Although essentially conservative, he contributed to the idea of a new historical dialectic by criticizing the linearity of historicism. (As Benjamin emphasized, Friedrich Engels had acknowledged Bachofen's strong influence.[100]) Bachofen's research focused on the pre-Christian funerary cults, and he insisted on a fundamental change in the perception of primordial life and death after Christ. According to Benjamin, Bachofen tried to show how modern metaphysics and its political incarnation labored to suppress primal forces.[101] An alternative, from that perspective, would be the recalibration of the whole relationship between the two poles and their temporal order and organization (the relation of body to time, as Bergson calls it).[102]

Classic historiography of German nationalism has traditionally drawn lines that link late romantic aestheticism with twentiethcentury nationalism.[103] Yet those inspired by late mythical thinking, as shown in the case of Bachofen's followers, were drawn to it often because of its opposition to authoritarian views. Bachofen had boldly declared his opposition to the Prussian state and its accompanying institutions, particularly the legal system and schools, whose jurists and faculty members he identified as the state's servants. As an alternative to the decadence of Prussian rationalism and its

[99] "Unsere moderne historische Forschung, in einsietiger Ausschliesslichkeit auf die Ermittlung der Ereignisse, Personlichkeiten, Zeitverhatnisse gerichtet, hat durch die Aufstellung des Gegensatzes zwischen geschichtlicher und mythischer Zeit . . . eine Bahn angewiesen auf welcher tieferes und zusammenhangendes Verstandnis nicht zu erlangen ist. Wo immer wir mit der Geschichte in Beruhrung treten, sind die Zustande der Art, dass sie fruhere Stufen des Daseins voraussetzen: nirgends Anfang, uberall Fortsetzung, nirgends blosse Ursache, immer zugleich schon Folge." J. J. Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht: Eine Untersuchung uber die Gynaikokartie der Alten Welt nach Ihrer Religiosen und Rechtlichen Natur* (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1948), p. 15.

[100] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 5:223, 226, 227.

[101] Ibid., p. 225.

[102] "Questions relating to subject and object, to their distinction and their union, should be put in terms of time rather than of space," wrote Bergson, and "We may speak of the body as an ever advancing boundary between the future and the past, as a pointed end, which our past *is continually driving forward into our future." Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 71, 78.*

[103] "The radical Right became a revolutionary force in the last decades of the nineteenth century." George Mosse, Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality (New York: Howard Fertig, 1980), p. 5.

vaunted technology, Bachofen praised ancient Rome.[104] All of the attributes of the Prussian state that Bachofen most disliked were embodied in a single figure. As Lionel Gossman and Andreas Cesana have shown, from the publication of his *Roman History* in 1854 Theodor Mommsen "was the object of the passionate and enduring hatred" of Bachofen, who saw him as "the fawning servant of power."[105] Nietzsche, who became acquainted with Bachofen during his time in Basel, joined him in his resistance to historicism in general, and to Mommsen and the Prussian system in particular.[106]

Hence, for those who imagine that a conservative tradition leading from myths through romanticism into a modern nationalist ideology came to exist in linear fashion, the Bachofen-Nietzsche-Klages perspective presents an enigma. How to explain a rejection of the state and a critique of the dominant culture (historical, social, and political) that led to a vocabulary of limitless power? The question hurls us back to Klages.

In a series of unpublished lectures dedicated to Bachofen and delivered from the early 1920s to the early 1930s, Klages presented Bachofen as a radical theoretician of historical time.[107] Both Benjamin and Baeumler followed this emphasis, even if each construed it according to his own social or political views. Klages believed that Bachofen's determination to historicize the mother cult, and its attendant cultural habits, grew out of a desire to question modernity in general and nineteenth-century historicism in particular. Pre-Christian cultures, according to this view, had not been condemned to view life through the distorting prism of historical chronology. In Bachofen's matriarchal society, women had no commitment to the family structure nor to any social institution larger than the biological unit of reproduction. They were permitted to marry more than one man and even to marry their husband's brother.

The authority of men, by contrast, brought only harm, namely, Western morality and linearity. Addressing a topic that was close to his heart and his life, Klages commented, "The father is not recognized [as an authority] and the concept of fatherhood is a mere fiction."[108] A social system different from that of the modern era could only

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[104] *J. J. Bachofen, "Antrittsrede," in Gesammelte Werke (Basel: Benno Schwabe,* 1943), 1:7-24.

[105] Lionel Gossman, *Orpheus Philologus: Bachofen versus Mommsen on the Study of Antiquity*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 73 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1983), pp. 1, 25. For another detailed history of Bachofen and his followers, see Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). See also Andreas Cesana, *Johann Jakob Bachofens Geschichtsdeutung: Eine Untersuchung ihrer geschichtsphilosophischen Voraussetzungen* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 1983), p. 87.

[106] In a remarkable letter Nietzsche informed his friend Peter Gast about a fire that had damaged Mommsen's house: "He repeatedly ran back into the flames, and one had to stop him at the end . . . [A]s I heard the story my heart coiled in my body, and I still feel it physically when I think about it. Is it empathy [*Mitleid*]? But what do I have with Mommsen? I was never moved by him." Friedrich Nietzsche to Peter Gast, July 18, 1880, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Briefe*, ed. Richard Oehler (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1993), pp. 229-230.

[107] See, for example, Ludwig Klages, "Darmstadtes Tage," *Hessische Landeszeitung*, October 12, 1927, and "Bachofen als Erneuer des symbolischen Denkens," *Hamburger Nachrichten*, February 5, 1932.

[108] Ludwig Klages, DLA, Konv.: Vor., Sig.: 61.3804, "Bachofen," lecture no. 1, p. 1.

exist when ideas about time also differed markedly from those of the twentieth century; to Klages, who himself wrote a *Kritik der Kritik*, "Bachofen saw history as a process of criticizing the critique."[109] In Klages's reading of Bachofen, history was something very different from life, even opposed to life, a negative view that needed to be eradicated. The proof was that potency [*Potenz*], the result of active life, "falls victim to history."[110] During a time when it was widely assumed that history and progress were inextricably linked, Bachofen dissented (according to Klages), seeing history in terms of the human heart, symbol, image, or an inclination toward the creation of narratives: "The real and ideal elements of tradition are not contiguous, but rather lie within each other . . . so that never a real, but only a spiritual, truth can be attained for the history of the past." This, Klages summarized, "is not the historical truth, but the myth."[111] Klages differentiated positive critics (Bachofen, Nietzsche) from negative critics (modern analysts). Whereas the former tried to radicalize current and past reality in order to find its soul, memory, and the accompanying hermeneutic principle, the latter tried to rationalize the near past, and in that way distance itself from its own dead. Bachofen showed, in contrast, that in the Orphic tradition the tendency to think in terms of the future was the consecration of death.

> The cult of the past is that of the dead, . . . and here I come to the crucial point: it is the cult of eternity . . . On both sides of death lies a zone of changeless being . . . and in the eternity confirmed by death . . . It is the early heathen. For this, eternity lies in life, and not beyond life on the level of being.[112]

Klages's rehabilitation of Bachofen (and Carus, as will be shown in the next chapter) made him the champion of lost romantic souls and a modern interpreter of counternarratives. If he also championed Nietzsche it was to present him as the true discoverer of the unconscious and an heir to late romanticism.[113] Klages elevated these figures in order to lower the status of Freud, or other modern and progressive thinkers, whose rational and technical narrative rudely divorced spirit from soul. Truth had taken a long sabbatical after the deaths of Bachofen and Nietzsche, Klages argued, but the sabbatical was over, and it was time to get back to work. The dark and heavy shields that had long concealed the *Urgeschichte* (primordial history) of modernity had fallen.

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[109] Ibid.

[110] "Potenz, fliessend und fluchtig wie die Handlung und daher gleich allem, worin Leben wirkt, selbst der Geschichte verfallen." Ibid., p. 5.

[111] Klages elaborates: "The real and ideal elements of the tradition cannot be placed in sequence, but are rather placed one inside another [*nicht nebeneinander, sondern ineinander liegen*] . . . and that is, at the end, not a reality for the story of the past, but could be seen only as a spiritual truth [*eine geistige Wahrheit*]." Ibid.

[112] "[E]s ist die fruhheidnische. Fur welche die Ewigkeit im Leben liegt und nicht jenseits des Lebens auf der Ebene des Seins." Ibid., p. 7. I am using Reich's translation.

[113] Some historians and theorists of psychology have suggested that modern psychology owes a debt to Bachofen's investigations of matriarchy and patriarchy. See Adrien Turel, *Bachofen-Freud: Zur Emanzipation des Mannes vom Reich der Mutter* (Bern: Hans Huber Verlag, 1939).

7. Politicizing Bachofen: The Bachofen Debate, 1925-1926

In 1925, while Klages and Bernoulli issued their Bachofenia, the two camps—the Klages camp and the Baeumler camp—started a debate that would become crucial for those interested in *Lebensphilosophie* in general and its Nazification in particular. The origins of the most important confrontation over Bachofen's ideas are described in a letter Klages wrote to Rudolf Bode in 1925.[114] He complained about the upcoming plans of Munich's most prominent publishing house, Beck'sche Verlag (now called C. H. Beck), to stimulate a public discussion of Bachofen's theories by inviting three well-known intellectuals to respond to the recent revival of Bachofen: Manfred Schroter, a cultural philosopher from Leipzig and a personal friend and close collaborator of Baeumler;[115] Oswald Spengler, the popular author of *The Decline of the West*; and Leo Frobenius, the collector and publisher of African myths.

Baeumler and Klages knew about each other even before their interpretations of Bachofen collided. During the 1910s, the right-wing salon of Elsa Bruckmann drew together many who belonged to the George group, including the cosmics Klages and Schuler. The Bruckmanns later lent their living room and funding to the Nazi cause. Elsa Bruckmann became known as a Hitler admirer even before the Munich putsch, and she visited him after his jailing, carrying books and food to him. After his appointment as a chancellor, Hitler rewarded the couple's loyalty with a Mercedes.[116] Recognizing early that he might have competitors in the Bachofen field, Klages had written to Hugo Bruckmann in 1923, criticizing the intention of the Beck'sche publisher to let Baeumler and Schroter touch his Bachofen. He sent a similar complaint to his admirer, the gymnastics and rhythmic theoretician Rudolf Bode, and told him that "while Schroter tended to indulge in name-dropping," dealing with Bachofen "requires one to have his own keys to the texts, or one will never find a coherent path."[117] The Bruckmanns had probably met Baeumler after the publication of *Der Mythus von Orient und Occident* (1926), and it was they who introduced him to the Nazi elite, including Hitler himself.[118]

As the head of the institute for political pedagogy, Baeumler's position at Berlin University was certainly of service to the Nazi party. But so was Klages's, in spite of his distance. During the early years of the Nazi regime, Klages was repeatedly invited to lecture at Berlin University, as well as at the Lessing Hochschule, to discuss his work

[114] Ludwig Klages to Rudolf Bode, May 18, 1925, DLA, Sig.: 61.4199, letter no. 17.

[115] Christian Tilitzki describes Schroter's fascination with Bachofen even before his meeting with Baeumler during the early 1920s. See Tilitzki, *Die deutsche Universitatsphilosophie*, pp. 216-217.

[116] Farbrice d'Almeida, *High Society in the Third Reich*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 2008), pp. 26-27.

[117] Ludwig Klages to Hugo Bruckmann, April 27, 1923, DLA, Sig. 61.4298, letter no. 4.

[118] Alfred Baeumler, *Mannerbund und Wissenschaft* (Berlin: Junker und Dunnhaupt, 1934), p. 194.

about *Lebensphilosophie*, graphology, and characterology.[119] Interestingly, Klages was one of the first thinkers invited by Alfred Rosenberg to lecture in Berlin after the 1933 victory and the appointment of Hitler.[120] Apparently, the distance was not as wide as Klages seemed to imagine it sometimes. After all, Rosenberg dedicated whole pages to contemplation of Bachofen's relevance to the racial policy of the Nazi Reich, while debating the "many unhealthy thinkers [who] have taken his [Bachofen's] extravagant fantasies" as a suitable challenge for the Aryan race. Rosenberg was especially troubled that "present day feminism— without the author wishing it—has found in Bachofen a glorification of its nature."[121]

Bachofen was for Baeumler a possible tool for reviving the longforgotten mythic power of the German race. His *Mythos von Orient und Occident* of 1926 aligned him with those opponents of both Kantian ethics and historicism. Like Bachofen and Nietzsche before him, Baeumler used Theodor Mommsen as a representative of scientific historicization and protested: "Mommsen sees it all as the present, a prosaic nearness, a critique. One overestimates the fact that Ranke and Mommsen belonged to the scientific-critical branch of the new school of historical writing."[122] The antihistoricist echo generated strong feedback. That same year, Baeumler published several articles about Bachofen; one was republished in his intellectual history of Germanness.[123] In 1929 he published "Korrekturen: Bachofen und Nietzsche," a comparative study of Bachofen and Nietzsche. At the center of Baeumler's later interest in Bachofen was his discussion of the mythic ontology of time, fuel for Baeumler's attacks on the Jewish science of psychoanalysis. Myth, he claimed, was essentially an "absent chronology." As a heuristic device, Baeumler contrasted the thinking of Bachofen, referred to as "the prophet," with that of a foil identified only as "the psychologist"—clearly Freud. "[Bachofen] gazed into the depths of pre-time [*Vorzeit*]. Fearful yet craving, the psychologist sets his sights on his own time and the proximate [*umgebenden*] times of preceding centuries . . . Whoever risks his own life, whoever must undertake a great act, he must forget all psychology."[124] For Baeumler the revival of myths and their time structure stimulated a *vita activa* that transcended linear time and all epistemology.

[119] Klages discussed his invitations with his disciples often. See his correspondence with Hans Eggert Schroder, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, H. E. Schroder File, 61.12259, letter nos. 1-28 (1928-1954).

[120] Alfred Rosenberg to Ludwig Klages, March 15, 1931, DLA, KA, 61.12902, letter nos. 1, 2. For a careful history of the relationship see Tobias Schneider's excellent article, "Ideologische Grabenkampfe: Der Philosoph Ludwig Klages und der Nationalsozialismus 1933-1938," in *Vierteljahrshefte fiir Zeitgeschichte* 49:2 (2001): 275-294.

[121] Alfred Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age* (Sussex, England: Historical Review Press, 2004), p. 314.

[122] "Bei Mommsen ist alles Gegenwart, prosaische Nahe, Kritik. Man uberschatzt zu leicht den Umstand, dass Ranke und Mommsen der wissenschaflich-kritischen Richtung innerhalb der neueren Geschichtsschreibung angehoren." Alfred Baeumler, "Introduction," in Bachofen, *Mythus*, p. clvii.

[123] Alfred Baeumler, "Von Winckelmann zu Bachofen, 1926," in *Studien zur Deutschen Geisteschichte* (Berlin: Junkerund Dunnhaupt Verlag, 1937), pp. 100-170.

[124] "Der Psychologe halt den Blick mit angstlicher und gieriger Wachsamkeit auf seine Zeit und die sie umgebenden Zeiten vorigen Jahrhunderts . . . Wer in Gefahr des Lebens schwebt, wem eine grosse

In a fragment probably composed during the second half of the 1950s, Baeumler talks about an explicit negative ontology and temporality, characterizing time as

always uncreative, plural, and alive . . . How can one unite the linear, the circular, and the repetitious? There is only one "sign" for time . . . namely, its irreversibility in the process of time . . . When one thinks in a historical way, one perceives time in a superficial way.[125]

Like Klages before him, Baeumler recognized that Bachofen's antipathy to history and to psychology stemmed from a deep resistance to sequence and linearity. But Baeumler believed in the pressing need to act and change within time, and eventually he set out to apply Bachofen and Nietzsche's prehistoric language of symbols to the political realm.

If for Klages time could be understood only in terms of an "experienced happening" (*Geschehen*) that typically involved dreams or the use of drugs, as mentioned in chapter 1, for Baeumler action, and not time, was the main agent of reform and radical change. Yet the perception of a mythical and a total aestheticized time occurs in both Klages and Baeumler. Baeumler's concern was that man's new consciousness of time had destroyed much of his ability to act. Klages's worry was the opposite, namely, how to sleep better. Klages concluded his philosophy of time with a retreat to the isolation of the dreamland of images. Baeumler wanted to realize his dreams in the world.

In contrast to Klages, Baeumler did not shrink from defending those philosophers whose views and pleas were close to his. For example, Baeumler (and Schroter) defended Spengler's thesis of cycles in human history when he was attacked in the 1920s by many academic philosophers and historians who saw him as a simplifier and popularizer.[126] Baeumler's action implied a greater willingness to place ideas in the service of political ideologies. As one educated in the historicist school, Baeumler tried to explain how romanticism in general, and Bachofen in particular, could serve the new *volkisch* Germany:

When the romantic narrates history, the deeds of kings attested in documents are not important to him; rather, he writes the inner history of a time and a people, the history that reveals itself to an eye that knows how to read the signs that have been passed down. This history, which speaks in symbols, knows only large periods of time; the feeling of life of a people changes slowly.[127]

Tat auferlegt ist, der muss, der vergisst alle Psychologie." Alfred Baeumler, "Korrekturen: Bachofen und Nietzsche," in Heinrichs, ed., *Das Mutterrecht*, p. 147.

[125] Alfred Baeumler, "Ontologie: Zeit," Philosophisches Archiv der Universitat Konstanz, Sig.: ZE 31.

[126] Manfred Schroter, *Der Streit um Spengler: Kritik seiner Kritiker* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1922), p. 17.

[127] "Wenn der Romantiker Geschichte erzahlt, so kommt es ihm nicht auf die Taten der Konige an, die durch Dokumente bezeugt sind, er schreibt die innere Geschichte einer Zeit, eines Volkes, die Geschichte die sich nur dem Auge, das die Zeichen der Uberlieferung zu lesen versteht, enthullt. Diese Geschichte, die in Symbolen spricht, kennt aber nur grosse Zeitraume; das Lebensgefuhl der Volker wandelt sich nur langsam." Alfred Baeumler, "Chthonisch, dionysisch, apollinisch," originally published in *Der Mythus*

What Baeumler strived for was explosive change, a quick and shocking revolution of the cultural and national spirit. Myth was essential in this respect: the function of the past was to serve the action of the present. In his inaugural address on the day of the book burning, Bauemler explained "that National Socialism cannot be understood from the intellectual positions of the past . . . History knows no 'back.'"[128] *Lebensphilosophie*, the ideal philosophical battleground, quickly extended its vocabulary to all aspects of life.

Lebensphilosophie in general, and the admiration of Bachofen in particular, illustrate an affinity between Baeumler and Klages even as they point up some differences. For Klages would never have accepted Baeumler's heavy emphasis on action.

Such similarities and differences are more apparent in the two men's political comments, particularly in relation to Walter Benjamin. In a letter Alfred Baeumler sent to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, in May 1926, he insisted that a shared foe implied a convergence:

The contrast between your interpretation of Bachofen and ours is a contrast that lies completely beyond the usual understanding of those objects that Bachofen dealt with. The number of philistines is so large and powerful and that of the antiphilistines so small that it would be deplorable when those few and firm opponents of *bourgeois* prejudices make their struggle more difficult by using polemics. The final decision has not yet been taken on the contrast between your Bachofen interpretation and mine . . . Our enemy is probably both one and the same.[129]

Along with his letter, Baeumler included a copy of the essay on Klages, Bernoulli, and Bachofen that Walter Benjamin had published in

Literarische Welt. As mentioned above, Benjamin's essay not only put all the attention on Klages—"This enterprise is all the more productive since it attempts to grapple with Klages"—but beyond it, Benjamin stressed, like Klages, the retroactive reloading of Bachofen's theory with the power of radical modern thinking and "certain elements he calls 'images.'"[130]

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von Orient und Occident: Eine Metaphysik der alten Welt (Munich: Beck'sche Verlagshandlung, 1926), republished in Heinrichs, ed., *Das Mutterrecht*, p. 136.

[128] Quoted in Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, trans. Stephen D. Ricks (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p. 179.

[129] "Der Gegensatz zwischen Ihrer und unserer Bachofen-Auffassung ist durchaus ein Gegensatz jenseits der ublichen Auffassung derjenigen Gegenstande, von denen Bachofen handelt. Das Philisterium ist so gross und machtig, die Zahl der Anti-Philister ist so klein, dass es sehr zu bedauern ware, wenn sich die wenigen entschiedenen Gegner der burgerlichen Vorurteile durch Polemik den Kampf erschweren, den sie fuhren. Ueber den Gegensatz zwischen Ihrer und meiner Bachofendeutung muss noch *nicht in jeder Beziehung das letzte Wort gesagt sein . . . Der Gegner steht* uns wohl beiden gegenuber." Alfred Baeumler to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, May 8, 1926, Institut fur Zeitgeschichte in Munich, Nachlass Alfred Baeumler, Mappe 23: Korrespondenz Manfred Schroter.

[130] Benjamin, "Review of Bernoulli's Bachofen," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: 1913-1926, pp. 426-427.

Baeumler drew a large "X" on the words of Benjamin's encomium. *His* Bachofen served a militant and a mythic radicalization of such "chthonic powers" in the battlefield.

8. Conclusion

During the 1920s *Lebensphilosophie* became a political philosophy that resisted all political systems. It used its radical potential, as one neoKantian critic put it, "to overcome every element of thinking that has served philosophers up to now."[131] Adorno's perspective was a bit different. He explained the unification of *Lebensphilosophie* and fascist ideology in terms of a shared fascination with "the life style of belated bohemians, . . . a hotbed of that spirituality whose protest against the rationalism of the schools led . . . more swiftly to Fascism than possibly even the spiritless system of old Rickert." What gave it voice was "the law that lurks tacitly behind all the works on the Cosmogenic Eros and kindred mysteries."[132] But not even Adorno bothered to supply more than a cultural description of the phenomenon. *Lebensphilosophie* issued a call for the revival of the primordial, to be accomplished by hastening time, by mythologizing the future, which Klages insisted was a non-time. Because they both accepted that this radicalized time could be placed in the service of politics—Klages reluctantly, Baeumler actively—both men can be seen as affirmative thinkers, though they worked from opposite positions. Benjamin, however, was a critic who worked from within, counting more on subversion than on a frontal attack.[133]

For *Lebensphilosophie*, the difference between Klages and Baeumler is a telling one, a gap large enough to envelop every twentieth-century theory of totalitarianism, but it has been neglected because of the general contempt postwar historians and philosophers had for rightwing theories. Both Klages and Baeumler were trying to unite a new aesthetic with an old political view of the *volk*, and they shared an aspiration for the *total weltanschauung*, an *aesthetic* view that had to be politicized in order to be realized. Klages produced a wacky aesthetic that Baeumler—and Nazi ideology with him—rejected in favor of action (*Tat*).

In contrast, as late as 1931, Klages resisted any attempt to identify him with a single political stand, or for that matter with the principle of politics per se. In a letter written that year, he complained that the journal *Die Tat*—which celebrated the philosophy of pure action and supported *Lebensphilosophie* for the previous 20 years—had "reduced

[131] Heinrich Rickert, *Philosophie des Lebens*, p. 16.

[132] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Refl ections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 66-67.

[133] For a discussion of Benjamin's subversive discussion of myth, see Gunther Hartung, "Mythos," in *Benjamins Begriffe*, ed. Michael Optiz and Erdmut Wizisla (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2000), pp. 552-572.

itself to the merely political."[134] Still, he did not seem to have hesitated to place articles there. Baeumler, on his end, kept attacking Klages until—as will be explained in the next chapters—he convinced Alfred Rosenberg to declare a formal war on the Klages's circle. As Bernard Rust (1883-1945), the Prussian minister of culture in 1933 and later the minister of science, education, and culture of the Third Reich, explained in an article he published in the Nazi daily *Volkischer Beobachter* on May 27, 1933, "Klages and Baeumler are now both called for [*berufen*] at the University of Berlin . . . In order to fence out some decisions, that will be applied beyond philosophy."[135]

Amid the ruins of German critical philosophy, Benjamin stands between the two "fathers of fascism" as the bearer of the torch of ethical and political responsibility. His fascination with Klagesian radical aesthetics was grounded in his own vision of saving fallen angels from the oblivion of linear historicity. Klages was not opposed to the idea, or he would have cut his ties to Benjamin. Baeumler, in contrast, could not have been more hostile.

[134] Ludwig Klages to Hans Prinzhorn, March 27, 1931, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig. 61.6587, letter no. 2.

[135] Bernhard Rust, "Gegenpole innerhalb der volkischen Idee. Klages und Baeumler in Berlin," in *Volkischer Beobachter*, May 27, 1933. Rust is suggesting that the object of the fight concerns power, not philosophy.

4. Alternative Subject: Anti-Freudianism and Charakterologie, 1919-1929

The immediate period after the end of the First World War saw the growing emphasis on social and political psychology, to a large extent due to the growing relevance of life philosophy, depth psychology, and mass psychology. Freud published his *Massenpsychologie und IchAnalyse* in 1921 (translated the following year by Freud's disciple James Strachey as *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*), the same year Edward Spranger (1882-1963) published his *Lebensformen* (Life forms)[1] and Ludwig Klages published his *Vom Wesen des Bewusstsein* (From the essence of consciousness)[2]—that attacked the Freudian division of individual conscious and unconscious. The three thinkers commented, from opposite perspectives, on the same tradition and sources of influence, reintegrating the impact of Gustave Le Bon's mass psychology, Friedrich Nietzsche's depth psychology, and Wilhelm Wundt and Wilhelm Dilthey's experimental psychology, folk psychology, and life forms. To illustrate how tight this discursive circle was, during the first two decades of the twentieth century it is sufficient to note that Le Bon's first translator to German (of his *Psychologie der Massen*, 1911), Rudolf Eisner, was a disciple of Wundt, and a close collaborator of Wilhelm Dilthey and Georg Simmel, a philosopher who contributed to *Lebensphilosophie*, group or mass psychology, and later the group forming the history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*).[3] All of these movements were taken very seriously by *Lebensphilosophers* and applied by such thinkers as Ludwig Klages. As mentioned in previous chapters, the impact of *Lebensphilosophie* on such interests, concepts, and methods disappeared after World War II, or, worse, completely identified with fascism. As will be shown below, such anachro-

[1] Edward Spranger was one of the principle representatives of the psychology of life. After writing his dissertation under Dilthey, he served as a professor of psychology and pedagogy in Berlin and Tubingen and served during World War II as a military psychologist. He was also linked to the July 20, 1944, military rebellion against Hitler. His *Lebensformen* (1921) is still considered a central text of German psychology, and his typology of personalities is still taught in management schools in the United States.

[2] Ludwig Klages, *Vom Wesen des Bewusstsein* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1921).

[3] Take, for example, Eisner's book *The Working of the Soul: Ideas for an Organic Psychology*, published in 1909, the year before his translation of Le Bon's book. The fact that Eisner—of Jewish origins—did not see an obvious contrast between "organic psychology" and his "group identity" or his training in Kantian philosophy points to a different aspect that should be developed elsewhere.

nisms missed the great revolutionary potential *Lebensphilosophie* held not only for the extra-parliamentary reactionaries, but also for the rebellious progressivists. Mitchell G. Ash's work, now a classic in this field, has already pointed out the intricate political relationship that supported the reception of Gestalt Psychology.[4]

Post World War II history—until the 1980s—missed not only the revolutionary potential of the pre-War psychology but also its chronology and development. As Ash and others have shown during the past two decades, during the early 1920s German psychology was politicized and much of its politicization had to do with the growing impact of *Lebensphilosophie* or related anti-Freudian analyses. During the prewar years an antibourgeois and antipatriarchic rebellion was affiliated in those works with a nationalist plea for a collective unconsciousness. Different attempts to separate the two elements failed in political terms; Freud himself commented critically about Le Bon's interpretation in the second chapter of his *Group Psychology*, but his own school of psychoanalysis was heavily criticized in Germany. Further attempts did not break the spell. The growing interaction between psychology and radical politics did not escape Freud's own school: Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), who was close to Freud during the 1920s, wrote *Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* (The Mass Psychology of Fascism, 1933), which reframed Le Bon's concept in relation to "German imperialism." It was attacked immediately by the Nazi *Vo Ikischer Beobachter,* and Reich fled Germany back to Vienna and from there, in 1939, to the United States.[5] Reich's advice to think seriously about Bachofen and his critique of patriarchy, in 1933, was perceived—correctly in his case—to represent a post-Marxist, post-Engelsian critique of Nazi authoritarianism. It is interesting to note that Reich used terms identified with *Lebensphilosophie* already in his first two works, equating the "orgastic potency" to both the Freudian libido and *Lebensphilosophie's* experience (Erlebnis) or ecstasy (Rausch). As discussed in the previous chapter, such concepts were closely related to Klages's work on nineteenth century thinkers such as J.J.Bachofen. As desmonstrated in this chapter, Klages's analyses and revival of Carl Gustav Carus and Friedrich Nietzsche as two contesters of Freud, helped to transform and politicize the pre-Nazi and Nazi psychology.

Klages's new work utilized Bachofen's matriarchy and made *logocentrism* a popular term hurled against all transparent Western forms of positivist analysis, patriarchalism, and materialism. He identified all of those with Freud's psychoanalysis and a general decline into the pitholes of "logocentrism." As he pleaded in the last part of his *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (Spirit as the adversary of the soul, 1932), "One has to

[4] Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[5] In the chapter discussing the concept of mass psychology, Reich declares that his principle question is: "What produced the *mass-psychological soil* on which an imperialistic ideology could grow and could be put into practice?" Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Theodore P. Wolfe (New York: Orgone Press, 1946), p. 15 (emphasis in the original).

recover, in any possible way, from the blinding [effect of] logocentrism."[6] The West and its values became a synonym for cultural decline. Klages's message, already popular before 1914, now became the battle cry of a new postwar generation, at this point (pre-1933) not yet cleansed of its antiliberal rebelliousness.

Before returning to psychology, let me mention two literary threads that utilized the same nexus between psychology and pessimist politics, via characterology and mass-psychology. When Robert Musil tried to summarize this new conception of elitist cultural pessimism in *The Man without Qualities* (1929), written during and about the 1920s, it was by no mere chance that he based one of his central figures on Klages and his anti-Freudian theories of character.[7] The rise of an antiFreudian psychology based on organic forms and replicated qualities is accompanied in the book by a critique of the "urban mechanization" and "the strange, dispersed arithmetic of time."[8] Katherine Arens demonstrates that Arthur Schnitzler and Otto Weininger were interested in a similar anti-Freudian characterology of "qualities" when she writes, "[Schnitzler's] approach signals more than an anthropological or even a psychoanalytical analysis, for Schnitzler bases his work on a picture of the total man in culture: the fundamental constitution or predispositions of man [*Geistesvergassung*], his specific gifts [*Begabungen*], and his moods or 'states of the soul' [*Seelenzustande*]."[9]

The impact and seriousness of anti-Freudian psychology was generally ignored after 1945. As the historian of psychology Ulfried Geuter demonstrated, the politicization of German psychology was generally ignored until the 1980s.[10] If true, it is a surprising fact for such a sophisticated and historically oriented research. What could be the reason for such a long delay? Once historicized it is clear that German psychology should be regarded in relation to politics, in fact—as early as the 1920s dispute about mass psychology.[11] At the center of the dispute was a serious debate about the relevancy of psychoanalysis as a collective system. What brought a stark change to psychoanalysis during the 1920s was also the reason for its crisis, as Erich Fromm declared in his book *Crisis of Psychoanalysis* (1970), in which he looks retrospectively at the psychology

[6] "Man muss allerdings auf anderem Wege von der logozentrischen Verblendung schon genesen sein." Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, vol. 3 (Bonn: H. Bouvier Verlag, 1974), p. 112.

[7] For a thorough discussion of Musil's interest in modern psychology and the philosophy of psychology, see Marie-Louise Roth, *Robert Musil: Ethik und Asthetik, zum Theoretischen Werk des Dichters* (Munich: Paul List Verlag, 1972).

[8] Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eignschaften* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1989), p. 7. Marie-Louise Roth, in her study of Musil, writes, "[Musil's] expressionism was an attempt to grasp the associative content of the soul and present through it the inner secretive essence of things. It opposes the intuitive philosophy of Klages and Bergson, and its [slogan's] 'suppression of life' and the 'spirit as the adversary of the soul.'" (Roth, *Robert Musil*, p. 59).

[9] Katherine Arens, "Schnitzler and Characterology: From Empire to Third Reich," in *Modern Austrian Literature* 19:3-4 (1986): 100.

[10] Ulfried Geuter, *Die Professionalisierung der deutschen Psychologie im Naztionalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984), p. 166.

[11] Ibid., p. 165.

of the 1920s. Psychoanalysis had not paid enough attention to the rise of the "Aryan unconscious," as Jung described it in a radio interview in 1933, accusing Freud of "not understanding the Germanic psyche any more than his Germanic followers."[12] Its apoliticism led many intellectuals from both inside psychoanalysis— Wilhelm Reich, Otto Fenichel, Otto Gross, and even Erich Fromm are a case in point—and from outside to call for a change. The alternative— for both left and right—would be taken from a Nietzschean "depth psychology" (*Tiefenpsychologie*), which bore such phenomena as Klages's characterology and science of expression. Jacob Golomb argues that the principal aim of depth psychology was "to evoke a mood of deep suspicion and distrust towards metaphysics (and other dogmatic views as well),"[13] mainly by placing the concept of power at the center of psychological method. "It follows that the specific object of the psychologist's task is power and its appearance in culture and history. We can say," Golomb concludes, "that Nietzsche-as-psychologist is actually a philosopher dealing with power and its exhibitions. And thus, Nietzsche's 'new psychology' that—unlike others—dared 'to descend into the depths,' became what he called the doctrine of the development of the will to power."[14]

In the mid-1920s Klages already saw himself as the father of a new anti-Freudian tradition that was heavily grounded in the Nietzschean depth psychology. Steven Aschheim describes the Nietsche-Klages axis in the following terms:

For Klages, Nietzsche's psychological achievement was the demarcation of the battleground between Yahweh's ascetic priests and the orgiasts of Dionysus; his psychological sensitivity provided extraordinary illumination pursued through his relentlessly honest selfknowledge and unmasking [*Entta uschungstechnik*] . . . For Klages, the aggressive and consumptive will to power was "de-eroticized sexuality"; Nietzsche's individualist insistence on self-overcoming was an act of *Geist* in disguise, derived from precisely the Socratism and Christianity which he was supposed to have abhorred. The will to power was the agent of an abstracted and aggressive mind, of capitalism and socialism that cut people off from their natural, earthly roots.[15]

In short, Klages had already marked the path taken later by Martin Heidegger in his 1930s lectures on Nietzsche as the "last metaphysician."[16] Werner Bohleber points out the historical roots of the strongest anti-Freudian current in German psychology, espe-

[12] William McGuire, ed., *C. G. Jung Speaking* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), pp. 773-779. Quoted in Zvi Lothane, "Power, Politics, and Psychoanalysis: An Introduction," in *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 12:2-3 (2003): 94.

[13] Jacob Golomb, "Nietzsche's New Psychology," in *Nietzsche and Depth Psychology*, eds. Jacob Golomb, Weaver Santaniello, and Ronald Lehrer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 4.

[14] Ibid., p. 7.

[15] Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 81.

[16] "Nowhere else in the history of Western metaphysics is the essential form of its respective thinkers actually expressed in this way, or more precisely and literally thought out . . . It remains essential in the figure of Zarathustra that the teacher teaches something two-fold which belongs together, eternal recur-

cially the part of it that was identified with depth psychology. According to Bohleber, Richard Noll, Mitchell G. Ash, and other critical historians of German psychology,[17] a historical line leads from early nineteenth-century antiKantian psychology to depth psychology and from there to different anti-Freudian approaches. Bohleber traces a path that starts with Carus and Bachofen, passes through Nietzsche, and ends with Klages and finally Jung. According to Bohleber's thesis, this approach "would refuse to accept any rift opening between science and life, a *Lebensphilosophie* (e.g., Ludwig Klages's) and Husserl's phenomenology."[18] As I mentioned in the previous chapter, between 1935 and 1937 Walter Benjamin had offered to write about Klages and Jung from a similar perspective. As will be mentioned in this one, it is not coincidental that a majority of historians of psychology found themselves forced to investigate theories of language and a uniquely German understanding of life alongside their psychological research. Even if suppressed nowadays, during the early 1900s psychology had much to do with philosophy, biology, and ethnology or race sciences.[19]

In this counterhistory of psychology and psychoanalysis, Klages is an exception. Although not the most lucid psychologist or philosopher of the soul—not even the most interesting one—he was nevertheless the one responsible for the evocation of this lineage and much of its vocabulary, regenerating its influence in the political and philosophical discourses of the 1920s.

A careful historicization would show that *Lebensphilosophie*—and Klages's role within it—created an opportunity for both psychology and politics simultaneously: a new vocabulary that declared war on all narratives of progression, offered a serious alternative to opponents of Freud (even within the psychoanalytical movement), provided a method of character study that starts its analysis not from the subject but

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rence and superman." Martin Heidegger, "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?" in *Review of Metaphysics* 20:3 (March 1967): 429.

[17] Werner Bohleber, "Psychoanalyse, romantische Naturphilosophie und deutsches idealistisches Denken," in *Psyche, Zeitschrift fur Psychoanalyse und ihre Anwendungen* 43:6 (1989): 506-521. Richard Noll, *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), p. 166. Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[18] Bohleber, "Psychoanalyse," p. 512.

[19] The authors of the history of modern psychology in Germany identify major trends in German psychology. Among the central ones, they identify what they call "psychological-anthropological personality theories, characterologies, and typologies," all of which have to do with different "biological-constitutional principles," as developed in the "biotypologies" of Ernst Kretschmer and Erich Jaensch, two close collaborators of *Lebensphilosophie* in general and of Klages in particular. In discussing "alternative and complementary lines of development," the authors identify what they call "psychologies oriented toward philosophies of life."

The initiators of this psychology are Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), and Ludwig Klages (1872-1956). The authors write, "Here lie the origins of today's *philosophical psychologies* and *psychotherapies* (such as therapy in *Daseinsanalytic*)." See Lothar and Helga Sprung, *History of Modern Psychology in Germany in 19thand 20th-Century Thought and Society*, E-Book by Psychology: IUPsyS Global Resources, 2009, http://e-book.lib.sjtu.edu.cn/iupsys/Origins/Imada/im03ch02.htm (accessed June 14, 2012).

from its factual "appearance" or "expression," and refused all presumptions about self-development by identifying a certain inherent quality in individuals that binds them to their illusive "development." This chapter, then, tells the story of opposition between a life typology (*Characterologie* and *Tiefenpsychologie*) and psychoanalysis and how its role as a byproduct of two different notions of life and inner time translated during the mid-1920s to both psychological (individual) and political (collective) discourses. Here again, one sees a gradual process of politicization that leads from the early nineteenth century's shared origin in psychophysics through the discovery of the unconscious to the different versions of late-nineteenth-century typological psychology and up to the 1920s' unity of individual cells and collective souls.

1. Bachofen versus Freud

In the second chapter of his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud analyzed and criticized Gustave Le Bon's false identity of individual and mass or group psychology.[20] Freud opened his chapter with a quote, repeating Le Bon's argument regarding the coming together of individual and collective traits: "The psychological group is a provisional being formed of heterogeneous elements, which for a moment are combined, exactly as the cells which constitute a living body form by their reunion a new being which displays characteristics very different from those possessed by each of the cells singly."[21] Freud then continued to criticize Le Bon, who had failed to account for the origin of the group's bond: "If the individuals in the group are combined into a unity, there must surely be something to unite them, and this bond might be precisely the thing that is characteristic of a group. But Le Bon does not answer this question; he goes on to consider the change which the individual undergoes when in a group and describes it in terms which harmonize well with the fundamental postulates of our own depth psychology."[22] Interestingly, Klages would make similar claims concerning Freud's interpretation of the self, but from the perspective of the collective, and then move on to force Freud's Judaism on Freud's method of reading and analysis. But first a few words about the background that leads Klages to this frontal conflict with psychoanalysis.

Klages studied applied psychology with his mentor in Munich, Theodor Lipps, himself identified with experimental psychology and psychophysics. Lipps's phenomenological reading of psychological characteristics, and especially his emphasis on the need to back observations in empirical data, deeply impressed Klages. Klages continued, then,

[20] Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 10.

[21] Ibid., p. 7. The quote used in the English translation of Freud is taken from Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, unspecified translator (1896; reprint, London: Fisher Unwin,1920), p. 29.

[22] Ibid.

to produce a theory of expression and bodily signs that extended Nietzsche's fusion of psychology and philosophy while minimizing its stress on the will. After he left Germany for Switzerland, Klages moved deeper into the philosophical discourse and left most of his graphological and psychological work to his sister, whom he trained and supervised, taking regular trips to Munich to examine her work.[23] While leaving most of his earlier psychological work behind, Klages never left psychology as a philosophical subject and in Switzerland examined it from the perspective of an anti-Freudian *Lebensphilosopher*.

Freud's answer to Le Bon, which Klages most probably learned while writing his own Eros book, was to draft the principle of *sublimation* as a critical commentary on both the church and the father principle. Freud, who had already referred to Bachofen in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and in his correspondence with Jung,[24] was undoubtedly commenting in his "postscript" on Bachofen's theory as a critical argument against Le Bon and a shared critique of both "sublimating" institutions— Christianity and patriarchy, ideal love and the army. He wrote, "It is obvious that a soldier takes his superior, that is, really, the leader of the army, as his ideal, while he identifies himself with his equals, and derives from this community of their egos the obligations which comradeship implies."[25] Freud immediately extended this structural relation to Christianity: "Every Christian loves Christ as his ideal and feels himself united with all other Christians by the tie of identification."[26] Freud then synthesized both Christianity and patriarchy with a shared critical view that brought in Bachofen's matriarchy as an alternative: "[W]e must return for a moment to the idea of the scientific myth of the father of the primal horde. He was later on exalted into the creator of the world, and with justice, for he had produced all the sons who composed the first group. He was the ideal of each one of them, at once feared and honoured, a fact which led later to the idea of taboo . . . As a compensation . . . he may at that time have acknowledged the mother deities, whose priests were castrated for the mother's protection."[27] Freud then added, "[I]t was then, perhaps, that some individual, in the exigency of his longing, may have been moved to free himself from the group and take over the father's part. He who did this was the first epic poet; . . . he invented the heroic myth."[28] Bachofen,

[23] Klages admitted as much to a few of his disciples. In a letter to his follower, the Nazi economist Kurt Seesemann, he wrote: "The evaluations were written not by me but by my sister! This is naturally a business secret, for I have fewer than four assistants [altogether]. Personally, I have not written any evaluation for over half a decade." Ludwig Klages to Kurt Seesemann, December 30, 1932, Deutsche Literaturarchiv am Marbach (henceforth DLA), Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.7133, letter no. 15.

[24] William McGuire, ed., *The Freud-Jung Letters*, trans. R. Manheim and R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), letters 312J-316J, 318J, April-June 1912. For that and other relevant references to Bachofen, see Lionel Gossman, *Orpheus Philologus: Bachofen versus Mommsen on the Study of Antiquity* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1983), p. 2.

[25] Freud, *Group Psychology*, p. 110.

[26] Ibid., p. 111.

[27] Ibid., pp. 112-113.

[28] Ibid.

we should recall, had mourned the death of heroism with Mommsen and historicism, or Hegel and idealism, stressing that a whole ancient culture was erased with the rise of patriarchy, but had called for a new generation to return to this mythological world: "The story," Bachofen wrote about one of his many carefully selected myths, "recognizes the higher divinity of the paternal principle, but at the same time suggests that the heroic youth who strode swiftly across the stage before the astonished eyes of two worlds could not lastingly subject the feminine principle, which he was condemned to acknowledge at every step . . . Mankind owes the enduring victory of paternity to the Roman political idea, which gave it a strict juridical form and consequently enabled it to develop in all spheres of existence; it made this principle the foundation of all life and safeguarded it against the decadence of religion, the corruption of manners, and a popular return to matriarchal views."[29]

Setting psychoanalysis firmly within deep mythical and biological instincts expressed an adversarial relationship: From the perspective of *Lebensphilosophie* and its *volkish* psychology, psychoanalysis was still assuming the wrong order of events, mental and physical, individual and collective. Freud's insistence on the libido as a fundamental explanation for the unconscious—"psychoanalysis . . . has no difficulty in showing that the sexual ties of the earliest years of childhood also persist . . . [in tender feelings as] the successor to a completely 'sensual' object tie with the person in question or rather with that person's prototype (or imago)"[30]—was falsifying the order of becoming and alluded to lucid beginnings (primal scene, anxiety) and ends (curing, healing) that did not exist in reality. What *Lebensphilosophie* and existential philosophy offered instead was openness to structure and its time line. Musil scholars explain how Musil built on Klages's arguments against

psychoanalysis as "dispersed" or "de-eroticized" (*ent-erotisierte Sexus*) and image-oriented.[31] That is the essence, writes Heinz-Peter Preussen, of Klages's Eros of distance (*Eros der Ferne*) and of his principle of transformation, as explained in his *From the Essence of Consciousness*: "The gaze transforms the gazed" [*Das Schauen verwandel(t) den Schauenden]*."[32] In spite of his attempt to distance himself from a supposed simplistic methodology and reductive system, Klages did not shy away from swift and crude judgments that traced the intellectual roots of Freud's "failure" in the nineteenth-century "psycho-physics" and the Nietzschean will. "In the history of ideas," he wrote, "so-called psychoanalysis (or disintegration of the soul [*Seelenauflosung*]) is

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[29] J. J. Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 117-118.

[30] Freud, *Group Psychology*, p. 117.

[31] Klages, *Philosophische Schriften*, in *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 3 (Bonn: H. Bouvier Verlag, 1974), p. 489. See also Heinz-Peter Preusser, "Die Masken des Ludwig Klages," in *Musil-Forum: Studien zur Literatur der Klassischen Moderne* 31 (2009-2010): 240. Editors for this journal are Norbert Christian Wolf and Rosmarie Zeller.

[32] Preusser, "Die Masken," p. 241. Preusser is referring here to Klages, *S a mtliche Werke*, vol. 3, p. 447.

the unbelievable bastard of a failed marriage [*Missheirat*] between Herbart's atomism and Nietzsche's philosophy of self-deception. Admittedly, the resulting creature is a failure that carries traces from certain influences of relatively exotic origin, e.g., in the form of the theory that the entire human being, actually the entire world, is sex [*Sexus*]."[33] Klages's language leaves little doubt: Freud's stress on a material sexuality and simultaneously on the universal structuralism of its complexes was creating—in his view—a sickly chimera.

The principal resistance to Freud, one notes, was based on his focus on agency, as embodied by nineteenth-century scientific atomism and the Nietzschean emphasis on the will. *Lebensphilosophie* replaced it with instincts, artistic genius, and the imagistic and collective emotions; it stipulated consciousness with a "speaking I," or "the disappearance of the subject," to recall Bohrer's observation concerning the "biologization of the 1920s," which would make agency utterly superfluous, if not damaging, in favor of "an imaginative I in a collective time."[34]

Klages's characterology took an alternative and very German course to Freud's architectonic and universal narrative of the ego. According to one interpreter, it followed a unique—albeit reductive—mixture of Diltheyian typology, which creates an analogical relation between the subject and his surrounding, and Husserlian phenomenology.[35] Since Klages never referred to Husserl and did everything possible to avoid phenomenology, a more accurate description of the combination would be a mix of Diltheyish typology, a Nietzschean emphasis on *Rausch* (ecstasy), and Wilhelm Wundt's social psychology, which Kurt Danziger explains this way: "What the psychologist was trying to get at were processes going on within individual minds that were, however, replicated in all (normal, adult) minds."[36] Mitchell G. Ash identified this worldview as "the

[33] Die sog. Psychoanalyse (=Seelenauflosung) ist geistesgeschichtlich der unglaubwurdige Bastard aus einer noch unglaubwurdigeren Missheirat: der Missheirat namlich von Herbarts Vorstellungsatomistik mit Nietzsches Philosophie der Selbsttauschung. Freilich tragt das missratene Geschopf auch von gewissen Einflussen verhaltnismassig exotischer Herkunft die Spuren, z.B. in Gestalt der Lehre, der ganze Mensch, eigentlich die ganze Welt sei Sexus." Ludwig Klages, *Die Grundlage der Charakterkunde*, in *S a mtliche Werke*, vol. 4 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1977), p. 329. Johann Freidrich Herbart (1776-1841) was a post-Kantian philosopher who was considered to be the first psychologist of education. In his theory of education he relied on Kant's understanding of objects in the world "as such" but shifted the emphasis to the perception of objects rather than our idea of the object as such. For further reading about Herbart's theory of education and psychology, see Benjamin B. Wolman, *Historical Roots of Contemporary Psychology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 29-46.

[34] Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Ekstasen der Zeit, Augenblick, Gegenwart, Erinnerung* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2003), p. 65.

[35] Wolfgang Metzger, "The Historical Background for National Trends in Psychology: German Psychology," in *Historical Perspectives in Psychology: Readings*, eds. Virginia Staudt Sexton and Henryk Misiak (Belmont: Brooks/Cole, 1971), p. 344.

[36] Kurt Danziger, "Social Context and Investigative Practice in Early Twentieth-Century Psychology," in *Psychology in Twentieth-Century Thought and Society*, ed. Mitchell G. Ash and W. R. Woodward (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 15.

dynamic flow of interrelationship between the 'totality of human nature' and the world Dilthey called simply 'life' or 'life itself.'"[37]

In aesthetic terms, Klages's psychology was assuming the simultaneity of distance and its erasure, the existence of oppositions and their eradication. For example, Klages argued that all homogeneous unities— such as a soul—exist already in nature, not in human cognition, and should be understood as such. One can only experience human qualities, typifying or defining them, but not analyzing them. "Every sign of expression can be interpreted characterologically in two ways: as an affirmation of qualities that facilitate powers [*Krafte*] or as an absence of polarized powers [*polarer Krafte*]. The choice occurs on the basis of the content of life: the richer this content is, the stronger the call for affirmation; the more impoverished, the stronger is the call for negation." The purpose of characterology, then, is to support not only the individual, but to "search for law and order and to let the sensual uniqueness of every appearance [*Erscheinung*] have its full impact on us. As such it reveals to us, following our own measures of fullness, the level of its *Formniveau* as the symbol of its participation in the rhythm of life."[38] The use of the concept of *Formniveau* (form level), one of Klages's popular neologisms in his graphological research, was meant to remind the readers of the layered empirical system of signs in graphology that ties together individual and collective, particular and general.[39] This system opened a space of interpretation that was supposed to estimate a level of harmony, style, originality, and beauty in one's handwriting but did not give specific coordinates for measurement or hierarchy. The handwriting presents both an expression of an individual soul and the collective cultural atmosphere around it. Nietzsche's and Bismarck's genius, according to Klages, can be recognized in both their individual characteristics and a general collective soul that surrounded their creative power and supported it. There are no clear boundaries that separate the individual as independent entity.

Hence, to understand the vital "I," one needs not the Freudian, vertical, and three-layered structure or its conscious intellectual agency, which Freud is willing to radicalize to an absolute term when he writes about "the individual in the group" that

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[37] Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture*, p. 73.

[38] "Jedes Ausdrucksmerkmal kann charakterologisch doppelt gedeutet werden: im Sinne der Bejahung von Qualitaten, welche "Krafte" ermoglichen, oder im Sinne der Abwesenheit polarer Krafte. Die Wahl geschieht auf Grund des Lebensgehaltes: je reicher er, um so mehr ist Bejahung geboten, je durftiger, um so eher Verneinung . . . [N]ach Ordnung und Gesetz zu suchen, und von jeder Erscheinung voll auf uns wirken lassen ihre sinnliche Einzigkeit. Alsdann offenbart sie uns nach dem Mass unserer eigenen Fulle ihre Stufe des Fromniveaus als das Symbol ihres Teilhabens am Rhythmus des Lebens." Ludwig Klages, *Ausdruckskunde*, in *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 6 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag 1964), p. 117.

[39] Klages defines it in his *Graphologie* in the following terms: "[T]he different levels of the 'Formniveau' are hard to separate, for it seems irrelevant [*gleichgii Itig*] whether one talks about grades of uniqueness [*Eigenartsgraden*] levels of originality [*Urspriinglichkeitsstufen*], strength of the rhythm or the Formniveau. Such signs seem to mark the Formnivuea of every personal soul-expression [*personlichen Seelenausserung*]." Klages, *Graphologie*, in *S a mtliche Werke*, vol. 7 (Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1968), p. xlix.

"his emotions become extraordinarily intensified, while his intellectual ability becomes markedly reduced."[40] Rather, contends Klages, we need a horizontal self of multiple and simultaneous intuitive parts. If seen as two opposing graphs, then layers in the Freudian schema are moving up and down the archeology of the self; the second, the *Lebensphilosopher*'s, assumes only a correlation of images or a lack of one. Klages compares the Freudian ego with the principle of the intellect (*Geist*) and with "a universal rule of . . . united ego and logos," which in turn take "primordial forces, under the tyranny of form" and which take over the very "ethical autonomy of the individual."[41] Here, as in other places, Klages not only exposed his own fallacies, but in fact missed the radical social potential of life philosophy itself; the alternative to a fusion of spirit and self was not one of essentialist "biologization" versus Freud's "dictatorship" of form, but a translation of the self to its surrounding power relations, first noticed by Bachofen's critique of patriarchy and Nietzschean depth psychology. Wilhelm Reich and other critics of psychoanalysis, since Otto Gross's fling with psychoanalysis during the early 1910s, were able to explore the radical implications of this late-nineteenth-century critique of idealism and Logos in more precise terms; in order to do so, however, they needed Bachofen, and not least, Klages's analysis of Bachofen's work. As Martin Green described it in *The Von Richthofen Sisters*:

Turning to history, we see a striking likeness between Klages and Gross in their joint hatred of Moses and the prophets, Plato, and Aristotle, all of whom they see equally as betrayers of soul to mind . . . Indeed the authority they most preferred to cite was not Nietzsche but Bachofen, whom no one could accuse of social brutality. Their joint reading of him was their great intellectual adventure. Klages first came across him in 1900, shut himself up alone for five weeks to study him, and emerged feeling a new man.[42]

On August 14, 1923, in a letter to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, his colleague on the Bachofen books and an exponent of Nietzsche,[43] Ludwig Klages proposed that Bernoulli compare psychoanalysis to late romantic psychology, in favor of the latter. Klages urged him to radicalize the contrast to the Freudian humanistic *Geist* (spirit, intellect) to "make it more polemical." If Bernoulli turned to the philosophy of Bachofen,

[40] Freud, *Group Psychology*, p. 33.

[41] Ludwig Klages, *Rhythmen und Runen* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1944), p. 306.

[42] Martin Green, *The Von Richthofen Sisters, The Triumphant and the Tragic Modes of Love* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), pp. 77, 81.

[43] Carl Albrecht Bernoulli was the principal disciple of Friedrich Nietzsche's close friend, Franz Overbeck. Bernoulli wrote *Of the Interpretation of Nietzsche* at Overbeck's behest; Lionel Gossman describes it thus: "Overbeck strove for the rest of his life and beyond it, through the work of his student Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, to preserve a different picture of Nietzsche from that propagated, unfortunately with considerable success, by 'die Dame Forster,' as he insisted on calling her [Elisabeth Forster Nietzsche]." Lionel Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 418.

wrote Klages, he would find the antidote to all "mechanistic" depictions of the soul.[44] Nearly ten years later Klages would repeat again and again the same equation, while opposing spirit (*G eist*) and soul (*Seele*) and emphasizing that "[a]ll knowledge of life is dispersed in soul and image. [Yet] both soul and image are impenetrable."[45] The implication was, naturally, that all work of the spirit or intellect was in danger of drawing humanity to "a total annihilation." Occasionally explicitly, habitually implicitly, Klages discerned an "I" (*Ich*) and a "whole life" (*Lebensganz*) that collided directly with Freud's "Judaic staging [*Judainszenierung*], the so-called science of psychoanalysis,"[46] and the structure of the Oedipus complex that "would block all possible active process of naming [*Benennung*] reality."[47] In his view, modern notions of the soul were leading away from late romantic experimental psychology of literal names, types, and characters, enforcing a set of categories from the outside.

In his introduction to Klages's collected works about *Charakterologie*, Hans Eggert Schroder, Klages's disciple and biographer, admitted that a large section of Klages's effort was dedicated to contrasting and destroying "the schooled psychology [*Schulpsychologie*] of the period that lasted between 1900 and 1925."[48] Schroder, who would later cleanse the Klages literary estate from all signs of anti-Semitism, was cautious not to name Freud as his master's nemesis. Although Klages was not alone in his resistance to psychoanalysis, his influence reached a variety of fields and disciplines. As his correspondence from the time shows, many physicians, psychiatrists, and physiologists were highly interested in his work and often saw it as empirically a good fit for integrating into their own practice, especially when resisting psychoanalysis themselves.

In this way, for example, the acclaimed psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn (1886-1933), who published *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* (Artistry of the mentally ill, 1922), came to know Klages and to preach his theory around the world. Prinzhorn's books, influential in both Germany and the United States, developed a whole new psychiatry that evinced a post-Nietzschean and a Klagesian break with the usual boundaries between the normal and the pathological, in which the principal interpretative tools included an emphasis on a neutral and nonjudgmental phenomenological approach, one based on Klages's "nature of configuration" and eidetic images.[49]

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[44] Ludwig Klages to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, August 14, 1923, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.4141, letter no. 33.

[45] Ludwig Klages, Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele, vol. 2 (Bonn: H. Bouvier Verlag, 1966), p. 957.

[46] Ludwig Klages to Hans Prinzhorn, October 23, 1928, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.6585, letter no. 17.

[47] Klages to Prinzhorn, January 3, 1928, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.6585, letter no. 1. Klages's use of "Benennung" implies here "naming," in accordance with his theory of images, and not the more common translation as "designation."

[48] Hans Eggert Schroder, "Introduction" to *Prinzipien der Charakterologie,* in Ludwig Klages, *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 5: *Charakterkunde II* (Bonn: Boucier Verlag, 1979), p. 726.

[49] Hans Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, trans. Eric von Brockdorff (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1972), p. 13; originally published as *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* (1922). The phenomenological

As a result of Klages's countless ties with the medical and psychiatric institutions in Germany (Prinzhorn had a stronghold in Heidelberg, Schroder and others in Leipzig and later in Berlin), Austria (Philip Lersch and his school of psychology in Vienna where Klages was cited frequently), and Switzerland (where Klages had his own students and a close relationship with the circle of Paul Haberlin, among others), many of his concepts—psychological, metaphysical, aesthetic—were standardized. Moreover, Klages and his circle were among the first to identify certain aesthetic schools, expressionism and naturalism, for example, with psychiatric diagnostic and empirical tools, which would be used later for the Nazi cultural attacks on "degenerate art."

The heart of their vocabulary came from an explicit anti-Freudian approach. The wealth of voices echoing Klages is overwhelming, and those voices reach deep into the "schooled psychology" circles. For example, Edgar Michaelis, a well-known critic of Freud, echoed Klages's use of Carl Gustav Carus against Freud as a proof that psychoanalysis was indeed "a psychology without a soul."[50]

In his work on the reception of psychoanalysis, Anthony Kauders demonstrates that different members of the Klages circle were leading the antipsychoanalysis critique during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and their presence in this field cannot be ignored. In 1929, when Freud was considered for the Goethe Prize in Frankfurt, not only was Ludwig Klages a competing candidate for the prize, but a member of the Klages circle, the journalist Werner Deubel (1894-1949), was leading the rejection of Freud's candidacy. According to Kauders, "Werner Deubel, representative of the Frankfurt press association and student of Ludwig Klages, advanced a more fundamental critique. Freud's treatment of the unconscious was deficient, he opined, in that it resembled a 'rational darkness' in which humans existed under the same conditions as under reason itself."[51] Furthermore, before and after Freud's winning the Goethe Prize the following year, the leader of the anti-Freudian attack was Hans Prinzhorn. In his open critique of Freud during the midand late 1920s, including his "Krisis in der Psychoanalyse" (Crisis in psychoanalysis, 1928), "Prinzhorn rejected Freud's conception of the id as a 'rationalized system,' the nature of which was 'craftier' and 'more determined' than the goings-on in the brain of a shady lawyer."[52] Prinzhorn rejected psychoanalysis in favor of "life that confronts us in all of its animated varieties" and "the special 'power of life.'"[53] In the context of the late 1920s and early 1930s, indeed, the attack on Freud

approach Prinzhorn referred to—in contrast to Klages he did read well the phenomenologists of his time—resisted Huesserlian categorization, accusing him of being too logical and hence judgmental and unsuitable for therapy.

[50] C. G. Carus, *Vorlesungen uber Psychologie, gehalten im Winter 1829/1830 zu Dresden*, ed. and introduction by Edgar Michaelis (Leipzig: Torpfel Verlaf, 1931), p. xii.

[51] Anthony Kauders, "'Psychoanalysis Is Good, Synthesis Is Better': The German Reception of Freud, 1930 and 1956," in *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences* 47:4 (Fall 2011): 384.

[52] Ibid., p. 385.

[53] Ibid.

reflected a broad process in the making. As Kauders concludes, "[M]ore and more Germans turned away from liberalism and opted for the extreme left and right."[54]

The process also extended into unexpected territories, such as "a return to Wilhelm Dilthey as well as [to] the growth of characterology."[55] In his seminal work on the history of Gestalt psychology, Mitchell Ash describes it this way: "From outside the university came yet another challenge, from proponents of so-called 'scientific graphology' and 'characterology,' led by Ludwig Klages. With the help of handwriting analysis, Klages and his followers claimed to discover people's true inner lives behind their 'masks of courtesy.'"[56] As the historians of psychology demonstrate, anti-Freudian life philosophers remained loyal to a small set of key references, among them Dilthey, Nietzsche, and Bachofen, the latter a popular allusion during the 1920s, mostly due to Klages and his disciples.

Again we see here that Klages's psychology demonstrates *Lebensphilosophie*'s radical potential. A subversive intellectual path—one that was suppressed after 1945—was common in the work of radical conservatives and progressives before the rise of Nazism. Wilhelm Reich, an active communist, criticized Freudian psychoanalysis as insufficient when it comes to cultural and political phenomena. In contrast, his own research—heavily influenced by Bachofen and Klages—analyzed the present from the perspective of Eros (*The Function of the Orgasm*, 1927) and character analysis (Character analysis, 1933).[57] Both works criticized the German bias toward a patriarchic and authoritative figure, on the one hand, and the tradition stemming from Gustave Le Bon's *La psychologie des foules* (1895), on the other hand. In 1927 Reich wrote:

Since the emergence of patriarchy, the natural pleasure of work and activity has been replaced by compulsive duty. The average structure of masses of people has been transformed into a distorted structure marked by impotence and fear of life . . . [T]his distorted structure not only forms the psychological basis of authoritarian dictatorship, it enables these dictatorships to justify themselves by pointing to human attitudes such as irresponsibility and childishness.[58]

The two works prefigured Reich's more comprehensive integration of a Bachofenic theory in his *Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933). In this work Reich described those who were to succumb to the power of fascist patriarchalism, "from Social Democracy and the liberal center parties," to be, "without exception, revolutionary minded masses

[54] Ibid., p. 387.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture*, p. 290.

[57] The latter work was published the same year Reich published his *Psychology of Fascism*. The impact of Bachofen and Klages are apparent in both affirmative and critical terms, as contributing simultaneously to Reich's critique of Freud and his portrayal of fascism. See Wilhelm Reich, *Charakteranalyse: Technik und Grundlagen f u r studierende und praktizierende Analytiker* (Vienna: International Psychoanalytic University, 1933).

[58] Wilhelm Reich, *The Function of Orgasm: Sex-Economic Problems of Biological Energy*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p. 8.

who were either nonpolitical or politically undecided prior to this."[59] His analysis of this cultural revolution relied on the "sex economy" of fascist patriarchalism, but also emphasized how much Bachofen suits both the communist as well as the fascist thinkers:

Matriarchy, which is a historically demonstrated system, is not only in accord with the organization of natural work democracy, but also with the society organized on a natural, sex-economic basis. Patriarchy, on the other hand, not only has an authoritarian economy, its sexeconomic organization is catastrophic . . . It was for this reason that Bachofen's findings threatened to make hay of tradition.[60]

It is curious that Reich advanced his argument via a comparison between Nazi ideology and Bachofen's matriarchy, commenting about the reactionary philosopher of life, Alfred Rosenberg, and his "ethnology" that "favor[ed] the patriarchal theory" against matriarchy. Reich put it succinctly:

Patriarchy . . . has not only an authoritarian economic organization, but also a catastrophically chaotic sex-economic organization. The church—far beyond the period of monopolization of science— continued to keep alive the metaphysical thesis of the "ethical nature of man," his inherent monogamy, etc. For this reason, Bachofen's findings threatened to turn everything upside down. The amazing thing about the sexual organization of matriarchy was not its completely different blood relationships but its natural selfregulation of sexual life. Its real basis was the absence of private ownership of the social means of production, as shown by Morgan and Engels. Rosenberg, as a fascist ideologist, must deny the historical fact of the origin of ancient Greek culture in matriarchal forms of culture . . . Fascist ideology (in contrast to Christian ideology) separates human orgastic longing from the structure created by the authoritarian patriarchy and assigns it to various races.[61]

Wilhelm Reich was not the only popular name among those critics of Freudian psychoanalysis who adopted Bachofen as their guide. In fact, the impact of Bachofen's critique—as mediated by Klages—was so strong that one finds it decades later in Erich Fromm's *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis* that dismisses Freud's neurotic ego when arguing that old libido psychology should be replaced by the rebellious, romantic psychology of Bachofen. Fromm wonders what gives Bachofen's psychology its overarching and transpolitical power and answers by relating the Bachofenic matriarchy—implying also his critique of phallocentrism—to a universal biological fact, while applying patriarchy to the limited institutional interest or an individual self. In Bachofen's words, "Maternity pertains to the physical side of man, the only thing he shares with the animals; the paternal-spiritual principle belongs to him alone."[62] Moreover, it is the "maternity that links humanity to nature, the cosmos, and it is maternity that truly

[59] Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), p. 99.

[60] Ibid., pp. 86-87.

[61] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[62] Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, pp. 109-110. Quoted in Erich Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Holt, 1970), p. 88.

strives for justice on the basis of equality."[63] Bachofen proved open to a whole new spectrum of interpretation. Klages, Fromm shows, chose to see Bachofen from the perspective of antirationality and anti-intellectuality, playing down Bachofen's protestant belief and emphasizing his resistance to idealism.[64] Alfred Baeumler, in contrast, saw in Bachofen only the patriotic perspective. Fromm rejects both of their views and instead, like Walter Benjamin, adopts Engels's view, which sees Bachofen as a critic of the patriarchic centralized institution. Bachofen's idea of maternity, Fromm writes, "brings to light psychic structures that are wholly different from those observed in our society; at the same time it throws new light on the 'patricentric' principle."[65]

Fromm and Reich were not alone in turning elements of Bachofen's matriarchalism against established culture. In the following pages I discuss in detail Walter Benjamin's close reading of Klages as well as their correspondence, and I point at Emil Utitz and Salomon Friedrich

Rothschild's further development of Klagesian Jewish characterology.[66] But before I explore the shocking reception of Klages's characterology, I explore its general background and context and how it developed into two opposite yet concurrent paths.

2. The type

Richard T. Gray's recent history of physiognomy supplies a clear and illustrative history of the roots of *Charakterologie* or anti-Freudian psychology and its ties to modern race theory.[67] After acknowledging Johann Kaspar Lavater's major role in physiognomy and "his most prominent nineteenth-century German successor, the naturalist and psychologist Carl Gustav Carus,"[68] Gray describes the two anti-idealists as the principal inspiration for the twentieth-century "marriage of physiognomics and German *Lebensphilosophie*" that he identifies as "pre-fascist, often proto-fascist."[69] During the early 1900s, writes Gray, Lavater and Carus represented a late-romantic, post-Nietzschean form of psychology, and during the 1920s they became the principal enemies of psychoanalysis. As Anthony Kauders puts it, from the perspective of Freudian psychology, "In theory, the response to psychoanalysis could have reflected the double nature of

[63] Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, p. 91.

[64] Ibid., p. 94.

[65] Ibid., p. 101.

[66] I explore the history of E.Utitz and S.F.Rothschild in a chapter about "The German-Jewish School of Biopolitics," in *Das Leben von Tode her,* eds. Katrin Solhdju and Ulrike Vedder (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2014).

[67] Richard T. Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

[68] Ibid., p. 101.

[69] Ibid., pp. 175, 178. Despite attacking Klages and the race theorist Hans Gunther directly, Gray is careful not to follow the "irrational" reductive theory, and he shows the complexity and critical roots of both physiognomy and *Lebensphilosophie*

Freud's theory. For those who assaulted the 'rationalist spirit' could have embraced the psychoanalytic 'discovery' of the unconscious. And those who repudiated the many manifestations of *Lebensphilosophie* could have appealed to the enlightened nature of Freud's project."[70]

Klages's *Prinzipien der Charakterologie* (*Principles of characterology*), first published in 1910 but better known during the 1920s, serves here as a case study. As Gray points out,

[A]fter providing a long explanation as to why the "meaning" of psychology lies in "viewing the phenomenon *symbolically*," Klages claims: "with this turn [that is, to the symbolism] we return once more to the importance for psychology of the visual point of departure. As defined here, psychology is understood primarily as morphology, a theory about the form of the psychic 'organization.'"[71]

The advantage of historicizing such seemingly marginal preracial theories is that it allows one to differentiate much more accurately between the subdisciplines and their ties to a certain weltanschauung. "Psychology in Klages's sense subsumes characterology, graphology, and the science of expression as distinct subdisciplines," and in its broader conception it is understood as "semiotics of the physical world," which point at the "body as communicative medium of the soul"[72] and the structural principle of the individual as a "*Leitbild*, his or her exemplary or guiding image."[73] Gray is correct in his observation concerning the mediality of the body in Klages's theory, but wrong when he understands this medium in structural terms. Gray defines the type (*Typus*) in Klages's *Lebensphilosophie* as a deduced rule: "[The type that is] governing this structural transformation determines what is 'characteristic.'"[74] But Klages used the type on an analogical basis, as an *Urbild* (ur-image) that marked a convergence between the primordial and the recent and that was reproduced within any structure. Hence, it was altering the form from the inside and not forced from the top. The *Typus* was marking a threshold between suppressed recollections in the unconscious (the primordial Eros, for example, was suppressed by the later Logos) and their unacknowledged impact on one's face, body, and living instinct, at any given moment. The typical meets the individual at those sites of struggle with, or acceptance of, such primordial forces. It does not govern more than it is governed itself. There is no linear relation, no realization, here. Klages's psychology was an explicit attack on Freud, but it was also an attack on the Kantian metaphysics he thought he identified behind it.

[70] Anthony D. Kauders, "The Mind of a Rationalist: German Reactions to Psychoanalysis in the Weimar Republic and Beyond," in *History of Psychology* 8:3 (2005): 256.

[71] Klages, *Prinzipien der Charakterologie*; quoted and translated in Gray, *About Face* , p. 158.

[72] Gray, *About Face* , p. 159.

[73] Ibid., p. 160.

[74] Ibid., p. 161.

3. Principles of characterology

When Klages started working on characterology in the early 1910s, very few theories had been developed in this field. But in the mid1920s, when Klages was at the peak of his fame, his characterology was considered a principal inspiration to different schools, among them Gestalt psychology.[75] By the end of the decade, the number of publications about those new sciences had multiplied by the thousands, and their authors seemed to offer the most innovative and radical voices in psychology and psychiatry. As Kurt Danziger shows, during the 1910s and 1920s the ratio of published group psychology works to individual psychology works was 2:1, the majority of such essays grounded in a typology of one sort or another. The percentage was even higher in the United States, where group psychology was occupying about 80 percent of the professional publications.[76] The uniqueness of the German work in group psychology, however, was its often-mentioned relation to *Lebensphilosophie*. As many psychological and psychiatric publications of the 1930s illustrate, Klages's psychology of life was essential for the depth psychology of the time, for the different typological classifications of groups, and for a general attempt to relate individual psychology to human drives, instincts, and the fascist cult of death.

The close contact between life and death stood at the heart of Klages's psychology. The way an individual or a group treated the life-death axis formed its whole sense of living, character, and expression. What is the relationship all about? Klages's characterology demonstrates how the community, especially a myth-oriented one, allows one to overcome the regular boundaries between life and death. According to Klages, death is not the end point, nor a solution to the riddle of life, but a constant point of reference, like heart beats or the short intervals between them, the presence of absence in one's life, a true universal language. "Bachofen discovered," he wrote, "[that t]he rebirth of the life of the gods is created when one god sacrifices another. Immortality, which the Pelasgians believed in, makes death the condition of life. It renews the essence. Every appearance is the rejuvenated image of something past, that is to say, life circles back into itself. Immortality, as the Pelasgian people believe."[77] Klages,

[75] Ash, *Gestalt Psychology*, pp. 12, 300.

[76] Danziger, "Social Context and Investigative Practice," p. 25.

[77] "[W]ird ein Gott dem Gotte geopfert-, ist die Ursache der Erneuerung des Lebens der Gotter. Die 'Unsterblichkeit', [an] die der Pelasger glaubt, macht den tod zur Bedingung des Lebens. Alles kommende ist in verjungter Erscheinung ein Vergangenes oder: das Leben kreist in sich selbst zuruck." Ludwig Klages, "Bachofen als Erneuer des symbolischen Denkens," in *Corolla Ludwig Curtius; zum zechzigsten Geburtstag Dagebracht* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1937), pp. 178-179. Pelasgian was the name applied by ancient Greek writers to groups of people who preceded the Hellenes and dwelt in several Greek, Anatolian, and Aegean locations as neighbors of the Hellenes. Pelasgian has since come to be used indiscriminately by scholars to indicate all the autochthonous inhabitants of these lands before the arrival of the Greeks, and in recent times it is even being applied to the indigenous, pre-Indo-European peoples of the Caucasus and Asia Minor as well. This information is taken from http:// encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Pelasgian (accessed June 14, 2012). Klages learned about

then, drew a line that links his ontology of images with prehistory on one end of the line and to modern collective memory on the other; he also linked Bachofen to himself, as the two philosophers of this ontological temporality.

This, Klages argued, is the time of life (*Lebenszeit*), which he tied to the shape and roots of a community. If life is always the wholeness (*Ganzheit*) of movement, time here is the movement of movement, the thinking of thinking, illustrated by its never-endingness that represents the *aporia* of life. *Lebensphilosophie* does not try to resolve this aporia, but to describe it, classify it according to types, and possibly to radicalize it from the perspective of the group. This attempt is the reason for the totalizing of experience: life as a whole must reach for the extreme to understand its limits and to transcend them. Life, much like an identity, must be there in order to be transcended.

Let me unpack this internal paradox a little. When Klages thought about typical personal characteristics, it was always with those ideas of radicalization of emotion: "*Rage* is directed toward annihilation; *stupor* toward orientation; *inclination* toward unity; *happiness* toward delight; *fear* toward fleeing."[78] The end point is a total experience (*Erlebnis*) and an ability to grasp a certain wholeness. The path leads back to the inside, rather than to a realization or activation in the world, which is how a neo-Kantian sees it. Where these emotions meet reality is almost of no interest to characterologists, unless the outside changes the inner structure and experience of the individual. The reason, Klages claimed, is that the drives could be seen only in space or in movement, "by their orientation [*Richtung*] . . . toward their designed aim."[79] Yet the very existence of a plan does not mean a necessity or a teleological course. The question of fulfillment or lack of it is, as he noted, more important as an indication to the process of signification and the particular emotion behind it.[80]

From a psychological perspective, a character is to be deciphered by the traces it leaves behind or by the absence of traces, not its archive of successes and failures, which would presume life as an evolutionary course, which he accused psychoanalysis of adapting to.[81] The classification of such facial traces starts from the type—a communal shared form of expression—and only then dives deeper into the individual expression as a necessary variation on a basic theme or line.

Since the early and mid-1920s, politics enters exactly here, where Klages started to identify evolution with progress, and both with the resistance to the soul and to life: "The idea of development [*Entwicklung*]," he wrote, "can be broken down into laws without a remainder."[82] In a dramatic stroke Klages linked science, politics, and

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the Pelasgians from Bachofen's research and used them as a code name for all primordial and magical beings.

[78] Ludwig Klages, *Personlichkeit, Einfuhrung in die Charakterkunde* (Potsdam: Muller and Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1928), p. 45 (emphasis in the original).

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., p. 40.

[81] Ibid., p. 31.

[82] "Nur noch naherungswiese und nie ohne Rest in Gesetze aufteilbar ist." Ibid., p. 20.

psychology into one idea: "The science of the character," he wrote, "means the characters of organic *Einzelwesen*, which one calls 'individuals' [*Individuen*], to use a foreign word. *Individuum* comes from *in-* 'un' and *dividuum* 'divisible,' and literally means 'indivisible' (*das Unteilbare* or in Greek *a tomon*). This presents a close look into the language."[83] Through this etymological exercise, Klages demonstrated that the role of the characterologist is to restructure the whole relationship between the individual and the group, space and time, inner and outer reality. Hence, in contrast to how characterology is usually described, the purpose of the 1920s characterology was a revolutionary one in every possible way.[84]

Central to characterology was the stability of identity, which Klages never questioned. Yet the characterological understanding of *i dentity* lacks a normal mediation of consciousness. Rather, it is grounded in a transhistorical set of aesthetic categories based on nature itself. "[J]ust as nature manifests opposites and polarities as expressions of identity, and just as the real and the ideal are merged in the Absolute," wrote Klages, "so the organism contains the two polar principles of gravity and light (substance and movement), . . . which would yield total identity, where all differences would be obliterated."[85] In the mid1920s Klages abandoned the more specific empirical texts of the 1910s and explored their philosophical implications. Then already famous in Germany for his role in graphology, Klages continued to use his research in graphology to elaborate a theory of signs and aesthetics, which he was constructing on a literal-phenomenological understanding of the cosmos. "The first appearance of a sign," he wrote, "is the appearance of a human face [i.e., the mother's, above the baby's eyes]."[86] This is where the baby learns his first conditions of character, based often on forms of resistance and affiliating an individual microcosm with external conditions perceived as a cosmic potential.[87] This is also where humanity learns intuitively the physiognomical types and expressions of feelings. The baby knows how to identify anger and fear way before he or she knows what they mean, so no interpretative agency is needed. Physiognomy, like our personality, is an intuitive practice. Following Bachofen and Nietzsche, Klages tried to find a hermeneutic retreat to the primal form—the child and the mother for every individual, the myth and collective symbols for the group, what

[83] "Mit einer 'Wissenschaft von den Charakteren' die Charaktere organischer Einzelwesen meinen, die man fremdwortlich 'Individuen' nennt. Individuum kommt von in= un und dividuum= Teilbares, wurde also in wortlicher Ubertragung 'das Unteilbare' bedeuten (im Griechischen: Atomon). Darin liegt ein Tiefblick der Sprache." Ibid., p. 13.

[84] The opposite understanding of characterology can be detected in contemporary cognitive psychology, which observes qualities, types, and traits on *the basis of empirical, individual, decontextualized, and antitheoretical set of categories. For a comprehensive introduction to the different approaches to characterology during the early 1900s, see Abraham Aaron Roback, The Psychology of Character (1927; reprint, London: Routledge, 2001).*

[85] Klages, *Personlichkeit.* p. 63.

[86] Ludwig Klages, *Grundlage der Wissenschaft vom Ausdruck* (1913; reprint, Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1942), p. 85.

[87] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

Jung would later call the archetypes. When Klages compares those ur-images to the "sick" intellectual forms—Jewish, Christian, often homosexual—he always links them to an unstable notion of identity and an image of identity: "The hysterical type"—his code name for the "sick" intellectual forms mentioned above—"means the instability of instinctive life [*Triebsleben*] . . . [Its] image has no power, no rhythm, and no center."[88]

It is no wonder that Klages's psychology appealed to fascists. The central organ of Nazi psychology, the *Zeitschrift fur angewandte Psychologie,* quoted Klages and relied on Klagesian typology as one of its canonical references. As I will show in chapter 6, during the late 1930s Klages and his school actively helped the Nazi regime in different ways, mostly based on his graphological and characterological research. For our purpose, in this chapter, it is essential to see not only where this discourse ended, but also where it began.

4. The dreams of an anti-Kantian: Ernst Platner

The characterological discourse belongs to the 1920s' impractical and antiKantian philosophy, wearing—within the limits of the psychological field—the robe of anti-Freudianism. "[S]ince Kant no small credit was taken for a renunciation of metaphysical desires," wrote Klages. The object of modern psychology and psychoanalysis "is not man, but rational man, i.e., a being which can think logically and act in a utilitarian way. The mainspring of its investigation is not an interest in life . . . but in the capacity for thinking and willing, which is that of logic."[89] Klages's characterology strove to renew a state of juvenile experience, total and timeless, or a dreamy state of hallucination. For that purpose, it regressed all the way back to the late 1800s and the beginning of romantic psychology.

In his biography of Klages, Hans Eggert Schroder claimed to have asked his master about the origins of his *Traumbewusstsein* (dream consciousness). In response, recalled Schroder, Klages named as his inspiration the book Emil Platner published in 1796, entitled *Philosophische Aphorismen.*[90] This was certainly a mistake, though a forgivable one; Klages must have meant the book with the same title that *Ernst* Platner published three years earlier. Platner was one of the founders of a popular, romantic strand of *Lebensphilosophie*, a critic of Kant, and the father of "pragmatic history."

The first wave of resistance to Kant's philosophy took place during the early 1790s. Johan van der Zande has said of these writers that they were "bad Kantians" but

[88] Ludwig Klages, *Die Probleme der Graphologie, Entwurf einer Psychodiagnostik* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1910), pp. 78-79.

[89] Ludwig Klages, *The Science of Character*, trans. W. H. Johnston (Cambridge, Mass.: Sci-Art Publishers, 1932), p. 30.

[90] Hans Eggert Schroder, *Ludwig Klages: Die Geschichte seines Lebens*, vol. 2: *Das Werk* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1972), p. 726.

not necessarily "bad popular philosophers."[91] Popular philosophers relied heavily on rhetoric and on the Socratic dialogue, rather than the scholarly philosophical jargon that was Kant's bread and butter. According to van der Zande, the founder of this amorphous movement, Johann August Ernesti, demanded in 1754 the return of *Lebensphilosophie* to the universities and specifically the philosophy faculties. Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1740-1821) established an even closer connection between the "philosophy of life" and a "philosophy of action" in 1782. Founded as "a protest in the name of 'life'" against modern science and universalism, this philosophy of life assigned to the "science of man" the ability to explain the other empirical sciences.[92]

Platner's 1793 *Philosophical Aphorisms* was an enthusiastic response to Ernesti (Platner's foster-father), a plea for the use of language and its tools of representation for functions other than functionalist communication. This idea was grounded in "a strong belief in the correspondence between words (*verba*), and subject matter (*res*), and both in relationship to the audience."[93] Platner saw language not as Western philosophers had since Plato and Aristotle—namely, as a higher phenomenon, abstract and conceptual—but as something embedded in both everydayness and the history of human communities, not functionalist but still universal. There was nothing *a priori* in language, nor was it reserved for the realm of enlightened philosophizing. Platner found Kant's abstract discourse unapproachable: "In the beginning, philosophizing only about philosophy: that marks the end of all selfsatisfied thought [*Selbstgenugsamkeit*]."[94] Like Ernesti, Platner wanted to simplify the aims of philosophy; he thought Kant's ideas ought to be rendered more approachable, less encumbered by a specialized lexicon and more relevant to the mundane world.

At the center of his philosophical enterprise, Platner placed the key concept of representation, which he called "pragmatic" and "realistic." But since Platner's pragmatic realm included visions, the facts of the soul, it did not strictly correspond to the world as it is empirically described. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who had likely been a student of Platner in Leipzig, explored this gap, in his *Lectures on Logic and Metaphysics* (1794-1802; supplemented in 1812), which amounted to a devastating critique of Platner's opposition to Kant. Fichte's idealist adumbration of the "I" that constructs others as the "not I" eventually became, as shown in the following pages, one of Klages's targets. The pragmatists' idea that the self came into existence through a series of reactions

[91] Johann van der Zande, "In the Image of Cicero: German Philosophy between Wolff and Kant," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56:3 (July 1995): 420.

[92] Ibid., p. 430.

[93] Ibid., p. 432.

[94] "Man philosophiere nur furs erste uber die Philosophie selbst: das macht aller Selbstgenugsamkeit im Denken ein Ende." Ernst Platner, *Philosophische Aphorismen, Nebst einigen Anleitungen zur philosophiscen Geschichte*, in Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Supplement zu Nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1977), p. 1.

against others caused an academic uproar and convinced Fichte to shift to "genetic description," a more linguistically grounded approach later exploited by Husserl.[95]

Although Kant exerted a tremendous influence on Fichte and the phenomenologists of the 1920s, Platner came from the opposite direction. His theory of psychology was grounded in the tradition identified with the Leipzig school, which included such names as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), Christian Wolff (1679-1754), and, later, Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), the father of modern German folk psychology who was often referred to as the German William James. Later affiliates with this school of thought include Hans Driesch, the father of biological philosophy, during the 1910s and 1920s. Kant viewed humans from an ethical and rational perspective—all humans were free agents, judging and deciding for themselves—yet Platner's aphorisms described humans as composed of a given and a reaction, and human actions were seen in terms of their relation to their environment or surroundings (*Umwelt*), a concept that would be revived by vitalist biology during the early 1920s. Platner was among the first writers to assign a specific consciousness to the dream state, a fundamentally different idea from the Cartesian view of dreaming as beyond the philosophical boundary of reality. "Without this constant contribution of thought, and through the lone influence of those laws," wrote Platner, "the soul would contribute nothing to the thought process; it would be an afflicted spectator of the game of the imagination and the succession of images awakened therein. This is really what happens in dreams and in related states; it is also [what happens] in young children and quite likely in animals."[96]

Unlike Kant, Platner defined time as "the art of presentation, according to which things appear [*erscheinen*] and are considered as being[s] [*sayend*] that exist at the same moment. As long as time is the basic concept, an attribute of all meaningful presentation, . . . it does not permit anything to be categorized as outside of experience [*Erfahrung*]."[97] If Kant saw *Erfahrung* as complete unto itself, for Platner it was but one reflection of reality. In her research of the origins of popular *Lebensphilosophie* at the end of the eighteenth century, Gudrun KuhneBertram demonstrates that Platner was only a representative of a much

larger movement of a "*Biosophie*," (biophilosophy) that identified the resistance to Kantianism and "scholasticism" or "schooled philosophy" [*Schulphilosophie*] with immediacy, "the results of experience," and the " *Urbild* of humanity."[98]

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[95] Ibid., p. 696. See also Hans Blumenberg's brilliant analysis of Husserl's 1924 lectures, in his *Lebenszeit und Weltzeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), pp. 9-68.

[96] "Ohne diese unablassige Mitwirkung der Denkkraft, und durch den alleinigen Einfluss jener Gesetze... ware die Seele bey dem Gedankenlaufe nichts, als eine leidende Zuschaeurin des Spiels der Phantasie, und der darinnen nach einander verwecken Gedankenbilder. Dies ist wirkliche der Fall im Traume, und in den damit verwandten Zustanden; auch bey jungen Kindern-vermutlich auch bey den Thieren." Platner quoted in Fichte, *Supplement zu Nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 4, p. 80.

[97] Ibid., p. 226.

[98] Gudrun Kuhne-Bertram, *Aus dem Lebenzum Leben: Entstehung, Wesen und Bedeutung populiir Lebensphilosophie in der Geistesgeschichte des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Lang Verlag, 1987), pp. 79-88.

5. Dream time

A short while after finishing his *Prinzipien der Charakterologie*, Klages moved to an explicit discussion of the philosophy behind it. The concept of *Rausch* (ecstasy, intoxication) is a good example for the inherent ties that unite *Lebensphilosophie* and *Charakterologie*; it appears first in a section of *Von Traumbewusstsein* (On dream consciousness),[99] the theory of dreams that occupied him for much of 1914. In response to both Freud's detective work and the Nietzschean *Ubermensch* (superman), Klages blurred the boundaries between dreams and reality and explained how dreams served as the total expression of emotions and sensations of the world. Dreams have an alternative and primordial sense of reality that rational people have lost. The only lived experience of this primordial notion of time is in either *Rausch* or the timeless state of the child. In a long digression on William James, the father of American pragmatism, Klages praised James's insights into childhood intuition as the ideal type of understanding.[100] Childhood, which lacks an exact notion of time and space, was for Klages the absolute "dream time," a time of total repetition and the possibility of true ecstasy.

Without a clear notion of a beginning or an end, dreaming is the result of a multiplicity and simultaneity of worlds. It cannot be intellectually understood and must be experienced. If it sounds all too vague, one has only to recall the language of rave culture and dance clubs since the early 1990s.[101]

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[99] Originallypublished intwoparts: LudwigKlages,"VomTraumbewusstsein, Teil 1," *ZeitschriftfurPsychologie* 111:1 (1914); and "Vom Traumbewusstsein, Teil 2," *Zeitschrift fir Pathopsychologie* 3:4 (1919). Republished as *Vom Traumbewusstsein* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engeimann, 1919) and later collected in *Vom Traumbewusstsein*, *Ein fragment* (Hamburg: Paul Hartung, 1952). Quotations are from the Paul Hartung edition.

[100] Klages, *Vom Traumbewusstsein*, p. 379.

[101] Simon Reynolds described the rebellious potential of the "rave culture" which includes a surprising number of elements from life philosophy and its later new age appropriations, such as the "gaia culture," the "generation ecstasy," the use of drugs in order to sharpen "prehallucinogenic feel," or "the removal of inhibitions," a "tension in rave culture between consciousness raising and consciousness razing, between middle-class technopagans . . . and weekenders." Reynolds goes back to the anarchist scene of the 1980s, and especially John Moore's "brilliant" 1988 monograph *Anarchy and Ecstasy: Visions of Halycon Days*, "which reads like a prophecy and program for rave culture. Crucial preparations for the mystery rites include fasting and sleep deprivation, in order to break down 'inner resistances' and facilitate possession by the 'sacred wilderness,' . . . 'mandalas and visual images.'" The experience includes "the becoming of androgynous, total saturation," where "individuals transcend their ego boundaries and their mortality in successive waves of ecstasy," and "a politics that doesn't look like politics." This rebellious language, focused on the individual as a particular element within a cosmic surrounding, has to do with the relation to a small community of experience, and to the "neopagan" and "organic" culture. For a summary see Simon Reynolds, *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 83-86, 237-248. The excerpts were collected in *Cultural Resistance: Reader*, ed. Stephen Duncombe (London: Verso Books, 2002), pp. 118-131. John Moore, the philosophical inspiration of "rave culture," identified his own sources in Nietzsche's *Lebensphilosophie*, pointing out the close relationship between ecstatic forms of left-wing anarchism and right-wing new-age conservatism. As Andrew Koch explained in a book edited by Moore: "With every structure open to Dionysian deconstruction, the

In *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* John McCole explains Klages's—and Benjamin's following him—interest in dream consciousness in the following way.

To begin with, dream consciousness lifts the separation between the subject and object of perception, between the ego and things. The fleetingness of appearances in dream moods corresponds to a "restless mutability of all images" in dreams themselves. Dream reality has a "protean character" similar to the "mythic art of metamorphosis" in which figures flow and blend into one another . . . As the barriers between subject and object go down, the separation between "here" and "there" in space loses its force along with the distance between "now" and "then" in time. What replaces them is a "perpetual present with a boundlessly mobile now-point" and a "boundlessly mobile here."[102]

According to McCole's acclaimed work, Benjamin's fascination with Klages was kindled by this theory of dream consciousness and *Rausch*, and it stands behind much of Benjamin's career, from his dissertation to the works of the early 1920s, the essay on surrealism in 1929—"Benjamin's reckoning [has] been directed at a figure behind Aragon . . . [T]hat figure was Ludwig Klages"[103]—and up to his preparation for the writing of the Arcades, his last unfinished piece, reviving itself the earlier critique from 1929 and the accusation that the surrealists "harbored an inadequate notion of the nature of intoxication."[104] What made this work so powerful for Walter Benjamin?

The construction of dreams, Klages explained in 1914, is utterly divorced from conscious mental operations. Rather, it is a byproduct of the bodily tasks that reflect the functioning of the universe itself and a sense of primordial time that knew no differences, or *things*, and was characterized by constant movement and the fluid world of dreams. He wrote, "We meet at this point all the great mythologies, which are infatuated with the indecisive, the fantastic, and the demonic."[105] One wonders if, by including the indecisive, Klages was trying to emphasize the open hermeneutical potential of the body.

Part 2 of *Von Traumbewusstsein*, published in 1919, was a further elaboration of the arguments presented in Part 1 but focusing more on the emotional effects of dreams. Taken as a whole, the essay is an apology for extending the boundaries of consciousness

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essentially anarchistic nature of life is revealed. Nietzsche does not perceive this in negative terms, but as opening up the possibilities for human achievement. The human task is to interpret, to live and reflect life in creative achievements. It is the anarchistic nature of the world that makes this both possible and necessary . . . [T]o put it simply, there can be no moral or ethical grounds for obedience." Andrew M. Koch, "Dionysian Politics: The Anarchistic Implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's Critique of Western Epistemology," in *I Am Not a Man, I Am Dynamite!: Friedrich Nietzsche and the Anarchist Tradition*, ed. John Moore (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2004), p. 60.

[102] John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 237-238.

[103] Ibid., p. 236.

[104] Ibid., p. 235.

[105] Klages, *Vom Traumbewusstsein*, p. 16.

to accommodate the realm of dreams, a strong challenge to Kant (and Freud following him).

Klages's text implied a long philosophical tradition even as it reframed that tradition in a new and radical way, as a counternarrative to traditional romanticism. When *Von Traumbewusstsein* appeared in a special edition in 1952, Klages wrote an introduction in which he announced—in his typically pompous way—that the essay "summarizes no less than two thousand years of the philosophy of dreams."[106]

The dream is the rearrangement of the occurrence and its symbols, but now in an unconventional sequence of images, something quite different from the linearity of Freudian structures. Klages developed at this point a theory of phantasmagoria: "The boldest phantasms of the dream, so we are told, are separated into image elements [*Bildelemente*]."[107] Images, unlike narratives, cannot be completely explained and deciphered, nor forced into a historical narrative of explanation. Rather, it is the image that shapes history retroactively. This argument is why Klages started to emphasize the "reality of images" above all other perceptions of reality; the image became the basic ontological unit. The ancient power of ur-images, or of dreams, makes itself apparent in conscious reality through poetry and artistic creation: "[Art is made] not from actual experience [*Erfahrung*] . . . but from [the reflection of] ancient forms."[108] After a general discussion of the nature of dreams, Klages inspected a series of passages from Gottfried Keller's *Green Heinrich*, a lateromantic novel that had long fascinated him (see chapter 2). This novel, he argued, was the best example of an artistic form that operated as "the annihilator of time" (*Vernichtiger der Zeit*) in its linear formulations, and that preserved "the stream of time" (*Verfluss der Zeit*) in its multidirectionality.[109] This idea is the heart of Klages's essay and the center of his phantasmagorial method of the *reality of images.*

Indeed, such ideas can be found in any of Benjamin's texts. One finds a surprisingly close reading of images as the raw material of experience and history in Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Concept of History* (1940): "'The truth will not run away from us': this statement by Gottfried Keller indicates exactly that point in historicism's image of history where the image is pierced by historical materialism. For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image."[110]

The creative power of images led Klages to a new formulation of the phantasm experienced in dreaming, a central concept for his essay and later for Walter Ben-

[106] Klages, "Preface" to *Vom Traumbewusstsein*, no page number indicated.
[107] Klages, *Vom Traumbewusstsein*, p. 9.
[108] Ibid., p. 10.
[109] Ibid., pp. 31-32.
[110] Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," *Selected Writings 4: 19381940*, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 391.

jamin's writings.[111] As Michael Jennings reminds us, "the notion of phantasmagoria is tied to notions of elective psychology, a position Benjamin increasingly came to associate with protofascist writers such as Ludwig Klages and Carl Jung."[112] Werner Fuld drives the point home with his estimation that "[w]hat Benjamin liked in [Klages's] cosmological Eros [and the dream work which Fuld did not know about] was the rejection of Freud's theory; in a seminar in the winter semester of 1917-18, he criticized Freud using harsh words."[113] Klages's work enabled Benjamin to position images as a counterforce to events and continuity of idealist historicism. Benjamin's theory of phantasmagoria, Margaret Cohen shows, owed to his understanding of dreams, which she affiliates, wrongly, with Freud. According to Cohen, "one plausible etymology for phantasmagoria is *phantasma agoreuein*, the ghosts of the public place or marketplace."[114] Benjamin's historian, she contends, is a collector of images, mostly organized around social types, who works "as dialectical materialist, as Surrealist rag-picker, as Freudian dream interpreter . . . [T]hese images or phantasmagoria were not associated with a particular genre, media, or practice but rather scattered throughout what we have seen Benjamin call a 'thousand configurations of life.'"[115]

In accordance with Benjamin's stress on the phantasmagoric spectral quality of "an integral part of the dialectical image through which the past manifests itself in the present,"[116] Klages's 1952 preface to *Vom Traumbewusstsein*, explained: "My description shows that the dream space [*Traumraum*] diverges from the waking space [*Wachraum*], and dream time [*Traumzeit*] from the waking time [*Wachzeit*]: dream space and dream time develop and ground the different cognitive signs [*Kennzeichen*]. Only once this assumption has been made can one truly understand the meaning of the dream."[117] Plagued by insomnia for much of his life, Klages was referring here to what was for him a nightly situation. His own dream time tended to be quite brief, as mentioned in chapter 1. Could his interest in *Rausch* have been the result of sleep

[111] One can only agree with John McCole's comment that "Benjamin never resolved the conflict between his conception of a dreaming or oppressed collectivity as the true subject of history and his rejection of the category of subjectivity as such . . . [T]he critique of Jung and Klages he planned, but unfortunately never pursued, would have helped clarify his position." McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition*, p. 294.

[112] Michael Jennings, "On the Banks of a New Lethe: Commodification and Experience in Benjamin's Baudelaire Book," Boundary 2 30:1 (2003): 96.

[113] *Werner Fuld, "Walter Benjamins Beziehung zu Ludwig Klages," in Akzente, Zeitschrift fiirLieteratur* 28:3 (June 1981): 277.

[114] Margaret Cohen contrasts the phantasmagoria with the allegory—which "derives from *allos agoreuein*, to speak other than in the public place or marketplace." Margaret Cohen, "Benjamin's Phantasmagoria: *The Arcades Project*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 209.

[115] Ibid., p. 211.

[116] Svetlana Boym, *Another Freedom: The Alternative History of an Idea* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010), p. 24.

[117] Ludwig Klages, "Preface" to *Vom Traumbewusstsein*, no page number indicated.

deprivation, a physical phenomenon? Whatever the physical explanation, Klages made it a weltanschauung and a theory.

6. Walter Benjamin's reading in Traumbewusstsein

Psychoanalysis, as a reductive process, stood in sorry contrast to the creative power of *Rausch* and *Erlebnis* (ecstasy and living experience), especially because of the Freudian "unfortunate title of the Oedipus complex."[118] This idea appealed to revolutionary thinkers like Benjamin.[119] For him, Klages's theories were another window opened onto the "primal past." "In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor," he wrote, "the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history [*Urgeschichte*]—that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society—as stored in the unconscious of the collective—engenders, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopian that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions."[120] There is little doubt that Benjamin first encountered the concepts of *Rausch* and nonlinear dream images, both vital to his phantasmagoria, in *V on Traumbewusstsein*. He obviously took a particular interest in the essay, since he wrote to Klages late in 1920 to inquire about the promised second part.[121] Klages's reply, unpublished until now, harks back to their first meeting in 1914. In his reply Klages not only offered Benjamin the reading he was inquiring about and other references, he also indirectly suggested a meeting in Berlin later that year.[122] There is no evidence that the two men met at that time, but the correspon-

[118] Klages to Prinzhorn, January 3, 1928, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.6585, letter no. 1.

[119] See Fuld, "Walter Benjamins Beziehung zu Ludwig Klages," p. 77: "What Benjamin liked in the cosmogenic Eros was the rejection of Freud's theory, which in the winter semester of 1917-1918 he took as a side interest for his promotion. In the seminar he gave a highly negative evaluation as a presentation."

[120] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, The Capital of the Nineteenth Century, Expose of 1935," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 5.

[121] Walter Benjamin to Ludwig Klages, December 10, 1920, in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, vol. 2, eds. Christoph Godde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995), p. 115.

[122] "Dear respected doctor, . . . My work on dream consciousness has been interrupted for three years because of the war. Unfortunately, the war has made my life so thorny that I have not been able to finish it. I am afraid it will be left in the form of a torso . . . You end your letter by expressing interest in my work [as a whole], which has convinced me to recommend to you the following works: a book entitled *Vom Wesen des Bewusstsein* (1921), which covers the basic psychology employed in all my research; you will also be able to find both "Bewusstsein und Erlebnis," which was published years ago in *Deutsche Psychologie*, and a section of the stillunpublished book *Geist und Seele.* This last work I consider the most important development of studies of dream consciousness. Finally, I should mention the two essays published as part of my collection *Mensch und Erde* . . . I should mention that I plan to visit Berlin for two weeks at the end of March and the beginning of April to deliver a lecture. Until our next communication, to which I look forward, I remain, yours, Ludwig Klages"; see Klages to Benjamin, December 20, 1920, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.4074.

dence continued. Not many Benjamin experts have paid attention to this extraordinary connection that lasted for almost 20 years and contributed a great deal to Benjamin's vocabulary if not his analysis.[123] John McCole, one of the few who placed this relationship at the heart of Benjamin's theory of dreams, images, and history, explained it in Benjamin's "pains to delineate romantic doctrines against organicism, subjectivism, and charismatic genius—in short against all attempts to place the romantics' tradition at the service of vitalism and *L ebensphilosophie*."[124]

One wonders what could have united an apolitical, conservative, romantic autodidact with an urban sophisticate highly alert to politics and culture. Most obviously, the two shared a deep aversion to norms and easy solutions. Both chose to supercede norms and limitations by a fusion of the categories and a dream-like logic that psychoanalysis tried to fix and rationalize. In March 1925 Klages wrote to one of his followers, the psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn, "To the psychoanalysts, who are without exception lascivious petit bourgeois, it seems as if the sexual drive is a definite singular, and character is an indefinite plural."[125] As an alternative Klages offered the paradoxical relation between singular and plural, proximity and distance: "Since the relation between the here and now works always through a tension, it becomes a back and forth movement . . . We lose a sense of singularity in this relation, having been drawn further back; the I loses its place [*Ort*], and is drawn into the distance [*ins Ferne gezogen wird*], . . . as if it makes the distance and the one-ness *present* only so [*als welcher allein das Dort und Einst* gegenwartig *macht*]."[126]

Benjamin followed such ideas with his own version of distorted space and dream logic, most apparent in his experiments with hashish. As he reported in 1928, "The idea of closeness of death came to me yesterday, in the formula: death lies between

[123] Scholars of Benjamin usually mention Klages only in relation to the trip Benjamin made to Munich in 1914 and to a reference Benjamin made to Klages's *Hauptwerk* in 1932. See, for example, two standard texts: Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin: A Biography*, trans. Malcolm R. Green and Ingrida Ligers (London: Verso, 1996); and Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997) . A work that did describe more fully the connection between Klages and Benjamin, albeit somewhat briefly, is Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetics of Redemption* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 180. Only a single article has been written about the relationship: see Fuld, "Walter Benjamins Beziehung zu Ludwig Klages," pp. 274-285.

[124] McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition*, p. 111. A point McCole mentions but chooses not to explore further is the delay in Benjamin's historicization of *Lebensphilosophie*, until the late 1920s: "Benjamin later decided that Dilthey was indeed a precursor of Klages." See McCole, p. 113, n. 58.

[125] "Psychoanalytiker[n] geschieht [es], die ohne Ausnahme lusterne Spiesser sind, Aber der Geschlechtstrieb ist ein sehr bestimmter Singular, und die Charakter sind ein unbestimmter Plural." Klages to Prinzhorn, March 31, 1925, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.4074, letter no. 25.

[126] Klages, *Vom Traumbewusstsein*, pp. 43-44 (emphasis in the original).

me and my trance."[127] In the betterknown "Hashish in Marseilles," Benjamin claimed that "all this [altered sense of space and time] does not occur in a continuous development; rather, it is typified by a continual alternation of dreaming and waking states, a constant and finally exhausting oscillation between totally different worlds of consciousness . . . All hits the subject reports in a form that usually diverges very widely from the norm."[128] Benjamin connects this experience explicitly to the experience of *Rausch*: "[T]he memory of the intoxication [*Rausch*] is surprisingly clear."[129]

What separates Benjamin and Klages is Klages's resistance to political philosophy, his reluctance to acknowledge the impact his own philosophy and vocabulary had on political theories in spite of the clear racist implications his theory of types carried.

7. Philosophy of characterology

In a comprehensive essay about major currents of German philosophy, published in 1931, Arthur Liebert (1878-1946), a well-known neo-Kantian from Marburg, described philosophy of life as a deep-seated intellectual innovation that reacts to a fundamental crisis, a "crisis of idealism" in philosophical terms. Pairing it with realistic and existential philosophy, and the collapse of the political system, Liebert pointed out, "[I]t is necessary to understand the motives of the movement and to familiarize oneself with this notable 'philosophy of life.'"[130]

During the mid-1920s *Lebensphilosophie* became a quintessential discourse in different fields and disciplines, elaborating on the hermeneutics of both a collective self and a personal self. Liebert was interested in *Lebensphilosophie* as a philosophy of individual existence in the world, hence a philosophy of psychology and anthropology, and chose to focus on Edward Spranger, Ludwig Klages, and his follower, Hans Prinzhorn, as its prime representatives. All three contributed to Liebert's view in two ways: first, they revived a romantic tradition of self that was eradicated with Freudian psychology and the sciences; and second, all three made an attempt to create a neoromantic psychology and philosophy of the self on the basis of modern images and aesthetics, trying to integrate some Freudianisms to a conflicting typology of the soul. As Liebert shows, all three had been influenced by Nietzsche's antitraditional views and biological philosophy, and they identified any idealization of reality or its philosophical category, idealism, "as cowardice."[131] All three focus on a total living experience (*Erlebnis*) and

[127] Walter Benjamin, "My Second Impression of Hashish," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, part 1: 1927-1930, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 87.

[128] Benjamin, "Hashish in Marseilles," in *Selected Writings* vol. 2, part 2: 1931-1934, p. 673.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Liebert published a series of articles commenting about the role of *Lebensphilosophie* in contemporary philosophy. I will be referring to two of the articles in this chapter. Arthur Liebert, "Contemporary German Philosophy," in *The Philosophical Review* 42:1 (1933): 32.

[131] Ibid., p. 34.

an immediate contact to the landscapes, while resisting the "over-intellectualization" of positivism and "polluted" modernity.[132] (For my purposes this discussion will focus on Klages and Prinzhorn only.) Principle examples of the idealists' cowardice were social institutions and the bourgeois normative codes that neo-Nietzscheans despised. Admitting the power of *Lebensphilosophie* as a radical force that altered the view of both individuals and their view of the world, Liebert argued, charges philosophy itself with a new power of creation: "Realism and the philosophy of life in the most characteristic sense of the word is a tendency which sees in life not merely the source of all philosophical reflection but also the creative force which permeates all being. In particular life is the source of all human existence, producing man's nature and his modes of action."[133] In 1931 *Lebensphilosophie* was already fusing together the philosophical provocation of the early 1920s and the demand to action of the late 1920s, following the severe social, political, and economic crisis of the Weimar republic. In short, it became a political discourse.

Before exploring the final shift in *Lebensphilosophie* to a direct political action, however, let us clarify the nature of the ties that link together the individual and collective in a situation of bare existence.

Historically speaking, Liebert ascribed *Lebensphilosophie* to Julius Bahnsen (1830-1881), a forgotten founder of characterology, or its more modern form, Gestalt psychology, which he says was "for a long time overlooked, until it was introduced to a wider public by the characterology of Ludwig Klages."[134] Naturally, typological psychology, developed by Klages and Prinzhorn, "[d]raws into the circle of Sigmund Freud, not however without severe criticism, since [it] objects that psychoanalysis rationalizes the unconscious and therefore gives false representation of it."[135] In contrast to Freud, Klages's graphological characterization presumed that humans express themselves with written symbols and signs, mere images of reality: "The leading conception of his [Klages's] realistic psychology may be stated in his own words: 'Not things but images are animated; this is the key to all biology.'"[136]

Liebert's essay followed a period of eager American reception of German philosophy. Not long before, Edgar Wind, Husserl's and Heidegger's student, gave a public lecture at Columbia University and identified philosophy of life as "a wave of irrationalistic metaphysics [that] swept over Europe."[137] What gave *Lebensphilosophie* its power during the 1920s? What named it as a contemporary intellectual fashion that integrated

[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid., p. 35.
[134] Ibid., p. 36.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Arthur Liebert, "Contemporary German Philosophy," in *The Philosophical Review* 44:1 (1935): 41.
[137] Edgar Wind, "Contemporary German Philosophy," in *The Journal of Philosophy* 22:18 (August 1925): 480.

many perspectives from both political and philosophical sides? And finally, if it was so powerful, why did it vanish?

8. The reception of nineteenth-century psychology:

Carus (Hans Kern) and Nietzsche (Karl Lowith)

The final part of this chapter discusses the potential and failure of characterology, or what I would like to identify here as *biopsychology*, and its inherent ties to *Lebensphilosophie*. The radical erasure of boundaries that fused private and public, social and communal forms, past and present, was the force that generated different forms of biopsychology and *Lebensphilosophie*, phantasmagoria and ur-images, from the early 1920s to the late 1940s. As Roberto Esposito explained in his *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*: "At the moment in which on one side the modern distinctions between public and private, state and society, local and global collapse, and on the other that all other sources of legitimacy dry up, life becomes encamped in the center of every political procedure."[138] The transformation of romantic psychology into a collective biopsychology is an excellent case study.

The summer of 1923 was dry and glinting, with bright starry nights. It was followed by a long and icy winter. Klages reflected about the weather while situating and reviving the philosophy of Johann Jakob Bachofen, who with Nietzsche can be considered the most substantial challenge to historicism and idealist Hegelianism. A year after the publication of his *Vom kosmogenischen Eros* (1922), dedicated to Bachofen's symbolism, Klages moved to further illustrations of late romanticism, focusing more and more on its psychology and its idolization of childhood and using Bachofen's emphasis on matriarchy in order to undermine nationalist historicism and even more so the Freudian focus on the father and mature consciousness. By then, he had become so well known as an expert of the romantic sciences that he was asked to lecture in the most prestigious universities.[139] Offers to professorships were submitted every other year—and cordially rejected. One of the first came from Karl Jaspers, who was taken by Klages's 1910 work, *Principles of Characterology*, and offered him a position in Heidelberg.[140]

In the midst of his work on Bachofen's philosophy in the mid-1920s, Klages published two other large essays. First was an introduction to the reprint of *Psyche* (1846) by Carl Gustav Carus. In his introduction Klages looked back a generation in the history of the soul, to Goethe and Carus's time. The second essay was about Nietzsche's

[138] Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 15.

[139] Klages was invited to give a series of lectures about Nietzsche at Munich University during the spring of 1920.

[140] Klages to Jaspers, July 27 and 29, 1914, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61. 5472/1, letter no. 2.

psychology, which was published first in Emil Utitz's journal of charaterology and later extended and revised as a book in 1926.[141] The following sections describe those essays and their significance to Klages's worldview. While they differ in emphasis, methodology, analysis, and even style of arguments, both late romantics, Carus and Nietzsche, contributed much to the new discipline of characterology, sharing a close view of life as biopsychology. Klages saw himself as their intellectual offspring.

[141] See Ludwig Klages, *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1926); published first in article form in Emil Utitz's *Zeitschrift fur Charakterologie*, no. 1 (1924).

8.1. Carl Gustav Carus

Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869) was a respectable physician (since 1827 the Saxon king's physician in Dresden), a well-known romantic painter, and a theorist of colors and landscape painting. A well-educated man and intellectual, he integrated a study of the subconscious with a theory of universal signs—which Klages introduced to his readers in 1926 as "the most essential contribution to the research of character and our perception of space [*Raumanschauung*]."[1] Klages contextualized Carus—known mostly as an early theoretician of medicine and a close collaborator of Goethe—as a predecessor of Nietzsche's psychology.[2] Without mentioning his specific intention, and probably thinking of Dilthey and Freud, Klages denounced all credibility for a "psychology of understanding," using Carus's work to depict it as a "psychology without a soul."[3]

As Jutta Muller-Tamm shows in her comprehensive study of Carus, he utilized his interdisciplinary interest as a medical doctor, his research in comparative anatomy, his fluency in poetics and literature, and his theory of painting and images to advocate for the idea of "simple living [*das Lebendige schlechthin*]."[4] Grounding his argument in a "genetic method" that assumed "the idea of unity in nature as a whole," Carus developed—following Goethe—a morphological method that shaped "the connection between art and science, as the knowledge of nature [*Behufs*]."[5] Carus used the same principles of observation to look at human nature and the landscape and turned them into a tight, inherent connection between the geographical surrounding and the human character, all organized around "the physiognomic-cosmological perception of landscape, built on the basis of 'classic German geography.'"[6] Little wonder that Carus's genetic system found its way into modern psychology (in 1853 he published *The Symbolism of Human Gestalt*), modern anthropology, and theory of art. According to Muller-Tamm, a strong influence on the young Carus was the anti-Kantian anthropology of one Ernst Platner, whose 1772 *Anthropology for Medical Doctors and the Worldly Educated* contextualized the modern profession of medicine in philosophical terms. Platner taught

[1] Ludwig Klages, "Introduction," in Carl Gustav Carus, *Psyche*, ed. Ludwig Klages (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1926), p. i.

[2] Ibid., p. ii.

[3] Ibid., p. iii.

[4] Jutta Muller-Tamm, *Kunst als Gipfel der Wissenschaft: Asthetische und wissenschaftliche Weltaneigung bei Carl Gustav Carus* (Frankfurt: Walter de Gruyter Verlag, 1995), p. 30.

[5] Ibid., p. 32.

[6] Ibid., p. 38.

Carus one of the important principles of his own later work, that is, the theory of *influxus physicus*, "the belief that the psychic appearance is shown through the world of the body."[7] Carus, who demonstrated a healthy critical inclination in his comments on Platner, developed and extended his "idea of the unconscious" [*Idee des Unbewussten*] into a romantic science and modern anthropology.[8]

Carus's science of life led him, according to Klages, to conclude that "[t]he key to understanding the essence of conscious inner life [*Seelenleben*] lies in the region of the unconscious."[9] Once again, Klages found in Carus, as he did in Platner, a popular theorist of the night and darkness, of dream time and dream space, a poetic voice proclaiming that "the greatest part of the soul life occurs during the night in the unconscious."[10] The philosophy behind Klages's assertion is one of *Dasein* (being), or, more accurately, of "a form of living *Dasein*, . . . a form with no matter, which reveals itself as lacking an idea that would determine it, [and] is an absurdity [*Unding*]."[11] Carus was the first to actually replace scientific matter with images as criteria, the "eternal flow of appearances in the spirit, [which] contains only the present."[12] Klages would take from him his reality of images.

Just as Klages's republication (and introductory remarks) of Bachofen's work became inseparable from Klages's concepts and views, so did analyses of Carus derive from Klages. In fact, that many young scholars writing about romantic psychology in general, or about Nietzsche and Carus in particular, came to Klages for advice. One of those was Hans Kern, a young student writing his dissertation about Carus and romantic psychology under the guidance of Max Dessoir, himself a close acquaintance of Klages since the early 1910s, a wellknown philosopher of psychology, and an adviser of Alfred Baeumler. After writing to Klages in the fall of 1924, Kern received an invitation to visit, and he became an enthusiastic follower. In 1925, fresh out of the academy, Kern narrowed his neo-Kantian dissertation to a 20-page article he revised to incorporate a Klagesian *Lebensphilosophie* and published it in Klages's journal, *Zeitschrift fur Menschenkunde* (*Journal for the study of man*). In it, he painted Carus with the strong, bright colors of romantic philosophy and psychology, which "began, approximately at the turn of the century, to attract attention in the general population, then later specifically within the various branches of so-called *Lebensphilosophie* . . . This was namely a research of *causes* that would lead, as Nietzsche correctly noted in his *Will to Power*, to a *regressus in infinitum.*"[13] Following Carus and Nietzsche, and

[7] Ibid., p. 58.

[8] Ibid., p. 60.

[9] "Der Schlussel zur Erkenntnis vom Wesen des bewussten Seelenlebens liegt in der Region des Unbewusstseins." Klages, "Introduction," in *Psyche*, p. vii.

[10] Ibid., p. i.

[11] "[E]in lebendiger Dasein . . . eine Form ohne irgendeinen Stoff, in welchem sie sich auspragte, und ohne irgendeine Idee, wodurch sie bestimmt wurde, ist ein Unding." Ibid., p. viii.

[12] Ibid., p xvii.

[13] "Die Philosophie der Romantik, lange Zeit zum toten Hausrat gerechnet, begann etwa seit der Jahrhundertwende die allgemeine Aufmerksamkeit wieder zu erregen, denn innerhalb der verschiedenen

in contrast to different scientific perceptions—Kern gives Max Weber's paradigmatic "science as a vocation"[14] as an example—"the German youth has currently gathered enough power to rebel and find the new *Fu hrer*, who would take a higher aim of life and promise us our one and only naked belonging."[15]

According to Kern, Carus's importance was his *Biosophie*, which rejected Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling's emphasis on (Kantian) awareness. Awareness, Kern warns, "was seen and grasped by Klages as the effect of *Logocentrism*."[16] Carus, according to Kern, created a metaphysical system of "cosmic physiognomy," grounded in the "cosmic rhythm," and which sees all earthly creation as part of the flow of life, including rocks ("the crystal heavenly creation"), or rivers and their rhythmic flow, always "in relation to the whole earth (*Erdganz*)."[17] Carus was the one who turned our intuition toward the unconscious as constructed from primal images (*Urbilder*) that are felt before they can be uttered and are discussed mostly in the fashionable discourse of the time, the (vitalist) embryology. From the cell, or the embryo, "He took the universe to be shaped as a ball (whose center is everywhere, since it has no periphery),"[18] and hence fundamental to the qualities of any "plastic element" or the "organic plastic," which Nietzsche would later adapt to his own aesthetics.[19]

According to Klages and Kern, Carus fell short in one aspect: the importance given to death, which Bachofen would elaborate and explain later. Carus's rhythmic and aesthetic view of the universe saw death as part of the scientific birth and death cycle, and therefore "clearly was not able to give it a metaphysical meaning."[20] Nevertheless, Kern concluded, Carus's work can be considered as a "thinking of thinking [*Denken des Denkens*]."[21]

In spite of their differences, Klages and his pupils were able to trace a counterhistorical line that united Carus and Bachofen with Nietzsche. Present historians of psychology are still committed to the view and mention Carus, Bachofen, and Nietzsche in the same breath when discussing the evolution of pre-Freudian subconsciousness. Henri Ellenberger, a well-known historian of psychiatry and psychology, presents Carus as

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Richtungen der sogenannten Lebensphilosophie . . . Diese war namlich *Ursachenforschung* und fuhrte so, wie Nietzsche im 'Willen zur Macht' mit Recht bemerkte, auf einen regressus in infinitum." Hans Kern, "Die kosmische Symbolik des Carl Gustav Cams," in *Zeitschrift fiir Menschenkunde, Blatter fiir Charakterologie und Angewandte Psychologie* 1:4 (November 1925): 17.

[14] The phrase comes from a lecture Weber gave in Munich in 1918.The lecture was translated into English in Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 2004).

[15] Kern, "Die kosmische Symbolik des Carl Gustav Carus," p. 17.

[16] Ibid., p. 19 (emphasis in the original).

[17] "[Z]u einem grosseren Organismus gehorig ist der Fels zu nennen mit seinen kristallinischen fugungen oder die Quelle mit ihren rhythmischen Stromungen in Beziehung zum Erdganzen." Ibid., p. 19.

[18] Ibid., p. 21.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 22.

[21] Ibid., p. 28.

the one who first "defines psychology as the science of the soul's development from the unconscious to the conscious,"[22] leading to Bachofen's symbolic soul, which was revived by the cosmics in Munich.[23] Carus's psychology, he argues, was based on a "genetic method, [which] was a way of connecting a primordial phenomenon with the metamorphoses . . . finding laws governing their connecting. Among other Ur-phanomena was the myth of Androgyne," which ties Carus—in Ellenberger's mind—directly to Plato's notion of Eros in his symposium.[24] Another well-known historian of psychology, Lancelot Whyte, argues in his *Unconsciousness before Freud* that Carus "seeks to derive all phenomena, as it were deductively, from a central principle of life, dimly conceived as the growth of forms. Carus's root principle is unconscious and holistic."[25] Both historians tie Carus to later contributions in psychology and to Bachofen's and Nietzsche's philosophy. All are seen through the looking glass of their influence on later generations, specifically Freud and his circle. The relation, however, should be one of opposition and dissenting, not the anachronistic presumption of linearity. In spite of Freud's interest in both Carus and Bachofen (Freud's library included works by both, as well as by Nietzsche), it was his rebellious followers—usually depicted as opponents of institutions of all kinds, socialists, and other dissenters—who embraced these alternative theories of symbols in nature and man. Carus became the hero of many opponents of Freud and the Jungian *Tiefpsychologie*: "Carus's unconscious is deep and is not influenced in its seed by stimulation. This, in fact, separates Carus's psychology from Freud's, who must have repeated himself, that he finds nothing religious (or 'oceanic') at the experiencing of the soul."[26]

Ellenberger also points out how Freud's followers interpreted Carus: "Bachofen's influence reached Alfred Adler through the intermediaries, [the socialists] Engels and Bebel. Adler contends that the present oppression of women by men was an overcompensation of the male against a previous stage of female domination . . . As for Jung, he most probably had read Bachofen's main works, and his teaching is filled with concepts that may at least partly be ascribed to Bachofen's influence, such as those of the Anima and Animus, the 'old wise man,' and the 'magna mater.'"[27]

When Klages explained the historical lineage that led from Carus to Bachofen to Nietzsche, he did so within the very terms of the formed discourse: "There is no doubt," Klages forcefully stated, "that Carus was on his way to the 'mothers.'"[28] Such innovative historical consideration has been made possible by the radical theories of the

[22] Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 208.

[23] Ibid., p. 222.

[24] Ibid., p. 203.

[25] Lancelot Law Whyte, *The Unconscious before Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1960), p. 148.

[26] C. G. Graber, "Carl Gustav Carus als Erfoscher des Unbewussten und Vorlaufer unserer Seelenheilkunde," in *Zentralblatt fiir Psychotherapie* 3 (1941): 37. See also Bohleber, "Psychoanalyse," p. 517.

[27] Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p. 223.

[28] Klages, "Introduction," in *Psyche*, p. xi.

1920s. Only a climate of cultural crisis enabled a drastic change of perspectives regarding a central and a key issue of German history: the relationship between romanticism and idealism. Klages and his circle disconnected the two and turned Carus, Bachofen, and Nitzsche's psychology against the idealist psychoanalysis, the psychology of the fathers.

8.2. Nietzschean Psychology

"If you have a character, you also have a typical experience that always comes back" wrote Nietzsche in one of the most frequently quoted citations of his *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886).[29] Klages constructed a more complicated network between those elements. Klages was obsessed with Nietzsche, his view of character, and his "eternal recurrence" since his early days in the George circle, and since the late 1890s he had held him almost in a sacred spot.[30] He started seeing Nietzsche as central to all psychological narratives since the early 1900s, and he integrated Nietzsche's philosophy in his writing about characterology beginning in the early 1910s. According to Paul Bishop, "[I]n Nietzsche, Klages found a great ' *Seelendurchschauer und Geisterkenner*,' [the one who knows souls and intellects] whose philosophy 'dissolved' not just ethics but the 'intellectual phenomenon' itself, by relating it to its 'biological value.'"[31] In 1919 Carl Albrecht Bernoulli seems to have decided to present Klages with a piece of this aura. He invited Klages to Basel on May 14, 1919, fifty years to the day since Nietzsche's inaugural speech at the University of Basel. Klages revised his lecture for the occasion into a large article and then into a book. He was so proud of this invitation that he mentioned it in his correspondence for years to come, long after he turned from Bernoulli in disgust. The weight of this invitation should not be underestimated, for Bernoulli had a very special position regarding Nietzsche's legacy. As Lionel Gossman explained, Franz Overbeck—Nietzsche's best friend and patron—and Bernoulli were debating a reductive, nationalistic popularization of Nietzsche, conducted first and foremost by Nietzsche's sister: "[O]verbeck strove for the rest of his life and beyond it, through the work of his student Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, to preserve a different picture of Nietzsche from that propagated, unfortunately with considerable success, by 'die Dame Forster,' as he [Overbeck] insisted on calling [Elisabeth ForsterNietzsche, Friedrich's sister]."[32] Once again, against all odds, Klages was linked to a humanist tradition that resisted the sister's attempt to nationalize and make Nietzsche into an

[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosohy of the Future*, part 4, citation number 70, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 59.

[30] Klages's comments on the margins express strong emotions, such as, "Jealousy, murder!" when Friedrich Nietzsche criticizes a youthful friend who was explaining about Wagner's music; or "incredible, horrible dictum!!" when Nietzsche portrays his school years as turning his youth to an empty waste of time. See handwritten inscriptions inserted in Klages's copy of Elisabeth Forster-Nietzsche, *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsche's,* vol. 1, in Klages's Library, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages: Bibliothek.

[31] Paul Bishop, "The Reception of Friedrich Nietzsche in the Early Work of Ludwig Klages," in *Oxford German Studies* 31 (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2002), p. 132.

[32] Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt*, p. 418.

anti-Semite. Whether Klages comprehended this aspect, or was simply flattered by the honor given to him, he was still surrounded by different, antinormative thinkers.

In 1926, the same year he edited and published Carl Gustav Carus's *Psyche*, Klages also published his psychological interpretation of Nietzsche. In *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches* (The psychological achievements of Nietzsche) Ludwig Klages followed those achievements of Nietzsche that he liked, mostly the countercultural framework, and criticized those he disagreed with, for instance, Nietzsche's will to power. As Steven Aschheim describes it, "for Klages, Nietzsche's psychological achievements were the demarcation of the battleground between Yahweh's ascetic priests and the orgiasts of Dionysius; his psychological sensitivity provided extraordinary illumination pursued through his relentlessly honest self-knowledge and unmasking [*Enttasuschungstechnik*] . . . For Klages the aggressive and consumptive will to power was 'de-eroticized sexuality.'"[33]

In 1926 Klages's anti-Western—that is, anti-Christian and antiJewish—rhetoric did not seem self-contradictory when it met with a clear rejection of authority and naked power. His method advanced in a different way altogether: "If one thinks of the secret meaning of 'know thyself' the following is revealed: know in thyself the ur-image and the source of all being [*erkenne im Selbst das Urbild und den Quell alles Seins*]."[34]

Klages's interpretation of Nietzsche's psychology drew the attention of serious thinkers. One young student attracted to Klages's romantic psychology was Karl Lowith (1897-1973), a young Jewish conservative, Husserl's and Heidegger's student, who followed the latter to Marburg, where he was expelled by the Nazis—with Heidegger's support—in 1934. Among the major influences on his life, Lowith mentions "the formative power that radiated from the George circle,"[35] Max Weber's sociology, and Nietzschean and Heideggerean existentialism. Lowith's heretofore unknown correspondence with Klages during 1926-1927 accounts for the happy reception of Klages's Nietzscheanism. In his first letter to Klages, Lowith expressed his interest in Klages's characterology and its ties to Nietzsche's psychology. Following the publication of his own dissertation about Nietzsche's notion of eternal recurrence,

Lowith explained in correspondence that he was asked to review Klages's new book about Nietzsche. In a tiny, bug-like script, Lowith asked for a copy of the full text as well as other matters of advice. In his third letter, from March 1926, Lowith daringly asked Klages if he could arrange for a review of his own Nietzsche manuscript at

[33] Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, p. 81.

[34] Ludwig Klages, *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1958), p. 24.

[35] Karl Lowith, *My Life in Germany before and after 1933: A Report*, trans. Elisabeth King (Athlone: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 19. For a critical reading of this explicit confession see Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Lowith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 84.

Klages's journal.[36] Klages responded favorably and in fact also offered him some books to review for the same journal.[37] Moreover, in a letter from March 1927, Lowith began discussing Dilthey's philosophy and psychology with Klages, and the letter concludes with a request to join Klages's seminar about graphology in Kilchberg.[38]

Lowith worked on Klages's texts with all serious dedication. His essay about Klages's *Nietzsche's Psychological Achievements* can be justly counted among the best readings of Klages's psychology in general and of Nietzsche's influence on psychology in particular. Chapter by chapter, section by section, Lowith's refutation or affirmation of Klages's analysis argues, mocks, and finally admits its importance: "In the following we must investigate the extent to which Klages's science of appearances [*Erscheinungswissenschaft*] radicalizes the questions and answers of the contemporaneous *Lebensphilosophie*, especially that of Nietzsche."[39]

Lowith's analysis of Klages deserves a short elaboration. Lowith starts the essay by pointing out Klages's resistance to all general concepts (*Allgemein-begriffe*). He determines Klages's *Denkmotiv* (thought motif or thread) as the one concerning the opposition between heart and mind (intellect and soul), and contextualizes Klages's work as a whole, from his 1904 George monograph and its "molding principle of *Rausch*."[40] Interpreting Nietzsche on the basis of *Rausch* and *Lebensfiilie* (fullness of life), Lowith shows, had directed Klages's attention to a certain aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy, equating him with the principles of *Ausdrucksbewegung* (movement of expression), which attests to a unity of body and mind, from the perspective of signs, or theory.[41] Lowith explains Klages's method as polar dualism, which seeks unity and harmony on a metaphysical level, mostly by giving language a magical aura. The polarity is grounded in the principle "separation [that] Klages makes between the meaning of the word and the actual concept of the word."[42] That is, the conceptual frame of a word or an idiom is different from its literal meaning. Klages focuses on the latter, believing in the literal nearness of language and being. It is language, or words in particular,

[36] Karl Lowith to Ludwig Klages, March 25, 1926, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.10787, letter no. 3.

[37] The first book Lowith reviewed was by one of the most important race theorists of the 1920s, L. F Clauss. Lowith wrote a very fair review that tried to explore the advantages of Clauss's analysis and deny its most important claim, the one about the superiority of the Nordic race, "a dogmatic claim" that harks back to "a law of aristocracy." "At its best," he wrote, "it turns back to Nietzsche's psychological differentiation of human motivations." See Karl Lowith, "L. F. Clauss 'Rasse und Seele,' in *Zeitschrift fiir Menschenkunde* 2:3 (August 1926): 24.

[38] Lowith to Klages, March 25, 1927, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.10787, letter no. 9.

[39] "Wir werden daher im Folgenden vor allem nachzusehen haben, inwiefern Klages' 'Erscheinungswissenschaft' die Fragestellungen und Antworten der beizeitlichen Lebensphilosophie, insbesondere derjenigen Nietzsches, radikaler ausgebildet hat." Karl Lowith, "Nietzsche im Licht der Philosophie von Ludwig Klages," in his *Samtliche Schriften*, vol. 6 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1987), p. 8.

[40] Ibid., p. 9. Lowith read the second edition. The book was first published in 1902.

[41] Ibid., p. 10.

[42] Ibid., p. 11.

that pulse with the forgotten essence of life once pulsing in the body. Here Lowith himself seems to conform to what Jurgen Habermass called his "cosmology," usually incorrectly associated with Heidegger.[43] Lowith was accurate in his observation, in fact, providing a much greater sophistication than contemporary readers of Klages. Indeed, Klages has fused his signs theory with the literal meaning of a pure language in many of his writings, especially when considering the need to reframe a new language of an authentic personality. Even in ancient Greek, he explains in his theory of personality, words that ended with a vowel *a* usually meant a sign, vital to any true character identification. "In earlier times, such words carried a symbolic or magical significance, which is why talismans in fairy tales are said to have secret characters engraved, i.e., signs that give them a magical vitality."[44] Philosophy since the Enlightenment, or Kant, has neglected this essential key.

Lowith did not ignore Klages's critique of Nietzsche. According to him, Klages criticized Nietzsche for his surrender to the metaphysics of the will, that is, for his admiration of power, traits which were taken blindly, in his eyes, by Heidegger (and Baeumler). For Klages, Nietzsche is a great thinker who shook up all normative thinking because of a "suicidal nature," which is expressed in his negativity, the notion of *Nicht-Sein* (not being) and *Nicht-Haben* (not having).[45] Therefore, Nietzsche's psychology is, for Klages, primarily engaged with a discourse of authenticity and loss of selfidealizations, with "the destruction of masking [*Destruktion der Maskierung*]."[46] Finally, according to Lowith, the appeal of Nietzsche's constant retreat to a primordial past (and eternal return) is for Klages "a naturalistic use of 'biology,' 'physiology,' 'body,' etc. in the sense of a basic tendency toward a return to the nearest realities, in the sense of a concrete psychology (*Realpsychologie*) that takes into account vitalistic foundations."[47]

A life or vital Nietzschean psychology is inherently linked to a language of images and signs, as well as to a collective discourse of authenticity and immediacy. Benjamin was quick to point this out during the early 1930s, referring to Klages's book as relevant to the new situation in Palestine.[48]

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[43] Jurgen Habermas, "Karl Lowith: Stoic Retreat from Historical Consciousness," in *Philosophical-Political Profi les*, trans. F. Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 79-98.

[44] "[I]n der Herkunft des Wortes, das mit Ton auf der letzten Silbe und wie a gesprochenem e im Altgriechischen 'Kennzeichen' meint . . . Solche hatten aber in alter Zeit symbolischer oder magischer Sinn, wehalb es z.B. im Marchen heisst, dem Talisman seien geheimnisvolle 'Charaktere' eingegraben gewesen, d.i. Zeichen, die ihm eine zauberische Lebendigkeit liehen." Klages, *Pers onlichkeit*, p. 145.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., p. 20.

[47] "In Sinne dieser Grundtendenz zum Ruckgang auf die nachstliegenden Wirklichkeiten versteht Klages Nietzsches naturalistische Redeweise von 'Biologie,' 'Physiologie,' 'Leib', usf. im Sinne einer konkreten, die vitalen Grundlagen in Rechnung setzenden Realpsychologie." Lowith, "Nietzsche im Licht der Philosophie von Ludwig Klages," p. 22.

[48] Walter Benjamin to Gershom Scholem, June 1, 1932, in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, vol. 4: 1931-1934, eds. Christoph Godde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), p. 100.

To summarize, romantic psychology was for Klages the basis of his own characterology and science of expression. Moreover, in many ways, it supplied Klages with the roots of his metaphysics. Carus mentions the concept of logocentrism as early as 1857, accusing the West of completely misconstruing the inherent aesthetic difference between patriarchic cognition and aesthetic intuition. Nietzsche, like Carus and Bachofen, "also held in his hand the Faustian key that promised to lead the way to the mothers."[49]

In May 1927 Hans Kern published another article in Klages's journal, *Zeitschrift fur Menschenkunde* (where Lowith published as well), this time about Nietzsche and his romantic theory of the unconscious.[50]

Hans Prinzhorn and other Klagesians would follow suit the following year. The general approach of the Klages circle is on the design of "a whole different law of development," and the intention to "shape a new image of man, a new psychology . . . It is time to follow him [Nietzsche] in his search and release this vision [Ausblick] into the present."[51] Alfred Baeumler must have listened to this plea as well as to the success of another member of the George circle who published a popular book about Nietzsche, celebrating and "lyricizing" him as a "great man,"[52] when he published his Nazi edition of Nietzsche in 1931.[53] Baeumler's heroic and racial Nietzsche, a will-to-power Nietzsche, however, doesn't match the Klages circle's focus on Nietzsche as a lateromantic psychologist. The whole point about the revival of romantic psychology was the acknowledgment that life, life time, and meaning of life refer constantly to death as its being (*Sein*) and to existential fear as its motive of becoming. Unlike the Freudian death drive, the existential stress on the eternal recurrence shifts the discussion to the aestheticiziation of a circular, living experience.

9. The reception: Hans Prinzhorn, Emil Utitz and Salomon Friedrich Rothschild on biocentric psychiatry and Jewish characterology

Almost every psychiatrist in Germany in the 1920s knew Klages's name, mostly thanks to the work of his disciple, Hans Prinzhorn (1886-1933). Anthony Kauders

[49] Ludwig Klages, *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches*, quoted in Paul Bishop, "The Reception of Friedrich Nietzsche in the Early Work of Ludwig Klages," p. 151.

[50] Hans Kern, "Friedrich Nietzsche und die romantischen Theorien des Unbewussten," in *Zeitschrift fur Menschenkunde* 8:4 (May 1927): 107-116.

[51] Hans Prinzhorn, *Nietzshce und das XX. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: Niels Kampmann Verlag, 1928), p. 13.

[52] Max Whyte, "The Uses and Abuses of Nietzsche in the Third Reich," in *The Journal of Contemporary History* 43:2 (April 2008): 176. See also Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* (Berlin: Georg Bondi Verlag, 1920).

[53] Ibid., pp. 172-173.

Figure 4.1 Klages at his Desk in Zurich, *ca.* 1942. DLM: Nachlass Ludwig Klages.

argues that Prinzhorn had attacked Freud since the mid-1920s—using Klagesian language—by "producing a mechanistic system that ignored or undermined the power of life and animism, and, in doing so, psychoanalytic theory brought about 'the danger of a chronic nihilism underlying the pathos of exact scientific knowledge.'"[54]

Prinzhorn studied art history in Vienna and singing in London. He then shifted to the more practical discipline of medicine but was finally taken by the new findings of psychiatry. In 1918, after he was released from the army, he became an assistant in the Heidelberg Psychiatric Clinic, where he studied the clinic's large collection of images of patients taken in different countries. Prinzhorn worked in sanitoriums near Dresden and then in Frankfurt before publishing *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* in 1922, which immediately made him famous. The book expounded a "biocentric" view that would later apply Klages's environmental "mainspring" (*Triebfedern*), while rejecting most psychoanalytical assumptions. Its opening pages mention the impact that Klages's *Lebensphilosophie* had on his analysis and diagnosis of patients:

Piderit, Darwin, Wundt, and later Croce and Kohnstamm have described the many ambiguities of expressive gesture. In general psychiatry it has become common because of Kraeplin to treat the disturbances of the expressive gestures as a unit in themselves. Only Klages, however, founded a complete theory of expression, much of which we accept. According to his theory, expressive gestures have the capability of so realizing psychic elements that they are communicated to us directly, as participants. Any motor discharge can be a carrier of expressive processes, not just voluntary movements, but also physiological [movements] reflect manifestations such as blushing.[55]

Prinzhorn was trying to trace those unique moments of creativity of the mentally ill, and to spot through them the life force that motivated them. For that purpose he used the drawings of patients diagnosed with a variety of mental illnesses. What he called "configurations" had to connect the produced image to an ingrained inclination of the character, express the illness, and prove the creative power of life that burst through the illness or was empowered by it. His job was to analyze and classify the different types of configurations made by patients, who expressed their intuitive inclinations using colors, shapes, and free drawing. "Our conception of the nature of configuration," he wrote, "is based mainly on Klages's . . . [E]verything is discussed here only in the light of the central problem of configuration. This would not become altogether clear if we based our investigation of the creative process on an individual and expected to find the elements essential for future creation first in the chaos of individual life experience."[56] The focus was again on the composition and the form as an expressive impulse, a trace of psyche. The method was to follow each individual form as a unique creation that makes its own laws and rules.

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[54] Kauders, "The Mind of a Rationalist," p. 257.

[55] Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, p. 12; originally published in 1922 as *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken.*

[56] Ibid., p. 13.

Prinzhorn's book had a powerful reception from the artistic communities in Germany and France. He caught the attention of two of the most distinguished psychologists of the time, David Watson and William McDougall in the United States, and he reported to Klages their enthusiasm of Klages's ideas about character. In 1926 Prinzhorn wrote to McDougall, urging him to appoint someone to translate Klages's *Prinzipien der Charakterologie.* After lecturing on Klages in Paris in 1929, he sailed to the United States to deliver more lectures on Klages at several universities—Yale, Duke, and Wisconsin—as well as Antioch College and St. Elisabeth Hospital in Washington, DC. (He also extended his visit to research narcotic effects in Mexico, conducted among Indian tribes, which changed Prinzhorn's anthropological view as a whole.) His lectures were not limited to psychiatry and characterology (always mentioning Klages as his principle influence), but extended to Nietzsche and other *Lebensphilosophers.* Here again the context is crucial. In a letter from February 1929 he told Klages that his psychiatric work was now combined with other principle philosophers of psychology, all belonging to the Baeumler group (by then already identified with the Nazi Weltanschauung): Manfred Schroter, Friedrich Seifert, and Edgar Daque. In May 1929 Prinzhorn reported to Klages about the Davos confrontation between "the young Heidegger and the old Cassirer" and told him about a plan to invite him and Heidegger to Paris, which he made with the president of the Institut Germanique der Sorbonne.[57]

The guiding principle of Prinzhorn's career, from his 1922 book to his death in 1933, is his resistance to the opposition of normal and pathological. "The public," he wrote, "has recently heard a great deal about 'mad art,' the 'art of the mentally ill,' 'pathological art,' and 'art and insanity.' We are not overly happy with these expressions."[58] In the images drawn by the mentally ill and their "brushing creative energy,"

Prinzhorn found the basis of his system that he identified as "a future psychology of configuration."[59] It was a descriptive and nonjudgmental psychology that resisted the measuring of personalities according to psychiatric standards, for "hardly ever is the mind of the critical investigator superior to the personality he is testing."[60] Hence, a psychology of configuration would avoid presumed judgments regarding the mentally ill. Prinzhorn identified the principle aim of his method as trying to place the mental situation we know (normal) and the one that is unknown (pathological) at odds—in other words, to defamiliarize the situation and hence avoid all presumed judgments and moralism.[61] At the heart of the psychology of configuration, Prinzhorn elaborated the role of the eidetic images. His method was based on the idea that "expressive gestures play a role in all vital actions," yet when typologizing the gesture, one should take into account the individual. "From the purposeful movement of the

[57] Prinzhorn to Klages, May 7, 1929, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.11625, letter no. 17.
[58] Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, p. 1.
[59] Ibid., p. 4.
[60] Ibid., p. 5.
[61] Ibid., p. 6.

arm, the gesture provoked by joy or anger, to the 'oral gesture' of the word and its manifestation in writing or in a picture, the individual psychological element is always communicated to us simply and directly, instead of by rational association."[62] At its core, Prinzhorn's psychopathology returned to the principles of late-romantic psychology, as shown in Bachofen and Nietzsche's use of symbols: "That an otherwise neutral 'sign' becomes the bearer of a meaning which is not explicit but is based on origin and tradition offers a connecting point to the communicative urge."[63] Prinzhorn's theory of the soul, then, focused on the need to use symbols and signs for both playful and more serious expressions, as shown in primitive, mainly Indian art. "Primitive works of art especially still show traces of the original natural forms which may have stimulated playful activity."[64] The mind of the mentally ill, not bounded so much to norms and obedience to socialization, was used by Prinzhorn to get closer to this unconscious urge to create.

It is clear that characterology was understood since the mid-1920s as an essential science that was worth a serious philosophical and psychological consideration. Emil Utitz (1883-1956), a brilliant professor of philosophy in Halle, undertook the discipline as his life's study during that significant decade. His book *Charakterologie* (1925) became a landmark in the field and a constant reference for later works. Utitz, a converted Jew, was born in Prague and studied with Franz Kafka and the group of German Jewish intellectuals around him. After accepting an academic position in Germany he fled back to Prague in 1933, was jailed in Theresienstadt until 1945, and was then reappointed as a professor at Prague University, where he remained until his death a decade later. Utitz's understanding of characterology and its historicization was a moderate one in terms of the debate between neo-Kantians and anti-Kantians, Freudians and Klagesians, and he tried to find a middle ground between the factions. Utitz did not make a secret of the rebellious side of characterology, in spite of his own personal moderation: "Characterology itself is fighting for simple and linear outlines."[65] His critique of Freud, however, showed characterology as a counterlinear methodology, which he identified with the opposite aims of psychoanalysis. His history of the movement named Julius Bahnsen, Max Dessoir, William Stern, Georg Simmel, Karl Jaspers, the founders of Gestalt psychology. But most important to his history were Ludwig Klages's *Lebensphilosophie* and *Charakterologie,* "the genius *Fuhrer* of graphology [*dem genialen Fuhrer der Graphologie*], who emphasizes the method of *multiplicity* of elements. Finally this does not negate the clarity [*Eindeutigkeit*] of a border case. It implies necessarily that under all potentials there is only one possibility."[66]

[62] Ibid., p. 12.
[63] Ibid., p. 17.
[64] Ibid.
[65] "Charakerologie selbst noch um einfache, lineare Umrisslinien kampft." Emil Utitz, *Charakterologie* (Berlin: Pan-Verlag, 1925), p. 7.
[66] Ibid., p. 32.

Another close follower of Klagesian biocentric psychology was Salomon (Shlomo) Friedrich Rothschield (1889-1995). Rothschild was born in 1899 in Giessen. He died almost a century later (in 1995) in Jerusalem. He studied medicine and psychiatry in Giessen and Munich. After his doctoral degree he worked under Erich and Frieda Fromm in Heidelberg (1925-1928), and later under the Jewish Lebensphilosopher Kurt Goldstein (1928-1933), in Frankfurt. In 1935 Rothschild published his Habilitation under the concise title " *Symbolik des Hirnbaus: Erscheinungswissenschaftliche Untersuchung u ber den Bau und die Funktionen des Zentralnervensystems der Wirbeltiere und des Menschen*".[67] The book was written under a strong Klagesian influence and Rothschild sent an early draft to Klages, who commented on the philosophical argumentation. At least one comment, according to Klages's own report to other students in his circle, pointed out how Rothschild's "natural tendency" to think and act according to the "grounding rules of his race" missed the deeper and darker tones Klages was expressing in his work.[68]

In 1936 Rothschild fled the sinking European ship to Palestine. He became a leading professor of medicine at the Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem. During the 1950s he continued to write about the "problem of the self" from the perspective of an interdisciplinary fusion of life-philosophy and the life-sciences, while researching the symbolic functions of the nerves system. In his personal file at the university archive is Rothschild's curriculum vitae, in which he numbers himself "among the students of the well-known philosopher and Swiss psychologist Ludwig Klages."[69] Later in the c.v., dated 1957, he slips into Klagesian language to explain how an "organic" and "biospheric" view of life works. Using Klagesian language to explore such tensions within different "life-forms" Rothschild extended and developed the system he called, in 1960, Biosemiotics. Never distinguishing in a hard way between Lebensphilosophie and psychoanalysis (unlike Utitz who separated the two and then tried to re-synthesize them) Rothschild became a member of the Israeli society of psychoanalysis during the late 1950s and the 1960s and developed a strong interest in parapsychology.

A few years after Utitz's book gave an institutional voice to *Charakterologie*, Baeumler's group published another major text about the discipline, this one by Friedrich Seifert.[70] Beginning with the same set of assumptions, Seifert pointed out that characterology inherently resisted both the historical and the conceptual observations, "which would severely limit its options."[71] In contrast to the Kantian and structuralist ap-

[67] Salomon Friedrich Rothschild, *Symbolik des Hirnbaus: Erscheinungswissenschaftliche untersuchungen uber den Bau und die Funktionen des Zentralnervensystems der Wirbeltiere und des menschen* (New York: S. Karger, 1935).

[68] Klages discussed Rothschild's work and background with a few of his colleagues. See for example his correspondence with Chrstoph Bernoulli during 1934-1935. Ludwig Klages Nachlass, DLA, Sig. 61.4143.

[69] The Faculty Archive at the Hebrew University in Jersualem, Personal Files, Shlomo Rothschild.

[70] Friedrich Seifert, *Charakterologie*, in *Handbuch der Philosophie* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1929).

[71] Ibid, p. 8.

proach of Utitz, or the dreamy aesthetics of Klages, Seifert emphasized a clear break with all conventions and the "move toward a radical secularization of humanity."[72] Idealism, Seifert showed, focused on concepts and objectivity, on the rational intellect and "the idealized I as the essential determining function of everything objective."[73] *Charakterologie*, he shows, has for the first time brought humanity to a psychology of wholeness (*P sychologie des ganzen Menschen*).[74] The Klages school, he points out in a footnote, has taken characterology as its vocation while rejecting idealism as a whole and separating modern characterology—based on Nietzsche—from its historical roots. Yet its romantic basis, as in Carus's case, "[only] succeeded in creating an opposition between *Charakterologie* and scientific psychology."[75] Seifert's focus on the practical applications of characterology is a typical reaction of the fascist view of such rebellions. The Baeumler circle applied many of the antilogocentric ideas but required that the formal provocation should be accompanied by an applicable option. This approach would become even clearer with Nazi psychoanalysis and racial philosophy and science. In 1938, when Nazism feared the influence of the impotent and passive philosophy of Ludwig Klages, Alfred Rosenberg would dedicate a special lecture and a published booklet to an elaborate explanation of the impracticality of the Klages school to the Nazi system and state.[76] No other school of philosophy has won the great honor of being attacked so severely by the primary ideologue of the Nazi party.

10. Conclusion

It is an irony of history that led to two very distinctive forms of characterology after 1945. One thread led to Klages's anti-idealist *Lebensphilosophie* and the Baeumler-Seifert-Schroter pro-Nazi typology.

Part of this form of characterology was revived during the early 1950s and made acceptable by the main organ of German psychologists.[77]

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[72] "Ein Zug zur radikalen verweltlichung des Menschen." Ibid.

[73] "[D]as idealistische Ich die alles Objektive wesentliche bestimmende Funktion." Ibid., p. 9.

[74] Ibid., p. 12.

[75] Ibid., p. 13.

[76] Alfred Rosenberg, *Gestalt und Leben* (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1938). Based on a lecture given at the University of Halle in Wittenberg, April 27, 1938.

[77] "A cursory look at the first two congresses of the German society for psychology in 1948 and 1951 indicates that popular positions from the Weimar period witnessed a veritable renaissance. At the Gottingen conference, for example, a roundtable discussion on the 'drives' and the 'will' largely approved of Klages' ideas 'with a few reservations.' . . . Similarly, numerous articles in the *psychologische Rundschau*, the official organ of the German Society for Psychology, betrayed the influence of Klages, bearing such titles as 'Personality,' 'Character and Handwriting,' 'Fate and Character,' 'Handwriting and Sexuality,' and 'The Soul in the Signature.' . . . [T]he obituary of Klages published in the Rundshau in 1957 lauded the 'depth of his insight,' the 'extent of his awareness,' and the 'clarity of his argumentation.'" Kauders, "The Mind of a Rationalist," p. 263, quoting "Nachruf," in *Psychologische Rundshau* (1957), pp. 75-76.

A second thread concluded with a small Jewish group that originated from Utitz's effort. Utitz himself published in 1948 a short book that analyzed life at the concentration camps from a characterological perspective. His *Psychologie des Lebens im Konzentrationslager Theresienstadt* (The psychology of life in the concentration camp Theresienstadt) attempted to reach the syntax of camp life. For example, Utitz emphasized the rhythm of widespread phenomena—rumors, for example—that characterized an internal form of life with a "biological meaning."[78] The different human types and the different characters of human interaction in the camp supplied Utitz with a perfect notion of "the wretchedness of the present *Dasein*, which views even the most modest and free life form [*Lebensform*] to be [absolute] paradise."[79] In such conditions, he wrote, identity became more flexible. Both past and future became more important than the present, for "to live in the far future makes it much easier not to ask about the next day."[80]

To conclude, from a biopolitical perspective, Klages's anti-idealistic tools fit the analytical tools Foucault used in order to examine the politics of sexuality. As Philipp Sarasin pointed out in his introduction to Foucault's philosophy of sexuality and biopower: "In contrast to psychoanalysis, [Foucault's notion of] sex in modernity functioned 'without law, like power without a king.' In that sense 'thinking about the order of sexuality should be done with the assistance of the concepts of law, death, the blood and sovereignty."[81]

[78] Emil Utitz, *Psychologie des Lebens, im Konzentrationslager Theresienstadt* (Vienna: Continental Edition Verlag, 1948), pp. 17-18.

[79] "[A]ngesichts der Jammerlichkeit des jetzigen Daseins, wirkt selbst die bescheidenste Lebensform in Freiheit als Paradies." Ibid., p. 22.

[80] "In ferner Zukunft zu leben und doch nach dem nachsten Tag nicht fragen." Ibid., p. 26.

[81] Philipp Sarasin, *Michel Foucault zur Einfuhrung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2005), p. 165.

5. Lebensphilosophie: Conservative Revolution and the Cult of Life

Not surprisingly, World War I left scars on a whole generation of army veterans in Germany, a generation that was as philosophically inclined as it was conservative. Many of them found in Ludwig Klages a voice to express their postwar sentiments and attitudes; in fact, a series of conservative texts citing Klages's influence quickly shaped the revolutionary tendencies of young intellectuals usually identified with the conservative revolution in the final years of the Weimar republic.[1] By 1930 a number of them were leading much of the reaction against the Weimar republic and Western democracy: Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) was already a famous man, after the publication of his two-part work *Decline of the West* (1918 and 1922). Carl Schmitt published a series of highly sophisticated reactionary works calling for the empowering of law and sovereignty, grounded in Catholic and Germanic values, as demonstrated in his *Political Theology* (1922), *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (1923), and an essay called "The Concept of the Political" (1927, full book in 1932).[2] Hans Freyer published a well-received piece of conservative agitation known as *The State* (1926),

[1] Roger Woods characterized the conservative revolution in the following terms: "[C]onservative revolutionaries assumed the role of 'intellectual vanguard of the right.' . . . [M]any of them were born in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and this generational bond was strengthened through the First World War which many of them experienced directly in their formative years. Although the term Conservative Revolution predates the First World War it only became an established concept in the Weimar period, passing into the cultural and political vocabulary of the day via the writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the political theorist Edgar Jung . . . [C]onservative revolutionaries sought to break with that tradition of conservatism which had its roots in Wilhelmine Germany, and they dismissed all thoughts of a political restoration . . . [T]hey rejected the whole business of parliamentary politics in Weimar . . . Conservative revolutionaries sought to come to terms with socialism, not by embracing it in its existing form, but rather by reworking it into a 'German socialism,' a 'socialism of the blood.' . . . This national community (*volksgemeinschaft*), it was argued, would transcend the conventional divisions of left and right, and enable Germany to attain a position of strength in a world where nations had effectively discarded moral standards in their dealings with each other and were guided only by 'natural' self-interest." Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), pp. 1-2.

[2] Schmitt's understanding of the political crisis, during the 1920s, opened the route to a series of anti-Semitic and anti-Western conceptualizations during the 1930s. Interestingly, after 1945 Schmitt revised his texts from the 1930s in order to rid them of explicit anti-Semitism. For a detailed history and analysis of Schmitt's anti-Semitism see Raphael Gross, Carl Schmitt and the Jews: The "Jewish Question," the Holocaust, and German Legal Theory, trans. Joel Golb (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).

and Ernst Junger, who became a celebrity after the publication of his autobiographical novels, *Storm of Steel* (1920) and *The Battle as a Living Experience* (1925), gave violence an eidetic and ecstatic appearance in *Total Mobilization* (1931), where the concept of *Rausch* (ecstasy, intoxication) makes frequent appearances at his deadly battlefields. Alfred Baeumler and Manfred Schroter were preparing the nationalization of Bachofen and the Nazification of Nietzsche; Martin Heidegger was preparing his innovative *Time and Being* (1927), shortly before turning to Nietzsche himself. All of those mentioned above, and many others with them, were pleading to revolutionize the state's philosophy and the relationship between representation and experience. It is interesting to note that the better philosophers in the group rejected *Lebensphilosophie* as a paradigm but also acknowledged its importance and innovative vocabulary.[3] To cite just two arbitrary examples of the connection between *Lebensphilosophie* and the conservative revolutionaries, Oswald Spengler never openly admitted his interest in Klages or *Lebensphilosophie*, but Spengler's own lectures, as well as his depiction in the scholarly literature, relate some key ideas and interests to *Lebensphilosophie* in general or Klages in particular.[4] The same interesting mixture of rejection accompanied by appreciation can be seen in every conservative intellectual of the time. Martin Heidegger edited the critical edition of Wilhelm Dilthey, admired the Catholic *Lebensphilosophie* of Max Scheler, and developed—if one agrees with Georg Imdahl and David Farrell Krell—his own form of life philosophy.[5]

The classic historiography of the Third Reich often stumbles in its assessments of the relevance of Nazi terminology to intellectual and daily life. Usually the relationship is described through personal testimony, such as that of Victor Klemperer in *Lingua Tertii Imperii: The Language of the Third Reich* (*LTI*, 1957), his theory of Nazi language. Presented as inherently irrational and often mystical, "Nazi philosophy"—always in scare quotes—is described as "cultlike" (*kultische*), a product of a vague phenomenological view based on negation and emphasizing external appearance, "a performance [*Schau*]," Klemperer argued, "that the Stefan George circle sacralized" by opposing it

[3] Both Schmitt and Heidegger rejected Lebensphilosophie explicitly yet used and supported much of its vocabulary and the stress on living experience as a form of rootedness. See Carl Schmitt, The Concept of the Political, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), p. 96; *Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY:* SUNY Press, 1996), pp. 43-45.

[4] "Like Klages, [Spengler] formulated [*Lebensphilosophie*] in the form of impressive antitheses . . . Nature is the object of objectifying, history is the reality of mental becoming." Herbert Schnadelbach, *Philosophy in Germany 1831-1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 152. A closer look at Spengler's reactions to Klages exposes a pretty critical commentary on Spengler's side. For example, after the publication of Klages's Eros book in 1922, Spengler joined a public debate about it, which drew colorful responses by Klages in his letters. Ludwig Klages to C. A. Bernoulli, April 27, 1923, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig. 61.4141, letter no. 31. See also the exchange between Spengler and Elisabeth Forster-Nietzsche, March 14, 1927, in *Briefe 1913-1936*, ed. Anton M. Koktanek (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1963), p. 516.

[5] Georg Imdahl, *Das Leben Versetehen: Heideggers formal anzeigen Hermeneutik in den fruhen Vorlesungen (1919-1923)* (Wurzburg: Konigshausen and Neumann Verlag, 1997); David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

to "the 'system' the circle abhorred as much as it did 'intelligence' and 'objectivity.'"[6] Klemperer, similarly to Georg Lukacs, identified Nazi rhetoric with the organic and neoromantic worldview, which was for him quite close to religious ecstasy, and placed it opposite to an enlightened and rational view.[7]

In many respects profascist thinkers such as the *Lebensphilosophers* of the 1920s and 1930s looked much like the portraits in Klemperer's rogue gallery. In the pan-Germanic and anti-Semitic chapters in *Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (1929-1932), Ludwig Klages identifies the sources of his vocabulary as cults and ancient religions. Moreover, as Klemperer surmised, Klages traced the inherent conflict to an overgrowth of Enlightenment philosophy that led directly to industrialization and the rationalization of life and of the world. Accordingly, Klages recognized *Lebensphilosophie*'s obsession with *Schau* (scene or performance), *Schauung* and *Anschauung* (intuition in Kant's texts), *Schein* (*mere* or *false* appearance according to Hegel) and *Erscheinung* (*true* appearance according to Hegel), etymologically and semiotically related, all seen by *L ebensphilosophers* as part of an intuitive and "mysterious road" that leads to "a world of images."[8] This road, Klages wrote, leads to "breaking through thought (*discurrere*)," or "the *intuitive* spirit of the *discursive*."[9]

In its depiction of "science as a cultural critique" in the aftermath of World War I, Anne Harrington's *Reenchanted Sciences* describes the impact *Lebensphilosophie* created as a drive to wholeness or holism. "Many of the epistemological concerns raised by this movement," Harrington writes, "were not very different from those advanced by people like Dilthey in the 1890s, but life philosophy unfused them with a far more explicit political and populist accent. The graphological and pop philosopher Ludwig Klages, for example, spent three volumes denouncing human rationality as a parasite that had worked across history."[10] In his *Reactionary Modernism*, Jeffrey Herf acknowledges that *Lebensphilosophie* and its political supporters among the conservative

[6] "'Weltanschauung', schon vor dem Nazismus verbreitet, hat in der LTI als Ersatzwort fur 'Philosophie.' . . . 'Schau', dem Stefan George-Kreis heilig, ist auch der LTI ein kultisches Wort . . . 'System' gehort auf die Liste des Abscheus neben 'Intelligenz' und 'Objektivitat'." Viktor Klemperer, *LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen* (Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, 1975), p. 129.

[7] Ibid., p. 186.

[8] Ludwig Klages, *Charakterkunde II, Samtliche Werke*, vol. 5 (Bonn: Boucier Verlag, 1979), p. 234.

[9] "'Intuitive wird . . . nach Analogie der Wahrheit, d.h. mit einem Blick des inneren Auges gefunden . . . indem es seine mehr oder minder lange Kette von Schlussen durch lauft (discurrere). Dem intuitiven Vorfinden oder Haben steht das discursive Finden entgegen und, soweit beides auf individuellen Anlagen beruht: dem *intuitiven* Geiste der *diskursive*." Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, in *S a mtliche Werke*, vol. 1 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1969), p. 611 (emphases in the original). Klages uses the Latin term *discurrere*, which means literally "running back and forth" and comes from the same root as "discourse." The Latin-German dictionary explains that the word comes from *discursus*, originally meaning "movement, association, and speech." See Hans Schulz and Otto Basler, *Deutsches Fremdworterbuch: da capo-Dynastie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), p. 669.

[10] Anne Harrington, *Reenchancted Sciences: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 32.

revolutionaries "have the public sphere."[11] Both the political power of *Lebensphilosophie* and its impact on the public sphere were a consequence of its absolutist discourse. Herf's chronology is crucial here for his narrative leads—not from a certain political affiliation to the politicization of the discourse, the primary argument in his book, but its opposite. "The conservative revolutionaries were heirs to European irrationalist traditions," he writes, "traditions that took on a particularly intense coloration in Germany due to the politicization of *Lebensphilosophie*, the philosophy of life."[12] In other words, for Herf, the course is leading from the irrational idea to a political philosophy and then to the mutual, crude politicization of both, which gave this generation its peculiar character.

The contention of this chapter, and book, is a different one: *Lebensphilosophie* was radical first, and only later politically so. It was aesthetic first, and later was applied—with its aesthetic principles—to serve political action. Its radicalism transcended politics per se, which is exactly why the Nazis liked it so much.

The present chapter describes the end of the process that led from the late 1890s to the late 1930s, which is the formative period in the politicization of *Lebensphilosophie.* As will be shown below, the politicization was inherently tied to the fundamental aesthetics and temporality of *Lebensphilosophie*; after the drive to radicalization described in previous chapters came the development of an antistructural and antisystematic hermeneutics. During the late 1920s and early 1930s the movement became identified with pro-Germanism, naked white bodies against dark land, the Nazi understanding of life and death, of revival and renewal, of individuals and collectives, until finally *Lebensphilosophie* fostered the development of a specific and strict kind of biological politics. I proceed through these themes in order to explore the full extent and impact of the forms *Lebensphilosophie* fashioned for the political weltanschauung of the 1930s. I argue that only *Lebensphilosophie*—as a discourse—was able to foster the antireligious sacralization, the apolitical politics, and the ahistorical collective consciousness in which the Nazis brought about the utter destruction of conventional morality. To clarify further, I propose that Klagesian *Lebensphilosophie* be divided into three periods:

1. The early rebellious and intellectual *Lebensphilosophie* of the 1910s and early 1920s, shaped by the aesthetic and antinormative approach taken from the George circle and reworked by Klages, Baeumler, and Benjamin. The "Jargon of life" that marked the early 1900s reception of Nietzsche, Bachofen, and Dilthey, (see chapters 1 and 2) concluded in the mid-1920s with the Bachofen debate (see chapter 3) and a deep ideological division within this discourse.

2. The politicization of *Lebensphilosophie* in the midto late 1920s, adapted to the right wing in general and the Nazi party specifically. Close connection to Hitler's dec-

[11] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 24.

[12] Ibid., p. 26.

laration of the *FiihrerPrinzip* in 1926 and the establishment of Alfred Rosenberg's Combat Organization for German Culture in 1930. It is not a mere coincidence that the growing interest in racial typology stood at the center of this shift. A new understanding of individual and collective emphasized a pure German element in both single and plural terms. Klages's graphology and characterology helped to shape this against the "Jewish science" of psychoanalysis and individual freedom (see chapter 4). Lebensphilosophie has become the ultimate tool of control.

3. The actualization of *Lebensphilosophie* as a pure racial-political tool since the mid-1930s, and especially after 1938, left Baeumler in the midst of the Nazi administration, Klages on the margins, and Benjamin fleeing for his life. Long decades of historiography tried to separate here the conservative revolution from the racial and biological racism. Klages's career proves that this separation missed important discursive elements.

My previous chapters explained *Lebensphilosophie* by focusing on how it worked in the aesthetic elitist movement in Schwabing and in the alternative psychological theories of characterology and graphology. In this chapter I describe how it worked in its prime political form. Did this highly refined terminology affect its social and political surroundings? Did the new world of organic structures—as Foucault pointed out in *The Order of Things*—change the relation between language and nature, knowledge and being?[13] In the context of a certain period in Germany, how did it reach such wide circles of intellectuals, and what was its effect on them? What are the political implications of taking aesthetic categories and applying them to politics in a state of crisis? And finally, from a methodological perspective, what made "the most fashionable philosophy of our time," as Heinrich Rickert called it in the title of a book published in 1920, into a Nazi language?[14]

1. Lebensphilosophie: A discourse and its politicization

Lebensphilosophie—as a discourse of intuition and "inner eyes"[15]— would never have made the leap into politics had not the *discurrere* (dashing, rushing with no direction) of the early 1920s turned to "a creeping crisis of culture"[16] and a series of social and political upheavals that destroyed all public support for the Weimar parliamen-

[13] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 238.

[14] Heinrich Rickert, *Die Philosophie des Lebens: Darstellung und Kritik der philosophischen Modestromungen unserer Zeit* (Tubingen: J. C. Mohr, 1920).

[15] This is how Kracauer depicts Simmel's philosophical introspection, in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essyas*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (1963; reprint, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 257.

[16] Georg Simmel, "The Crisis of Culture," in *Simmel on Culture, Selected Writings*, eds. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 97.

tary system, producing what the high-ranking conservative revolutionary Hermann Rauschning described as "a desperate people, a people ready for anything."[17] How else could a purely philosophical discourse become a popular, often populist, tool in the hands of politicians? For that matter, in the early 1920s *Lebensphilosophie* never constituted a united political phenomenon. More significant, once the discourse was translated into proper political terms, those terms often contradicted principles firmly established by dominant *Lebensphilosophers*. The search for a practical and a "final solution" to the question of European Jewry, whether by means of expulsion or the complete annihilation of the race, would never have been accepted by the earlier form of *Lebensphilosophie*, before its politicization and Nazification during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Does the earlier resistance to practical solutions exempt those thinkers from any political responsibility? Ernst Cassirer argued in 1946 that fascism was based on destroying the sense of freedom and simultaneously "reliev[ing] men from all personal responsibility."[18] Cassirer's own solution, much like Foucault after him, was to try to understand the transformation of life—and use of it—as a stronger plea for political responsibility, not weaker. *Lebensphilosophers* mostly ignored this notion of responsibility. Looking at the world with close-range aesthetic lenses, they refused to extract any political meaning unless it was aesthetic, too. Many of them, like Ludwig Klages, became involved in politics in order to realize their view of aestheticized life, and they ignored the negative politics it implied. Klages himself refused to recognize his views as anti-Semitic.[19] Klages's political involvement, and especially his anti-Semitism, of which there can be no doubt, has been denied by his followers and by some apologetic historians—even as most Holocaust historians have treated his position as barbaric.[20]

The problem is somewhat clarified when illustrating how important the Klages circle became for the conservative revolution. Trying to realize, through this fusion of conservatism and revolution, the coming European revolution, the Klages circle felt deeply uncomfortable with the weapons taken up by the shock troops. Like other conservative intellectuals—Ernst Junger, Oswald Spengler, Hans Freyer, Wilhelm Stapel,

[17] Hermann Rauschning, *Makers of Destruction: Meetings and Talks in Revolutionary Germany*, trans. E. W. Dickes (London: Eyres and Spottiswoode, 1942), p. 21. Rauschning (1887-1982) was the president of the Danzig senate and a Nazi. He is best known for his *Conversations with Hitler* (1940), and a series of memoirs, often inaccurate, describing Germany in the early 1930s. After breaking with the Nazis in 1934, he was among the first to warn the world about his former associates' plans, and he prophesied the possible destruction of Europe.

[18] Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 288.

[19] See the correspondence of Ludwig Klages with Vienese scholar Herbert Honel, in which Klages refused to admit he was ever "an anti-Semite." Ludwig Klages to Herbert Honel, January 3, 1948, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61. 5334/12-22, letter no. 13.

[20] For a recent apologetic history of *Lebensphilosophie* in general and of Klages in particular, see Thomas Rohkramer, *Eine Andere moderne? Zivilisationskritik, Natur und Technik in Deutschland 1880-1933* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoningh, 1999).

Eduard Spranger, and, of course, Hermann Rauschning—the Klagesians approved of Nazi rhetoric yet refused to acknowledge its possible implications.

Lebensphilosophie had a great popular following during the 1920s and 1930s due to the interconnections among philosophy and psychology, aesthetics and an organic theory of the body. Much of its favorable reception came from circles connected to the post-Nietzschean conservative revolutionaries.[21] Klages's mixture of old-fashioned politics and innovative post-Nietzschean aesthetics proved to be an audience magnet. In 1928 Klages's lecture tour—exploring the tight connections between graphological and characterological signs and *L ebensphilosophie*— took him to Heidelberg, Baden-Baden, Mainz, Freiburg, Dusseldorf, Essen, and many smaller towns; detailed reports of his lectures usually followed in the local newspapers. In 1929 he lectured in Aachen, Leipzig, Duisburg, and Berlin, among other cities. When he spoke in Hamburg in 1932 and 1933, the newspapers reported sold-out halls, and the long newspaper reports included photos or sketches. Clearly he was a celebrity. In February 1932 the daily *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* devoted an entire page to Klages's lecture about temperament. "Today the name Ludwig Klages is a talisman," the article began. "One hears about him everywhere, from the *Lebensreform* and to the most recent issue of the *Goethe-Jahrbuch* . . . For the former, Klages is this century's great prophetic revivalist; for the latter, he is a nihilist who has pushed Nietzsche's ideas as far as they could possibly go and finally dissolves all traditional cultural values into an abyss [*Nichts*]."[22] Abyss is, here, a positive noun.

In December 1932, on his sixtieth birthday, Klages received from the Reich's president, Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934), the prestigious Goethe medal. A month later, on January 30, 1933, Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany by a reluctant Hindenburg, and later that year Klages became a "senator for life" at the German Academy of Sciences, thereby recognized as a founding father of Nazi ideology.

In the summer of 1933 Klages gave a series of lectures in Berlin and was hailed by the young Hans Eggert Schroder, who organized a small crowd to welcome him. The lecture hall was so full that students were listening from the window sills to hear the famous philosopher. In November 1933 Klages again made a tour of Germany to talk about *Charakterologie*. The lectures were reported in both academic journals and daily newspapers, and the comments were generally laudatory. In September 1934 the University of Hamburg hosted a conference dedicated to Klages's philosophy; again, according to private reports from Klages's followers present at the event, the hall was full

[21] Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 144.

[22] "Der Name Ludwig Klages ist heute ein Symbol. Ueberall tritt er uns entgegen: von der Lebensreform bis zum neuesten Bande des GoetheJarhbuches . . . Fur die einen ist Klages der grosse prophetische Erwecker des Jarhhunderts, fur die andern der entscheidene Nihilist, der Nietzsche bis in die letzten Konsequenzen weiterdenkt und schliesslich alle uberkommenen Kulturwerte ins Nichts auflost." "Die Lehre vom Temperament: Ludwig Klages spricht in Hamburg," in *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, February 3, 1932.

to capacity. In November of the same year, a Klagesian biological and medial researcher named Julius Deussen established the Arbeitkreis fur biozentrische Forschung (Working Group for Biocentric Research) in Leipzig and an accompanying journal. Schroder followed suit and edited a collection of essays dedicated to the newest Klagesian philosophy, biocentrism.

Early in the summer of 1935, at its annual conference, the congress of German philosophers had not turned its full attention to Klages, as he complained in a letter written shortly afterward.[23] This lack of respect was quickly corrected, as the next conference was dedicated to Klagesian themes. Among those present at the 1936 conference were Bruno Bauch (1877-1942), the acclaimed neo-Kantian who was then head of the Kant Society and served as chairman of the German Society of Philosophy between 1934 and his death in 1942; Eduard Spranger (1882-1963), the popular Diltheyan thinker who developed the psychology and philosophy of the *Lebensformen* in his book of that name (1922); the famous philosopher and biologist Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950), who was Heidegger's and Gadamer's mentor at Marburg; and Erich Rothacker (1888-1965), the rector of Bonn University and a well-known *Lebensphilosopher* who established the discipline of *Begriffsgeschichte* (history of concepts).

Reports about the conference filled not only the German papers of the day, but also reached the American academic audience. *The Philosophical Review* reported in May 1937:

The meeting, held at Berlin, September 21-23, 1936, was devoted to the general theme of "Soul and Spirit." This topic had been chosen in order to clarify issues raised by Ludwig Klages's thesis that "spirit is the enemy of the soul." However, the well-intentioned purpose was frustrated when Klages, who was to lead the discussion, was taken ill while on the way to Berlin and could not attend the meeting (although he read his paper a few days later to a Berlin audience). The papers presented at the meeting were entirely free from references to an ideology that is objectionable to most non-Germans. They breathed the traditional spirit of scholarly objectivity and could have been read before any audience of philosophers.[24]

The idealized report summarizes a number of the papers presented, among them a critique Spranger offered of Klages's emphasis on the immediacy of drives and intuition: "Immediate understanding always remains anthropomorphic . . . [An] understanding through categories implies that 'in our productive imagination' we comprehend a 'scheme of the world as a whole.'"[25] The focus of the conference (and of the report) was *Lebensphilosophie* and the debates it had sparked among Germany's various philosophical schools. Attendees agreed in general about the critical and revolutionary value of *Lebensphilosophie*, which was characterized as an excellent tool for grasping "man in

[23] Ludwig Klages to Werner Deubel, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, June 30, 1935, Sig.: 61.4475, letter no. 5.

[24] William H. Werkmeister, "The Thirteenth Meeting of the German Philosophical Society," *The Philosophical Review* 46:3 (May 1937): 321.

[25] Quoted in ibid., p. 323.

his totality and concrete reality."[26] A comparison of *Lebensphilosophie* and Heideggerian existentialism led to the following conclusion: "To-day we can only place life side by side with the inorganic world as 'primordial phenomenon,' without reducing the one to the other . . . Being is now grasped as a destruction . . . *Lebensphilosophie* has rendered a great service to philosophy in general by stressing the fact that time is intertwined with being."[27]

What the report to the American public missed, intentionally or not, was the controversial ideological remarks of the conference. For example, the conference opened with a militant speech by Werner von Blomberg, the minister of war and commander in chief of the German Wehrmacht. Bruno Bauch, the next speaker and the conference's chief organizer, ended his welcoming speech with a declaration of support for the Nazi regime. His remarks were sent to Hitler, "who did not reply."[28]

When Klages lectured in Berlin during this period, it was often to oblige Bernhard Rust, a former student of philosophy who held the post of Reich minister of education and the arts. Much like Joseph Goebbels and Hjalmar Schacht, who saw themselves as champions of German literature, Rust believed that the essence of Germany lay in its language and poetics, so he invited Klages to speak frequently. The support from within the Nazi party won Klages favorable reviews in the Nazi press. A report in the *VoIkischer Beobachter* entitled "Opposite Interpretations within the National *[volkischen*] Idea," announced that Ludwig Klages and Alfred Baeumler—recently appointed as the head of pedagogy at Berlin University—lectured in Berlin to full halls.[29] The report expressed equal interest in the two *Lebensphilosophers* but admitted that large gaps opened between the two meant that "the center of the conflict has been defined," hinting at the antagonism between Klages and Baeumler: "It seems that the grounds for fencing decisions would not be made only for the [sake of] philosophy."[30] "Fencing decisions" here meant the appeal of *Lebensphilosophie* to Nazi politics, exploring the possibility that a winner in philosophical terms would take over a wider public discourse, another testimony to the importance of philosophy in general, to radical politics in general, and of *Lebensphilosophie* to Nazism, in particular. Baeumler and Rosenberg thought along the same lines and between 1935 and 1938 worked together to secure their control over *Lebensphilosophie* vis-a-vis the Klagesians. During 1935 and 1936 Klages was negotiating with both the University of Berlin and the Lessing Hochschule in Berlin for a permanent professorship, a distinguished position

[26] Ibid., p. 324.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Hans Eggert Schroder, whose presence at the conference I have noted, reported all of these details to Klages, who did not attend. See Hans Eggert Schroder to Ludwig Klages, June 27, 1936, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.12259, letter no. 10.

[29] "Gegenpole innerhalb der volkischen Idee. Klages und Baeumler in Berlin," in *Volkischer Beobachter,* May27, 1933.

[30] "Gegenpole innerhalb der volkischen Idee." Quoted in Tobias Schneider, "Ideologische Grabenkampfe: Der Philosoph Ludwig Klages und der Nationalsozialismus 1933-1938." *Vierteljahrshefte fur Zeitgeschichte* 49:2 (2001): 280.

due to the extraordinary connection between Nazism and philosophical education at that time. He was outraged to discover that Baeumler and Rosenberg had erected tremendous barriers to his academic advancement. As will be shown below, the formal conflict related to philosophical issues such as the role of spirit (*Geist*) in the Nazi *Lebensphilosophie*. Informally, Baeumler identified Klages as an internal threat to his own hegemonic *Lebensphilosophie* and wanted to neutralize Klages and his circle by reducing their political impact. So keenly was the battle waged that Schroder thought it appropriate, in his report to Klages, to describe Baeumler's assistant's activity at the philosophy conference. A stream of letters from other correspondents kept Klages informed about all of Baeumler's (and Rosenberg's) actions against him.[31]

Under other circumstances these skirmishes might be seen as typically Machiavellian academic feuding. The picture changes, however, once we consider that both groups not only influenced the way Germans reflected about their own lives, but projected this image to the outside world. In 1936 Klages was sent as a Nazi cultural ambassador to the Norwegian and Baltic states. In addition to representing the cultural contribution of the Nazi regime in both lectures and a long series of meetings with governmental representatives, he was asked to pay special attention to Jewish "subversive elements," as he calls them in his reports. His general report to the Nazi Ministry of Culture declared his mission a spectacular success.[32] In his detailed reports he considered the valuable impact of his ideas on a welcoming audience that more often than not already knew his theories. In his reports Klages assessed the loyalty of other German representatives he met and insinuated that some were of less than perfectly Aryan stock. The German dailies, once again, covered Klages's tour in detail and confirmed his claims of success.[33]

The Nazi regime was obviously interested in exploiting Klages's reputation. His public activities in Switzerland, now his homeland, during the 1930s and 1940s helped provide the national socialist cause with a patina of respectability. Klages himself saw an opportunity to enter the elite of the Nazi regime, integrate his philosophy with its politics, and become the regime's official philosopher. Journal entries from a trip he made to Greece in the spring of 1937 boastfully noted his ability to identify Jews "and other eastern races" at a glance.[34]

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[31] Kurt Seesemann advised Klages to write directly to Rust to undermine Baeumler (and possibly his spies). See Kurt Seesemann to Ludwig Klages, February 17, 1935, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.12413, letter no. 19.

[32] See the unpublished "Reise Notizen (1935-1937)" in *Verschiedene Autobiographisches*, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.3844.

[33] See, for example, *Munchner neueste Nachrichten*, October 22, 1936. Quoted in Schneider, "Ideologische Grabenkampfe," p. 281.

[34] "Notizen zur Griechischen Reise, April-Mai, 1937," DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Conv.: "Reise-Notizen."

Until Rosenberg's office quashed it, a plan to establish an SS college would have based part of its curriculum on Klages's graphology and characterology.[35] The proposal had been given preliminary approval in 1935 by Rust's office and the Prussian finance minister Johaness Popitz; its advocates were a group of philosophically inclined economists, among them Klages's disciple, Kurt Seesemann, and Jens Peter Jessen (1895-1944), a conservative revolutionary better known today as one of the July rebels executed at Hitler's command in 1944.[36] Jessen was not the only conservative interested in Klages's *Lebensphilosophie* on the one hand and cooperating with the Nazis on the other (until he grew disillusioned, of course). In fact, politically speaking, the conservative revolution was Klages's home base, which is probably the explanation for the stark attack on Klages by Rosenberg and Baeumler.

The two Alfreds obviously suspected the Klages circle to be popular enough to take over the mainstream of Nazi ideology. Baeumler used his role in Rosenberg's office to encourage Rosenberg to sic the Gestapo on Klagesians. Rosenberg's personal attack on Klages and his students in 1937 eliminated the political role of the Klages school. Still, the very vehemence of Rosenberg's attack indicates that he thought he was facing a real threat.[37]

The public lecture Rosenberg delivered at the University of Halle in April 1938, entitled "Gestalt und Leben" (Form and life), is a unique case of a stark attack on a philosophical school by the Nazi elite. In his lecture, later published on the front pages of the Nazi daily newspapers and issued in book form, Rosenberg argued that the Klages circle "identifies itself with the courageous protection of nature within the rich inner forms [*Gestalten*] of our time . . . [T]his is what Klages and his students call the 'biocentric system,' their name for a list of great thinkers that starts with Heraclites and continues to Goethe, Nietzsche, and then Klages."[38] Rosenberg rejected the idea of Klages as the most important *Lebensphilosopher* of his generation and the principal framer of the Nazi weltanschauung: "For over ten years my work has involved this philosophy of life, but there is no actual life

[35] See Kurt Seesemann to Ludwig Klages, February 11, 1935, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.12413, letter no. 18.

[36] The "July Rebels" were primarily conservative revolutionaries who were disappointed by Hitler's self-destructive policies and hatched a plan to assassinate Hitler. But the attempt on Hitler's life, carried out on July 20, 1944, failed, and a majority of the rebels were exposed and executed. A few of the rebels were known to be connected to the Stefan George circle, as was Claus von Stauffenberg, the best known among them. For more details see Robert Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 657-658.

[37] See the document sent by the Prussian secret police to Hans Eggert Schroder, whose title was Geschaftsfuhrer des AKBF (ab. Arbeitskreises fur biozentrische Forschungen, that is, the Circle of Biocentric Research), May 7, 1936, Bundesarchiv Berlin, BA, R 490/PA K 236.

[38] "Klages einen tapferen Menschen und gluhende Verteidiger der Natur in der Reihe der innerlich reichen Gestalten unserer Zeit zu begrussen . . . das 'biozentrische System' . . . ist das Endpunkt und Hohe aller grossen Denker, vom Heraklit bis Goethe und Nietzsche bis eben zu Klages." Alfred Rosenberg, *Gestalt und Leben; Vortrag, gehalten am 27 April 1938* (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1938), p. 9.

[*fassbaren Leben*] there [in Klages's *Lebensphilosophie*], only an abstract notion of primordial humanity [*abstrakten Urmenschen*]."[39] Rosenberg's attack, other than providing an inaccurate reading of Klages, revisited the mid-1920s' debate about the correct interpretation to Bachofen's *Mutterrecht* (Mother right; see chapter 3). Rosenberg's claims were an important part of the Nazi regime's campaign to bring out the active side of *Lebensphilosophie*, which inevitably involved suppressing the movement's radical aestheticism and its rebellious resistance to the phallic or patriarchic element embedded in all systems.

In cultural terms *Lebensphilosophie* can be regarded as one of the first movements to combat the distinction between high and low culture. Relying on the post-Nietzschean *Kulturkritik* (cultural critique) and the call for a return to primordial life, the partisans of *Lebensphilosophie* argued for a view of the individual and the nation as unified by elementary instincts. Conservative revolutionaries turned to Klages's negative biocentrism and critique to form a dynamic movement, grounded in an antinormative appeal to new social forms and the power of life (*Lebenskraft*).

2. Lebensphilosophie and the conservative revolution

The conservative revolution that swept through Germany in the 1920s grew out of fierce opposition to the postwar parliamentarians and the damage the individual had suffered through mechanization.

Lebensphilosophie was present behind the founding book of the conservative revolution, written by Hermann Rauschning, an elitist conservative and at one time a close adviser to Hitler. Rauschning fled to Switzerland in 1936 after realizing that the final aims of the Nazi party were bound to result in catastrophe. When he offered a general description of the mood that propelled the revolution, Rauschning turned to a passage by Hugo von Hofmannstahl, a conservative author, avantgarde poet, and a close friend of Walter Benjamin who, like Klages, had been a protege of Stefan George only to rebel against him later.

What we of the younger generation sought was allegiance to a whole: accepted loyalties, established standards. We sought responsibility to the world around us, we asked for an allotted place and service. I come to that great passage of Hofmannsthal's which seems to me to be the deepest and most comprehensive of diagnoses of a possible future: "We may fairly speak of it as a gradual and momentous process when we

[39] "Diese Philosophie des Lebens in meinem Werk Stellung genommen und hervorgehoben, dass hier durch aus nicht von einem fasbaren Leben die Rede sei, sondern von einem abstrakte[n] Urmenschen, von dem niemand etwas weisse, dem man die nicht eine absolute 'Weltsicherheit' zuschreiben konne, dass es sich hier also um ein Produkt der Phantasie handle . . . auch hier nur Erd, Nacht, und Muttergotter als lebensnah hinaustellen und das Vaterrecht, die Licht-und Sonnenmythen der nordischen Volker, die Griechische, als nur geistig-lebenzerstorend zu begreifen." Ibid., pp. 12-13.

consider that it begins actually as a counter movement to that intellectual upheaval of the sixteenth century which we call, in its two aspects, Renaissance and Reformation. The process of which I am speaking is nothing else than a *Conservative Revolution*, in such a scale as the history of Europe has never known."[40]

Trained in politics rather than the humanities, Rauschning did not succeed in conveying the sense that the banner of this revolution bore a lucid aesthetic discourse, which would be so decisive for Hofmannsthal's understanding of organic *Schau* (performance). Nevertheless, his strong dependence on an aesthetician as a principal source for a political revolution is a telling point concerning the close relation between aesthetics and politics.

Roger Woods's history of the conservative revolution acknowledges this relation but frames it within a social context. Woods emphasizes that after 1918, many felt that "the war had no meaning."[41] Woods focuses on an educated middle class opposed to democracy, with little interest in "conventional nationalism"[42] or individualism. As radical was Ernst Junger's image of soldiers as ants being trampled by a giant, taken from the expressionist Klagesian, Alfred Kubin.[43] Woods adds to that image a feeling of inevitability, strongly associated with a new image of the machine. As one of the authors of the magazine *D ie Standarte* wrote, "Faced with the might of the machine, everyone was equal, and it was an unjust, despicable, and damnable business . . . just as birth and death, gale and storm will always be until the end of time."[44]

But what really distinguished this revolution from others was the emphasis on the battle as *Inneres Erlebnis* (inner experience)—the title of a popular 1922 book by Junger—and its adoption of the Nietzschean aesthetics of destruction. Junger turned the aestheticization of death and violence to the living dynamic of a "world that is perpetually creating and destroying itself." This last phrase was a part of the epigraph Junger used for his famous anthology *Krieg und Krieger*, identified by Walter Benjamin as the ur-text of fascism. Benjamin himself took Junger and this inherent relation between destructive violence and re-creation of inner experience to represent the rise of fascism in general. In "Theories of German Fascism," published in *Die Gesellschaft* in 1930, Benjamin pointed out that a whole generation of conservative revolutionaries learned to reconsider war as a "primal experience" that is identified with "the eternal," an untimely essence "which these new Germans now worship as it is the 'final' war that

[40] Hermann Rauschning, *The Conservative Revolution* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), p. 52 (emphasis in the original).

[41] Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 12.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., p. 16. For Klages's close correspondence with the expressionist Alfred Kubin, see Paul Bishop, "'Mir war der 'Geist' immer mehr eine 'Explodierte Elephantiasis,' Der Briefwechsel zwischen Alfred Kubin und Ludwig Klages," in *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* XLIII (1999), pp. 49-95.

[44] Franz Schauwecker, "Antwort," *Die Standarte* 16 (October 9, 1927): 446. Quoted in Woods, The *Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic*, p. 17.

the paficists carry on about . . . If this corrective effort fails, millions of human bodies will indeed inevitably be chopped to pieces and chewed up by iron and gas. But even the habits of the chthonic forces of terror, who carry their volumes of Klages in their packs, will not learn one-tenth of what nature promises."[45]

In their own studies of the conservative revolution, Stefan Breuer and Rolf Peter Sieferle—two of the best-known historians of the period—emphasized a similar type of aesthetics and temporality that supported the aestheticization of violence. In their eyes, a close reading of the conservative revolutionaries would inevitably bump into the "image of repetition" (*Weltbild der Wiederkehr*),[46] the principle of sovereignty that "did not distinguish state from society, or *status civilis* from *status politicus*,"[47] and Moller van den Bruck presented the notion that "the beginning is eternal" (*Anfang is immer*).[48] In more than one way, *Lebensphilosophie* was responsible for this language and its ideological content; uniting a "beginning" with "repetition" was its rebellion against every progressive teleology that developed according to a presumed end. What about the beginning of the conservative revolution itself?

"The conservative revolution,"according to Jeffrey Herf, "took place in and around universities, political clubs, and little magazines. These institutions,"he claims, "constituted the public sphere."[49] According to Herf, this public sphere was created by *L ebensphilosophie.* "The conservative revolutionaries," he writes, "were heirs to European irrationalist traditions, traditions that took on a particularly intense coloration in Germany due to the politicization of *Lebensphilosophie*, the philosophy of life."[50] Even though the correlation between the two groups was not exact—one was obsessed with translating immanent aesthetics into hard politics, the other refused in principle to acknowledge any institution—the shared interest in fundamental aesthetics, inner experience, and obsession with life incorporating death cannot be denied.

So we return to my earlier question: How were *Lebensphilosophie* and the conservative revolution connected? Herf's argument about the Weimar intellectual right wing, that it "claimed to be in touch with 'life' or 'experience' and thereby to be endowed with a political position beyond any rational justification," is just as true about Weimar's left wing.[51] Such an analysis cannot elucidate how the particular *Lebensphilosophie* preached by Ludwig Klages and Georg Simmel during the 1910s became a reactionary

[45] Ernst Junger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Berlin: E. S. Miller, 1922), pp. 81-82. See also Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic*, p. 19. For Walter Benjamin's comments on Junger and Klages see Walter Benjamin, "Theories of German Fascism," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2: 1927-1930 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 320-321.

[46] Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), p. 2.

[47] Ibid., p, 10.

[48] Quoted in Moller van den Bruck, *Das Recht der jungen Volker,* ed. H. Schwarz (Berlin: Verlag der Nahe Osten, 1932), p. 134.

[49] Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 24.

[50] Ibid., p. 26.

[51] Ibid., p. 26.

political praxis, nor can it explain how left-wing thinkers like Walter Benjamin, conservative thinkers like Hans Freyer, militant aestheticians like Ernst Junger, or a mix of all like Karl Lowith would be so receptive.

The integration of *Lebensphilosophie* to the conservative revolution seemed to come from a fusion of philosophy and politics, aesthetics and the everyday, Bachofen and Nietzsche with "heroic realism."[52]

Ernst Junger, like Alfred Baeumler and other pro-Nazi intellectuals, pleaded to invest in a new type of warrier-worker as "the face of a race that starts representing a new landscape . . . where one is represented neither as a person nor as an individual but as a type."[53] As Herf shows, "Junger's use of the categories of *Lebensphilosophie* lends a peculiarly grotesque duality to his celebration of war. The sources of war are not to be found in national conflicts of interest but in suprahistorical terms such as 'life' or 'blood.'"[54] Like Klages (or Benjamin) or Baeumler (or George Gross), Junger suffused his terminology with the *Rausch* (intoxication, ecstasy) of war. "Once again," wrote Junger, "the ecstasy. The condition of the holy man, of great poets and of great love is also granted to those of great courage . . . It is an intoxication beyond all intoxication, an unleashing that breaks all bonds."[55]

Why is it that conservative revolutionaries like Rauschning, Junger, Spengler, Freyer, and others always found their way back to the Georgian aestheticization of life and the Diltheyan hermeneutics of inner experience, even when not being fully conscious of it? A few years before Rauschning expressed his debt to Hofmannsthal—one of Stefan George's young proteges[56]—Benjamin had warmly praised Hofmannsthal's play *Der Turm* (The Tower, 1925)[57] for its presentation of the "primal sound of nature's creatures" and of a hidden yet "permanent, providential element of all revolutions."[58]

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[52] Alfred Baeumler, professionally responsible for integrating both Bachofen and Nietzsche into the Nazi vocabulary, identified Nietzsche with "a Heraclitan view of the world," which was focused, according to Baeumler, on the assumption that "Der Kampf ist der Vater aller Dinge [War is the father of all things]." Seeing the world in Heraclitan terms, Baeumler continued, meant for Nietzsche seeing reality in its purity: "Unerschopft und unerschopfbar, aus der Tiefe des Unerkannten schaffend und gebarend, Gestalten erzeugend, die nach einem Gesetz ewiger Gerechtigkeit aus dem Mischkruge des Daseins hervorgehen, sich bekampften, in diesem Kampfe sich behaupten oder untergehen. Will man eine Formel fur diese Weltansicht, so moge man sie *heroischen Realismus* heissen." Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker* (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 1931), p. 15 (emphasis in the original).

[53] "Es ist dies das Gesicht einer Rase, die sic hunter den eigenartigen Anforderungen einer neuen Landschaft zu entwicklen beginnt und die der einzelne nicht als Person oder als Individuum, sondern als Typus reprasentiert." Ernst Junger, *Der Arbeiter: Herrschaft und Gestalt* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta'sche Verlag, 1981), p. 113.

[54] Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 73.

[55] Junger quoted in ibid., p. 74 (Herf's translation).

[56] For a detailed description of the relationship see Norton, *Secret Germany*, pp. 98-107, 322-324.

[57] Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929) rewrote the play during most of the 1920s. This mourning play (*Trauerspiel*) refers to different texts that *became crucial for Benjamin's own theory of history and memory, from Pedro Caledron's Life Is a Dream to the story of Kaspar Hauser.*

[58] Walter Benjamin, "*Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Der Turm," in Selected Writings,* vol. 2: 1927-1934, p. 105. The critique was originally published in *Die literarirsche Welt*, March 1928. In it, as well as

In a letter to Hofmannsthal he wrote, "I see your play as a play of pure mourning . . . and your Sigismund [the protagonist] as a 'Creature.' . . . The spirits that are necessary in the mourning play are intrinsically connected here to the Creature [*Kreatur*]."[59] The word *Kreatur*, which means something inbetween the human and the animal, has recently been identified by Eric Santner as a key Benjamin used to describe the "inhuman" and "amplified life," a political and historical category central to his theory of signs, his "dialectic-at-a-standstill" temporality and biopolitics.[60] Retracing our steps from Benjamin back to the conservative revolution, it seems as if both aestheticians and revolutionary politicians were looking for a pathbreaking set of forms that would unite thinking and reality, human imagination and the primal sense of animalistic life. The left-right division came later. Benjamin, after all, like Hofmannsthal and Junger, was "one of the first to note that certain concepts of beauty were connected to *Lebensphilosophie* . . . [In] his essay on Junger, he had observed that the right-wing intellectuals had transferred the idea of expression from the language of *Lebensphilosophie* to the interpretation of historical events."[61] Ernst Junger was trying to do something Rauschning was striving for as well: translating the aesthetic immanence of *Lebensphilosophie* into organic metaphors of political activity. Equally interesting, however, was Benjamin's ability to sense this transformation while it occurred. Only someone who studied *Lebensphilosophie* and was equally sensitive to the sciences (biology), aesthetic tradition (philosophy, history), and contemporary relevance (*Jetztzeit*, politics) was able to understand the implications and effect of such a shift. Only someone who did not commit to the ideology behind those, the progressive view of Enlightenment, the conservative view of theology and tradition, or the sense of authoritarianism of politics, could have defamiliarized all and worked at a new perspective.

Such observations were not limited to Benjamin and his piercing intellectual power. Other intellectuals with an open approach to politics and aesthetics reacted with the same curiosity regarding *Lebensphilosophie* and its close ties with the conservative revolution, specifically Hans Freyer and Karl Lowith.

Hans Freyer arrived in Berlin in 1913 to study with Georg Simmel, attended all of Simmel's university lectures at the university, and visited Simmel at home on sev-

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in his letters to Hofmannsthal, Benjamin referred to the seventeenth-century Spanish play, *Life Is a Dream* by Pedro Calderon de la Barca.

[59] "In Wahrheit sehe ich in Ihrem Werk ein Trauerspiel in seiner reinsten kanonischen Form . . . Es ist der Stoff eines 'Trauerspiel' und der Sigismund Ihres Dramas ist 'Creatur' in weit radikalem Sinne . . . Die Geister, die dem Trauerspiel obligat sind, verbinden hier sich innigst mit der Kreatur." Walter Benjamin to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, June 11, 1925, in *Gesammelte Briefe*, vol. 3: 1925-1930, eds. Christoph Godde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1997), pp. 47-49.

[60] Eric Santner, "Miracles Happen: Benjamin, Rosenzweig, Freud, and the Matter of the Neighbor," in Slavoj Zizek, Eric L. Santner, and Kenneth Reinhard, *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), pp. 112, 150.

[61] Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 34.

eral occasions.[62] Like other members of the *Serakreis*—the small circle of conservative thinkers in Jena established by Eugen Diederichs—Freyer's first exposure to Simmel's ideas had come through Diederichs and the reactionary circle around *Die Tat*.[63] Diederichs himself served as Freyer's informal mentor, published two of his books, and was responsible for Freyer's first contribution to a major periodical, a review of Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* that appeared in *Die Tat* in 1919.[64] As I explained in chapter 3, during the 1920s and 1930s Hans Freyer referred routinely to *Lebensphilosophie* in general and to Klages in particular. Much like Benjamin and Junger, Freyer came to believe that Klages's notion of antilinear time could provide a crucial starting point for a modern hermeneutics. This led him to reject the idea of Western progress, a philosophy of time and history he identified with totalitarianism. During the 1930s he often sounded very much like the Klagesians, which critics pounced on, questioning his loyalty to the Nazi party.[65]

In his research on the *Tat* group, historian Kurt Sontheimer did not refer to Freyer, but explained that the journal and the circle around it "could be grasped as symptomatic [of] the spiritual and political crisis of the Weimar Republic."[66] For Sontheimer, who ignored the discursive applications of *Lebensphilosophie* and the way it was integrated by the politics of the conservative revolution, the *Tat* circle amounted to nothing more than a "group of esoteric writers," even if "Diederichs's *Tat* was not a '*volkisch*' journal in the primitive sense, like other groupings one views during the Weimar period."[67] Sontheimer found here an interesting point but turned against his own conclusions; in fact, it was *especially* those intellectuals standing between right and left that were most interested in *Lebensphilosophie* for its radical philosophical potential, and Karl Lowith is one clear example of this unconventional group.

In 1938 Karl Lowith, "one of the most significant figures of twentiethcentury German philosophy,"[68] a Jewish disciple of Martin Heidegger who was forced to flee Germany, was living in exile in Japan. From the other side of the globe, Lowith continued to reflect on and write about the philosophical and discursive conditions that enabled the politics of this time. One of his texts was a review for the Frankfurt School's *Zeitschrift fur Sozialwissenschaft* in which he compared Klages, Freyer, and Albert Schweitzer. He was quite fascinated by the first two and pronounced them as "two characteristic examples of our spirit and times." Relating their thinking to the tradition stemming from Dilthey's *Lebensphilosophie*, Lowith argued that their philosophy was "no longer a dis-

[62] Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 45.

[63] For more details about Diederichs and the *Die Tat* circle, see chapter 3 of this book.

[64] Muller, *The Other God*, p. 32.

[65] Ironically, the intraparty conflict was at its most intense between Freyer and Ernst Krieck, the regime's other significant *Lebensphilosopher*. See Muller, *The Other God*, pp. 280-285.

[66] Kurt Sontheimer, "Der Tatkries," *Viertelharshefte furZeitgeschichte* 7:3 (July 1959), p. 229.

[67] Ibid., p. 231.

[68] Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Lowith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 71.

cipline shaped by Ranke and Burckhardt, but a liberating advance [*frei Vorstossende*] inspired by one of the Fuhrer's initiatives and a 'logic of the heart,'" arising "from the blood, from the race, from faith.'"[69] Compared to the later generalizations, Lowith in 1938 seems much better equipped to judge and examine the potential and risks of this terminology. Lowith himself changed and shaped his positions between the mid-1920s and late 1930s. As I mentioned in chapter 3, in the late 1920s Lowith maintained a lively correspondence with Klages, praised his interpretation of Nietzsche, and contributed a number of reviews to his *Zeitschrift fu r Menschenkunde.* The boundaries that would divide the camps so decisively along political, ideological, and ethical lines in 1938 did not seem to exist in 1927.

3. Lebensphilosophie and politics: Der geist als widersacher der seele

The story of *Lebensphilosophie* and its connection to politics, even Walter Benjamin's part of the story, is not one of complete independence. After all, Benjamin used many sources as guidance and interacted with ideologies or thinkers Klemperer would never even consider deserving from an academic standpoint. A primary source for Benjamin was Klages's *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (Spirit as the adversary of the soul), published in three parts between 1929 and 1932. Klages's book embodied the hermeneutic principles that occupied both *Lebensphilosophers* and conservative revolutionaries in the heat of their own political transformation. Most visibly, it gave greater prominence to the biological terms that had been marginal in previous works, dwelling especially on the idea of *Grenzqualitat* (quality of thresholds), which Klages connected to the most fundamental condition of human cells.[70] Klages's biological ruminations were supported by many historical examples, drawing on current ethnological research and studies of ancient religions and rituals; the mathematical and physical material had presumably been mediated by Melchior Palagyi.[71]

[69] "Das Neue in F.s futuristischem Historismus, ist, dass die Geschichtlichkeit des 20. Jahrhunderts nicht mehr durch 'Fortschritt,' 'Entwicklung' und 'Dailektik' bestimmbar sein soll. Wesentliche 'Kategorien' der Geschichte seien jetzt 'Aufbruch' und 'Entscheidung,' Augenblick und Existenz. Dagegen seien diejenigen Kategorien, mit denen Dilthey die Geschichte zu verstehen veruscht, 'uber Nacht,' 'alte Generation' geworden . . . So seien z.B. auch die geschichtlichen 'Bewegungen' des 20. Jahrhunderts nicht mehr von der Art, wie sie etwa Ranke und Burckhardt begriffen, sondern 'frei vorstossende' auf Grund der Initiative eines Fuhrers und einer 'Logik des Herzens.' Mit Denken hat diese Geschichtsphilosophie naturgemass nichts mehr zu tun, kommt doch die Kraft zum geschichtlichen Handeln 'aus dem Blut, aus der Rasse, aus dem Glauben.'" Karl Lowith, review of *Aus Meinem Leben und Denken, Ludwig Klages, Der Mensch und das Leben, Hans Freyer, das geschichtliche Selsbtbewusstsein des 20. Jahrhunderts*, by Albert Schweitzer, *Zeitschrift fur Sozialwissenschaft* 7 (1938): 227-228.

[70] Klages, *Der Geist*, vol. 1, p. 238.

[71] One of the the most important voices influencing Klages's later philosophy is, surprisingly, the voice of the forgotten Hungarian Jew Melchior Palagyi (1859-1924), who published in 1901 a theory of

In *Der Geist* Klages identified four guiding principles of life—continuity, pulse, waves, and flow. The principles were based on ones elaborated in previous works by Klages: the typological system of repetitive modes, the aesthetic emphasis on thresholds, and the unexpected ecstatic potential of the inner experience. The first, continuity, was marked by "an unbroken living experience" which Klages understood as a continuous "having-been-flowing [*erlebete immer schon verflossen*]," opposed to the "interruptive quality of the spirit *[Grade der Lebensstorbarkeit*]." The essential form of *Erlebnis* was identified with the pulse, the repetitive but hidden rhythm of the planets, life and death, the ocean's waves and human hearts. Klages warned his readers not to confuse the movement of waves, identified with a "regular cosmic rhythm [*einer regelmassigen Wellenbewegung*]," with "the expression of breaks and oppositions [*des Erlebten wird zum Bewusstsein der Geschiedenheit der Gegensta nde*]." But most important of all was the "flowing experience . . . that forms the basis of any threshold quality [*Grenzqualita t*] and hence consciousness in the sense of the ability to comprehend and render judgment."[72] In other words, Klages argues that temporal terms such as repetition and flow or liminal aesthetic ones like thresholds and systems of signification bring one closer to life itself. Klages did not stop there, but made an attempt to bring the two parts together, the anti-linear and antiJewish temporality he identified with the Germanic, and the liminality he identified with the discourse of life.

The liminal temporality Klages emphasized at the heart of *Der Geist* did not prevent him from setting clear poles, mostly surrounding the core opposition of soul (*Seele*) and mind (*Geist*). The continuity, flow, repetition, and pulse all belong to the side of life and soul. The mind or the spirit stops this movement and therefore the flow of life itself. For Klages, "Soul is the meaning of the living body," which, Thea SteinLewin-

space and time that attempted to overcome Einstein's relativity theory. Palagyi relied on a regulative and ethical support, knowing he could not compete with Einstein's mathematics. Klages met Palagyi in 1908 at a conference in which the latter criticized Einstein's relativity theory. Their ensuing friendship became the most important one in this later stage of Klages's life. Klages saw Palagyi as his scientific soul mate and the mathematician who could materialize Klages's *Lebensphilosophie* into numbers and equations. The two independent scholars corresponded about metaphysical considerations and visited each other often, especially during the first half of the 1920s, when Palagyi was moving around in Germany. Klages's letters to Palagyi, still unpublished, expressed a deep personal commitment and sense of debt. Palagyi appointed Klages as the executor and editor of his posthumous works, which Klages followed and executed faithfully. Using his training in mathematics and physics, Palagyi developed a theory of time that reminds one of *Lebensphilosophie*; at the center of his theory he placed the concept of a "*fliessenden Raum*" (flowing space), which Klages grasped—after Palagyi—as "*geschenden Raum*" (occurring space). See *Der Geist*, p. 459.

[72] "Die Frage, was im Augenblick der Besinnung vom bereits verflossenen Erlebnis gegenwartig sei, fuhrt zur Aufdeckung eines tiefgehenden Unterschiedes der akttragenden *Grenzqualitiit* des Erlebens von den aktlosen Zwischenqualitaten, eines Unterschiedes, der die Grundlage der Lehre vom willkurbaren Sicherinnern bildet und damit des Bewusstseins im Sinne der Fahigkeit zum Erfassen und Urteilen." Klages, *Der Geist*, p. 238.

son wrote, "is the basis of Klages's science of expression."[73] Mind, spirit, intellect are all regulating forces connected to the will and to the regulation of the spontaneous life. Three properties of this polarized structure are the ability to arouse an emotional response ("affectivity"), the capacity to arouse one's will ("Temperament"), and the personal capacity for expression or "threshold of expression."[74] The expressive side of the vital movements is "the visible manifestation of the impulses and feelings of the psychic life," and it "formulates the following principle of expression: 'An expressive (body) movement is the visible manifestation of the impulses and feelings which are represented in the vital movement of which it is a component part . . . [T]he expression manifests the pattern of a psychic movement as to its strength, duration and direction.'"[75]

Der Geist is a far more political book than anything Klages had previously written. Its anti-Semitism—in spite of its reliance on Palagyi, a Hungarian Jew—is explicit and profuse, especially in the second part. Its principal thread leads from a theory of signs, time, and language to the ancient, Bachofenic world of cults and rituals, inherently tying together life and the cult of death, aesthetics and rituals of violence, leaping back to different images of "modern decline," "distancing of the worlds," the "growing alienation of subjective and objective." Much of the fault of this general decline is laid at the door of "Jewish moralism" taken further and reproduced by "Christian hunger for power"; "Judaism," Klages quoted one-sidedly from Nietzsche, "is the priestly people of resistance par excellence."[76] Referring next to Bachofen's theory of civilizations, Klages claimed that, while adapting high economy to a new history of the intellect, "[Catholic] Rome took over Jerusalem."[77] Jewish textual culture and its Catholic descendants signified for him a clear sign that logic, will, mind, and intellect took over life, flow, impulse, and the biocentric.

Romanticism meant to Klages the alternative to this inherent sense of decline, drawing on the romantic aesthetics of nature. Therefore, *Der Geist* erased the divisions between images and facts, past, present and future, laws and what lies outside of the law. The "flow" allowed nature to resist static structures. Instead of developing a historical-scientific narrative of culture, made of facts, events, or objects, Klages conceived of a historical process based on typology, working from a typological language of symbols. For example, he cared less about the history of architecture and great monuments than he did about the ruins of ancient temples, the hidden forms they exposed to those who

[73] Thea Stein-Lewinson, "An Introduction to the Graphology of Ludwig Klages," *Character and Personality* 6:3 (1938): 164.

[74] Ibid., p. 168.

[75] Quoted and interpreted by Stein-Lewinson, p. 170.

[76] "'Die Juden, sagt Nietzsche in 'Zur Genealogie der Moral,' in bezug auf den von ihm angesetzten Kampf zwischen Rom und Juda, 'die Juden namlich waren jenes prioesterliche Volk des Ressentiment par excellence' . . . der Papalismus ist judaisierter Casarismus." Klages, *Der Geist*, vol. 2, p. 1243.

[77] "'Nicht Byzanz, nicht Antiochia, weder Alexandria noch die afrikanische Hippo, sondern Rom tritt an Jerusalem Stelle.'" This is Klages quoting Bachofen in ibid.

view them without assumptions and moral judgments. The perspective is one of the present relevance, internalizing an ur-image that it inherits from its earliest sources: "When we, those living in the present, step in front of the temple ruins of the past, with a single glance we are deeply disturbed yet comprehend certain characteristics of the soul of antiquity . . . [A]n inner glow seems to reach . . . with Homer's Olympian epics and the clear metallic reverberations of the rhythms of the Greek tragedians."[78] The poetic consideration of symbols to life, according to Klages, is what contemporary science is missing. Arguing against Max Weber's famous *Science as a Vocation* (1918), Klages contrasts the idealistic view of science with the power of ur-images. Playing on the meaning of Max Weber's own name (*Weber* translates to "weaver"), he claims that Weber and Weberian sociology were incapable of understanding what he (or the ancient tragedian) weaves (*webt*).[79] Klages's deconstructive work on the relation between distance and nearness, implying an attack on Weber and then Simmel's sociology of *D istanz*, was the basis for his definition of the *aura*, a concept he and Schuler took from Bachofen and the ancient cults and which Benjamin, in turn, adapted along similar lines that undermined the spatial division of distance and nearness. For Klagesians, conservative revolutionaries, and critical thinkers alike, past and present came close and enmeshed into one mythic entity.[80] As esoteric as it may sound, such views made complete sense to the conservative revolutionaries of the late 1920s.

Klages's tendency to empty out concepts is most apparent when discussing Judaism and its "Paulinian sects." Channeling Nietzsche, Klages biliously called Judaism "a historical mistake of the Monon of the spirit."[81] For him, "the victorious 'monotheism' of the Israeli prophets, and their hatred of gods . . . translated into the vampire will to power."[82] One feels here the heart of Klagesian *Lebensphilosophie* beneath (negative) universal laws; a naked will to power, he claims, displayed the material laws found in "*Jahwes Gesetz*" (Jehovah's law), whereas Nietzsche and especially Bachofen found the substance of cosmic life and their biocentric metaphysics in appearances, images, fables set in worlds without shadows—or, rather, in worlds with shadows so deep they cannot be described.[83] Judeo-Christian morals applied directly to the world and never reflexively considered their own presuppositions, while Klages's world was constructed

[78] "Wenn wir Gegenwartigen vor die Tempeltrummer von Pastum treten, erfassen wir tieferschuttert mit einem einzigen Blick bestimmende Zuge aus der Seele des Altertums . . . Ein inwendiger Glanz scheint den Ruinen zu entstrahlen, der sie unter einen Himmel versetzt . . . mit der olympischen Epik Homers und den metallklar hinauschallenden Rhythmen der griechischen Tragiker." Klages, *Der Geist*, p. 270.

[79] "Was er webt, das weiss kein Weber." Ibid.

[80] Dagmar Barnouw identified this aesthetics of temporality as inherent to the "radical cultural conservatism" shared by Benjamin and Junger: "The unique significant image as transtemporal magic constellation—gazed at, stared at—is in Junger's as well as Benjamin's view a powerful comment on the banal temporality of technological systems." Dagmar Barnouw, *Weimar Intellectuals and the Threat of Modernity* (Bloomingon: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 216.

[81] Klages, *Der Geist*, vol. 2, p. 1266.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., pp. 1267, 1245.

from the thin lines separating shapes and temporal reincarnations. In a brilliant chapter devoted to the *Magna Mater* (Great mother), Klages proved that behind the discourses of antilegalism and antistructuralism lay nothing but "the beginning of life, thrown into the future, but rather as the fullness of life," grounded "not on the mutual exclusion of oppositions, but rather on the cutting through, the *coincidentia oppositorum*."[84]

The final aim of this "cutting through" was a "secret language," a typology that connected man and nature, in contrast to the JudeoChristian appeal to scientific clarity. Writing about the "essence of reality," Klages traced the philological ties between the German word *Dichten* (poetry) and the Latin word *dictare*, meaning "to copy" and, later, "to draft."[85] As Bachofen and Nietzsche indicated, the relationship between thought and image were much closer when humans identified nature as their immediate surrounding. Klages, however, contended that "the primordial Dionysian broke and was fused with the concept of 'prophet,' a demonic quality of the time."[86] In the premonotheistic period, time was not flowing necessarily to the realization and fulfillment of aims. Hence, the notion of thought and spirit or intellect had a different meaning altogether. From that perspective, Klages wrote about an "ancient meaning of *Geist*—the *spiritus* or *spirare* [breath, exhalation] or the *anima* and *animus*—all tied to drifting [*Wehen*] and to wind. In a linguistic sense, 'drifting' stemmed from *Rausch*, fermenting, 'drifting back' which survived from the old Nordic *gaisa*, meaning the ecstatic rupture [*rauschend Ausbrechen*]."[87] This linguistic lesson he connects with the fable about a secret language spoken by the Nordic races and their heroic god Wotan, whose name "is related to the German word for anger [*Wi ten*] and the Latin word for a singer of godly inspiration [*vates*]. Wotan is the god of runes—the secret and legendary Nordic language—and the father of magic, prophecy, and poetry. A rune is, then, the expression of 'a secret word,' the fatherland's song, a secret sign."[88]

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[84] Ibid., pp. 1334-1335. Klages took the concept from Simmel without admitting it. Simmel himself cites Thomas Aquinas.

[85] "Mit dem deutschen Lehnwort 'dichten' (aus lat. Dictare-abschreiben, spatter abfassen)." Ibid., p. 1196.

[86] "Fur die Griechen aber bliebt es in hohem Grade charakteristisch, dass sie dank ubermassigem Kunstsinn im Dichter nicht so sehr den vom Gotte Begeisterten als einen Bildner sahen und ihn deshlab aoinrf|S, d.i. den Macher . . . Dafur indes brachten sie den dionysischen Ursprung grade des Sehertums zur Geltung mit dem Worte Seher, das einen in damonischer Rasserei Beriffenen nennt." Ibid., p. 1197.

[87] "Dagegen entsprache dem die alte Bedeutung von 'Geist,' das wie spritus-von spirare-oder anima und animus-verwandt mit asiv = wehen und avspog = Wind = von den Sprachforschern auf einen Stamm fur rauschen, wehen, garen zuruckgefuhrt wird, der noch vorliegt in einem altnordischen geisa=raischend ausbrechen." Ibid.

[88] "Die Entwicklungsgeschichte keines germanischen Gottes ist so aufschlussreich wie diejenige Wodan (nord. Odins) . . . der Wetter-und Fruchtbarkeitsgott, der Schlachten-und Heldengott, der Erfinder der Runen, der 'Vater des Zaubers.' . . . Wodan, dem in den Veden der Damon Vata = Wind entspricht, von dessen Wagen es heist, er dringe donnernd alles zerbrechend vor . . . Wodan ist urverwandt mit wuten, mit lat. Vates, das 'gottbegeisterter Sanger,' und 'Seher' heisst, mit altir. Glaube = Dichter . . . 'Runes' ubrigens, wie beilaufig erinnert sei, bedeutet 'geheimes Wort,' geheimes Lied, geheimes Zeichen." Ibid., pp. 1197-1198.

As demonstrated in his mythic, highly codified language, Ludwig Klages tried to reload the normal, daily, banal language with an esoteric meaning he extricated from the ancient roots of language itself, before it was classified and organized in modern life. Such a suggestive and alternative undercurrent, flowing right under the feet, was an appealing thought for the conservative revolutionaries of the late 1920s. It enabled them to rethink their own senseless existence and the horrid violence they viewed as another appearance, an explosion, of an untimely entity that reached them from a primordial past. The images of *Lebensphilosophie* found their way into the daily life and speech of the Nazi elite. Rauschning quotes Hitler using the same language of biological metaphors and anti-ethical blood-aesthetics, time after time, in front of his closest adherents: "I assure you, that as Haeckel and Darwin, Goethe and Stefan George became the prophets of their own 'Christianity,' so would the swastika replace the cross. Instead of the blood of a messiah, you will celebrate the pure blood of our *Volk*, . . . a symbol for the eternal commuity of the *Volk*."[89] For some reason, most historians and philosophers preferred to view this as a simple case of irrationality.

4. The Klages circle: Werner Deubel

The growing integration of Klages's language in political circles, especially among those conservative revolutionaries who became Nazi supporters, could be easily demonstrated if one looks at his admirers. A few of Klages's leading disciples moved within the reactionary circles, and they dedicated much effort to spreading the Klagesian word and politicizing it. First among them is Werner Deubel, the best-known member of the Klages circle, after Klages himself. In December 1929 Deubel (1894-1949), a poet, cultural philosopher, and theater critic who had known Klages since the early 1920s, accepted an invitation to give a lecture on Klages's thought at a prestigious gathering of the Kant Society. In his report to Klages from the meeting, Deubel referred explicitly to the growing need to tie *L ebensphilosophie* to hard political issues on the one hand and canonical philosophy on the other. Klages seemed reluctant to follow this advice.

A year earlier, in 1928, Hans Kern, another faithful Klages disciple and later a loyal Nazi, was asked by Radio Berlin to prepare a series of lectures on *Lebensphilosophie.* Kern divided his lectures into four sections: the eighteenth-century notion of life espoused by Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Gottfried Herder, the romantic notion of life exemplified by Lavater and Carus, Nietzsche's radicalization of the romantic models, and, as the grand finale, Ludwig Klages on life. This four-part structure, as

[89] "Ich garantiere Ihnen, so wie sei Hackel und Darwin, Goethe und Stefan George zu Propheten ihres Christentums gemacht haben, so werden sie das Kreuz durch unser Hakenkreuz ersetzen. Sie werden anstatt des Blutes ihres bisherigen Erlosers das reine Blut unsers Volkes zelebrieren; . . . [als] Symbol der ewigen Volksgemeinschaft." Hermann Rauschning, *Gesprache mit Hitler* (New York: Europa Verlag, 1940), p. 51.

well as Kern's explicit references to current politics, made it clear that he saw *Lebensphilosophie* as part of an antiKantian tradition of the revolutionary right.

When he expanded his lecture in an article published by Werner Deubel, he pushed the claim further. Eight years after his radio lectures, transcripts of Kern's lectures were distributed by Klages's followers to key figures in the Nazi elite and to Nazi journals and newspapers.[90] The circle's work was so thorough that historians who have conscientiously studied these Nazi sources still consider Carus and Lavater the fathers of modern racism, without comprehending the organized effort by the Klages circle to convince them of that viewpoint since the early 1920s, and especially after 1930.[91] Klages himself, in spite of his paranoia about the "Jewish journalism,"[92] acknowledged the influence he had on big conservative dailies such as the *Vossische Zeitung* as well as smaller and elitist magazines such as the *Berliner Blatter* and *Die Tat.*[93] Even a partial reckoning of the dailies and journals that had published Klages since the midand late 1920s would list dozens of references.[94] Klages's influence definitively displays the criteria Herf made for the principle sites for the conservative revolution, created in the public sphere of "universities, political clubs, and little magazines"; but more importantly, his influence proves how *Lebensphilosophie* penetrated into the heart of the popular conservative media, uniting aesthetic anarchism with conservative politics.[95]

The most explicitly political texts, those that formed the ideological backbone of the conservative revolution, were never written by Klages himself but by his most trusted students, primarily Werner Deubel and Hans Kern (see chapter 4 for more on Kern). The two disciples exemplify the shift from a post-World War I conservative revolution to a Nazi obsession with racial purity. Deubel, addicted to morphine since he received an injury in World War I, grew increasingly dependent on the Klages circle in the 1930s

[90] See Kern's reports in his correspondence with Klages. Hans Kern to Ludwig Klages, February 5, 1928, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.10290, letter no. 24; Kern to Klages, October 30, 1936, Sig.: 61.10292, letter no. 36.

[91] See, for example, Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 24, and Richard T. Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

[92] This is a recurrent term in Klages's correspondence with his followers. For example, see the exchange between Klages and Kern in 1936, when Klages was accused of being sympathetic to Jews and answered by supplying proof of the attacks "the Jewish press" carried against him. Usually, such accusations relied on the Jewish identity of the publisher, the editor, or a key writer for the relevant journal or paper. For the use of the term "Jewish press" see Hans Kern to Ludwig Klages, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, October 7, 1936, Sig.: 61.10292, letter no. 33. For the "Juda ver. Klages plan" see Kern to Klages, November 5, 1936, Sig.: 61.10292, letter no. 37.

[93] Ludwig Klages to Kurt Seesemann, January 27, 1933, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.7133, letter no. 16.

[94] See the newspaper boxes at the Klagesarchiv in DLA, Zeitungsausschnitte, 1904-1914 and 1920-1927. According to later reports by Schroder, a majority of the material was collected and kept by Klages himself.

[95] Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 24.

and 1940s.[96] Klages and his followers provided the Deubel family with both food and cash, and Deubel, who had been convinced of Klages's genius since the appearance of *Vom kosmogenischen Eros* in the early 1920s, repaid his patron with intense loyalty and a highly laudatory tone in a long series of critiques for different newspapers.

In 1931 Deubel published *Deutsche Kulturrevolution; Weltbild der Jugend* (The German cultural revolution: A worldview of the youth). Reinhard Falter described this popular text as "a Klages disciple's manifest."[97] Much like other Klagesian texts, it places Klages's ideas in line with the conservative revolution, politically speaking, but presents a philosophical divergence due to its focus on aesthetic ideas. Later Klagesians would refer to Deubel and other writers of this period as the "intergeneration," the group that was active between the early postwar generation and the national socialists. Deubel, indeed, like Nietzsche's "last man," pointed at the major contribution made by younger thinkers than himself—the generation that was not haunted by the traumas of the trenches of World War I, but that translated the lessons of the war to an aesthetic conclusion that would overcome the "old age of European civilization."[98]

As Deubel showed in the first pages of his book, this group set the conditions for the German revolution, that is, the "dynamic movement" of the "living craft" (*lebendige Kraft*).[99] Yet, typical of the constant ambivalence that plagued the Klages circle, Deubel also expressed some reservations regarding the total politicization of the aesthetic as "an intensive, but helpless drive."[100] As an alternative, Deubel suggested the Jungerian "experiencing of death," which put a demand on total aestheticization and reached beyond conventional politics. Deubel grounded this in an actual experience: "The world war meant the graphic experiencing of death and for thousands the earthquake of the soul . . . This infused the conventional content of concepts such as *right* and *left*. Both camps serve death, . . . and where one flourishes without roots, the other hopes to bloom though its fibers are desiccated."[101] The last part of the passage was taken almost word for word from a letter Klages had written to Deubel in April

[96] Deubel's situation can be scrutinized from the intensive pleas for financial help he sent to Klages and other members of the circle. Klages made comments about Deubel's addiction in a few letters. In 1926 Klages warned Deubel that "Morphine does not create damage itself, but creates an inner effect [i.e., dependency]." In this letter Klages admitted he experimented with it and other drugs because of his chronic insomnia. Ludwig Klages to Werner Deubel, February 7, 1926, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.4472, letter no. 3.

[97] Reinhard Falter, *Ludwig Klages: Lebensphilosophie als Zivilisationskritik* (Munich: Telesma Verlag, 2003), p. 68.

[98] Werner Deubel, ed., *Deutsche Kulturrevolution; Weltbild der Jugend* (Berlin: Verlag fur Zeitkritik, 1931), p. xvi.

[99] Ibid., p. vii.

[100] "Oder nur ein zwar intensives, aber ratloses Auseinanderstreben ausdrucken soll." Ibid., p. vii.

[101] "Der Weltkrieg gerade als Erlebnis des Todes bedeutete fur Tausende das erste Erdbeben der Seele . . . Es genugt heute nicht mehr, ein junger Mensch zu sein, um im Sinne einer solchen Revolution zur Jugend zu zahlen. Vor ihr verliefern dem Tode, wenn-auf das Lebendige bezogen-dort die Schlauheit des 'bosen Willens' und hier die Dummheit des 'guten Willens' steht und die einen ohne Wurzeln bluhen, die andern mit verdorrten Fasern wurzeln mochten." Ibid., p. xi.

1931 and which continued to separate left and right: "The left is associated with the shrewdness of the 'evil will,' the right wing with obtuseness."[102] In the letter Klages instructed his acolyte to consult *Der Geist*, which traced a history of ideas (*Geistesgeschichte*)—or, rather, a counterhistory—from Heraclitus to Nietzsche to Alfred Schuler, and, inevitably, Klages. The principal theme connecting the names was "the prehistory of the revelation of images."[103]

After two decades invested in the philosophy of life, Klages and his circle had become the philosophers of death. By the paradoxical phrase "experiencing of death," Klages and Deubel meant to express the inherent link between life and death, the simultaneous existence of an end and of a continuous process. They presented life according to pre-Socratic thought, experienced in terms of a primordial and imagistic time, scorning as "an intellectual act" the idea of continuing time.[104] From this perspective, all life should be seen not as something that arose out of nothing and shaped into fullness, but as an image reflected backward, in search of a deadly cell, the only carrier of true *duree* (duration) in life. This retroactive capacity to see death everywhere is different from the roots of *Lebensphilosophie*, as they were discussed by Simmel and Dilthey. Simmel's notion of *Grenzwesen* (essential thresholds), which— as Heinrich Adolf noted—"carries within it the inherent notion of overcoming borders."[105] Instead, Klagesian *Lebensphilosophie* should be understood as a hermeneutic power that uses finality as an image in order to sharpen one's sense of living life on the edge. Death charges life with *Rausch* (ecstasy), for it requires one to live life to the fullest at any given moment. *Lebensphilosophie* provides the close connection between *Rausch* and pessimism. In the words of the Pythagorean philosopher and physician, Alcamaeon (Alkamion), quoted by Klages and later cited by Hans-Georg Gadamer, "We human beings must die because we have not learned to connect the end with the beginning again."[106]

Tying death with linearity and human finality was, then, an old tradition. What Klages and his disciples pleaded to, however, was the internalization of human finality into life itself and overcoming the ancient metaphysics that accompanied it. Overcoming old opposition between life and death was translated also to collective terms, which is perhaps the reason Deubel repeated—after Klages—that "it is not only the epoch of German culture that has ended, but the European position in the world that has

[102] "Links steht die Schlauheit des 'bosen Willens,' rechts die Dummheit." Ludwig Klages to Werner Deubel, April 21, 1931, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.4474, letter no. 2.

[103] "Aus der Vorgeschichte der Entdeckung der Bilder." Ibid.

[104] "Erwagungen uber die Zeitdauer geistiger Akt anzustellen." Klages, *Der Geist*, p. 41.

[105] Heinrich Adlof, *Erkenntnisstheorie auf dem Weg zur Metaphysik*: *Interpretation, modifikation und Uberschreitung des Kantischen Apriorikonzepts bei Georg Simmel* (Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag, 1999), p. 213.

[106] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientifi c Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 150.

reached its end."[107] The end of history, individual death, and images of ruins preceed history itself, individual life, and new constructions. Now was the time to rethink its limits and boundaries. Klages tried to redirect Simmel's thresholds philosophy back to the living experience of the Germanic mythos.

Deubel's text became a basic text of the conservative revolution in its later pro-Nazi form. It was described as such in the November 1935 *Volkischer Beobachter,* which featured a comprehensive review of his work. The article praises Deubel both for his "brilliant text" and for his longstanding contributions to the Nazi effort, "not only as a critic and a cultural philosopher, but as a creator"—the last comment a reference to his career as a dramatist.[108] It also praised Deubel for cultivating popular awareness of poetics (*Dichtung*) in his book, for adopting an antianalytic writing strategy that relied on metaphors and images instead of polemical arguments.

5. Conclusion: First attempt to theorize Lebensphilosophie

Lebensphilosophers argued fiercely in favor of a ritualistic yet selfconscious notion of life as a coherent discourse and a form of codification of signs, grounded in the circularity of blood, the repetitive heartbeat, or other bodily arithmetics (*Rechenkunde*).[109] *Lebensphilosophers* turned to the sacred world as a store of images and symbols: the sacred body, the repetitive flow of time, and the biocentric focus on "cosmic life and blood symbolism."[110] These were manifested in the ahistorical human appearance (*Schau*) of shapes (*Gestalt*) such as "the rod, cross, ring, egg, hand, finger, eye, etc.,"[111] mediated by the ancient symbol of certain trees "and the shape of the phallus."[112] The types of symbols, one should note, always worked from the feelings in the present, from the

[107] "Es ist ja nicht nur eine deutsche Kultureopche, es ist eine europaische Weltstunde die zu Ende geht." Deubel, *Deutsche Kulturrevolution*, p. xvi.

[108] A Nazi administrator added the article to Werner Deubel's file, now at the German Bundesarchiv in Berlin, BA, RK, Sig.: B 0030. According to materials found there, Deubel entered the Nazi Reichsschriftskammer (Nazi Organization of Writers) on August 4, 1942, recommended by Klages and Hugo Bruckmann.

[109] *"Ein andrer Abweg zur kodifizierten Zeichendeuterei und mit Vorliebe zu einer mystische[n] Rechenkunde, wie beides soeben da und dort wieder* in Blute stehen, teilweise im Dienste erwerbsassiger Mantik." Klages, *Der Geist*, p. 1276.

[110] "Denn auch sie sind Angelegenheit des Organismus; wohingegen der Zerfall, von dem hier bestandig die Rede ist, die *Lebenssubstanz* oder denn das Prinzip betrifft, vermoge dessen kosmisches Leben in die Form organischen Lebens eingeht . . . Dagegen [der Zerfall] konnte in der Beziehung Entdeckung einem Forscher gelingen, der einzudringen vermochte in die *Symbolik* des Blutes . . . [dass in] dem *biozentrischen* Metaphysiker der Zukunft ein unabsehliches Feld eroffnen." Klages, *Der Geist*, vol. 2, p. 1245 (emphases in the original).

[111] "[Z]um andern Eingenschaften seiner Gestalt: Stabform, Kreuzform, Ringform, Eiform, Handform, Fingerform, Augenform usw." Ibid.

[112] "[M]it einem Korper vom Holze der Feige und von der Gestalt des Phallos." Ibid.

phenomenon or "now point" (*Jetztpunkt*).[113] Klages found his way back into an immanent perspective by seeing an inherent relation between the outer phenomenon and the inner experience. "The soul is the formative principle of the living body," he wrote, "exactly as the living body is the phenomenon and exposure of the soul,"[114] and his writing grew from this intricate, heavily symbolic, and circular mythical perspective.

If the only way to figure the gradual politicization of *Lebensphilosophie* is by examining it from the perspective of discourse theory, it is not surprising that the first to pay attention to its aesthetic rebelliousness were literary scholars and political philosophers. Following the lead of Peter Szondi, who focused on the work of nineteenth-century *Lebensphilosophie*, I argue that *Lebensphilosophie*'s greatest contribution was its hermeneutical radicalism.[115] This radicalism, in turn, allowed *Lebensphilosophie* to keep its political relevance even while debating the principle of representative politics and the mimetic relation between thought and reality. For *Lebensphilosophie* nothing but total unity was deemed satisfactory. In this sense, *Lebensphilosophie* was leading to what Hannah Arendt called the totalitarian principle of "a constant radicalization of the standards,"[116] and Hans Mommsen called a "cumulative radicalization."[117] Stressing the inherent radical element in *Lebensphilosophie* demonstrates how and where it worked for the Nazi rhetoric.

Expanding beyond Szondi's thesis, I believe that during the 1920s *Lebensphilosophie* radicalized oppositions to such a degree that they simply collapsed in favor of an ontology of flow and circularity; *Lebensphilosophie* shaped a unique hermeneutic that served well the Nazi demand to form an antipolitical language to deal with democratic representative politics or an antiparliamentarian philosophy that pleaded the end of the democratic left-right divide in favor of a total organic unity.[118] The roots of this extreme approach could be seen in Nietzsche and Bachofen, but the idea did not turn into a clear cultural marker until the 1920s. Here again, seeing *Lebensphilosophie* only

[113] "Wenn wir bedenken, dass wir vom Jetztpunkt im Plural sprechen, solcherart auf ein Selbiges in den verschiedenen Jetztpunkten hinblickend, unerachtet unser wirklichles Jetzt einmalig, einzig und ohneglichen ist." Klages, *Der Geist*, vol. 1, p. 21.

[114] Ludwig Klages, *Zur Ausdruckslehre und Charakterkunde* (Heidelberg: Niels Kampmann, 1926), p. 304.

[115] Peter Szondi, "Schleiermachers Hermeneutik heute," a chapter in *Schriften II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978), p. 112.

[116] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1973), p. 391. In a footnote Arendt extends her characterization "into all phases of Nazi policy."

[117] "Der Nationalsozialismus: cumulative Radikalisierung und Selsbtzerstorung des Regimes," entry by Hans Mommsen, *Meyers Enzyklopiidisches Lexikon*, 16 (1976): 785-790. See also Ian Kershaw's discussion of the "unstoppable radicalization of the 'system'" in his "'Working Towards the Fuhrer': Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship," in *The Third Reich: The Essential Readings*, ed. Christian Leitz (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p. 250. Saul Friedlaender has repeatedly used this concept in different works. Most importantly, see the way he used the concept to explain the shift to the "total war" and the genocide during the summer of 1941. Saul Friedlaender, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pp. 197-260.

[118] Szondi, "Schleiermachers Hermeneutik heute," p. 113.

as a discourse permits such a view, and only this perspective can demonstrate the power the discourse had, not only on the aesthetics of both Klages and Baeumler, but on other strange communions of left and right, such as the life characterology of the Jewish phenomenologist Emil Utitz (see chapter 4), the radical *volk* psychology of Wilhelm Stapel, or the sociology of the progressive Georg Simmel and the conservative Hans Freyer. Finally, it is my belief that this is the critical explosive potential that enabled Walter Benjamin's extraterritorial perspective on all matters.

Szondi argued that the new hermeneutics developed by the Dilthey school created the basis for a new language of life and a new total speech act that tried to unite the most abstract aesthetic principles with what Heidegger would later call the *ontic*, the ontology of the everyday. This meant that the discourse of life was committed to the same life laws of the individual and collective soul that led to Heidegger and Gadamer's philosophy, and, in contrast to the formalistic theories, into a world of metaphors and images extracted from what Szondi calls a "*path-breaking life moment* [*Lebensmoment*] as an immediate act, [performed] not through a document, but through an active, actual expression of life."[119] In this way Szondi characterized the Dilthey school of *Lebensphilosophie*, but Klages went one step further. For him, this aesthetic of life forms was asserting its relevance to even the simplest actions of the body, only to conclude that its realization was the opposite of activity and the will. In other words, Klages took a purist aesthetic position that forced him to support a passive stance in the world; only such passivity could allow a total recognition of the cosmic aesthetic power and avoid the easier enactment by any political force. If, as Ulrich Raulff showed, Klages's aestheticism and political abstinence were shared by George, "a decisionist of ambiguity," Klages made this avoidance a philosophical principle.[120]

Klages's cosmology echoes the most basic arguments Simmel set forth in his *Lebensanschauungen* (1918),[121] following Henri Bergson and Stefan George, and extends them.[122] Klages's was unique in his early attempt to conceptualize the fundamental principles of structuralism, the better to transgress them, striving all along to achieve the very same exclusivity that Simmel and Bergson, Lessing and Benjamin were avoiding. This attempt was visible in his 1922 *Vom kosmogenischen Eros:* "The cosmos lives, and everything that lives is polarized; the two poles of life are soul [*psyche*] and body

[119] "Um die Auffassung des Gesprochen . . . Rede und Schirft aufgefasst als *hervorbrechender Lebensmoment* und zugleich als Tat, also nicht bloss als Dokument, sondern als active, aktuelle Ausserung des Lebens." Ibid., p. 112 (emphasis in the original).

[120] Ulrich Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister, Stefan Georges Nachleben* (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 2009), p. 72.

[121] Georg Simmel, *Lebensanschauung: Vier metaphysische Kapitel* (Munich: Duncker and Humblot, 1918).

[122] Rudolf W. Meyer, "Bergson in Deutschland, Unter besonderer Berucksichtigung seiner Zeitauffassung," in *Studien zum Zeitproblem in der Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Phanomenologische Forschungen 13, ed. Ernst Wolfgang Orth (Munich: Verlag Karl Albert, 1982), vol. 13, pp. 10-89.

[*soma*] . . . The meaning is experienced internally; the appearance externally."[123] The concept appears in his 1930s work on the opposition between the spirit and the soul, working in the same way by radicalizing the opposition and then overcoming it, thanks to an internal "reality of [primordial] images," of life and especially of death.

In contrast to the Judeo-Christian tradition that Kant helped to institutionalize, and that Klages sees as "nihilist" formalization,[124] Klages attempted to overcome structures and absolute limits.

The gaps Klages traced between the demand to total inner living and what the outer phenomenon reflected required a horizon of a catastrophe, or, as Walter Benjamin wrote a year after Klages's *Eros*, "pure language" can be attained only where "all information, all sense, and all intention finally encounter a stratum in which they are destined to be extinguished."[125] There is no contrast between Klages's passivity and his belief in the perfection of catastrophe; it was this very cosmological passivity, he thought, that would enable the catastrophe and create the condition for the rise of the superman. He was not wrong.

Klages's superman was a man of words, the creator of a new language of life. Klages longed for the appearance of pure language through a linguistic *Fuhrer,* but acknowledged this desire as wishful thinking as a testimony for loss. "If we look in any dictionary, e.g., that of George, we find that 'genius' comes from *gignere* "to beget" [*zeugen*], which indicates a god that reigns over human nature and acts on the procreation and birth of humans, that accompanies them as their protector throughout life, and that determines their fate."[126] In other words, it is the aesthetic genius, the painter of words, the creator of images, that possesses the power to reunite the different human levels, the upper and the lower with authentic images of existence.

In spite of his strong resistance to George, Klages, much like Benjamin, still acknowledged his crucial role in reforming language, reconstituting German around the idea of inherent life. Still, Klages was certain that only he was capable of importing

[123] "Der Kosmos lebt, und alles Leben ist polarisiert nach Seele (Psyche) und Leib (Soma). Wo immer lebendiger Leib, da ist auch Seele; wo immer Seele, da ist auch lebendiger Leib. Die Seele ist der Sinn des Leibes, das Bild des Leibes die Erscheinung der Seele. Was immer erscheint, das hat einen Sinn; und jeder Sinn offenbart sich, indem er erscheint. Der Sinn wird erlebt innerlich, die Erscheinung ausserlich." Ludwig Klages, *Vom kosmogenischen Eros*, in *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 3 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974), p. 390.

[124] "Der Nihilismus jedoch der Kantischen Formel lasst, wie wir sehen warden, den der Eleaten noch hinter sich!" Klages, *Der Geist*, vol. 1, p. 57. Two-and-a-half pages later Klages also identifies Kantianism with the "kapitalistischer Unternehmer," that is, capitalist enterprise. See ibid., p. 60.

[125] Benjamin plays here with the Jewish bible and Goethe's *Faust* simultaneously. But *logos*, the word, its sense of beginning or end, are all embedded in his understanding of life as pure language, taken from the tradition that ends with Holderlin and George. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: 1913-1926 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 260-261.

[126] "Schlagen wir in einem beliebigen Worterbuche, z.B. von Georges, nach. So finden wir unter dem Worte 'genius' das folgende: Genius, von gignere=zeugen, bezeichnet den uber die menschliche Natur waltenden Gott, der bei der Erzeugung und Geburt des Menschen wirkte, als sein Schutzgeist ihn durchs Leben begleitet und sein Schicksal bestimmte." Klages, *Der Geist*, vol. 2, p. 1278.

these Georgian insights into the philosophical realm that would reunite language with the imagistic experience of the world. It was a total view of the world exactly because it was limited to the appearances and images to begin with. The cosmology, ontology, and mysticism were all encircled by the boundary of perception, which internalizes the entire world (*Welt-All*).

Hannah Arendt complained that totalitarian movements drained concepts of their content, inverting the conventional hierarchy of contents over form.[127] Klemperer made a similar complaint: "How many concepts and emotions [the Nazi language] has poisoned and damaged!"[128] Yet *Lebensphilosophie* and Nazi terminology both rejected the very use of concepts as a necessary tool of understanding and refused to acknowledge the value of analytical characterization. One might as well debate existentialism with a ghost as attack Klages and his epigones for ignoring, twisting, or falsifying the true meaning of a concept.

In *The Order of Things* Michel Foucault pointed out a fundamental change that occurred at the end of the eighteenth century, namely the integration of the "organic structure" into the language, and the "essential displacement which toppled the whole of Western thought: representation has lost the power to provide a foundation . . . for the links that can join the various elements together."[129] *Lebensphilosophie*, obsessing about immediacy, ecstasy, intuitive typology, inner experience, and inner sight, extended this vitalistic turn and radicalized it. It immanentized death as a subcategory to life, but refused to acknowledge its political implications: "It kills because it lives," Foucault wrote, referring to the transformation that was leading to modern animalism, vitalism, and "untamed ontology."[130] Celebrating this animalism as an aesthetic-political phenomenon, Ernst Junger argued, "To live means to kill," giving a voice to a whole generation of conservative revolutionaries.[131] Accepting the necessary presence of death in life, *Lebensphilosophie* chose a less militant but not less destructive road. It destroyed the mimetic-analogical operation of classical logic in favor of a new immanent relation one identifies, nowadays, with biocentrism and biopolitics. My final chapter describes that collaboration.

[127] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 348.

[128] "Wie viele Begriffe und Gefuhle hat sie [die Sprache des Nazismus] geschadet und vergiftet!" Klemperer, *LTI*, p. 10.

[129] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 238-239.

[130] Ibid., p. 278.

[131] Junger, *Der Arbeiter*, p. 45. See also Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 74.

6. Lebensphilosophie and Biopolitics: A Discourse of Biological Forms

1. The history of biopolitics

Current histories of biopolitics repeat the key importance of Germany in the 1920s. The decade is generally described as the period that saw "the emergence of this biopower that inscribes it in the mechanisms of the State."[1] "Biopower," Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri write, "is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and articulating it . . . As Foucault says, 'Life has now become . . . an object of power.'"[2] What Hardt and Negri imply is that biopolitics can be explained from the perspective of the 1920s as the history and concept of life. For them, German biopolitics was realized with an actual stress on sheer naked power, or what Enrst Junger coined as the idea of "total mobilization."[3] Roberto Esposito, more interested in the history of philosophy, agrees with their estimation in *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. The 1920s shaped the "nucleus of biopolitical semantics,"[4] he writes, in "not [just] any state but the German state."[5] Furthermore, the term *biopolitics*, he argues, was coined by Rudolf Kjellen in the context of the German discourse of *Lebensformen* (life-forms) in his 1920 *Outline for a Political System*: "this tension that is characteristic of life itself . . . pushed me to denominate such a discipline biopolitics, which is analogous with the science of life, namely, biology."[6] Giorgio Agamben never discusses the 1920s in Germany as a separate issue, but he has implicitly done so through his philosophical discussions, most of which depend on the pre-Nazi theory of power. Both left-wing and right-wing interpretations of power originated for him

[1] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 254.

[2] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 23.

[3] Ibid., p. 421, n. 10.

[4] Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 16.

[5] Ibid., p. 17.

[6] Ibid., p. 17. Esposito quotes from Rudolf Kjellen, *Grundriss zu einem System der Politik* (Leipzig: Rudolph Leipzig Hirzel, 1920), pp. 3-4.

in that period and historical context, from Walter Benjamin's understanding to Carl Schmitt's and Martin Heidegger's, from Alfred Hoche's (1865-1943) concept of "life unworthy of being lived," coined under the influence of Klages and other *Lebensphilosophers* ,[7] through Jakob von Uexkull's concept of *Umwelt* (environment) and to Hannah Arendt's dialogue with Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, extending from her studies in Germany during the 1920s. It is the 1920s' radicalization of life that brings Agamben to adopt Foucault's later understanding of "disciplinary control achieved by the new bio-power . . . of 'docile bodies.'"[8] Why is this stress on the 1920s important to the understanding of biopolitical critique? For Agamben, the most radical relation between individual and public institutions emerged with the creation of "bare life" and the recognition of the "naked body" in a Benjaminian-Schmittian "state of emergency." The end point of this historical-theoretical discussion is of course the 1940s' *oikonomia* responsible for the reduction of human beings to the "naked life" of the *Muselmann* in the concentration camp.[9] To an extent, much of what is discussed nowadays in political theory is the byproduct of this process, extending from the early 1920s politicization of life to the 1940s racist realization that changed Western culture as a whole. Yet little of this historical background ever wins any attention. It is discussed by the philosophers as an analytical argument that allows them to radicalize their view of the present. This is what many of the biopolitical critics identify with "liminality" and "immanence" as hermeneutic practices. Agamben reinserts the radical political theories of the 1920s back into the political-theological discourse, especially the part of it that is identified now with the rise of a Paulinian discussion.[10]

Other interpreters of biopolitics such as Mladen Dolar and Eric Santner have written obsessively about the key thinkers of the German 1920s, among them Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger, Carl Schmitt, and Franz Kafka, with this liminality in mind. When Eric Santner evokes the existence of a "German Jewish school of biopolitics," he means the following: "The tradition of thought that I am calling 'German Jewish' is one that takes as its point of departure some form of the decisionist logic of sovereignty, . . . a space where the rule of law is in effect [and] always includes an immanent reference to a state of exception," that is, where all laws are suspended and where

[7] Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, p. 136. Hoche worked with another follower of Klages, the Jewish Lebensphilosopher Kurt Goldstein. He was also close to a central figure of the Klages circle, the psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn.

[8] Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 3.

[9] Giorgio Agamben, Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 2000).

[10] Agamben "paulanized" Benjamin, Scholem, Taubes, and other GermanJewish thinkers discussed in this book since his Homo Sacer For the most coherent exploration of that philosophical move see Giorgio Agamben, The Time That Remains: A Commentary to the Romans , trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

absolute authority, present or hidden, is always lurking.[11] Such an understanding of law and norms— whether "German Jewish" or simply "German"—understanding of life as operative and an inherent category, which Agamben defines in *Potentialities* as "immanent" and the sign of the "coming philosophy": "A legacy that clearly concerns the coming philosophy, which, to make this inheritance its own, will have to take its point of departure in the concept of life."[12] In other terms, the "coming philosophy" has to do with three necessary elements: The intellectual history of the 1920s, the political theory that examines the crisis of democracy, and the concept of life.

This discussion is not disconnected from the analysis of contemporary politics. Take for example Brian Massumi, who emphasizes recently the relevance of biopolitics and the immanence of life not only as the "coming philosophy," but as the very present politics in the United States: "The neoconservative power . . . is infra-vital. Its immanence to life is also, indiscriminately, the imminence of death: the threatening actualization, everywhere and at all times, of the conditions of emergence of life crisis."[13]

Since a majority of the interpreters of biopolitics agree—even if reluctantly—on its timing and political hermeneutics, it is surprising to see that none has conceptualized the terminology of life so evident in Germany in the 1920s.[14] Neither Agamben nor any of the other philosophers and historians of biopolitics, Foucault included, mention *Lebensphilosophie* in an orderly fashion. For example, the very concept at the heart of Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, bare life (*blossen Leben*), was popularized by Georg Simmel in his *Lebensanschauungen* (1918) as an inherent relation to death, on the one hand, and as aesthetic operation on the other: "The formation of life in its whole movement through death is, so to say, image-able."[15] Simmel himself connected this life form in the flowing of time into "nowness" [Jetzt-Sosein] and "the mere nowness [*Das blosse Jetzt-Sosein*]."[16] As we saw in previous chapters, the neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert

[11] Eric Santner, On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), p. 13.

[12] Giorgio Agamben, "Absolute Immanence," in Potentialities , trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 220.

[13] Brian Massumi, "National Enterprise Emergency: Steps Toward an Ecology of Powers," in Theory, Culture & Society 26:6 (November 2009), p. 170. I tried to explain the relevance of such readings for a contemporary understanding of life in Nitzan Lebovic, "Life," in *Mafteakh: Lexical Review of Political Thought 2 (2011):* http://mafteakh.tau.ac.il/en/issue-2e-winter-2011/life/ (accessed June 1, 2013).

[14] Agamben comes close to it without making it a historical argument, when he points out Heidegger's role as the mediator between two philosophical traditions. The first leads from Kant, via Husserl, to Heidegger and then Levinas and Derrida; the other leads from Spinoza, via Nietzsche, to Heidegger and then Foucault and Deleuze. In short, any examination of "the coming philosophy" should consider the 1920s' debate about the role of life and immanence in Heidegger and his fellow critics of democracy, on the way to biopolitics and "immanentation." Ibid., p. 239.

[15] "Diese Formung des Lebens in seinem ganzen Verlaufe durch den Tod ist bisher sozusagen etwas Bildhaftes." Georg Simmel, Lebensanschauung: Vier metaphysische Kapitel (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1994), p. 107.

[16] Simmel stresses here a temporal dimension of a being which turns Sein (being) into a particular presence. Sosein was used by different Lebensphilosophers , for example, Georg Simmel, Max Scheler,

complained after Simmel's death that Simmel had turned the concept of bare life, and *Lebensphilosophie* as a whole, into "the most fashionable philosophy of our time."[17] Shortly thereafter, Rickert extended his critique to Simmel's grounding of "nowness" or "immediacy." In 1923 he wrote that "the concept of *i mmediacy* would have liked to have remained unobjectionable [*unbedenklich*], but it needs to be thought of from a negative conception, for it has no positive definition."[18] Obviously, immediacy or "nowness," "now time," etc. are key concepts for *Lebensphilosophers* in their plea to reconsider temporality itself. Even Heidegger, in that sense, was not working within a vacuum, as many philosophers would have liked us to believe.[19]

If a naked life, or a naked immediacy, existed in philosophical texts and concepts since the late 1910s, then the discourse on life adapted into Nazism should follow suit and be considered in light of those cultural changes occurring during that period. According to the Nazi rhetoric, every Aryan carried the totality of living experience in him or herself, and every Nazi institution existed as a form of life, finite and infinite at the same time. Victor Klemperer summarized this logic in his research on the Nazi language: "The Third Reich speaks with a frightening unity about all life expressions [*Lebensa usserungen*] and about its legacy."[20] In 1933, Klemperer shows,

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and Ludwig Klages. It is translated differently for every thinker, and sometimes, as various translations of Simmel prove, differently in different works of the same thinker. Simmel used the term repeatedly. See ibid., p. 108. For another example of Simmel's use of Sosein see the first page of his Philosophy of Money, which was translated as a "particular quality of being." See Georg Simmel, The Philosophy of Money, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 56. Then again, in his book about the history of sociology, David Frisby translated the same term when used by Max Scheler as "essence." See David Frisby, The Alienated Mind: The Sociology of Knowledge in Germany, 1918-1933 (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 30.

[17] Heinrich Rickert, Die Philosophie des Lebens: Darstellung und Kritik der philosophischen Modestromungen unserer Zeit (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr Verlag, 1920).

[18] Heinrich Rickert, *UnmittelbarkeitundSinndeutung: Aufsa tzezur Ausgestaltung des Systems der Philosophie* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1939), p. 57 (emphasis in original). The concept of immediacy, popularized by Nietzsche, had garnered great interest among *Lebensphilosophers* since the early 1900s. Yet not before the early 1920s could one attach it to any particular view of politics.

[19] Georg Imdahl and David F. Krell are an exception to that rule; in their careful readings of Heidegger's early writings, both labor to demonstrate the close interest and impact of Heidegger's own editorial working and research of Dilthey's life philosophy. Heidegger's later rejection of *Lebensphilosophie* cannot disguise the impact it had on his interest in the living temporality of the *D asein*. See David F. Krell, *D aimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), and Georg Imdahl, *Das Leben Verstehen, Heideggers formal anzeigende Hermeneutik in den friihen Freiburger Vorlseungen* (Wurzburg: Konigshausen and Neumann, 1997). A few intellectual historians paid close attention to Heidegger's interest in *Lebensphilosophie* from a different angle. Let me mention here only the most recent and excellent two volumes Peter Gordon published on Heidegger's proximity to Franz Rosenzweig, and the opponents of Ernst Cassirer and neo-Kantianism. See Peter E. Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and idem., *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[20] Victor Klemperer, *LTI: Notizbuch eines Philologen* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1966), p. 20. English translations often miss the importance of vocabulary to the essence (*Wesen*) of Nazi language.

"the [Nazi] party empowered all its private and public life zones: the political, the legal, the economic, the artistic, the scientific, the schools, the sports, the family, the kindergartens and child care."[21] A recent research of Nazi language similarly concluded that Nazi "directives and projects greatly reduced the plurality of language use, instead determining the legitimacy of racialized norms and categories."[22] In short, the Nazis turned the discourse of life into a racial discourse of life and death, and this vocabulary penetrated all levels of society, from high politics to the smallest child-care center or fertility clinic.[23] A doctoral dissertation approved in 1934, at the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University in Greifswald concluded that, indeed, Nazi language was dependent on its "totality of life" and that Nazism did try "to change the language by adding new meanings to well-known words."[24] In contrast to how historians used to view this change, it was not a mere adding up or reduction, but, rather, a semantic change of meaning. Nazism changed the relation between life and its expression, between life and the different types of living entity and their immanent deadly core. Life did not stream from birth to death anymore, but integrated death at its heart: it was not a course so much as a momentary emphasis on each pure moment of living experience (*Erlebnis*). The historian Boaz Neumann wrote about it as "the Nazi life experience (reserved to the *Lebensraum*) [that] paved the way to the death experience," hence giving preference to an "ontology" of death.[25] The political implication extended beyond even the usual course of nationalist rhetoric. As the author of the dissertation, an enthusiastic Nazi, explained in his contemporaneous analysis, Nazism was working, linguistically, beyond the usual nationalist realm. "National Socialism objected to the usual use of the concept of 'nationality,' since such usage ignored and betrayed the more important signification of 'being born together' or of 'growing up together [*zusammengeborenen, Zusammengewachsenen*]."[26] The emphasis is not one of an individual joining the collective but of an inherent relation to the one collective of living and death that is set from the point of origin and at many points along the road. In manuals distributed to Nazi-trained speakers sent to teach the Nazi gospel to local communities, the instructions guide the speakers to emphasize again and again the concept of life as a revolutionary message. The instruction is taken from speeches by Alfred Rosenberg and expresses an attempt to fuse together a whole history and philosophy of life into one, prolonged,

[21] Ibid., p. 31.

[22] Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language ofNazi Genocide: Linguistic Violence and the Struggle of Germans of Jewish Ancestry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 5.

[23] Edward Ross Dickinson, "Biopolitics, Fascism, Democracy: Some Reflections on Our Discourse about 'Modernity,'" in *Central European History* 37:1 (2004): 1-38.

[24] "Das Hauptgewicht der nationalsozialistischen Sprachbeeinflussung liegt auf der neuen Sinngebeung oft alter, bekanter Worte." Manfred Pechau, *Nationalsozialistismus und deutsche Sprache*, inaugural dissertation submitted to the philosophy faculty of the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University of Greifswald (Greifswald: Hans Adler Buchdruckerei, 1935), p. 11.

[25] Boaz Neumann, *New German Critique* 85, Special Issue on Intellectuals (Winter 2002), 110.

[26] Pechau, *Nationalsozialistismus und deutsche Sprache*, p. 13.

act of resistance: This is the rejection of any linear understanding of life in favour of racial immanence:

What is life? Life means *struggle* [*Kampf*]; as Heraklitus showed, "Struggle is the father of all things." Nietzsche answered so the question [about life] . . . You are forgetting that our world looks as it does because our thought is reduced to viewing it through *space and time*, that [it] could be developed and released in *eternity* . . . [T]he first step to conscious life is [to] know thyself! In yourself, in the self, in your racial origin lies the full secret of the will of life.[27]

Shortly after this emphasis on the value of life as an absolute fusion of self and community, the Nazi manuals explain why Judaism is the eternal enemy of the Nazi race. Strangely enough, the explanation credits Jews as equal competitors in the Darwinian struggle of life: "Judaism grasped the laws of life, for life gave it the right, and made it the contemporary world ruler above the Aryan people."[28] That is, of course, when the Aryan should transform life into death and overcome Judaism and its own sense of life. Indeed, death has become the seed that predicts, preforms, life; life is now dependent on the praxis of death and defined by it.

Such discussions make it clear that historians read the Nazi racial bias a little too quickly. Hastening to explain the enmity and the actual action that were carried against the Jews, they skipped the discursive background that enabled it. Such discussions also illustrate what Michel Foucault identified, during the 1970s, as the discourse of biopolitics, or "the border between too much and too little."[29] In the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault turned Aristotle's understanding of man as a " *bios politikos*" on its head and defined "modern man" as "an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question."[30] Biopolitical sovereignty is located where politics decides

[27] " *Was heisst Leben*? Leben heisst *kaempfen*! Schom *Heraklit* sagte: Der Kampf is der Vater aller Dinge, und Nietzsche beantwortete die Frage . . . so: 'Die Welt ist der Wille zur Macht und nichts ausserdem.' Wohin du auch schaust, ueberall findest du Kampf ums Dasein, Ringen um selbsterhaltung, Arterhaltung und Entwicklung . . . Sie vergesssen, dass es den Menschen nur so Scheint, weil unser Denken beschraenkt ist in *Raum und Zeit*, weil wir nicht erkennen, was sich da in der *Ewigkeit* entwickeln und erloesen will . . . Der erste Schritt zu bewusstem Leben heisst: Erkenne dich selbst! In dir selbst, in deinem Rassenerbgut liegt der geheimnisvolle Wille deines Lebens." Fritz Reinhardt, ed., Redenmaterial der NSDAP, vol. 4, article 24, "Weltanschauung, NS," p. 1. No further publication details are given; all emphases in the original. Karl Dietrich Bracher spoke of the "army of agitators" the Nazi trained in that context: Karl D. Bracher, Die deutsche Diktatur (Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1969), p. 159. See also Goebbels's description of his propaganda success, based on "battalions of speakers," which he still insisted were a "mystical phenomenon" in Joseph Goebbels, *Der Angriff. Aufsiitze aus der Kampfzeit* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1935), pp. 94-96.

[28] "Weil das Judentum mit den Gesetzen des Lebens ging, darum gab ihm das Leben recht, darum hat es heute eine weltbeherschende Machtstellung ueber die arischen Volker erreicht." Fritz Reinhardt, ed., Redenmaterial der NSDAP, p. 3.

[29] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-79*, trans. Michel Senellart (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 19.

[30] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), p. 143.

about life and death but hides the decision within a so-called normal or regular conduct in the world. Foucault summarized this point in his discussion of the biopolitical system as an *apparatus* or *dispositif* that attempts to control and supervise any decision regarding the individual's life, including how one thinks or desires it. As Giorgio Agamben recently characterized it: "I shall call apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings."[31] This process of internalizing boundaries of life and death—proper and improper life—started, according to Foucault, during the eighteenth century and marks our daily existence in the modern and postmodern world. Nazism radicalized this process but also channeled it. In his late lectures about biopolitics, Foucault identified the Nazi leader cult with the formalization and internalization of an antistate form of biopolitics: "Nazism was the first systematic attempt to initiate the withering away of the state . . . The *Volk* in its community organization, the people as *Gemeinschaft*, is at once the principle of right and objective behind every organization . . . [I]t will be the form in which the *Gemeinschaft* [community] both manifests itself and produces its actions, but the state will be nothing more than this form, or rather, than this instrument."[32] It is also the basis for modern governmentality as a whole, grounded "in the principle of 'internal regulation' [which] means that this limitation is not exactly imposed by either one side or the other."[33] Where life and death boundaries are drawn from the perspective of life, "the whole question of critical governmental reason will turn on how not to govern too much."[34] This process, Foucault claims, is what ties the totalitarian principle of *Vitalpolitik* to the economy of bodies, or population.[35] Nazism used *Vitalpolitik* for its own good, but simultaneously advanced beyond it. "The objective of the Nazi regime was . . . to expose its own race to the absolute and universal threat of death. Risking one's life, being exposed to total destruction, was one of the principles inscribed in the basic duties of the obedient Nazi."[36] Foucault's discussion of biopower and biopolitics is one of the most sophisticated readings of contemporary politics of our time, and it opened a door to the further theorization of biopolitics by Giorgio Agamben. Foucault's analysis, however, as innovative as it may be, stops short due to his overarching, encompassing

[31] Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus, and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 14.

[32] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, p. 111.

[33] Ibid., p. 12.

[34] Ibid., p. 13.

[35] Vitalpolitik is grounded in the principle of growth or reduction that lies at the bottom of all competitive systems: economic, organic-physiological, or totalitarian. It assumes that politics, economics, society, and the individual all share the same form and image of the living body. It is exactly this shared body, or "synthesis of individuals," according to Foucault, that allows the system to have "no explicit contract, no voluntary union, no renunciation of rights, and no delegation of natural rights to someone else. In short, there is no constitution of sovereignty by a sort of pact of subjection." Ibid., pp. 242-243, 300.

[36] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 259.

argument. His understanding of life and death ends with a paradox; according to Foucault, modern biopolitics replaces old forms of sovereignty by regulating all aspects of life and population, while also releasing the control over death, but—and here is the paradox—it is exactly this obsession with life and deregulation of death that shapes the conditions for much bloodier wars and genocides: "If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return to the ancient right to kill, it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population."[37] The "disqualification of death" ends, then, with more organized death, not less.[38] What Foucault misses here, especially in relation to the Nazi genocide, is the dispositive, the apparatus, or the gradual shift from life to death and how death is reintegrated into life. In short, death is not "disqualified" as much as internalized, without regulation and supervision. In *Lebensphilosophie*, especially the *Lebensphilosophie* that developed after the mid 1920s, death becomes the invisible hand behind life, which does not need to report about it anymore; it is always there. Hence, from the perspective of *Lebensphilosophie*, the endpoint of the biopolitical apparatus is not the "receding of death" or "death becoming a scandal" for everyday language (this is how Benjamin describes the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie's relation to death—before *Lebensphilosophie*),[39] but rather the intensification of the presence of death in the midst of everyday language and "living experience."[40] Every page of popular *Lebensphilosophie* during the midand late 1920s, as of the Nazi rhetoric of the 1930s and 1940s, would demonstrate this point.

Nothing fascinated *Lebensphilosophie* more than the constant and irreducible presence of death in the midst of life. Nazi speakers sent to villages in Germany had to recite such mantras, taken from Hitler and Rosenberg's speeches. "We are living at the greatest time and turn of worlds, during a period of a break that reaches to the roots, not only meaningful to those areas of being [*Dasein*], but even more so to our life feeling."[41]

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[37] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 137.

[38] Foucault uses this term in *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 248.

[39] "It has been evident for a number of centuries how, in the general consciousness, the thought of death has become less omnipresent and less vivid . . . In the course of the nineteenth century, bourgeois society—by means of medical and social, private and public institutions—realized a secondary effect, which may have been its subconscious main purpose: to enable people to avoid the sight of the dying." Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 3:1: 1935-1938 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 151.

[40] For a short but coherent description of Foucault's notion of biopower and biopolitics, see Chloe Taylor, "Biopower," in *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* (Durham, NC: Acumen, 2011), p. 48.

[41] "Heute, glaube ich, geht ein immer starker anwachsendes Raunen durch Millionen und aber Millionen Menschen Seelen . . . eines tiefen Wissens, dass wir in einer der grosten Zeiten und Weltenwende leben, in einer Epoche, die einen bis in die Wurzeln gehenden Umbruch nicht nur auf einigen Gebieten des Daseins, sondern fur unser ganzes Lebensgefuhl bedeutet." Alfred Rosenberg, "Der Kampf um die Weltanschauung," *Redenmateriel der NSDAP*, ed. Fritz Reinhardt, p. 5.

In fact, if we trace the origins of biopolitics as a concept, we quickly see how vital *Lebensphilosophie* was to its acceptance. The vocabulary of life was the basis for Nazi biopolitical education, the combination of life and politics, feeling and action, internal and external. A Nazi official stated in 1935 that this connection was "the first and foremost goal of the Nazi regime . . . Only biology can develop the [German] race's laws of life [*Lebensgesetze*] in accordance with actual research."[42] By the mid-1930s Nazis held academic posts that would permit the party to define and advance its philosophy of life in accordance with biology or race. A collection of academic articles entitled *D eutschland in der Wende der Zeiten* (Germany at a pivotal moment, 1934), based on a conference held at the University of Tubingen in fall 1932, was dedicated to "educating politicians" in accordance with the biological principles "clearly expressed then by the *Fuhrer* of the new Germany, Adolf Hitler."[43] The academy, in that respect, "accepted the mission of politicization" in order to "rebuild personal convictions."[44] The path to both goals, a meta-political model of education emanating from the *Fu hrer*, passed through a "personal" conviction and educated the "will of the body." In the words of Ernst Lehmann (1888-1957), the director of the Botanical Institute at Tubingen, "On May 9, Reich Minister Frick emphasized in his lecture to the cultural ministers of the German districts [*Lander*] the grounding importance of a 'biological' teaching of life [*Lebenskunde*]" to be carried by "the always swelling stream of life"[45] and what he called biopolitics:

The biological experience [*Erfahrung*] attests to the great role this concept has in the development [of people] . . . Everyone knows, from countless distressing books, that the German birth rate is falling and the basic demand of the theory of natural selection can no longer be met. [In contrast,] the people sitting on our eastern borders seem biopolitically [*Biopolitisch*] strong, thanks to [their] much higher birth rate.[46]

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[42] The Reich's minister of education explained on January 15, 1935, that the first priority of the Reich was political education, and he went on to say that "allein die Biologie kann den Begriff der Rasse und Vererbung und die rassischen Lebensgesetze von der Seite der Tatsachen-Forschung her zwingend entwickeln." *Nationalsozialistische Bibliographie 1: Schriften uber Familie, Volk und Rasse* (Berlin: Zentralverlag der NSDAP/Fritz Eher Verlag, 1938), p. 7.

[43] "Fehlt es an einer solchen Erziehung, so entstehen 'Politiker,' deren Wesen und Gefahr keiner klarer durchschaut und gezeichnet hat als der Fuhrer des neuen Deutschland, Adolf Hitler. Er hat auch in seiner eigenen Entwicklung ein unumstossliches Vorbild fur solche politische Erzeihung gegeben." Hans Gerber, ed., *Deutschland in der Wende der Zeiten* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1934), p. vi.

[44] "[D]ie Universitat . . . muss vielmehr auch den Gehalt der personlichen Uberzeugung bilden." Ibid.

[45] "Was aber ist es, was den immer wechselnden Strom des Lebens uber die Erde hintreibt?" Ernst Lehmann, "Der Einfluss der Biologie auf unser Weltbild," in *Deutschland in der Wende der Zeiten* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1934), p. 131.

[46] "Alle biologischen Erfahrungen sprechen dafur, dass dieses Prinzip eine uberragende Rolle im Entwicklungsgeschehen spielt . . . Jedermann weiss nun aus den unzahligen traurigen Buchern der Gegenwart, dass unser deutsches Volk bei der immer starker zuruckgehenden Geburtzahl diesem Grun-

The conclusion was clear: "There can be no doubt: not only is there a Negro question in North America, not only is there a Jewish question in all the world, etc.—in every German house, Hans Gunther's work has communicated the awareness of racial difference within our own people."[47] Gunther had recently been appointed to a chair in race theory at the University of Jena; his ideas offered a solution to the biopolitical problem Germany faced through a combination of the temporality and aesthetics of life and the scientific discourse of biology.

Recent articles about Nazi biology have demonstrated clearly how in the early 1930s, even before the seizure of power, biology was integrated in the teaching of life (*Lebenskunde)*, that is, patriotic pedagogy, health education, and an amorphous philosophy, "a name that seemed to support the broader philosophical outlook long since held by most biology teachers."[48] Still, as the author of this comment herself admits, the involvement of high Nazi officials such as Bernhard Rust— Klages's principal patron in the Nazi regime—and Wilhelm Frick made "*Lebenskunde* instruction" into a narrowly defined curriculum, aimed at indoctrinating schoolchildren in "'the unity and interdependence of life' . . . an emphasis on *Ganzheit* [wholeness] and the dependence of life."[49] For that purpose Ernst Lehmann established the German Association of Biologists (Deutscher Biologen-Verband, DBV) in 1931, and immediately afterward its journal, *Der Biologe*, which from that point on furnished many future Nazis with basic knowledge of biology and eugenics.[50]

Research into the history of biology and racial sciences mostly ignores philosophy as a serious matter, even when admitting that laws of life supplied the core understanding of this new pedagogy. The result is a gross misunderstanding of the role of *Lebensphilosophie* in Nazi indoctrination, and, more specifically, of the preconditions set by its aesthetic notion of life and its antiparliamentary politics. In methodological terms, *Lebensphilosophie* was never apparent as a coherent discourse that went through a period of transformation when adapted to the political institutions of the state, as many discourses do. Rather, it was integrated into the very tissue of everyday language and all levels of life.

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danspruch der Selektionstheorie nicht mehr gerecht wird. Biopolitisch sind uns die Volker an unserer Ostgrenze durch ihre viel hohere Geburtzahl weitgehend uberlegen." Ibid., p. 138.

[47] "Kein Zweifel aber auch: Nicht nur in Nordamerika gibt es eine Negerfrage, nicht nur in aller Welt eine Judenfrage u.s.f.-in jedes deutsche Haus ist durch die Arbeit Hans Gunthers die Kenntnis gedrungen von der rassischen Verschiedenhiet innerhalb unseres Volkes." Ibid., p. 139.

[48] Sheila Faith Weiss, "Pedagogy, Professionalism, and Politics: Biology Instruction during the Third Reich," in *Science, Technology, and National Socialism*, ed. Monika Renneberg and Mark Weller (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 189.

[49] Ibid., p. 193.

[50] Ibid., p. 188.

2. Klages's b ioi

Let us return to a discussion of philosophy and its *bioi* (ways of life).[51] Since his early publications about philosophy of life, Ludwig Klages acknowledged the necessary link tying together his *Lebensphilosophie*, the theory of signs and forms, and biological metaphors. As demonstrated in previous chapters, Klages moved from an earlier theory of aesthetics based on racial types to a politics of life, grounded in the same racial typology.[52] During the Nazi era, probably trying to enhance his own position, Klages attached to this fusion a new component of political education. For him, the modern man was standing at the exact opposite end from what Aristotle—the coiner of *bioi* as a philosophical term—and Aristotelians promoted: a logical language of concepts and a practical ability to act.[53] Following on Bachofen and Nietzsche's attack on Western logic and other forms of "anthropocentrisms," Klages wrote about Aristotle with scorn, the same scorn he felt for contemporaneous German academicians: "If Heraclitus is the great discoverer among the Greeks, Plato the great formulator of the apocalypse, [then] Aristotle is its great professor."[54] This snide remark cast Aristotle as the inventor of modern reason and consciousness, making him responsible for the modern and tragic rupture between *Lebendigen* (living, bodily) and *Geistigen* (spiritual, intellectual) matters.[55]

Klages's views of the living body were taken up by many of his followers and acquaintances in Zurich and Berlin. Tracing the movement of his ideas allows us to view the gradual acceptance of a specific philosophical vocabulary by an institution, in this case the Nazi party. Even more specifically, it allows us to view the gradual implementation of Klages's philosophy of life—from the 1920s—by Nazi political education during the 1930s and 1940s. In contrast to Foucault and Agamben's characterization of modern politics as a shared ground for both the neoliberal economy of *Vitalpolitik* and total biopolitics, Klages and his followers chose a form of total body politics that they identified with an antiliberal system: revolutionary, antiglobal, and anticapitalistic growth that resisted all material consideration. The seeds sown by Klages during

[51] See James G. Lennox, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Biology: Studies in the Origins of Life Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 129.

[52] Tobias Schneider has denied that Klages ever subscribed to Nazi antiSemitism. See Schneider, "Ideologische Grabenkampfe: Der Philosoph Ludwig Klages und der Nationalsozialismus 1933-1938," in *Vierteljahrshefte fur Zeitgeschichte* 49:2 (2001): 275-294.

[53] Hannah Arendt came close to Klages's claim but with the opposite ideological conclusions; she recognized Aristotle as the creator of a Western *bios politikos*, which she tied to the concepts of *praxis* and *lexis* (speech), the cornerstones of modern democratic politics. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), pp. 12, 25.

[54] Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele,* in *Samtliche Werke,* vol. 2 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1966), p. 866. This passage first appeared in a much shorter book entitled *Geist und Seele*, which Klages published in 1918; he integrated much of that book into *Der Geist* in 1929.

[55] Ibid., p. 867.

the early 1920s bore interesting fruits during the early 1930s. The Bode school is our first example for this practical political phase of *Lebensphilosophie*.

3. The Bode school

In November 1921 Rudolf Bode (1881-1970), one of Klages's closest followers, shared with his mentor his "principles of bodily education."[56]

In the accompanying letter Bode described the "Bode school for the education of the body," which he planned to establish in the magnificent Bavarian castle of Nymphenburg in Munich, surrounded by beautiful parks and gardens.[57] Bode, later the director of the ambitious and popular Nazi gymnastics program, presented his philosophy of the body as a set of principles emphasizing the importance of connecting the "natural movement of the body" to "the principle of totality."[58] Bode grounded his whole system of gymnastics and "natural dance" on principles of rhythm and dynamic form, the physical dialectic of muscular tension and relaxation and the principle of physical automatization, all seen as immanent "poles" of *Lebensphilosophie*. Karl Toepfer describes him in *Empire of Ecstasy* as a theorist of body and movement who "introduced a 'total' concept of rhythm . . . A major influence was Klages, who asserted that excessive rationality or intellectual analysis was a source of 'arhythm,' or unnatural, strained, discordant, stifled movement."[59] During the first half of the 1920s Bode constructed a system of movement and gymnastics that relied on Klages's science of expression (*Ausdruckswissenschaft*) and published a popular work in 1925 under this

[56] Rudolf Bode to Ludwig Klages, November 24, 1921, Deutsche Literaturarchiv am Marbach (henceforth DLA), Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.8372, letter no. 12.

[57] This was the same Bodeschule fur Korperziehung Munchen, in Schloss Nymphenburg, still known to many Bavarians: http://www.bode-schule.de.

[58] Bode summarized his philosophy as follows:

1. Alle naturlichen Bewegungen sind Bewegungen des ganzen Korpers. Niemals beobachten wir eine isolierte Bewegung (Prinzip der *Totalita t*).

2. Alle naturlichen Bewegungen verlaufen rhythmische, d.h. sie nehmen ihren Ausgang von den grossen Korpermuskeln . . . (Prinzip der *Rhythmik*).

3. Alle naturlichen Bewegungen sind aufeinander abgestimmt, so dass bei geringstem Kraftaufwand die grosste Krafwirkung erzielt wird. Dieser Abstimmung entpricht die Abstimmung im Formverhaltnis der Korperteile zueinander (Prinzip der *Form*).

4. Alle naturlichen Bewegungen mit langsamen Anstieg der Spannung gehen hervor aus einem entspannten Muskelzustand und munden wieder in diesen (Prinzip der *Entspannung* oder der *Schwere*).

5. Alle naturlichen Bewegungen mit schnellem Anstieg der Spannung gehen hervor aus einem Gleichgewichtsverhaltnis antagonistischer Muskelspannungen. Die Bewegung entsteht durch Spannung der einen Muskelgruppe und Entspannung der anderen (Prinzip der *Vorbereitung*).

Rudolf Bode to Ludwig Klages, November 24, 1921, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.8372, letter no. 12.

[59] Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 127.

Figure 6.1 Rudolf Bode, *ca.* 1950. DLM: Nachlass Ludwig Klages.

title (*Ausdrucksgymnastik*).[60] During the later 1920s, the Nazis adopted a similar view of the body built explicitly on philosophical principles that were always related to an inherent view of life and total action. Bode expressed strong contempt for the Nazis in 1927, complaining to Klages that Munich had become the center of a lot of "Hitler-fuss with all of its tribal drumming."[61] Klages was careful not to mention any names in his reply, but he did second Bode's views. However, by 1930 Bode had joined other conservative revolutionaries in admiring the apocalyptic views set forth by General Erich von Ludendorff in "Weltkrieg droht auf deutschem Boden" (A world war impends on German soil), as well as other reactionary texts.[62] The conservative revolutionaries were drawn into the Nazi regime by its promise to realize a revolutionary vocabulary of life.

Rudolf Bode was the principal advocate of the gymnastic movement, a set of practices later exported to many countries. He was close to Carl Heinrich Becker (1876-1933), the Weimar republic's conservative minister of culture, a connection that led to his appointment as *Reichsleiter*— one of the highest ranks in the Nazi party—in 1933 as the head of Nazi gymnastics and dance organization under Alfred Rosenberg's Combat Organization for German Culture (Kampfbund fur Deutsche Kultur). Bode set forth his ideas about the automatization and regulation of the body in 11 books and a Klagesian journal titled *Rhythmus* (published since 1923 under Klages's close supervision). In a series of essays he published in the early 1930s and especially after Hitler's appointment as chancellor in 1933, Bode explicitly equated ideas such as the spiritual foundations of physical education and dance in the national socialist state or works he wrote under titles such as as *Angriff und Gestaltung* (Attacking and shaping) with the doctrine of *Lebensphilosophie* in general and Klages's in particular.[63] As Bode mentioned to Klages in their correspondence, his aim all along was to take human movement back to the animalistic self-assurance visible in children but never in adults.[64] The idea was that action and movement could project motivation and the will, not the opposite. Reviving the body as a living entity could reshape the will needed for its movement retroactively. Such vitalistic ideas concerning the body would have been very awkward before the 1920s and *Lebensphilosophie*. Bode built his career during the

[60] Ibid.

[61] "Hitlerrummel mit allem Tamtam eingesetzt." Rudolf Bode to Ludwig Klages, April 2, 1927, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.8372, letter no. 47.

[62] Rudolf Bode to Ludwig Klages, December 13, 1930, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.8372, letter no. 5. See also Erich von Ludendorff, *Weltkrieg droht auf deutschem Boden*: *Broschur* (Munich: Faksimile-Verlag, 1931).

[63] For the first, see the analysis of Laure Guilbert, *Danser avec le IIIe Reich: les danseurs modernes sous le nazisme* (Brussels: Complexe, 2000), p. 152. For the latter, see Rudolf Bode, *Angriff und Gestaltung* (Berlin: Widukind Verlag, 1939).

[64] "Das Ziel ist: Die . . . Bewegung horvorgehen zu lassen aus der Instinktiven Sicherheit in der Erzeugung naturlicher Bewegung, wie sie jedes Tier und auf jedes korperlich unverdorbene Kind hat." Rudolf Bode to Ludwig Klages, November 24, 1921, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.8372, letter no. 12.

1920s and 1930s around them. As Toepfer explains it, "according to Bode, a 'principle of totality' must govern perception of the body and its expressivity . . . Bode did not want his method associated with sport competition; rather, the aim of expression gymnastics was to develop bodily movements derived from rhythms in nature, with the view of making the body expressive in the performance of everyday action."[65] Toepfer argues, against this notion, that Bode failed to clarify what he meant by natural, or "organic," rhythms.[66]

In February 1941 Bode was appointed "NSDAP-Gymanstikpapst und Leiter der von Reichsbauernfuhrer" (gymnastics pope and principal instructor of the Reich's farmers) under the *Reichsbauemfuhrer* (director of the farmers organization of the Reich) Richard Walther Darre (1895-1953), making him one of the highest functionaries in the political education of the German population.[67] Darre was busy at that time in reorganizing the German *L ebensraum* under a biopolitical plan titled "Rasse und Raum" (Race and space), which was adapted by Heinrich Himmler. Bode's system of rhythmic movement was taught as a consistent philosophy of the *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil), another form of the rhythmic, repetitive flow found in the human pulse, natural cycle of the seasons, the ocean's waves, and the movement of the stars.[68] In a representative article titled "Korpererziehung und Kultur" (Body education and culture), Bode instructed his own followers against the "[body] theory under the violent spiritual [*geistige*] pressure that is called body control [*Korperbeherrschung*] . . . and achieves only the flattening and the niggering of the soul, since all utility [*Zweckhaftigkeit*] strives toward a goal, and the uninterrupted movement occurs only in unbalanced and narrow lines." In contrast to the spiritual, Bode argued that natural movements do not occur in long, goal-oriented lines, but "along rhythmic ones! . . . [in which] the oscillation [*Schwingung*] and secret vibration connect the human not only with his human side, but with all of nature."[69] Bode taught gymnastic teachers to feel, look, and teach the organic principle in their everyday movements and interactions with other humans or objects, incorporating all into instinctive movement. This teaching, he wrote, "opened everything . . . [and] became the grounding principle for all bodily

[65] Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, p. 128.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Rudolf Bode to Ludwig Klages, February 6, 1941, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61.8373, letter no. 17.

[68] For Bode and his role see also Tobias Schneider, "Ideologische Grabenkampfe," pp. 283-284.

[69] "Denn theoretisch habe ich immer und immer betont, dass die einseitige Unterjochung des Korpers unter die Gewalt des Geistes, genannt 'Korperherrschung,' die Gefahr einer Verflachung und Vernegerung des Seelischen in sich birgt, denn alle Zweckhaftigkeit ist zielstrebig und nur in einseitig eingeengten Bahnlinien vollzieht sich der 'Storunglose' Ablauf der Bewegung . . . Dieses verlauft aber nicht in zielstrebigen Bahnen, sondern in rhythmischen! Und praktisch habe ich das Ubermass der Zielstrebigkeit bekampft, indem ich die Schwindung, jenes geheime Vibrieren, das den Menschen nicht nur mit dem Menschen, sondern auch mit aller Natur verbindet." Rudolf Bode, "Korpererziehung und Kultur," in *Der Rhythmus, Zeitschrift fiir gymnastische Erziehung Mitteilungen des Bodebundes* 5:3 (July-September 1927): 99.

education and installed the reawakening [of the body] as *the* pedagogic problem of the present."[70]

Bode's system illustrates how *Lebensphilosophie* was able to break all social barriers of genteel German education and the physical boundaries that conventionally separated humanity from the rest of nature. It was not limited to one gender or one social class and instead preached a unity of all "organisms," all *bioi*. In spite of its clear appeal to reactionary thinkers, it did not show any preference for one ideological system before 1933, when Bode integrated it into the Nazi core curriculum.

In his new role, during the 1940s, Bode reported directly to Darre, who, together with Heinrich Himmler, controlled the SS Ahnenerbe, the principal research division of the SS, among other organizations. Yet Bode's influence could not—and should not—be measured by his actual political activities, but through his contribution to the Nazi vocabulary of the body and movement. As Norbert Hopster and Ulrich Nassen have shown in their study of Nazi education, Bode coined many of the fundamental concepts in the Nazi vocabulary of movement and "bodily competence": "All movements must be ordered from within and rhythmically formed, in the sense that the movement shines from the center to the whole body."[71] The concept of *Rhythmus* should be read here as a direct impact of Klagesian *Lebensphilosophie*—mediated through his followers—on the whole education system of Nazi Germany. Hopster and Nassen recognize Bode's impact but not its philosophical background.

Given Klages's and Bode's claim about a primordial unity between pure and naked life in the body and the wide practical teaching systems it fostered, the impact of *Lebensphilosophie* on Nazi education may be gauged by the following widely disseminated pedagogical dictum: "Our task as high school teachers . . . is the formation of a new awareness, a new ethic, a science that will shape the total living order [*Lebensordnung*] of our *Volk.*"[72]

The vocabulary of life encompassed a total reality that started with the individual and ended with the planets. The principal concept here was biology as grounded by *Lebensphilosophie*. On its way from the cell to the cosmic, the vocabulary labored to erase all forms of earthly hierarchy—between high and low culture and between

[70] "[Die] hochste Offenbarung . . . zum Grundprinzip aller korperlichen Bildung machte und dessen Wiedererweckung als das eigentliche padagogische Problem der Gegenwart aufstellte." Ibid.

[71] "Alle Bewegungen mussen sich von innen entladen als rhythmischgeformte, in dem Sinn, dass die Bewegung von einem Zentrum aus auf den ganzen Korper uberstrahlt." Rudolf Bode, "Die Bedeutung der korperlichen Bewegung fur die Erneuerung der deutschen Kultur," *Rhythmus* 13, pp. 286-293. See also Norbert Hopster and Ulrich Nassen, *Literatur und Erziehung im Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Ferdinand Schoningh, 1983), p. 53.

[72] "Unsere Aufagbe als Hochschullehrer ist es, sie zu gestalten: eine neue Erkenntnislehre, eine neue Ethik, die Wissenschaft der uns artgemassen totalen Lebensordnung unseres Volkes." Hans Lohr, "Wesen und Sinn der nationalsozialistischen Akademie des NSD-Dozentenbundes der Christian-Albrechts-Universitat," *inKieler Blatter,* no. 1 (1938): 40. Quoted in Monika Leske, *Philosophen im "Dritten Reich", Studie zu Hochschulkund Philosophiebetrien im faschistischen Deutschland* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1990), p. 81.

social divisions—sacrificing freedom to reach a total state of equality and fraternity. The teacher's manifesto quoted above was written with the explicit intention to share between teachers and students the burden of philosophical and ideological reforms to the educational system. This vocabulary paved the way for a call for reform that came simultaneously from below and above, from academics and working people, from teachers and students, from parents and children, from regional bosses and loyal workers. The only but necessary loyalty was to the Nazi vocabulary and its image of a *Fuhrer* at its center. Human psychology was molded accordingly. Ernst Krieck, the rector of Frankfurt University and the principal philosopher of Nazi education, wrote in his *Dichtung und Erziehung* (Poetry and education, 1933): "Language is not simply a pure external form; a good language is not an ornament of life. Rather, it expresses thought in its *volkisch* form and in its essence. Hence, the cultivation of language means simultaneously the cultivation of thought and character."[73] Like other Nazi devotees, Krieck identified the concepts of character in accordance with Klages's characterology and science of expression. Integrating the vocabulary

into his own philosophy, he wrote, "The language of the *Volk* . . . means especially its *task of life* [*Lebensaufgaben*] and its unique *meaning of life* [*Lebenssinns*]."[74] This simultaneity erased, in principle, a hierarchy of systems and images of progression. The task of life, which is typically defined in terms of a final result from the point where one achieves a goal, was supposed to inform one about life in its earliest stages and blur beginning and end. In other words, the body was united not only with nature and the material world, but with the essential processes that guide nature along its course. It was fragmented and recomposed on the basis of a momentary, pure essence, itself a result of the threshold between life and death, which—after 1941—would turn substantially toward the deadly side.

4. Biocentrism

In *The Myth of the State*, Ernst Cassirer claimed that "universals are not to be sought in the thoughts of man but in [the] substantial forces that determine his destiny"; in other words, "[o]ntology precedes morality and remains the decisive factor in it."[75] In the totalitarian state, this ontology cannot be separated from the power of myths and the myth of power. Therefore, the totalitarian state, in Cassirer's mind, united politics with ontology via myths and rituals: "In the totalitarian state, there is no private sphere, independent of political life; the whole life of man is suddenly inundated by the high

[73] "Sprache ist nicht bloss aussere Form, gute Sprache nicht Schmuck des Lebens, sondern Ausdruck der volkischen Denkform und Denkweise. Darum bedeutet Zucht der Sprache zugleich Zucht des Denkens und des Charakters." Ernst Krieck, *Dichtung und Erziehung* (Leipzig: ArmanenVerlag, 1941), p. 147.

[74] "Die Sprachgesetz des Volkes . . . seiner besonderen *Lebensaufgaben* und seines eigentumlichen *Lebenssinns* kommt." Ernst Krieck, *Die Wirklichkeit*, vol. 1 of *Volkisch-politische Anthropologie* (Leipzig: Armanen, 1936), p. 39 (emphases in the original).

[75] Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 231, 238.

tide of new rituals."[76] Examining carefully the rise of the biophilosophical vocabulary in the Weimar republic, Cassirer was well aware of Ludwig Klages's contribution to this totalitarian view of life, or what he calls "Klages's metaphysical awareness" based on his ontology of life and images:

Almost always, the overemphasis on the appearance of the *inner* will overcome the simple competent perception and content of impression, that is the dominant "demonic-living reality of images" [*der damonisch-lebendigen Wirklichkeit der Bilder*], ignored only by the opposing mechanical world. With this fundamental understanding, Klages's teaching, as no other, calculates the unique significance of the mythic. It wishes not only to convey the meaning of myths from the outside, but places it in the midst of its own typical orientation and analysis. In spite of it, . . . [Klages's system] remains trapped in the circle of mythic appearance. As [it was] for Bachofen, the myth [here] is not simply inventing or fictionalizing but rather an organ of exposure of the historical world and the historical reality, that is, an organ of the metaphysical awareness.[77]

Next to Klages, Cassirer saw Jakob von Uexkull's (1864-1944) biocentric philosophy as having brought about a basic shift in perception: now life carried with it a self-conscious, symbolic universe. Culture was united with biology or with the cultural "*animal symbolicum*" behind it.[78] As Peter Gordon demonstrates, *L ebensphilosophie* (known also as "philosophical anthropology") was placed at the center of the debate between Cassirer and Heidegger, who were often pitted against each other in fierce debates. Both identified this new biocentric philosophy with Uexkull, Klages, and Hans Driesch. "For Heidegger," writes Gordon, "philosophical anthropology furnished evidence for his own conception of the human being as governed by fundamental moods and situated within the totality of practical assignments he called the environment, or *Umwelt*. Cassirer, however, found validation of his philosophic belief that the human being may begin in finitude but eventually breaks free of its limits to create a symbolic order it then understands to be both an objective order and an expression of its own spontaneous consciousness."[79] From the perspective of *Lebensphilosophie*, both positions were wrong even if one more than the other; Uexkull and Heidegger's stress on the limits of *Umwelt* and finality was only slightly better than Cassirer's emphasis on the need to break away from them. For *Lebensphilosophie*, both positions were grounded in an old tradition of Western metaphysics. Both Cassirer and Heidegger conceptualized the crisis of their time in terms of the history and aesthetics of bodily concepts. In a lecture delivered in Freiburg during the winter of 1929-1930, Martin Heidegger hailed von Uexkull and his colleague and friend, Hans Driesch, as the two

[76] Ibid., p. 284.

[77] Ernst Cassirer, *Zur Metaphysik der symbolischen Formen*, *Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte*, *vol. 1* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1995), p. 24.

[78] Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 26.

[79] Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 75.

principal representatives of vitalist biology who had taken "two decisive steps" that together "had consumed biology."[80] He himself never changed into the harder biological discourse of Uexkull and Driesch, in spite of his sympathy. Still, due to his great philosophical impact, Heidegger's analysis could be placed at the origins of a biocentric view that was generalized into a worldview and correlated with the terminology of *Lebensphilosophie*. In *The Open: Man and Animal*, Giorgio Agamben refers to Driesch and Uexkull as the principal inspiration over a new sense of life, which inspired, in turn, such high philosophy as Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.[81] For Agamben, the key significance of the biocentric philosophy was its service to high philosophy or to totalitarian politics, but he misses the function of this vocabulary at the time and therefore its actual contribution. Heidegger's anti-Humanism was not the same as a biopolitical stress on the apparatus of living-life. For that, one has to turn to more marginal figures for philosophers, and for the more important contributors to the discourse of *Lebensphilosophie* and its understanding of biopotlics.

The term *biocentrism was* invented by Raoul H. France (1874-1943), a Hungarian biologist who immigrated to Germany and identified with the legacy of Ernst Haeckel. France established in Munich the Biological Institute that popularized biology as "the biocentric discourse intersection," as art historian Oliver Botar calls it.[82] Artists from both left and right sides of the political map and who considered themselves first and foremost revolutionaries took on the biocentric approach.[83] As France's late biographer argues, "the biocentric philosophy" that France popularized in Germany was based on the assumption that "life had to be the master of knowledge and had to determine its values."[84] France's conceptualization of biocentric systems corresponded with the work of Uexkull and Driesch. Much like Klages, France contributed much to the shaping of the discourse and was well-known to every scholar and artist who was interested in biology, biopolitics, biocentrism, and the like, but has sunk into complete oblivion since 1945.[85]

Botar's recent book on biocentrism and modernism follows Cassirer's path in focusing on Jakob von Uexkull, Hans Driesch, Ludwig Klages, and the latter's loyal

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[80] Anne Harrington, Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 53.

[81] Giorgio Agamben, The Open: Man and Animal, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 33, 39.

[82] Oliver A. I. Botar, "Raoul France and National Socialism: A Problematic Relationship," a paper given to the Fifth International Congress of Hungarian Studies, Jyvaskyla, Finland, 2011, p. 8. I thank Professor Botar for sharing this unpublished paper with me.

[83] Ibid., p. 16.

[84] Rene Romain Roth, *Raoul H. France and the Doctrine of Life* (Bloomington, Ind.: First Books Library, 2000), p. 176. France is also known as the inventor of the concept of biotechnology, which he identified with "the study of living and life-like systems" (p. 109).

[85] Botar's paper traces the explicit references to France's work among the artistic avant-garde of the 1920s, among them well-known names such as Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Fritz Neumeyer, Mies van der Rohe, and El Lissitzky.

follower, Hans Prinzhorn.[86] For Botar, biocentrism is understood mostly through its close contact with organicism, neovitalism, monism, and *Lebensphilosophie*. In narrower terms it is defined as a neoromantic Klagesian philosophy. "*Biozentrik*," writes Botar, "can perhaps best be characterized as *Naturromantik*—including both its scientific and metaphysical baggage—updated by nineteenthcentury biology. In its usage by Klages, *Biozentrik* was contrasted with both logocentrism and anthropocentrism. *B iozentrik* rejected anthropocentrism, decentering the human species in favor of 'nature' and 'life.'"[87] Perhaps it was this wide popular claim or the wide methodological scope that led Alfred Rosenberg, the key Nazi ideologue, to mention Klages's biocentric school as a threat in 1938: "These disciples of Klages refer to themselves as the 'biocentric' school, and they regard it as their sacred mission to do battle with the so-called 'mechanistic' philosophy, . . . [but] the far greater danger that I believe confronts us today is, rather, the biocentric philosophy itself."[88]

What was the nature of this biocentric school and the unwanted reaction it awakened? Neither scientists nor statesmen, Klages and his circle set out in the late 1920s to forge a pure language that would bring together biocentrism and *Lebensphilosophie*. They called themselves the *Zwischengeneration*, the "intergeneration," which came of age between the veterans of World War I and the younger generation of the national socialist state. Inspired by the plea presented in *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* for a new, pure language based on life study (*Lebenskunde*) and the new biology, in 1933 Klages's students established a think tank and a journal, both called Arbeitskreis fur biozentrische Forschung. Initially supported by the Nazi regime (the Nazis shut down the operation in 1936), its editorial leaders—Julius Deussen, Hans Eggert Schroder, Kurt Seesemann, and Hans Kern—met regularly with the Gestapo, the SS, and other Nazi institutions for racial research and biological and medical studies, as the manifesto of the group shows:

It is no coincidence that our gathering takes place in the same year as the National Socialist revolution. Only today has our practical work been enabled and, moreover, has it become necessary . . . We define ourselves in relation to two groups, the political and the religious: the emphasis of the NSDAP is essentially political, while this group focuses on attacking religious groups. As to our shared grounding worldview [*weltanschauliche Grundlage*] . . . the power of the state is committed to protecting cultural structures, since without them no right to life [*Lebensrecht*] can exist.[89]

[86] Oliver A. I. Botar, "Defining Biocentrism," in *Biocentrism and Modernism*, ed. Oliver A. I. Botar and Isabel Wunsche (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 17-18.

[87] Ibid., p. 32.

[88] "Rosenberg contra Klages," see John Claverely Cartney, web-page editor, "The Biocentric Metaphysics of Ludwig Klages" in http://www.revilo -oliver.com (accessed July 16, 2012), quoted in ibid., p. 30.

[89] "Deshalb ist es kein Zufall, wenn auch unsere Einigung in das Jahr der nationalsozialistischen Erhebung fallt: Erst heute beginnt unsere praktische Wirksamkeit moglich und auch notig zu werden . . . Der Schwerpunkt der NSDAP lauft wesentlich auf politischem Gebiet, die Ziele unseres Forschungskreises beruhren die religiose Sphare. Infolge der gemeinsamen weltnanschaulichen Grundlage haben wir die

Expressing a more general longing for primal forms, the Arbeitskreis fur biozentrische Forschung opened another window—a more scientific one, perhaps—onto biology, then a fashionable issue. Indeed, the center attracted a great deal of public attention, and with it another group of followers for Klages. For example, in a short memoir devoted to that period, one of Klages's younger followers wrote: "I have come to [Werner] Deubel and [Hans] Kern after reading about the Arbeitskreis fur biozentrische Forschung in a three-part interview conducted by the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* in Berlin. The first interview, before [that with] Deubel and Kern, was with Klages!"[90]

For Klages, biology was inherently tied to a perception of images and names. He cared less about the scientific, vitalistic work of Driesch and Uexkull and was drawn more to the typological analysis of characters (as explained by Prinzhorn, for example). Without a clear ability to define life against death, beginning and birth against the end and death, *Lebensphilosophie* adopted a formal view of existential struggle as a "struggle for life" opposed to fragmentation and mechanization, which it interpreted as a modern alienation.

The correspondence and the reports prepared by Julius Deussen (1906-1974), the founder of the Arbeitskreis fur biozentrische Forschung, reveal that he was in constant touch with the heads of the Nazi medical institutions. Among his correspondents from this period, one notes not only Hugo Bruckmann, one of Hitler's main financial patrons in the early 1930s, but also Eugen Diederichs and Ernst zu Reventlow (1869-1943), who helped found the Verbandes gegen die Uberhebung des Judentums (Organization against the Jewish Takeover), which counted among its members at one point both Martin Bormann and Alfred Rosenberg, and which published *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the early Nazi weekly *Reichswart.* Deussen's other correspondents included Wolfram Sievers, Herman Wirth, August Hirt, and Otto Huth, the founders and principal thinkers of the SS Ahnenerbe organization. Sievers was tried at Nuremberg and executed in 1948; Hirt, a famous anatomist whose research on the development of the human skull relied on hundreds of skulls acquired from Auschwitz, committed suicide in Schoenebach; and Otto Huth, who suffered no consequences as a result of his Nazi affiliations, was a professor at Strasbourg and published with the Klagesians.[91] Also involved with the Arbeitskreis was Wilhelm Wirth (1876-1952), the director of the Institute for Experimental Psychology in Leipzig. Wirth had studied

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Verpflichtung, die wirkliche Radikalitat der nationalen Revolution dort zu wahren, wo der Politiker Vermittlungen sucht. Die staatliche Macht ist verpflichtet, dem kulturellen Aufbau Schutz zu gewahren, denn ohne ihn entbehrte sie ihres Inhaltes und uberhaupt ihres Lebensrechtes." Arbeitskreis fur biozentrische Forschung, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Konv.: Prosa.

[90] Wolfgang Olshausen, "Ludwig Klages in Berlin, 1933," unnumbered manuscript in the "Prosa" section, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages,

[91] On this group, see *Hestia: Jahrbuch der Klages-Gesellschaft 1967/1969* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1971). The work is described as "lectures on the theme of language and its importance in the work of Ludwig Klages" and includes articles by Hans Eggert Schroder, Albert Wellek, Heinz Alfred Mueller, Hans Kasdorf, Francoise Wiersma-Verschaffelt, and Otto Huth. On Hirt's research see also the court

folk psychology and Wundt's psychology; in 1940 he became an army adviser in the field of military psychology and psychiatry. As was typical of Klagesian groups, the Arbeitskreis fur biozentrische Forschung also included several outspoken critics of the Nazis, such as Ernst Schwarz, who became an important politician in occupied Germany after the war.

The group's manifesto (1933) that circulated among the Arbeitskreis members, laid out their political aims:

(1) Man belongs to both zones of life and the spirit. However, if one follows the idealist or materialist laws of the spirit, one serves the *logocentric.* And if one leaves all values to the power of life, one serves the *biocentric* weltanschauung. Through such a decision one reaches the substance of *existence* and development. (2) We use the concepts coined by Ludwig Klages with special care. For us, Klages is the most significant harbinger of a *L ebensphilosophie*, the undercurrent of which reaches back into the pre-Christian, Germanic period . . . Certainly other names among the living philosophers may also be significant, but no name has enlightened us as much as that of *Klages.* (3) We could not bear the downfall of our culture thanks to the influence of *pseudo-radicalism* . . . encouraged by resentful politicians. (4) [The importance of] saving the cultural community, which is grounded on a secure hierarchy of life values, i.e., the inherent connections between blood and terrain as the roots of our existence. A decisive trust in the final powers of *human* teaching: the wonder [*Das Wunder*], the love, the pre-ideal image [*Vorbild*].

(5) The universally reliable method of our research can be designated

as demonstrative or symbolic thinking. In the results of *characterology*, which depend on this method of cognition, a condition becomes visible that is necessary to improve the health of our sense of reality . . . Therefore, we are convinced that our scientific possibilities lie not in the nonsense of atomized specialists [*a tomisierten Spezialistentum*], but *between* the individual disciplines.[92]

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sitting at Nuremberg that took place July 29 to August 8, 1946, at http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/imt/tgmwc/tgmwc-20 /tgmwc-20-198-04.shtml.

[92] "(1) Der Mensch gehort den beiden Reichen des Lebens und des Geistes an. Folgt er den idealistischen oder materialistischen Gesetzen des Geistes, dient er der logozentrischen, -setzt er die Machte des Lebens als letzten Wert, dient er der *biozentrischen* Weltanschauung. Durch diese Entscheidung wird die Substanz des Menschen in ihrer *Existenz* und in ihrer Entwicklung bestimmt. (2) Mit besonderer Absicht verwenden wir die von Ludwig Klages gepragten Begriffe. In Klages erblicken wir den bedeutendsten Verkunder einer *Lebensphilosophie*, deren Unterstromung in die vorchristliche, germanische Zeit reicht . . . Gewiss mogen uns unter den lebenden Philosophen auch andere Namen bedeutungsvoll geworden sein, -kein Name besitzt eine Leuchtkraft wie derjenige *Klages'.* (3) Nie werden wir den zivilisatorischen Verfall unserer Kultur durch den Einfluss von *pseudo-radikalen* . . . durch den Einfluss von Ressentimentsgetriebenen Politikern ertragen. (4) Die selbstgeschaffene Bergung innerhalb einer Kulturgemeinschaft verlangt, die sich auf eine feste Hierarchie der Lebenswerte grundet, d.h. Blut-und Landschaftszusammenhang als Wurzeln unsrer Existenz anerkennt,-und entscheidendes Vertrauen auf die letzten bildenden Machte des *Menschen:* Das Wunder, die Liebe, das Vorbild gesetzt. (H. Prinzhorn gibt in seiner *Personlichkeitspsychologie* [1932] die eindringlichste Zusammenfassung einer biozentrischen Wirklichkeitslehre vom Menschen.) (5) Als allgemein verbindliche *Methode* unserer Forschung kann das hinweisende oder

A letter sent by Klages to Carl Haeberlin (1870-1954), a doctor in Mainz, on January 10, 1935, also addressed the value of an interdisciplinary approach to *Lebensphilosophie*, biology, and politics. Like the Arbeitskreis manifesto writer, Klages dwelt on the opposition between logocentrism and biocentrism, but he went much further in his discussion of appearance, its connections to a more general theory of signs, and his post-Nietzschean philosophy of repetition.

For the ability to undergo transformation and rebirth, which lies within, . . . the primary concern nowadays should not be questioning which process follows which, but rather which stirring of life *appears* in it . . . Steadfastness means *repetition* and if one accepts a *repetition of the same*, the spiritual world can be calculated . . . Only the primordial human gives rise to a collision of polarities . . . The primordial human has ceased to experience appearances as either a positive or a negative drive and experiences them instead as the appearances of the essence of the world . . . Like the circular earth, as long as it lasts, . . . one gaze is transformed into another in a repetition . . . and renews itself from one gaze to another in the stream of occurrences that flows incessantly in the scheme of its own shapes, or—to put it in a more sophisticated way—resembles its own primordial image.[93]

In other words, Klages's theory of life was focused not on an ontological state of existence, but on an ontological form of time. The preservation or repetition he detected was found only in forms that kept a certain *sameness* due to the metastructural and primordial polarity that is still the major power of all human perception. The influence of his biocentric circle was apparent in such genetic experiments as the work done on twins in the late 1930s. In one study, explicitly indebted to Klagesian *Lebensphilosophie* and biocentrism, the researcher made the distinction between identical and fraternal twins, concluding that the genes of twins included not only the biological attributes of their race but also their " *Charakter-Ganzheit*" (wholeness of character).[94] The study was published by Philipp Lersch and Otto Klemm, two of the

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symbolische Denken bezeichnet warden. In den Ergebnissen der *Charakterologie*, die vor allen auf diesen Erkenntnisweg angewiesen ist, erblicken wir die Bedingung fur eine notwendige Gesundung unseres Wirklichkeitssinn es . . . Hierbei sind wir davon uberzeugt, dass unsere wissenschaftlichen Moglichkeiten weniger im atomisierten Spezialistentum, als *zwischen* den Einzeldisziplinen liegen." "Der Arbeits-Kreis fur biozentrische Forschung (AKBF)," in DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Prosa, unpublished manuscripts (all emphases in the original).

[93] "Fur das ihm innewohnende Vermogen der Wandlung und Erneuerung. Endlich waren wir solcher art Physiognomiker, aber in einem tieferen Sinne als dem bisher mit dem worte durchweg verbundenen. Wir fragen nicht mehr in erster Linie: welcher Vorgang folgt auf welchen andern? Sondern wir fragen . . . welche Lebensregungen *erscheinen* in ihnen? . . . Beharrung bedeutet zugleich Wiederholung; und aufgrund der Annahme von *Widerholungen des Gleichen* wird die Welt vom Geiste rechnerisch bewaltigt. Allein die Wirklichkeit geht nur uber jede von der Rechnung erreichte Dezimele unendlich hinaus." Ludwig Klages to Carl Haeberlin, January 10, 1935, DLA, Nachlass Ludwig Klages, Sig.: 61/5117, letter no. 1 (emphases in the original).

[94] Christian Eckle, "Erbcharakterologische Zwillingsuntersuchungen," in *Beiheft zur Zeitschrift angewandte Psychologie und Charakterkunde*, ed. Otto Klemm and Phillip Lersch (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth Verlag, 1939), p. 11.

Wehrmacht's leading psychologists; they called on their fellow psychologists to continue the research in depth.

5. The Deussen case, 1934

In 1934 Julius Deussen, the loyal follower and founding muse of the biocentric circle in Leipzig, published a study of Klages, treating him in a rather neutral and scientific fashion; he even went so far as to criticize the inconsistencies in his teacher's thought.[95] The reaction was swift. Schroder and Seesemann—Klages's most loyal disciples and Nazi adherents—expelled Deussen immediately from the Arbeitskreis, which they began running themselves. And when Klages circulated the unverified and false gossip that Deussen had a Jewish grandmother (which he probably heard from Haeberlin), Seesemann and Schroder informed the Gestapo. Deussen lost his medical and research position at Leipzig even before the investigation ended in his favor, with no charges brought against him. His search for a new job led to the Heidelberg clinic that planned and carried out the murder of thousands of disabled men, women, and children during the late 1930s. Records show that, as the clinic's director of surgery, Deussen led the way in the killing of handicapped children.[96] In a personal letter to his friend, the conservative revolutionary Joachim Haupt—a close adviser to Rust and the designer of the Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten (Nationalist Political Institutes of Education) for Nazi-elite indoctrination—Deussen referred to Haupt as the pseudonymous author of the article on Klages and Baeumler that appeared in *Volkischer Beobachter.*[97] The letter, much like the personal involvement of key Nazis, shows that the enmity between Klages and Deussen was known among the high administrators of the Nazi regime. It does not prove Klages's upper hand, though: Deussen himself was appointed in 1937 as a leader of the pedagogical indoctrination of his area and continued to win promotions in Nazi psychiatry organizations. In his capacity as a leading medical researcher in Heidelberg and participant in the Nazi euthanasia program, he was appointed to lead an important experiment on children with different mental and physical disturbances, causing the death of many. Deussen's official preoccupation was not over after the Nazis lost the war. As late as 1955-1956 he was still working as a medical adviser to the minister of law in Bavaria.

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[95] Julius Deussen, *Klages Kritik des Geistes, mit 7 Figuren und einer monographischen Bibliographie Ludwig Klages und einer Bibliographie der biozentrischen Literatur der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1934).

[96] A. Abbott, "German Science Begins to Cure Its Historical Amnesia," *Nature* 403 (2000): 474-475; William E. Seidelman, "Science and Inhumanity: The Kaiser-Wilhelm/Max Planck Society," *Not Now: An Electronic Journal* 2 (Winter 2000), http://www.baycrest.org/journal/ifnot01w.html (accessed February 12, 2013).

[97] Julius Deussen to Joachim Haupt, July 11, 1933, DLA, Nachlass Julius Deussen, doc. no. 7, file 6.

It seems that wherever one finds loyal Klagesian biocentrists, one finds loyal Nazis, that is, Klagesians who were willing to participate in the biopolitical apparatus of the Nazi state. But the impression is somewhat misleading. Unlike other Nazi racial scientists, those who embraced biocentrism never tried to solve the riddle of existence—such a solution would have been too linear. Had Deussen remained in the Klages circle, he most likely would never have become one of the senior members of the Nazi euthanasia program. In those cases where loyal Klagesians were successfully integrated into the Nazi hierarchy, it's important to note that they remained loyal to philosophical rather than political action. The task of biocentrism was the production of a truthful and amoral phenomenological description, not the actual killing of innocents.

The different motivation does not absolve the Klagesians from responsibility of the murderous policies they supported, even if passively. After all, they shaped and supported the discourse that allowed it. Much as some may deny it, and most Klagesians did, at the root of a certain vocabulary *as it is used* lies a close and inherent relation to the life and politics of the community, to actions in the world, and to the obsession with power and sovereignty. In his recent *Biopolitik: zur Einfiihrung,* Thomas Lemke points out that *Lebensphilosophie was* at the discursive heart of biopolitics; its stress on "organic existence, such as the instinct, intuition, feeling or living experience [*Erlebnis*] was contrasted with 'death' and the 'rigid', which represented mostly the 'abstract' concept, the 'cold' logic or the 'soulless' intellect [*Geist*]."[98] Lemke continues to point out that "the formulation of 'blood and soil' is the unique expression of the National Socialist biopolitics, a relation between the racial delusion and the murder of people," but also that "the grounding idea of a 'biologization of politics' [*Biologisierung des Politiks*] is not a German phenomenon and not reduced to the Nazi period."[99] Where Klages is concerned, Lemke is correct about the time, but wrong about the geographical focus. Klages's *Lebensphilosophie* and impact on the biopolitics of his time should be read from the perspective that precedes the rise of Nazi biopolitics, but it was explicitly stated as a German phenomenon. Let's return to Deussen and the AKBF one last time. Deussen's attempt to correct the Klagesian *Lebensphilosophie* and guide it toward a safer political haven opposed some fundamental principles of *Lebensphilosophie* in general and of the Klages group in particular, but its notion of power was not different. From the perspective of *Lebensphilosophie*, as much as one tends to approve of Deussen's critical tendencies, the Klagesians might have had a point in expelling him: his rationality was drawing Klagesian *Lebensphilosophie* into a threatening actuality. Marking actuality as the true fulfillment of *Lebensphilosophie* made Deussen sound closer to Baeumler and Rosenberg than to Klages, as I have shown in chapter 3. Either way, Deussen's case is a good example of the internal conflicts that threatened the Klages circle in particular and *Lebensphilosophie* in general, a conflict that repeats some of the broad lines sketched in the third chapter of this book, when describing the

[98] Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitik zur Einfuhrung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2007), p. 19.
[99] Ibid., p. 25.

unfolding conflict between Alfred Baeumler and Ludwig Klages. The Deussen-Klages debate provides a clear instance of the close affinity between *Lebensphilosophie* and Nazi exclusionary policy, as well as of *Lebensphilosophie*'s reluctance to enter into any form of actual politics. Paradoxically, the Klagesians had no qualms using the worst politics possible, the Gestapo, from intervening in order to keep their philosophical distance. In short, they liked the idea of controlling the murderous apparatus, but without dirtying philosophy with the actual stains shaped by *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil).

Because Klages and other important theorists of *Lebensphilosophie* proved reluctant whenever crossing through the political arena, they yielded control over their vocabulary to men more experienced in politics and government. By 1938 Klages's ideas were utterly out of step with the neo-Klagesian practice of those who had commandeered his ideas to suit the needs of national socialism. The attack launched by Rosenberg against Klages showed how inadequate was the latter's extra-philosophical actions when they confronted a continuously radicalized political movement.

6. Biomacht (biopower)

Petra Gehring wrote recently about the discourse of biopower in the context of bioethics: "The real power of *life* is one of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and it became omnipotent in our day, symbolically and socially. We have all learned that we do not only *have* life and could tell about it or from within it, but that we *are* life."[100] A careful history of *Lebensphilosophie*—originating in Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but expanding nowadays around the globe—reveals its destructive and simultaneously critical-constructive potential.

Giorgio Agamben, currently identified as the leading voice of biopolitics, described the appearance of the concept of life in the center of different linguist phenomena since the late nineteenth century in Germany. One idiom Agamben explores, of the "*sprachloser Urmensch*" (speechless proto-human), ties together life, biopolitics, and the aestheticization of borders. Leading from Ernst Haeckel's text from 1899 to the *Umwelt* (environment) theory of his disciple Jacob von Uexkull during the early 1920s, Agamben demonstrates the simultaneous rise of an affirmative and critical discourse of life. According to Agamben, the theory represents the primitive form of German—that is, modern— politics as a whole, mediated through the interplay of exclusion and inclusion and the anthropological machine of the nonspeaking apeman, or "the Jew, that is, the non-man produced within the man."[101] The appearance of a liminal man-ape, Agamben believes, is the ur-form of any state of exception, where "the animal is

[100] Petra Gehring, *Was ist Biomacht? Vom zweifelhaften Mehrwert des Lebens* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2006), p. 222 (emphases in original).

[101] Agamben, *The Open*, p. 37.

separated within the human body itself."[102] Such an image was projected by a whole set of metaphors taken from the perception of the *Umwelt*.

What *Lebensphilosophie* adds here, and perhaps corrects, is the way this category was translated into the world of fundamental forms: the Jews were seen as responsible for destroying the living environment by introducing the power of logocentrism and turning against all primal forces. They represented a life-death relation that refused to internalize death and make it immanent, and because of that, enabled death and destruction to take over life. From the Nazi perspective, as Samuel Weber summarized it "the Jews thus could be identified with the forces that affirm the priority of death over life and law over grace. To kill death would thus logically be to annihilate the Jews."[103] From this perspective, *Lebensphilosophie* viewed Jewish thought as a destructive epistemology opposed to the ontology of life (or its fragmented temporality), a negative power much greater than any natural and instinctive violence. Taken from this set of concepts, the figure of the Jew becomes the most decisive element for an ontology of biological images, be it *Lebensphilosophie*, biopolitics, or old-fashioned ethnology. It is no wonder then, that after 1945, when the Nazi genocide was slowly researched and exposed, a gap opened between *Lebensphilosophie* and biopolitical critique.

In an introductory article to a book about current German ethnology (anthropology)—and mentioning *Lebenslust* (lust for life) in its title— Thomas Hauschild explains that "since 1945 German ethnology has had a terminological problem,"[104] the result of a post-1945 association of the German descriptive language of ethnicity with the Nazi vocabulary of life and race. As a solution he proposes a turn to Foucault's notion of biopolitics (*Biomacht*) as the sole possibility of German ethnology that is interested in the link between German barbarism and German civilization.[105] Standing behind both the terminological problem and its offered solution is *Lebensphilosophie* and its politicization by Nazi race sciences. Further behind them both is the principle that links *Lebensphilosophie* in all its appearances, biopolitics included, with its immanent temporality as an ontology of (bodily) images. As the bestknown scientist of race in Nazi Germany wrote in his 1939 manifesto of racial policy, "[T]he power of the bodily observation and perception is unfolding . . . [T]he will, which originates with the clear awareness of the individual, is worked from within the will of the living individual

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Samuel Weber, "Bare Life and Life in General," in *Gray Room* 46 (Winter 2012), p. 20. Sam Weber's article is an exceptionally precise analysis of the concept of "bare life." However, in contrast to my analysis of *Lebensphilosophie*, Weber's stress falls on the weight given to *l ife* and *death* within the antinomian relationship, in a post-Paulinian context, rather than the immanentization of death within life as a secularized form.

[104] "Schon beim stillen Nachsprecher dieser Worter durfte den Lesern und Leserinnen klar werden, dass die deutsche Volkerkunde seit 1945 ein terminologisches Problem hat." Thomas Hauschild, "'Dem lebendigen Geist,' Warum die Geschichte der Volkerkunde im 'Dritten Reich' auch fur Nichtetnologen von Interesse sein kann," in *Lebenslust und Fremdenfurcht, Ethnologie im Dritten Reich*, ed. Thomas Hauschild (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995), p. 22.

[105] Ibid., p. 23.

[*Lebendige-Eigene*], and seems to me a sign of our present, and still more a sign and an omen of [our] future."[106] *Lebensphilosophie* is present in this comment—and other quotes from the period—not only because of the rather expected usage of the terms "life" and "living," but also in fusing those with an inherent and immediate expression of bodily drives on the one hand, and, less expected, the metaphysics of time on the other. "Many thinkers of the 1930s," Hauschild argues, "wanted to grasp time itself and eternalize it."[107] This notion that humanity stands on the verge of a breakthrough regarding time was common to all those rebels who turned their backs on an absolute idealist notion of progress and who turned all of their attention to pure forms and even purer principles of forms. This idea, Hauschild argues, was not any inherent Nazi necessity, but a radical notion that Nazism was able to exploit. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, "the concept of a powerful and passionate conquest of the future, but also the worry concerning a 'sick' and threatened present, is shared by [Wilhelm] Reich and [Hans] Gunther, but also Marcuse and Junger, Adorno and Klages. Common to many thinkers of the 1930s is the continuity between their own philosophy and the motive of lust for life [*Lebenslust*], . . . the search after the natural origin, which must turn back to the past."[108]

Why biopolitics, then? Hauschild explains this choice very carefully, justifying both ethnology and biopolitics with Foucault's notion that ethnology stands "on the boundary of human awareness . . . equal to psychoanalysis."[109] Adding *Lebenslust* and biopolitics to Foucault's "disposition of power," Hauschild concludes with a different view of origin (*Ursprung*), political theology, and Heideggerean primitivism.[110] The final step, then, seems almost obvious: "[P]ostmodernity and its material reality have created the conditions for a new perspective of 1930s and 1940s ethnology."[111]

7. Conclusion

Ludwig Klages died in Kilchberg, Switzerland, on July 29, 1956. He was 84. His last letters, some of them already deepened by illness and heavy depression, expressed no

[106] "Die Kraft korperhaften Sehens und Erfassen lasst sich entfalten . . . Der Wille, aus klarer Erkenntnis das Eigene, das Lebendig-Eigene aus eigenem Willen zu wirken, scheint mir ein Kennzeichen unserer Gegenwart und mehr noch ein Anzeichen und Vorzeichen der Zukunft zu sein." Hans Gunther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, vol. 1 (Munich: Lehmann Verlag, 1939), p. 3.

[107] "Aus einem Zeitalter der Not heraus wollten viele Denker der 30er Jahre die Zeit als solche besiegen und sich auf ewig in einer heilen, erlosten Menschheit fortzeugen." Ibid., p. 19.

[108] "Der Gedanke der kraftvollen und lustvollen Eroberung der Zukunft, aber auch die Sorge um eine als 'krank' und bedroht empfundene Gegenwart ist Reich und Gunther, oder auch: Marcuse und Junger, Adorno und Klages gemeinsam. Gemeinsam ist vielen Denkern der 30er Jahre auch die Bindung ihres Denkens an Motive der Lebenslust . . . die Suche nach einem naturwuchsigen Ursprung, zu dem zuruckzukehren gilt." Ibid., p. 20.

[109] Ibid., p. 33.

[110] Ibid., p. 21.

[111] Ibid., p. 43.

regret. In the end of his life Klages wrote about great sadness, following the death of his sister and his niece during the bombing of Munich. He also reported in different letters that the allies did not let him pass into Germany. He made great attempts to convince both the German and American authorities that he was not the anti-Semite they thought he was. How can a historian examine such sources and ignore the lack of self-reflection and absolute disregard of human lives? How can a historian comprehend the role of sources and origins in a discourse that denies history itself?

In this book, I have tried to reconstitute a lost discourse of life as a radical element that is still in many ways present in the contemporary intellectual and cultural climate. The discourse offers a way to grasp 1920s Weimar, with its fundamental aestheticism and radical politics, as the fundamental historical basis for current intellectual comprehension. It unites the two sides of one process of modernity in a single discourse, a single temporality, and a similar political philosophy without reducing them to a single phenomenon. Bluntly put, the history of *Lebensphilosophie* is the best possible elucidation of the perplexing fascination of both Nazis and aesthetic avant-gardists, of both antiSemites and a group of brilliant Jewish intellectuals, with the jargon of life. I traced the early roots of this discourse in the 1900s, its moment of formulation during the early 1920s, and a moment of change during the mid-1920s when the discourse was politicized. I conclude with the catastrophic end of the discourse and its aftermath.

At the end of the process, at the close of the 1920s, the discourse broke into three major chunks: the Nazi *Lebensphilosophie* of Adolf Hitler, Alfred Rosenberg, and Alfred Bauemler literalized in Hitler's geopolitical *Lebensraum*; the conservative, reluctantly pro-Nazi, cultural antiSemitism of Ludwig Klages and other *Lebensphilosophers* from the right; and the life vocabulary of pre-1933 and post-1945 critical thought, following the radical thinking from both the unofficial right and the left. This last critical strand only reconfirms the principal argument concerning the political nature of *Lebensphilosophie:* beyond all commitment to politics, it was the absolute and total commitment to radicalism and total forms that shaped its character. Biopolitics has recently completed the circle by turning the theory back to its discursive roots. Its stress on the apparatus that controls life allowed a variety of political forms to evolve out of it—"the different political positions of 'biopoliticians' [*Biopolitologen*] stand far apart,"—as Lemke writes, but the discursive source stands much closer to each of those different political appearances.[112] Lemke himself admits as much when he writes that "[the concept of] *life*, since the 1970s, becomes a reference point for both political thought and action. The stress on the *environment* [*Umwelt*] of human society . . . serves to secure the 'survival conditions of humanity.'"[113] The intellectual historian, sensitive to discourses, is needed in order to expose the shared root of such different phenomena, and ask—truly ask—about the implications of exposing the secret flow that runs under so much of our current political discourse in the West.

[112] Lemke, *Biopolitik zur Einfuhrung*, p. 31.
[113] Ibid., p. 40.

The interdisciplinary character of the topic should not stand between a historian and the challenge of fascist politics. A careful examination of the latter proves that no simple theory and history of nationalism could exhaust a "nervous age" trying to "represent itself as largely a literary and aesthetic movement."[114] In fact, no history of single characters, nor of particular philosophical or political schools—Nietzsche or Klages, Rosenberg or Hitler—could explain the impact of such abstract ideas on a common political sphere. One needs to historicize the very language of political consciousness, in this particular case, an explicit 1920s-1930s jargon of life.

In cultural terms, *Lebensphilosophie* offered a radical unity of high and low culture that turned the notion of cultural crisis upside down. From this perspective, I might identify the Nazi revolution as a movement that succeeded in totalizing an aesthetic discourse on all levels of daily life, thereby overcoming the deep epistemological and existential crisis of the 1920s. Identifying a clear enemy worked better than any other positive strategy. At one level, Nazism was the product of a negative cultural revolution that used aesthetics to form an ever-changing political dynamic, essentially committed to radical action. It denied the option of an individual and existential choice in favor of a collective "life form." It is only thanks to its total aesthetics that it was able to take over the whole vocabulary of life, and this vocabulary allowed it to totalize politics through the state of emergency.

Among the *Lebensphilosophers* whose thinking became part of the Nazi system, Klages's case is unique because of the radical conceptualization of the principles pointing at both the cleavage that needed to be healed and the medicine that would do it: the radical dualism of spirit and soul discussed in Klages's writings polarized the world as an immanent form and a fundamental temporality. His *Lebensphilosophie* is unique because of its stress on an immanent temporal order that charged the life with life's end, as the very core of its movement. In social-political terms it is unique because of its deep impact on both his archenemies—the Jewish intellectuals of the left—and those later carriers of his ideas in the Nazi elite. Because of this fork in the genealogy of *Lebensphilosophie*, terms that Klages used during the 1920s continue to carry great philosophical weight and are used by both his opponents (see the progressive critical edge *logocentrism* received) and his reactionary supporters.[115]

Walter Benjamin, Klages's most important commentator for the twenty-first-century reader, translated his stress on life to a whole set of life-related terms and a movement he re-calibrated for his own purposes. As Samuel Weber showed in his recent *Benjamin-abilities*:

What characterizes Benjamin's language, in German, and what once again tends to get lost in the English translation, is the critical movement of departure, of taking-

[114] Mosse, *Masses and Man*, pp. 1, 15.

[115] Currently, the best place to read Klages in English is the monumental work of translation done by John Claverley Cartney, an unidentifiable independent scholar whose name can be easily linked with some suspicious groups. See http://www.revilo-oliver.com/Writers/Klages/Ludwig_Klages.html and the anti-Semitic http://www.vanguardnewsnetwork.com/index.html.

leave, a movement that moves outward and away . . . This movement outward is then taken up in the shift from the familiar noun "life" (Leben) and the gerundive, built on the present participle, which I translate as "the living"; in German, "das Lebendige."[116]

Indeed, it is time to take our leave. In the view of Eric Voegelin (1901-1985), the cluster of concepts that led to modern racism derived from scientific biology and "legitimate" research on types and races. Including Hans Driesch and other non-Darwinian biologists in his research, Voegelin recommended further investigation of the intellectual history of the concept of race, speaking of "the soul characteristic of races."[117] In 1933 Voegelin concluded that "the failure of modern race theories" to produce an up-to-date version of Kant's "science of experience" had ensured Klages a readership: "In general we recommend that those who have so much to say about spirit and soul read, among other things, some works by Klages—not in order to adopt his theories but simply to learn what they are actually dealing with."[118] No twenty-first-century historian could have put it better, not even the historian writing this work. After four years of research, I am back to the point of origin, trying to rethink life and pure langsuage with its existential temporality, either out there in the political realm of crisis and order, or right here, inside this text, with its attendant ghosts.

Dilthey's influence on Heidegger, see the discussion of faktisches Leben in David F. Krell, Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy (*Bloomington:* Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 150-158. See also the comprehensive reading of the early "dilthey-ish" Heidegger in Georg Imdahl, *Das Leben Versetehen: Heideggers formal anzeigen Hermeneutik in den fruhen Vorlesungen (1919-1923)*. Wurzburg: Konigshausen and Neumann Verlag, 1997.

[116] Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's-abilities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 66.

[117] "The classification of man into racial types according to groups of traits and the study of the transmission of physical traits and predispositions through heredity is a completely legitimate scientific endeavor because a part of total human existence is undoubtedly of animal nature and can be isolated as such." Eric Voegelin, *Race and State*, trans. Ruth Hein (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), p. 34.

[118] Ibid., p. 82.

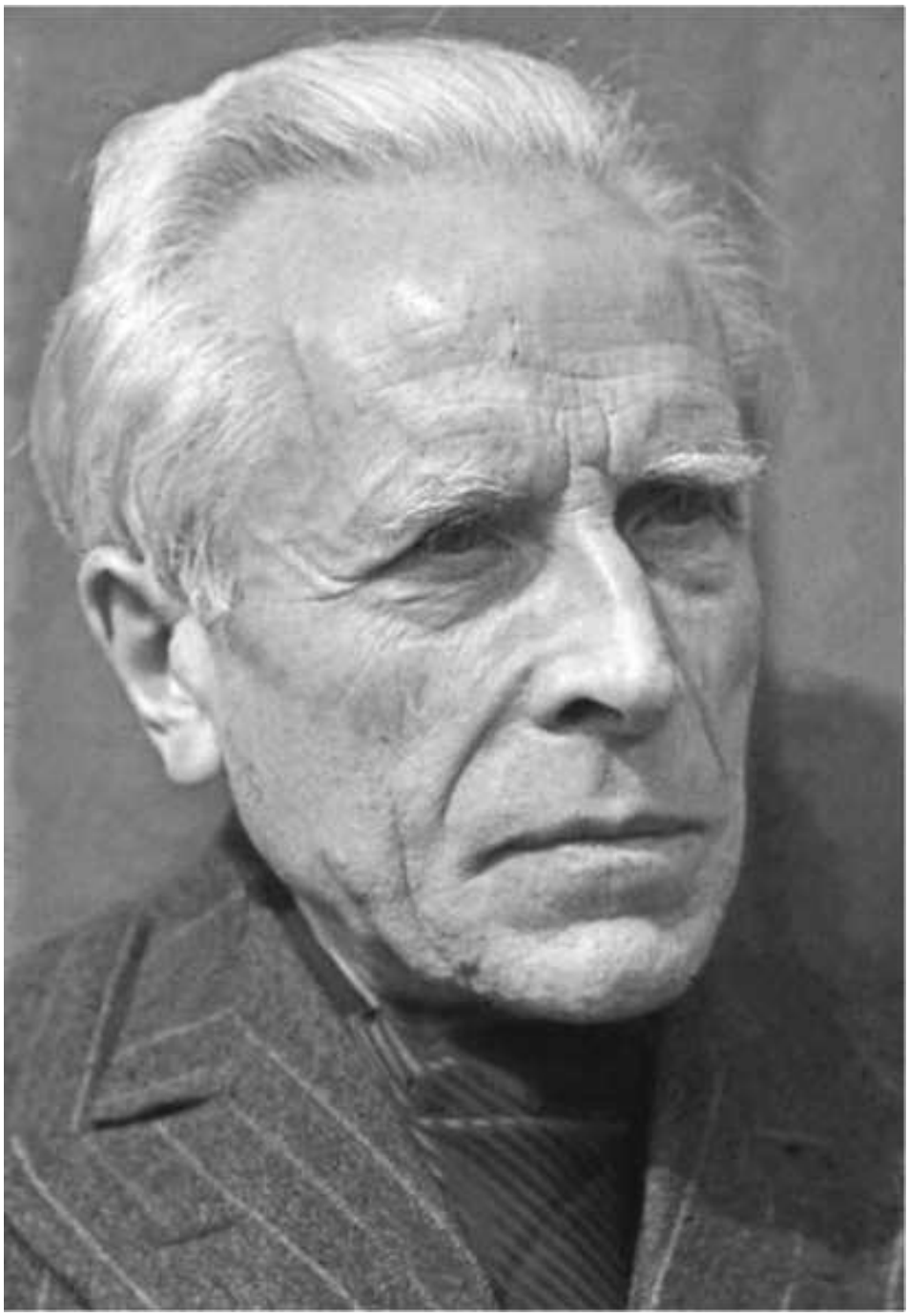

Figure 6.2 Ludwig Klages during the 1950s (undated). DLM: Nachlass Ludwig Klages.

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Nitzan Lebovic
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