Transatlantic Negotiations on “Hell“?

W.E.B. Du Bois’s Visit to Fascist Germany and Theodor W. Adorno’s Exile in the Land of the Culture Industry

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1. Marking Out the Area of Analysis

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) and Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1903-1969) were two distinct individuals who differed from one another in terms of skin color, place of birth, mother tongue, and religious affiliation. What is more, Du Bois led a life of political activism which spanned such diverse causes as Pan-Africanism, NAACP-civil rights agitation and Marxism (he eventually joined the CPUSA in 1961), whereas Adorno contented himself with a life of critical contemplation. At the end of it and in the midst of the German student rebellion of the late 1960s, the latter justified his lifelong aloofness thus: "Wer denkt, ist in aller Kritik nicht wütend; Denken hat die Wut sublimiert" ("Resignation" 150). While ultimate disillusionment with the United States impelled Du Bois to emigrate to the African Gold Coast and become a citizen of Ghana at the age of 95, intellectual and emotional affinity for his country of origin persuaded Adorno – although he at first cautiously retained his U.S. citizenship – to return to Germany after the downfall of the National Socialist regime.

These facts notwithstanding and more importantly, the two thinkers also shared a certain number of crucial characteristics: Both were culturally elitist, left-wing scholars and artists who were pervaded by intellectual European ethnocentrism (they were both trained at German universities) and demonstrated a profound interest in music and musical theory[1]. Granted, Du

[1] Another interesting commonality between the two pertained to the terms arguably most closely associated with them: The NAACP's organ *The Crisis* and the critical (as opposed to traditional) theory espoused by the members of the Institute of Social Research. The similarity between Du Bois's and Adorno's lifelong commitments becomes clear when one recalls that the words "crisis" and "critical" are etymologically related, stemming from the Greek term *krisis*, which denotes "discrimination", "decision", "crisis" or "decisive point" (cf. OED). Thus

Bois was primarily a historian and novelist fond of – besides the major German-speaking composers – the African-American musical legacy (he especially appreciated the "Sorrow Songs", i.e. spirituals written by slaves), whereas Adorno was above all a philosopher and composer who held the leading exponents of the avant-garde *Neue Musik* (i.e. atonal and twelve-tone music), namely Arnold Schönberg and Alban Berg, in high esteem. Yet such minor differences do not at all obscure the fundamental and indisputable likeness between the two.

This basic similarity is probably best underscored by an additional reference to the fact that both Du Bois – a black American – and Adorno – a German Jew – were members of persecuted minorities in their respective home countries during the 1930s and 40s. Peripherally, one might remark that it is a more than curious coincidence that both men were actually only partly members of the aforementioned minority communities, for Du Bois had also had Huguenot and Dutch ancestors, whereas Adorno was technically not even a Jew, since his mother was a Catholic singer who came from a family with a Corsican and Italian background. His father – originally a Jewish wine merchant – had already converted to Protestantism in the year 1910. Yet such a subtle analysis of the complexities of Du Bois's and Adorno's family background should not mislead – let alone deceive – the reader: Both white supremacists in the U.S. and German anti-Semites knew perfectly well whom they wanted to persecute, of whom they wanted to purge society. Or, as Adorno put it in *Minima Moralia's* "Mélange": ". . . noch die zwingendsten anthropologischen Beweise dafür, daß die Juden keine Rasse seien, werden im Falle des Pogroms kaum

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one might argue that a *crisis* is a decisive moment, a time calling for judgment, for praise and rebuke, for *critical* thought (cf. Schweppenhäuser 19).

etwas daran ändern, daß die Totalitären ganz gut wissen, wen sie umbringen wollen und wen nicht“ (183-84).

Given the fact that they had a great deal in common, a comparative analysis of Du Bois’s visit to Germany in 1936 and Adorno’s exile in the United States from 1938 to 1949 is bound to yield interesting results – not least because at first sight one assumes that both National Socialism and the so-called culture industry must have been sheer hell for men of their make-up. According to the German scholar Rüdiger Safranski, Adorno’s three “hells” were fascism, Stalinism, and the production of mass culture to which his colleague Max Horkheimer and he referred to as the culture industry in their “black”, epoch-making *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947)[2]. Yet does that mean that his American exile as such was unbearable? Du Bois’s “hell on earth” was clearly color prejudice and race hatred. Not only his writings, but also his activism (he co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909) demonstrate that from his perspective “the problem of the Twentieth Century” was “the problem of the color-line” (*Souls* 1). When he was barely twenty years old, he had already spoken of the “Hell of southern prejudice” (“The New Fatherland”) in a Fisk University address to visiting German educators. Yet does that necessarily mean that he experienced Germany as a wholly abominable place? Obviously, the country was in the grip of a fascist regime among whose National Socialist principles prominently ranked severe hostility towards those deemed “unfit”, i.e. Jews, communists, Gypsies, homosexuals and the mentally handicapped. People of color, however, were

[2] Cf. the documentary *Adorno – Der Bürger als Revolutionär* by Meinhard Prill and Kurt Schneider broadcast by the Hessischer Rundfunk in 2003.

not among the primary targets of fascist purges, persecution and eventual extermination. So what was Du Bois's attitude towards "the country of poets and thinkers" turned fascist when he briefly returned to it in 1936?

What follows will be an attempt to answer these questions comprehensively. It goes without saying that not only the word "hell" but also the term "negotiations" contained in the title of this investigation are to be understood metaphorically. What interests me are Du Bois's and Adorno's negotiations of meaning with regard to the word "hell". These negotiations did not take place between them, but rather between them and the readers to which their various writings were addressed. Moreover, while the metaphor "hell" aptly pinpoints my intention to probe subjective experience, "negotiations" carries political connotations which perfectly underscore the historical, social and, in particular, political emphasis of this investigation.

Among other, rather minor sources I will draw on a series of opinion pieces Du Bois wrote for the African-American weekly *The Pittsburgh Courier* in 1936 and 1937. When treating Adorno, I will above all consider the private correspondence with his parents, Max Horkheimer, Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and Thomas Mann as well as his largely autobiographic lecture "Kultur und Culture" (1958) as major sources for this scholarly endeavor. With regard to Du Bois, his attitude towards the main topics of his articles (namely Europe, science and technology, opera, the Olympics, industrial education, race relations and fascism) will primarily be dealt with. In addition, I will try to shed some light on his eminently interesting relationship with the founder of African Studies in Germany, Diedrich Westermann, whom he met while revisiting the Central European country. As far as my perusal of Adorno's

theoretical analysis of America is concerned, his opinions on – what he called – the "universal victory of the Enlightenment" in the United States as well as the "mass deception" and "mass fraud" (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 128) of the culture industry will mainly be discussed. When examining his stance towards the production of mass culture, I will concentrate on the following phenomena: advertisement, radio, jazz, film, television, print media and astrology. As stated above, however, these theoretical discussions will be preceded and thereby supplemented by a thorough scrutiny of Adorno's immediate and personal response to his exile contained in the letters he wrote to family members, colleagues and friends.

Proceeding chronologically, I will first deal with Du Bois's short stay in Germany before taking a closer look at Adorno's extensive "American experience". From my point of view, this is the only truly feasible approach to tackling the initial question of this scholarly endeavor. A deviating organization of this thesis (e.g. the construction of abstract and thus essentially meaningless overarching categories) will not work because Du Bois and Adorno did not concern themselves with the same aspects of the respective societies. While Du Bois dealt with a broad variety of phenomena in German society, Adorno primarily emphasized the detrimental characteristics of the industrial commercialization of culture. It goes without saying that I will devote a larger part of my investigation to Adorno's exile than to Du Bois's trip. While the American only visited Germany for about five months, the German stayed in the United States for eleven years.

Prior to discussing the overriding question of my thesis, however, I will briefly occupy myself with the context of Du Bois's and Adorno's foreign

experiences. That is to say, I will try to contextualize their German and American experiences diachronically (in Du Bois's case) and synchronically (in Adorno's case) in order to enable the reader to better understand their respective evaluations of their stays abroad. It is my opinion that a certain awareness on the part of the reader of Du Bois's studies at the University of Berlin and the Frankfurt School's work in New York City and Los Angeles will greatly enhance his or her understanding of the intellectuals' ultimate judgments. I will conclude my investigation by trying to respond to the question whether the two intellectuals really experienced "hell" or not.

From a subordinate, normative point of view, my aim is the following: By shedding light on their respective, comparatively unbiased accounts of the Old and New World, by scrutinizing their arguably balanced transatlantic negotiations, I wish to contribute to the mutual understanding of the two continents, and, in particular, the mutual respect between Germany and the United States of America. Unfortunately, such transatlantic understanding cannot necessarily be taken for granted at the present. Yet it is my conviction that – although objective differences between the two countries and continents undoubtedly exist – one can still get along if one truly understands one another.

2. Contextualizations

2.1. Diachronic Contextualization: W.E.B. Du Bois's "Age of Miracles"

During the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, German universities enjoyed an excellent reputation among American students. It is generally estimated that – in the course of this time span – 10,000 students from the United States attended institutions of post-secondary education in the Central European country; in 1880 (the year in which American enrollment peaked), some 15.5 per cent of all foreign university students in Germany hailed from the U.S. (cf. Herget 195). Leipzig, Halle, Heidelberg, Bonn and Göttingen were the preferred destinations for the young American knowledge seekers; yet the most popular of all was the University of Berlin (Humboldt-Universität), which managed to attract roughly 50 per cent of all American students attending German universities between 1850 and the 1920s (cf. Herget 196). In the U.S., German scholarship and science were not merely deemed superior to French learning; they were considered the apex of erudition as such. Harvard College, for example, sent prospective faculty members to a German university for a stint of advanced training before they could proceed in their careers (cf. Herget 196). What fascinated U.S. professors and students alike was the "general working atmosphere" and "dedication to learning" (Herget 196) which German institutions of higher education exhibited. Furthermore, Americans were awed by the "total dedication to scholarly life", the "contagious diligence of German students" as well as the "laboriousness of German professors" (Herget 197-98). Last but not least, Americans were – at

least to a certain degree – attracted by the German university ideal, namely the idiosyncratic "linkage of research and teaching" (Herget 205).

It now hardly comes as a surprise to note that W.E.B. Du Bois, who grew up in this climate of unabated appreciation of and respect for German scholarship, decided to spend two years of his life in Germany in order to "properly finish [his] education" (qtd. in Rampersad 42).[1] He was of the opinion that "a careful training in a European university for at least a year is, in my mind, and the minds of my professors, indispensable" (qtd. in Rampersad 42). Having already acquired three degrees at Fisk and Harvard (with a fourth, namely his doctorate, in the making), Du Bois attended the University of Berlin from 1892 to 1894. The academic coursework he completed in the German capital was in the related and interdependent fields of sociology, history, political science and economics. The financial support of the Slater Fund for the Education of Negroes even enabled him to come close to earning yet another academic degree: His effort to acquire a doctorate in economics from Berlin – "the most difficult of German degrees" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 143) – was thwarted, however, by a mere formality, namely the requirement that a Ph.D. demanded at least four semesters' worth of work. Yet the Slater Fund declined to support him any longer despite his already having completed his dissertation entitled *Der Gross und Klein Betrieb des Ackerbaus, in den Südstaaten der Vereinigten Staaten, 1840-90*. It is likely that from the perspective of the foundation's trustees Du Bois's educational program had become too rarefied; they apparently failed to detect any practical utility in Du

[1] Du Bois seems to have been characterized by a Germanophile mindset as early as 1888. In a Fisk University address he delivered to visiting German educators he had already professed to have learned to love their mother tongue in a German language class (cf. "The New Fatherland").

Bois's advanced academic studies: "How useful to the education of a people one generation removed from slavery could a University of Berlin-minted teacher be, after all?" (Lewis, *Race* 146). Nevertheless, Du Bois was to receive the coveted degree (this time in history) from Harvard in 1895 for his thesis *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, the first volume of the Harvard Historical Monograph Series. He was the first black whom Harvard granted such an academic honor.

Du Bois referred to the period of his higher education at Fisk, Harvard and Berlin as his "Age of Miracles" because a considerable number of his most heartfelt wishes came true. And his time as a student at the University of Berlin was arguably the crowning stage of this age. Three aspects of his early German experience are of especial importance to the tackling of the initial question of this investigation: First, the authoritative influence of his German professors on his conception of sociology as well as on his intellectual outlook on questions of culture, race, nation and history (this was especially reflected in his groundbreaking work *The Souls of Black Folk*); second and more importantly, the overwhelmingly positive experience of witnessing comparatively harmonious relations between different races in Germany; third, his acquaintance with the world of European culture. The supposition here, of course, is that a largely agreeable or even delightful time as student in Germany from 1892 to 1894 might have had a decisive bearing on his impressions of the country and its people in 1936.

Besides being somewhat of a pioneer in history (by virtue of his kick-starting the aforementioned Harvard Historical Monograph Series), Du Bois can definitely be called a pioneer in the field of sociology; what is more, his

choosing the sociological discipline as a major output for his later thoughts on race can largely be ascribed to the formative influence of his academic teachers at the University of Berlin. His seminal *The Philadelphia Negro*, which was published in 1899, is usually considered to have initiated the scientific examination of society in America. Likewise, Theodor W. Adorno's extensive study *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) has been credited with having pioneered the systematic sociological study of prejudice and authoritarianism. Yet Du Bois did not content himself with the mere intersubjectively understandable – i.e. scientific – scrutiny of social phenomena. Throughout his life, he sought to link objectivity to activism by engaging in what has been called "remedial sociology"; thereby, he believed, he could serve "simultaneously his moral imperatives, his commitment to truth, the advancement of his people, and his love of the scholarly life" (Rampersad 44). Such a notion of sociology as being a mixture of empiricism and remedial social action temporarily lured Du Bois away from history (cf. Rampersad 43). Moreover, it can safely be maintained that Gustav von Schmoller and Adolf Wagner – two of the most distinguished and extremely influential members of the so-called "Historical School" working in the thriving field of political economy – were most instrumental in seducing Du Bois away from "pure" historiography: Both Wagner and von Schmoller – two left-leaning social scientists – were firm believers in the inductive scientific method as opposed to the deductive approach practiced by Anglo-Saxon theorists. To put it another way, they believed in the meticulous gathering of social and historical facts, in the rigorous collection of various pieces of evidence, "to provide the basis for social justice through economic change" (Rampersad 44). Again: Although

social change was their ultimate goal, they insisted that it be preceded and supported by a thorough gathering of data. It is – in my mind – not difficult to grasp why this approach appealed to Du Bois.

What is more, von Schmoller and Wagner stood for a state-centered paternalism which denied the proletariat's role as historical subject and rather placed its trust in Prussian technocrats as facilitators of social betterment; the state's task was, they were convinced, to shield citizens from the market, regulate cartels and mediate between competing economic interests (cf. Lewis, *Race* 142). As we will shortly see, their views were entirely in keeping with Du Bois's elitism, which was especially characteristic of him during his student days. This conspicuous trait also prompted him to complain that too many German Socialists were part of "that anarchistic, semi-criminal proletariat which always, in all countries, attaches itself to the most radical party (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 144). Still, as he later told his readers in his *Autobiography*, Du Bois at the time had also started to attend SPD meetings in the working-class borough of Pankow (cf. 168).

The other academic teacher to have a lasting influence on Du Bois was "the fire-eating Pan-German" (Du Bois, *Autobiography* 162) historian and notorious anti-Semite Heinrich von Treitschke. If von Schmoller and Wagner had attracted Du Bois from the left, von Treitschke most definitely appealed to him from the right. The historian could best be described as an authoritarian romantic nationalist with imperialist aspirations, a person who was fascinated by the "aggrandizement and deployment of power" (Rampersad 44), who was convinced that history was shaped by the indomitable will of great men, who believed in the superiority of the Aryan race and who supported the seizure of

overseas colonies. In a word: He was "the very embodiment of united monarchical, armed Germany" (Du Bois, *Autobiography* 164). It is not very difficult to detect a clear affinity between von Treitschke's and Du Bois's conception of history – one must simply draw on the opening line of Du Bois's famous essay "The Talented Tenth": "The Negro Race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men" (842). Reading Du Bois's celebrated, "early" autobiography *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), one comes across another curious but – under these circumstances – totally intelligible remark concerning the topic of his oration on the occasion of his graduation from Fisk:

> Bismarck was my hero. He had made a nation out of a mass of bickering peoples. He had dominated the whole development with his strength until he crowned an emperor at Versailles. This foreshadowed in my mind the kind of thing American Negroes must do, marching forth with strength and determination under trained leadership. (32)

Granted, Du Bois clearly qualifies his enthusiasm for Bismarck retrospectively. However, during his whole life, he never managed to free himself entirely of his adoration for the strongman who molds the history of his people.

Today, Heinrich von Treitschke's notoriety is above all a result of his infamous role in the so-called *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* (1879-1881), which he had initiated with his pugnacious editorial "Unsere Aussichten" published in the *Preußischen Jahrbücher* (Nov. 1879) and which had pitted him against his great liberal antipode Theodor Mommsen. Although in the article under scrutiny von Treitschke was preoccupied with nationalism and consequently demanded that Jews improve their efforts to assimilate to the dominant culture, the essay also contained the disastrous and – in the final analysis – fatal claim "Die Juden sind unser Unglück!" (11). Furthermore, the opinion piece assembled almost all common Judeo-phobic topoi: The anti-

Semitic agitator only explicated what the overwhelming majority – coerced by public opinion – dared only to think (cf. 6), Jews were themselves responsible for the hatred with which they were confronted (cf. 7), Israelites controlled the financial sector and media (cf. 7), Jews were mendacious, cheeky, greedy, materialistic and bent on usury (cf. 9) and, perhaps most disturbing, Jews were deemed to be a foreign element (cf. 11); in fact, von Treitschke regarded their strangeness as so inveterate that some of them would perpetually remain mere "German-speaking Orientals" (12). It is utterly astonishing that even retrospectively (i.e. after the ordeal of the Holocaust) Du Bois did not qualify his original remarks about his former teacher. Yet even at the time that he had studied in Germany, his assertion that von Treitschke was not a bigot had been manifestly untrue. In Rampersad's words, "Du Bois was susceptible once again to his almost instinctive attraction to arbitrary power, force of will, and conspicuous elitism" (45).

Du Bois was above all influenced by von Treitschke's undeniably Germanic notion of culture. In fact, "a conception of *Kultur*, which implied the idea of a folk spirit rising up out of the souls of the masses" (Moses 245-46), was the predominant understanding of the term at the University of Berlin at the time. Again: It is not very difficult to see how such a definition of culture is embodied in (what many people regard as) Du Bois's masterpiece *The Souls of Black Folk*, whose title might roughly be translated as *Der Schwarze Volksgeist* (cf. Moses 246). The book arguably represents an attempt to not only describe but also conjure up an African-American folk soul, or even the spirit of black people in general. Considering that such an essentialist understanding of culture usually stresses the importance of legends, folk tales, myths and folk

art, it is hardly surprising that Du Bois devoted a considerable part of the book to the aforementioned "Sorrow Songs". Such a "highly mystical and organic conception of community" (Gilroy 128), such an almost metaphysical understanding of the terms "folk" and "soul" is also reflected in such sentences as the following: "we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness" (Du Bois, *Souls* 11-12). When one reads such assertions, it is not particularly difficult to discern the roots of a part of Du Bois's thinking. The romantically-fueled dichotomy between the Anglo-Saxon *Händler* and the German *Helden*, for example, which the propaganda machine of Imperial Germany constructed and disseminated during World War I, smacked of similar implicit assumptions[2].

Digging a little deeper, the "ur-source" of Du Bois's romantic nationalism can be found, as Anthony Appiah has pointed out, in the thought of von Treitschke's philosophical "precursor" Johann Gottfried Herder (cf. 325). Like Herder, Du Bois was convinced that races (i.e. groups of people united by blood, language, history, traditions and impulses) were central actors of history. The heart of the black race beat, Du Bois argued, in the "dark forests of its African fatherland" ("Conservation" 822). He thereby perhaps epitomized his exposure to the romantic Germanic conception of *Kultur*.

There is, of course, an obvious explanation for Du Bois's fascination with the true *Geist* of a nation, its soul or spirit: It appealed to him as someone who "is obsessed by his people's historic deprivation and disunity and who yearns

[2] The alleged contrast between merchants and heroes is, to be sure, an ancient anti-American stereotype; it also represents a case where anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism overlap. This is fairly often the case, for both America and the Jewish people are – according to the prejudiced – characterized by *rootlessness*: while the United States is allegedly a country without a history, the Jews are said to be a people without a country.

for a greater national or racial future" (Rampersad 45). This is, to be sure, a way of rationalizing his peculiar attraction to romantic authoritarianism and – strangely enough – even incipient fascism. We must, however, rationalize, for there is a great difference between incipient and actual fascism. Yet one thing is clear: Strains of the romantic nationalist ideology characterized his thought, at least partly, throughout his life (cf. Rampersad 45). As in the case of von Schmoller and Wagner, von Treitschke also seems to have had a formative influence on Du Bois's intellectual development. As we progress in this investigation, we will see whether or not this character trait also had a significant impact on his attitude towards National Socialist Germany.

Having clearly shown Du Bois's intellectual indebtedness to several of the most renowned German scholars of his time (one should not forget to mention Heinrich Rudolf von Gneist and Max Weber under whom he also studied), I will now concern myself with the most important aspect of Du Bois's first stay in Germany: His critical assessment of the state of race relations in Imperial Germany. Afterwards, I will briefly talk about his immersion in European culture from which a life-long love affair resulted.

Although Du Bois's conclusion concerning the quality of race relations in Germany was almost wholly positive, I will nevertheless mention a couple of negative instances. Von Treitschke, "the German Machiavelli" (Du Bois, *Autobiography* 164), for example, once made a derogatory remark in class one morning, uttering: "Die Mulatten sind niedrig! Sie fühlen sich niedrig" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 136). Notwithstanding Du Bois's belief that von Treitschke had not addressed him personally (von Treitschke was apparently not even aware that Du Bois was in the room), this utterance nevertheless left a bad taste in Du

Bois's mouth. However, he was quick to qualify the professor's remark, asserting that "Treitschke was not a narrow man. His outlook is that of the born aristocrat who has something of the Carlyle contempt of leveling democracy" (*Autobiography* 165). Summarizing the difference between the United States and Germany, Du Bois jotted down the following observation in his notebook: While America was a "boundlessly optimistic state founded on individual freedom", Germany was a "restlessly pessimistic state founded on obedience" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 137). It appears that von Treitschke's romantic authoritarian nationalism had not left such a deep impression on him after all. Although Du Bois emulated the German Emperor's beard and mustache, he could not but feel a certain ambivalence while seeing him astride, riding through the Brandenburg Gate: "I began to feel that dichotomy which all my life has characterized my thought: how far can love for my oppressed race accord with love for the oppressing country? And when these loyalties diverge, where shall my soul find refuge?" (*Autobiography* 169). Another interesting observation made in his *Autobiography* concerns the United States' and Germany's different notions of patriotism, or, to put it another way, the difference between sober constitutional patriotism and outright nationalism:

> The pageantry and patriotism of Germany in 1892 astonished me. In New England our patriotism was cool and intellectual. Ours was a great nation and it was our duty to preserve it. We "loved" it but with reason not passion . . . When I heard my German companions sing *"Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles, über Alles in der Welt"* I realized they felt something I had never felt and perhaps never would ". (168-69)

In spite of his admiration for the accomplishments of the Prussian state apparatus, Du Bois nevertheless seemed to possess certain critical instincts

which prevented him from wholly identifying with the authoritarian German Empire.

Turning to the only real experience of undisguised racial discrimination experienced in Germany at the time, one is tempted to say that it was well-nigh characteristic of the state of mind of most Germans that this blunt utterance of racial prejudice was made not by a German but by the wife of an American professor. Prior to the start of the university lectures in October of 1892, Du Bois had decided to travel a little through Germany. Among his destinations was Eisenach, a town where he lived in the house of Johannes Marbach, the rector of the Wartburg. The aforementioned U.S. professor and his spouse subsequently arrived from the Far West and lodged at the same pension as Du Bois. The latter had by then gotten to know the daughter of the Marbach family, and Dora – the Marbach's daughter – had already fallen in love with "her Willy" (Lewis, *Race* 130). This, however, was too much for the American couple to bear: "Mrs. Far West Professor" (Lewis, *Race* 130) immediately informed Dora's parents about the imminent danger their daughter was in due to her carefree consorting with a black man. Although everyone at the Marbach pension was relieved when the couple from the Far West had departed, "a certain awkwardness" (Lewis, *Race* 130) ensued. This resulted in Du Bois's feeling "a little sensitive" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 130), and came close to spoiling his hitherto perfect summer experience.

There was, however, another – minor – incident of being racially singled out: Continuing his travels after his first semester, Du Bois briefly digressed on Lübeck. When he took the streetcar on the first night of his visit, he noticed little girls "who rode for one station and giggled" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 138-39).

It got even more bewildering when he arrived in the town market the following morning: A large throng of people (including, once more, children) eyed him inquisitively. Du Bois's reaction, jotted down in his notebook, was: "Heavens, but these Lubeckers are curious" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 139). He went on, now seemingly desperate: "These children, o God these children – how they do stare and what can a man do when children stare?" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 139). This experience apparently led to "anger, and a general feeling of forlornness and homesickness that is terrible" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 139). The occurrence seems to have been a devastatingly negative racial experience for Du Bois. However, it did *not* (as we will see) rub off on his ultimate evaluation of the quality of race relations in the German *Kaiserreich*. In fact, what appears to have disturbed Du Bois even more than the incident itself was his reaction towards it. Such unprecedented vulnerability, this "slip of the mask" (Lewis, *Race* 139), seems to have scared him the most. Such an interpretation is primarily warranted by the fact that the diary passages quoted above were lost until David Levering Lewis first published them in the first volume of his grand work of life writing entitled *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race 1868-1919* (1993).

Du Bois's observation of the state of race relations in Germany in the 1890s allowed him to draw a practically unblemished, an almost wholly positive conclusion. As a matter of fact, it could hardly be considered an exaggeration if one were to maintain that he experienced an unprecedented and ultimately unique absence of racial restrictions between 1892 and 1894 (cf. Lewis, *Race* 132). A frequently quoted passage from the *Autobiography* serves to illustrate this claim:

> In Germany in 1892, I found myself on the outside of the American world, looking in. With me were white folk – students, acquaintances, teachers – who viewed the scene with me. They did not always pause to regard me as a curiosity, or something sub-human; I was just a man of the somewhat privileged student rank, with whom they were glad to meet and talk over the world; particularly, the part of the world whence I came. (157)

One must, of course, concede that Du Bois was somewhat of an exception, for he defied the preconceptions which the common German held of American blacks at the time: He hailed from New England, was literate and did not earn his money as a peasant; in other words: He did not seem to be a member of a race whose liberation from the shackles of slavery was still a vivid memory for many (cf. Lewis, *Race* 127). Concluding this section, one can safely claim that Du Bois derived infinite satisfaction from his – to paraphrase a great civil rights activist – being judged not by the hue of his skin, but by the quality of his character, noting in his notebook that "my race forms but slight impediment between me and kindred souls . . . I am here free from most of those iron bands that bound me at home" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 145). At the end of his study stint in Germany, the people he encountered had become "not white folks, but folks" (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 16). Upon his return to the United States in 1894, Du Bois at any rate lamented: "I dropped suddenly back into 'nigger'-hating America!" (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 16).

Anticipating a train of thought which will be reiterated in the main part of this investigation, it should be noted that precisely because hardly any people of African origin resided in the *Kaiserreich*, the few colonial subjects who did live there were able to go about their daily business without having to fear large-scale racism. Around 500 of the blacks who migrated to the "Fatherland" between 1885 and 1918 have been identified by name (cf. Campt, Grosse and

Lemke-Muniz de Faria 214). These individuals predominantly hailed from Cameroon and Togo, settled either in ethnically mixed port cities or lived in isolation, and usually worked as sailors, members of colonial exhibitions (*Völkerschauen*), craftsmen or attended universities (cf. Grosse 127). As Campt, Grosse and Lemke-Muniz de Faria have pointed out, the Africans' presence was strictly controlled and basically only served purposes of empire (cf. 206).

For the sake of concluding this diachronic contextualization of Du Bois's visit to fascist Germany in 1936, Du Bois's immersion in and consequent predilection for European high culture has to be discussed – albeit briefly. Especially emphasizing his acquaintance with Beethoven's various symphonies and Wagner's *Ring*-cycle, Du Bois summed up the gratifying experience thus: "Europe modified profoundly my outlook on life . . . something of the possible beauty and elegance of life permeated my soul; I gained a respect for manners" (*Dusk of Dawn* 45). Moreover, he derived satisfaction from the fact that his German acquaintances "did not regard America as the last word in civilization", and gained even more contentedness from the University of Berlin's refusal to recognize a Harvard degree, just as Harvard refused to recognize a Fisk degree (*Autobiography* 157). It was during these years that a curious duality began to characterize Du Bois's aesthetic sense: Thenceforth, he would hold both African-American spirituals and German classical music in high esteem. His emerging black nationalism was thus complemented by a lifelong fondness for European art. Hence Arnold Rampersad's astute conclusion:

> The key to his acceptance of European culture was his discovery that the white world was not monolithic . . . He saw that a dis-

> tinction needed to be made between white America and Europe. America came to represent to him in some respects a deracinated imitation of European culture . . . Paradoxically, then, Du Bois intensified his allegiance to white cultural values by dividing the white world. (46)

That is to say, while Du Bois continued to oppose a large, predominantly racist part of white America, he became an ardent, lifelong devotee of European artistic expression[3]. To conclude, I want to emphasize once more that Du Bois's time as student at the University of Berlin from 1892 to 1894 appears to have been an exceptionally pleasant and fundamentally important time for him; so much so, that it is not at all out of place to surmise that it positively influenced his later assessment of Nazi Germany in 1936. Further anticipating the main part of this thesis, however, one ought to add that later in life he wistfully looked back to his first stay in the Middle European country by speaking of the German Empire as "a Germany which no longer exists" (*Autobiography* 176).

Before I progress, I would like to draw the reader's attention to U.S. political conditions prior to Du Bois's trip to fascist Germany and briefly spell out what they looked like. Such a "completion of the picture" should further aid us in our understanding of Du Bois's reaction to Germany in 1936. An 1896 Supreme Court ruling in the notorious case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* had stipulated the so-called "separate but equal" doctrine, i.e. a principle of constitutional law that laid the foundation for so-called "Jim Crow" state legislation (cf. Sigler 401). Such racist laws demanded the segregation of

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[3] Although Du Bois was at times scathingly critical of various white American individuals, he never lumped them together – except when consciously overstating his case for the sake of bettering the lot of African-Americans. His reverence for the militant abolitionist John Brown (1800-1859), whom he "immortalized" in a classic of life writing in 1909, attests to his effort to differentiate. His determination to make distinctions in his analyses also characterized his *Pittsburgh Courier* articles on fascist Germany.

public facilities such as schools and railway cars, but also applied to institutions of religion, the sphere of employment, housing and the way one spent one's leisure time. Even such a vital American institution as the armed forces, in which blacks had served since the days of the Revolutionary War, was only desegregated in 1948 when President Harry S. Truman issued an Executive Order. Furthermore, more than 3,000 African-Americans were lynched in the south of the United States between 1882 and 1936. The American South, of course, was the region where around two-thirds – and thus a clear majority – of America's blacks lived (cf. Sigler 401). Finally, southern blacks were also frequently prevented from exercising their constitutional right to vote. In the face of such racist circumstances and with regard to (as we will see) Du Bois's admission that racial civility was the primary reason he traveled to Europe in 1936, it seems warranted to pose the question whether it was perhaps not Germany but his home country that was "hell on earth" for him. From my point of view, the ongoing oppression of African-Americans was crucial to Du Bois's decision to re-visit Germany. Having diachronically embedded W.E.B. Du Bois's visit to Germany in 1936, I will now attempt a synchronic contextualization of Theodor W. Adorno's exile in the United States.

2.2. Synchronic Contextualization: The Frankfurt School's "Exile in Paradise"

Theodor W. Adorno's time of exile during the Nazi reign can be divided into three distinct phases. In the first stage of his homelessness (1934-38), Adorno took up residence in Oxford, England, and attended the prestigious Merton College as an "advanced student". This certainly ran counter to Adorno's perception of himself at the time, for he had already held the position of a *Privatdozent* at the University of Frankfurt prior to his departure. Knowing Adorno, it is hardly surprising to discover that this decline in status severely offended him, and subsequently impelled him to retaliate with scathing scorn. In a letter to Ernst Krenek, he commented on his drafting up of a second dissertation on Husserl's phenomenology thus:

> . . . sachlich sind freilich die Schwierigkeiten, da meine eigentlichen philosophischen Dinge den Engländern begreiflich zu machen zu den Unmöglichkeiten zählt, und ich meine Arbeit gewissermaßen auf ein Kinderniveau zurückschrauben muß, um verständlich zu bleiben – was eine Aufspaltung der ganzen Arbeit in akademische und eigentliche Dinge mit sich bringt, für die ich mir [sic] eigentlich zu alt dünke. (qtd. in Jäger, *Adorno* 126)

Although Adorno lived amid pleasant surroundings, which were utterly conducive to his scholarly needs, he did not feel at home, and consequently remained an outsider. He failed to make any acquaintances of lasting importance, was regarded as a fop by his fellow students and perceived the convention of eating meals collectively in a common room as the "realized nightmare of being forced back into school, in short: the extended Third Reich" (qtd. in Jäger, *Adorno* 127). Yet for all his haughtiness, Adorno's openness to the academic examination of phenomena of popular culture – such as jazz –

was greeted with like presumption by the other "members" of Merton College. When Adorno's initial hope of being named the assistant of Ernst Cassirer also failed to materialize, he quietly wrote off England and began to contemplate an emigration to New York City – the refuge of the Institute of Social Research.

In 1938, Adorno finally emigrated to the United States, spending what constituted the major part of the time of his expulsion from Germany in the New World. While the second phase of his exile was spent on the East Coast in New York City and lasted from 1938 to 1941, the last stage of his "homelessness" (1941-1949) was spent in *the* metropolis of the West Coast, namely Los Angeles – which, by the way, could also be considered the center of the culture industry. For the time being, however, I do not want to discuss Adorno's experience in the United States (I will leave that to the main part of this investigation), but instead attempt to trace some of the American experiences of the other members of the Institute of Social Research. How did they earn their money? What did their professional cooperation with gentile emigrants from Germany look like? Did they share Adorno's assessment of the U.S.? If not, what did their judgments of America look like? Compared to Adorno, were the other Jewish intellectuals more or less sympathetic towards the country that saved them from certain, industrialized murder under fascism?

My present aim is to briefly sketch out some possible answers to these questions by touching on the following topics: First, the relationship of Adorno's mentor and head of the *Institut für Sozialforschung* (IfS), Max Horkheimer, towards the United States; second, the surveillance of the Institute by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); third, the work of various Institute members for the American secret service; and, fourth, the different forms

of professional cooperation between members of the Frankfurt School and other, non-Jewish refugees from Germany. To repeat: My aim here is to synchronically contextualize the forthcoming analysis of Adorno's exile in the United States. My hope is that such an embedment will aid the reader in his or her gauging of Adorno's experience.

Horkheimer's attitude towards America was overwhelmingly positive. In his love for the United States he went farther than simply rejecting anti-American stereotypes such as the insinuations that the U.S. was characterized by a dearth of culture and tradition, that it was overly materialistic and superficial (cf. "The American Way of Life" 235). In fact, towards the end of his life he was so sympathetic to the country that – amid the revolt of the university students in his native Frankfurt and elsewhere in Germany – he made no bones about his support of the U.S.'s intervention in Indochina. In 1967, a steadfast and belligerent Horkheimer declared in the Frankfurt *Amerikahaus*: "Wenn in Amerika es gilt, einen Krieg zu führen . . . so ist es nicht so sehr die Verteidigung des Vaterlandes, sondern es ist im Grunde die Verteidigung der Verfassung, die Verteidigung der Menschenrechte" (qtd. in Jäger, *Adorno* 277). In the same vein, he had already praised America's unmistakable constitutional patriotism in his 1964 lecture "The American Way of Life", likening it to the pride the citizen of ancient Rome took in the words "civis romanus sum". American patriotism, he argued, did not primarily relate to some ominously organic notion of *Heimat*, but instead to the country's Constitution, its laws and the established protection of the individual (cf. 237): "Es ist diese 'constitution', diese Freiheit, diese Gesinnung, die verteidigt wird, wenn sich Amerika verteidigt" (237). Peripherally, one might note that

Horkheimer's description of U.S. patriotism perfectly concurs with W.E.B. Du Bois's observation mentioned in the preceding part of this thesis.

More striking, however, was Horkheimer's praise of the equally Christian and democratic American practice of forthrightly calling an unfamiliar person "brother". The case in point Horkheimer had in store was a policeman who, after a slight argument, decided against fining him; he allegedly let the accused immigrant go by saying: "All right, go ahead brother!" (237). Horkheimer detected a considerable spirit of equality and humanity in American everyday life, believing that U.S. civilization was characterized by friendliness, mutual understanding and neighborliness (cf. 238). What is more, he believed that the education of children was less authoritarian than in Germany (cf. 244). As we will see in the main part of this thesis, this was very similar to what Adorno had to say about the matter. Yet Horkheimer was an attentive observer who realized that this trait of American life was closely linked to the urge for self-preservation as well as the desire to serve one's own interests. Thus friendliness and unfailing self-interestedness, generosity and determined self-preservation were but two sides of the same coin (cf. 239).

Furthermore, Horkheimer identified an unfaltering belief in progress as the central characteristic of American life, as the "allgemeine Philosophie Amerikas" (242), its *Weltanschauung*. From his point of view, the U.S., which, after all, had been founded on the strength of a "social contract", sought to achieve "perpetual peace" (Immanuel Kant) in the international system by repeating what its various states had done at its inception. The U.S.A., he was convinced, was guided by "die Vorstellung . . . es müsse einen Fortschritt geben, in dem am Ende . . . die Beziehungen der Völker durch Vertrag geregelt

werden" (242). The other facets of the Enlightenment concept of progress which he praised were a strong tendency towards the equal treatment of men and women, parents and children, a strong critical spirit, the readiness to joke about – even ridicule – oneself (Horkheimer especially had a penchant for American comic strips), the willingness to increase the social capital of one's nation by voluntarily getting involved in the work of "social-welfare organizations" (240) as well as the idea of competition in the sphere of university research and education. Although Horkheimer conceded that volunteerism was often driven by the yearning for prestige (cf. 240), such an explanation did not in any way impair its positive effects on society. From Horkheimer's point of view, however, the most important aspect of what he called progress was arguably the American readiness to criticize anything deemed worthy of criticism – including the U.S. itself. This echoed – as we will see – what Adorno referred to as the relative absence of taboos in American debates.

Yet it was not Horkheimer's aim to whitewash reality. He was astutely aware of the fact that the famous and notorious (at least since Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* [1851]) American *Fortschrittsoptimismus*, its radically liberal (understood in the European sense of the word) economic order as well as the U.S.'s own brand of racism had historically entailed and presently brought forth a whole host of negative phenomena. Among these prominently ranked the subjugation and partial elimination of America's indigenous peoples (cf. 237), the scarcity of legislation aiming at the creation of a welfare state (cf. 241) as well as the persistent discrimination against African-Americans (cf. 242-43). Nevertheless, it attested to Horkheimer's

evenhandedness that he acknowledged the difficulty of bridging the gap between white and black America. For the discrimination against people of color, he was convinced, largely resulted from an internal dynamic of society which could only slowly be changed. He cited the example of a young black or Puerto Rican couple which rented an apartment in a middle-class neighborhood. The white tenants, Horkheimer was convinced, would, in turn, start to move out of the house for fear that the couple would have noisy children or attract more blacks or Puerto Ricans who would ultimately ruin "the prestige to be a good address" (243). The landlord would, in consequence, deny the original black or Puerto Rican couple a rental contract or charge them a higher rent. The couple was thus – by virtue of an anonymous internal dynamic of society – discriminated against. A sober, but still hopeful Horkheimer concluded: "Die fortgeschrittenen Weißen wissen um beides, die Schuld und die Schwierigkeit, die Konsequenzen zu überwinden" (243). His faith in the gradual improvement of the situation of African-Americans seemed to largely rest on the enforcement of existing laws, further civil rights legislation and the verdicts of the Supreme Court (cf. 242). Yet for all his occasional criticism, Horkheimer was never as critical of the U.S. as his student Adorno at times was. This might have also been due to the former's immeasurably profound gratitude for having been saved: "Dass die Emigranten der Welt, die den Faschismus aus sich erzeugt, gerade dort den Spiegel vorhalten, wo sie ihnen noch Asyl gewährt, kann niemand verlangen" ("Die Juden und Europa" 308), Horkheimer had written in 1939.

The older Horkheimer got, the more conservative he became[1]. In the 1950s, the formerly Marxist professor took to liking the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer. Horkheimer's political views were by now staunchly anti-communist, in his outlook on politics he had approached positions held by the *Christlich-Demokratische Union* (CDU). Moreover, in the 1950s and 1960s he increasingly developed a keen interest in a topic hitherto bypassed, namely religion. This is the context in which Horkheimer's fierce, almost hawkish anti-totalitarianism must be appreciated. He pointed out, for example, that a respect for "jene alten und großartigen Grundsätze . . . die für Amerika kennzeichnend sind" (244), i.e. paying heed to the opinions of citizens instead of simply manipulating them, necessarily plunged a liberal democracy into a crisis in a time of global confrontation such as the Cold War – simply, because, from a military standpoint, the "awkwardness" and "cumbersomeness" of the democratic process in the U.S. was inferior to the "smooth" decision-making process of Stalinist Russia. Closing his talk on "The American Way of Life", he made his audience aware of a predicament: "Auf der einen Seite müssen wir alle wünschen, daß die Freiheit erhalten werde, auf der anderen müssen wir wünschen, daß sie sich verteidigt; beide entgegengesetzten Interessen miteinander zu vereinigen, ist unendlich schwer" (245).

In 1937, however, even in America several conformist restrictions on the right to free speech existed which a *younger* Horkheimer viewed very

[1] Horkheimer's increasing conservatism was also fostered by an empirical survey which the Institute had conducted with the co-sponsorship of Thomas Mann in the early 1940s. Their inquiry into the ways in which German gentiles had assisted Jewish victims of Nazism showed that conservatives and Catholics had extended greater help than liberals and Protestants. This outcome led Horkheimer to infer that "conservatives were often better preservers of critical ideals than liberals" (Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 224).

critically. He was aware of the fact that – even prior to the "witch-hunt" of the Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy – people were occasionally denounced as communists and subsequently deported or interned in camps. Consequently, he pleaded with Theodor W. Adorno, who wanted to settle in the U.S. in the following year, "äußerst szientivisch zu reden und ja kein Wort zu sagen, was politisch ausgelegt werden könnte. Auch Ausdrücke wie materialistisch sind unbedingt zu vermeiden". He further advised him to express himself in the simplest manner imaginable in his lectures, for "Kompliziertheit ist bereits ein Verdachtsmoment" (qtd. in Jäger, *Adorno* 146). As a precaution, Horkheimer also changed the title of one of his own articles: "Spätkapitalismus" yielded to "Autoritärer Staat".

It is not quite clear whether the various members of the IfS were really aware of the fact they were being watched by the FBI; however, it is very likely that they at least suspected the like. By virtue of the "Freedom of Information Act" the public can now examine the Bureau files. The surveillance of the IfS member Henryk Grossmann, which took place five years after J. Edgar Hoover's agency had begun its investigations of the Institute, represents a case in point: On July 29th, 1940, the police of Provincetown, Massachusetts, informed the FBI about the fact that Grossmann, who was allegedly only vacationing in the New England town, had shown a considerable and thus suspicious interest in Provincetown's docks. The police and the Bureau, of course, surmised that German or Russian submarines were cruising in the waters off the coast, the assumption being that Grossmann was

either a fascist or a communist spy[2]. On the next day, the FBI ordered the NYPD to interview Horkheimer's deputy, Leo Löwenthal (Horkheimer had by now moved to the West Coast for reasons of health). Although the inspection of the Institute proved to be inconclusive (the members' Jewish names basically excluded the possibility of fascist treason), the Bureau's suspicion did not relent, and it consequently continued to observe various members of the Frankfurt School until 1955. The suspicion now was that they were spies for the fifth column, which, in turn, worked for Moscow. On account of his association with the potentially "subversive" composer Hanns Eisler, Adorno also naturally attracted FBI surveillance, which, for instance, ascertained that his wife Gretel chauffeured him around Los Angeles in a green 1936 Plymouth whose license plates read "5E5507" (cf. Rubin 174). As will be shown, Adorno soon distanced himself from his suspicious colleague. It is unclear, however, if he was aware of how closely he was being scrutinized by the authorities at least from the middle of 1942 onward.

The FBI observations of the Institute encompassed interrogations, the reading of official and private mail and telegram correspondence, policing, the auditing of the Institute members' income tax payments, eavesdropping as well as the burgling of apartments (cf. Rubin 173). The most interesting FBI measures, however, pertained to the interception of at least three telegrams from Horkheimer to Friedrich Pollock, the scrutiny and partial translation of the 1933 and 1934 editions of the supposedly subversive *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (ZfS) as well as the testimonies of several *Special Agents* – the

[2] Hoover's neologism "communazis", which he had coined in order to refer to the German refugee community, indicated that the community members' German nationality and exile status were perceived as a "double threat" (Rubin 173). Similarly, the FBI had at first suspected the IfS scholars to be a group of undercover Nazis hunting down Jews who had fled from Germany (cf. Rubin 175).

Bureau's spies. Horkheimer's cables – which dealt with such diverse issues as the exact preliminary delineation of the Institute's extensive study of prejudice, its efforts to obtain entry permits for European friends and acquaintances, and the question of whether it would be wiser to travel by car or by train – were all meticulously analyzed by the FBI's laboratories in its hermeneutic quest to discover hidden and thus putatively conspiratorial messages. In each case, the Bureau was at first utterly convinced that Horkheimer's telegrams employed some secret code. Agency director and "cryptographer-in-chief" Hoover, for example, had suspected that Horkheimer's mention of "Nietzsche" and (German) "Expressionism" must have been indicative of some kind of subversive language. Even Horkheimer's ironic habit of signing his telegrams with "Alright", with which he apparently intended to parody Americans' disinterest in meaningful social change, aroused the mistrust of the FBI (cf. Rubin 175). Yet every time the FBI's initial suspicion came to nothing. Its explanations for its repeated failure to unveil a plot ranged from the alleged discovery that a particular cable contained no secret message to the concession that yet another telegram employed "einen privaten Code, der dem Labor nicht zur Verfügung steht" (qtd. in Winkler). The operative whose job it was to examine the ZfS concluded that its articles were of a scientific rather than propagandistic nature; nevertheless, it apparently possessed an anti-religious and materialist tendency; the flames of suspicion were further fanned by the fact that communism was not alluded to forthrightly – despite the authors' known opposition to the existing economic order (cf. Winkler).

To be sure, the FBI's dilettantism did not lack a certain comic quality; what was less amusing, however, was the fact that the Institute was also being

watched by one of its own members as well as two academics who had also fled to the U.S.. It is now well established that the Frankfurt School economist Karl August Wittfogel, whose work was later celebrated by leftist students in the 1970s, had been an FBI informer; likewise, the feature writer Friedrich Torberg, who organized a boycott against Bertolt Brecht in post-war Vienna, had also been a Bureau spy (cf. Winkler). Last but not least, the Fordham University economist Friedrich Bärwald, who had been somewhat associated with the Institute prior to its flight to the United States, must also be mentioned. In 1955, he commented on an eleven-year-old statement by Friedrich Pollock in a report to the FBI. The latter had denied that the Marxist concept of emancipation could in any way be successful in the United States, for "den Amerikanern ist jede Reglementierung so zuwider, dass sie es auch nicht einmal hinnehmen würden, wenn ihnen der Kommunismus ein Utopia bescheren würde" (qtd. in Winkler). In his analysis for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bärwald was able to allay all fear of a communist conspiracy: "Das Material, das aus dem Institut kam, war überhaupt nicht massentauglich und deshalb für marxistische Propaganda völlig ungeeignet. Die Arbeit am Institut gestaltete sich so esoterisch, dass sich die Mitglieder buchstäblich nur miteinander unterhielten" (qtd. in Winkler).

The exiled Frankfurt School, however, was not only a target of American government agencies; a few of its members (Herbert Marcuse, Franz Neumann, Otto Kirchheimer, Leo Löwenthal, and, as we will see, Adorno) also compliantly cooperated with the U.S. government when it came to gathering intelligence about the fascist Axis. The case of Herbert Marcuse was arguably the most famous of all, for he almost obsequiously (when one considers his

later radicalism) provided the intelligence service of the armed forces and forerunner of the CIA, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), with scientifically sound "Feindanalysen". Before that he had already served with the Office of War Information (OWI) for a short time. Yet – when one looks at the matter more closely – this sort of work seemed to come naturally to Marcuse, who, after all, had been a "Soldatenrat" in the revolutionary year of 1918 and apparently regarded his OSS-task as serving a "klassenspezifischen Propagandaaufgabe" (Jäger, *Adorno* 212). The case of Marcuse is one example underpinning the insight that ideological conviction did not necessarily prevent members of the Frankfurt School from appreciating their American safe haven. While Horkheimer, Adorno and Pollock returned to Germany for good after World War II (although they still retained their U.S. citizenship), Marcuse and Löwenthal permanently resided in the United States.

Wrapping up this synchronic contextualization of Adorno's exile, I will mention a few aspects of the professional cooperation between the Frankfurt School and other refugees from Germany. While several non-Jewish intellectuals also collaborated quite productively (Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler, for instance, assisted the film director Fritz Lang dramaturgically and musically in his work for *Hangmen Also Die*), cooperation was arguably most fruitful when Adorno hooked up with Eisler and Thomas Mann. Adorno collaborated with the former on a book entitled *Kompositionen für den Film*. Therein, their aim was to prove that the music of the modernist avant-garde, the *Neue Musik*, was much more suitable for the purpose of political enlightenment and progressive agitation in motion pictures than traditional film

scores (cf. Jäger, *Adorno* 163)[3]. Adorno's and Mann's teamwork – arguably the most famous exile collaboration of all – consisted in the joint conception of the novel *Doktor Faustus*. The book, which centers on the German composer Adrian Leverkühn, is a parable about Germany's course towards the disaster of fascism (cf. Jäger, *Adorno* 182). Although both books were – in the final analysis – accompanied by mixed feelings on Adorno's part (he later, as will become evident, withdrew from the co-authorship of *Kompositionen für den Film* for political reasons and felt that Mann had not given him his due for sharing his knowledge and offering up his musical advice), they nevertheless represent eminently fruitful products of intellectual teamwork facilitated by the common experience of exile. Anticipating the main part of this thesis, I could jump ahead and argue that – at least in this respect – Adorno did not necessarily experience "hell" in the United States.

Before I progress however, I would like to – paralleling what I did in Du Bois's case – sketch out what the political situation in Germany looked like before Adorno's American exile. In other words: One should recall what German Jews had been subjected to even before their mass deportation to, internment and extermination in concentration camps. In 1935, the Reichstag had unanimously adopted the Nuremberg Laws (which in reality were official orders issued by Hitler on the strength of his "emergency powers" assumed after the infamous arson in the parliament building). The legislation had, among other measures, defined Jews racially by looking to blood lineage, stripped Jews of German citizenship (and thus of political rights), forbidden

[3] Adorno's receptiveness to propaganda committed to the class struggle must strike the reader as a strange contradiction, for in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* he had categorically rejected the rational manipulation of the irrational: Propaganda, he had claimed, was mendacious and misanthropic – even if it served desirable aims (cf. 272).

marriages and extramarital relationships between Jews and gentiles, interdicted the employment of female non-Jews in Jewish households and prohibited the hoisting of the colors of the Reich by Jews. But Nazi anti-Semitism had not only assumed a "legal" guise. Arguably, the most traumatic Judeo-phobic event prior to the Shoah occurred as a response to the shooting of the German consular officer Ernst Eduard vom Rath by the Pole Hershl Grynzspan in Paris. In the course of what has come to be known as the *Reichskristallnacht*, which was part of the so-called "November Pogroms" of 1938, Jewish houses of worship were desecrated, Jewish homes, schools and businesses destroyed, almost one hundred Jewish Germans murdered, around 30,000 sent to concentration camps and thousands more injured (cf. Kaufman 316-17). Again, I think it is justified to pose the question whether "home" rather than the United States was perhaps "hell on earth" for Adorno. For it were the political circumstances in his home country which, after all, forced him to emigrate. Such a consideration seems even more pertinent when one takes note of a statement Adorno had made in 1935 about the authoritarianism of his former school mates: "Im Faschismus ist der Alp der Kindheit zu sich selber gekommen" (*Minima Moralia* 220).

3. W.E.B. Du Bois's Visit to Fascist Germany

Before thoroughly dealing with Du Bois's brief stay in Nazi Germany, two introductory remarks must be made. First, it is of great importance to keep in mind that Du Bois was a culturally Eurocentric scholar who had studied in Berlin from 1892 to 1894, and that this experience – as pointed out earlier – appears to have been an overwhelmingly positive one for him. In what many people consider to be his masterpiece, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), he makes the following significant observation concerning his being a man of color: "And yet, being a problem is a strange experience, – peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe" (4). Compared to the United States, Europe had apparently been a place of comparative racial civility.

Second, one ought to know when discussing his trip to Germany that he went there as a wholly unbiased social scientist – in spite of what he had heard about the horrors of Nazism. A correspondence of the year 1936 between him and Victor Lindemann, a well-known Jewish businessman from Newark, New Jersey, offers insight into Du Bois's scholarly convictions. Responding to a lack of understanding on Lindemann's part prior to his journey, he asserted:

> I do not see why the search for truth by anyone and under any circumstances should cause you amusement. My investigations in Germany do not commit me to any set conclusions or any attitude. Sixty-six million people are always worth studying. ("W.E.B. Du Bois to Victor D. Lindemann", March 31st, 1936)

This unprejudiced attitude, which distinguished the black sociologist Du Bois from the Jewish businessman Lindemann, also manifested itself in the scholar's aborted effort to write an autobiographic novel (entitled *A Search for*

Democracy) about an African-American professor comparing the social "accomplishments" of fascism, communism, and the Democratic New Deal program in the United States[1]. The claim seems warranted that Du Bois traveled to fascist Germany not only as a scientific observer who had a balanced account in mind, but also as a person kindly disposed towards the German population.

I will now take a closer look at Du Bois's findings, which he – as already mentioned – propounded in various *Pittsburgh Courier* opinion pieces between September 1936 and January 1937. Proceeding chronologically, my analysis will comprise the following topics: Europe, science and technology, opera, the Olympic Games, industrial education, fascism and race relations. In addition, I will devote a comparatively large part of my examination to the eminently interesting transatlantic relationship between Du Bois and Diedrich Westermann. Their academic exchanges (which predominantly pertained to the conception of the four-volume *Encyclopedia of the Negro* project) have not yet been systematically scrutinized. Whenever it is possible and appropriate, I will try to enrich my look at Du Bois's visit by including cross-references to Theodor W. Adorno's exile.

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[1] The central commonality between fascism, communism and Keynesian New Deal policies, Du Bois gathered, was that they redistributed income and other primary goods from society's top to its bottom. The average citizen (or subject) was thus increasingly provided with public education, social security (insurance, pensions), recreational facilities and such cultural public goods as theaters, lectures and expositions. Du Bois described the era's overall tendency as follows: "States differ from each other today, not as to whether they are doing these things, but principally in the methods by which they are doing them and the philosophic reasons which they are giving for their policies. But no matter what their reasons or ways, all civilized States today are transferring Wealth from the Rich to the Poor" (9/19/36). Interestingly, Du Bois included Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia under the heading "civilized". It is not clear whether he thereby only referred to a certain level of *socio-economic* development or also to *moral* authority.

The official purpose of Du Bois's visit to the central European country[2] was his ostensible wish to study the industrial education of German youth. If it turned out to be superior, its principles were to be applied to the foundering system for African-Americans, improving the institutional achievements of Booker T. Washington (his former arch rival) and others: "Dr. Du Bois feels that the German experience would be valuable at the present time, when there is an effort being made to reorganize American Negro industrial schools" ("Minutes of the Oberlaender Trust", February 15th, 1935). What Du Bois ultimately envisioned was "a fusion of liberal arts and technical instruction" (Lewis, *Fight* 389) in order to bring forth the "Talented Tenth" of black America. His trip was financed by the Philadelphia-based Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation and the Oberlaender Trust (the latter being a component of the former). The donor Gustav Oberlaender was a wealthy German-American stocking manufacturer, an avowed Nazi-sympathizer, a fervent anti-Marxist and, last but not least, a "philanthropist"[3]. To be fair to the far-rightist German-American "cultural broker", however, one should add that by 1938 the Oberlaender Trust expanded the scope of its financial assistance to include scholars who had been forced into exile by Nazi Germany, the most prominent probably being the physicist Albert Einstein (cf. Jenkins 56).

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[2] In a letter to the Oberlaender trustee and treasurer W. K. Thomas Du Bois sketched out a tentative itinerary ("My original proposal to the Oberlaender Trust"): "from Rotterdam up the Rhine to Frankfort, stopping possibly in Duesseldorf and Koeln to Frankfort. From Frankfort down to Mannheim and Freiburg, touching Switzerland. Then over to Munich and Nuernberg and up to Leipzig to Dresden and Berlin. From Berlin to Hamburg and the Hansa cities on the West" (January 8th, 1936).

[3] In a letter dated December 1st, 1936, W. K. Thomas – stricken with "great sorrow" – informed the foundation's fellows about the fact that "Mr. Gustav Oberlaender died suddenly from a heart attack on the night of November 30th, 1936" ("Wilbur K. Thomas to W.E.B. Du Bois"). It is a remarkably curious coincidence that the donor deceased almost at the same time that Du Bois's roughly five-month-long stint in Germany ended (the latter had entered the Middle European nation on June 30th).

Although the potential merit of Du Bois's journey was questioned by some curators of the trust, the sociologist eventually received a grant of $1,600 in order to study the "The relation of education and industry" in Germany. In particular, his aim was to probe

> the way in which popular education for youth and adults in Germany has been made to minister to industrial organization and advance; and how this German experience can be applied so as to help in the reorganization of the American Negro industrial school, and the establishment of other social institutions. ("Memorandum to the Board of Directors of the Oberlaender Trust" 2)

It is highly likely that the trust's officers also took the symbolic or propagandistic value of Du Bois's extended travels in the Third Reich into consideration; after all, he was "the leading Negro American intellectual" (Lewis, *Fight* 388) at the time. Moreover, he visited Germany during the Olympic Games – a time in which the attentive eyes of the whole world were turned on the Hitler state. Clearly, the idea of letting a famous African-American scholar and civil rights activist travel freely through Germany – even subsidizing his trip – must have had an irresistible propagandistic attraction not only for the trustees, but also for the German government officials who supported Du Bois's undertaking by offering up their recommendations. Among them were Botschaftsrat Dr. Leitner of the Foreign Ministry, Oberregierungsrat Dr. Handrick (Reichsanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung), and Dr. Studders (Reichsgruppe Industrie). Finally, these surmises are supported by the fact that Du Bois's original intention to directly study race prejudice or German colonialism had been rejected by the Oberlaender Trust. Only when he had proposed to examine the politically innocuous

industrial education of German youth had he been given the permission to proceed (cf. "W.E.B. Du Bois to Franz Boas", May 5th, 1936).

3.1. The Old World

Du Bois's trip to Germany in 1936 represented not only a late reunion with the Central European country – a land which had been "the new and mighty focus of Science, Education and military organization" (9/26/36) at the end of the nineteenth century; his sojourn could have also been headlined "the Old World revisited". Although he had set foot on European soil for a total of eight times since his student days in Berlin (four Pan-African conferences had taken place in Paris, London, Brussels and Lisbon between 1900 and 1927), the Old World still possessed an irresistible lure for the sixty-eight-year-old, culturally Eurocentric American. Notwithstanding the fact that old age does not seem to have been uncommon in his family (his paternal grandfather Alexander, for instance, enjoyed an impressive eighty-four years of life), Du Bois certainly did not expect to live ninety-five years, and probably thought it best to revisit Europe at a time when he was physically still able to do so. What is more, Du Bois well-nigh yearned for a trip abroad after a long period of editorial work at *The Crisis* and the strenuous writing of *Black Reconstruction* (1935) – another major historical work of his; and, last but not least, he sought a little enjoyment along the way (cf. Lewis, *Fight* 388).

From Du Bois's perspective, there were basically only five reasons why Americans would spend money to see Europe: To the first typical group of travelers, the mindless vacationers, Europe simply represented a cheap

alternative to Atlantic City – a place "where one goes to spend money, buy champagne and do things they wouldn't dream of doing at home" (9/26/36). The second type of traveler was drawn to Europe for the sake of satisfying an urge of infantile curiosity. His or her forthright aim was to see "the old, the funny, the unusual"; the immaturely curious visitor sought to convince him- or herself with his or her own ears and eyes of the fact that French, German or Italian were not dead languages, but rather living means of communication which "some queer folk" (9/26/36) actually used to express their thoughts in. The intention of the maturely curious, the third type of traveler, was "to see and touch things a thousand years old instead of a hundred" (9/26/36). If the third type of visitor had already been more sophisticated than the second, he or she was nevertheless surpassed in cultivation by a fourth type, namely the aficionado of beauty, who took delight in the sight of the Alps, the Sistine Madonna, the Venus of Milo, the Kremlin or the Loreley.

Obviously, Du Bois did not wholly fit into any of these categories. Instead, he – flaunting his elitist strain – primarily appreciated Europe because it represented "the center of modern human culture" (9/26/36) to him. "Civilization", he was convinced, "does not center in the United States or in Australia . . . For that reason, despite all our boasting and national pride, we turn continually and repeatedly toward Europe to know and understand the last word of human culture in matters of vital and everyday interest to us" (9/26/36). These assertions echo the thoughts that had taken shape in Du Bois's mind while he was still a student in Berlin. Arguably, Du Bois's thinking was astonishingly contradictory at times and continually shifted from one paradigm to another throughout his life; among these different patterns of thought most prominently

ranked Darwinism, elitism, socialism, Pan-Africanism, willful self-segregation and official communism (cf. Gilroy 117). These changes notwithstanding, Du Bois did stay true to one trait during the whole course of his life: Cultural Eurocentrism.

Yet Du Bois was not only convinced that it was "impossible to understand and appreciate modern culture without knowing Europe" (9/26/36); from his point of view, the Old World – as opposed to the United States – also had the considerable advantage of enabling contacts between members of different races. Scarcely surprising, Du Bois decisively took advantage of this possibility by dining with the cultural anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, lunching with the writer H.G. Wells, receiving a visit from the Belgian colonial expert De Cleene, and meeting with the German Africanist Diedrich Westermann, "who knew more African tongues than any man" (9/26/36). Westermann – a pioneer of African studies – must have especially impressed Du Bois. The latter consequently went into raptures: "It is safe to say that more is being done in the scientific study of races and race relations in Europe than elsewhere in the world. And this is the primary reason why I am here" (9/26/36)[4]. Du Bois thereby bluntly refuted the ostensible purpose of his trip, and made clear that he utterly admired the possibility of spontaneous contacts across the color line

[4] Du Bois had established significant scientific contacts across both the Atlantic ocean and the color line as early as 1904. In the year after the publication of his seminal collection of essays *The Souls of Black Folk* the distinguished German sociologist Max Weber had toured the United States. On that occasion the two social scientists met and agreed on the publication of Du Bois's article "Die Negerfrage in den Vereinigten Staaten" in the journal *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, which Weber edited. In a letter following their meeting, Weber proposed that Du Bois's "splendid work" (qtd. in Aptheker 106), i.e. *The Souls of Black Folk*, ought to be translated into German, and even suggested Elizabeth Jaffé-von Richthofen as an able translator, for both Du Bois's style and vocabulary were "very peculiar"; they sometimes reminded him, Weber claimed, of "Gladstone's idioms although the spirit is a different one" (qtd. in Aptheker 106). However, another twenty years would elapse before the book was finally published in German.

in Europe: “I have not especially sought such contacts, but they have been all the more welcome and valuable because they have come naturally” (9/26/36). In this respect, Europe in general and Germany in particular do not seem to have been in any way “infernal”.

But the Old World did not only facilitate interracial exchange; it was, Du Bois was convinced, also more progressive than the New World in that it showed a tendency to confer full citizenship status on black people, meaning that people of African ancestry tended to equitably partake of the rights and duties allocated to all other citizens. Not surprisingly, Du Bois especially made out this impetus in the land of the 1789 bourgeois revolution. France was a country, he believed, in which teachers, artists and professional men of African descent did not constitute a wholly unusual sight. Moreover, during his 1936 visit to Paris he saw a black bus driver on the Boulevard Raspail, an Afro-French soldier at the Comédie Française as well as a black university student sipping coffee on the Boulevard St. Michel. “It is fairly common then in France to see black men as Frenchmen” (10/24/36), he concluded. Although *la grande nation* was undeniably the spearhead of progress, other European countries tended to follow it: As early as 1911, for instance, the University of London had organized the First Races Congress which, according to Du Bois, had had the potential to be “the greatest movement for the unification of mankind ever planned” (9/26/36). And in the same year, a German anthropologist had declared that the number of races was as unimportant as “the number of angels that could dance on the point of a needle” (11/14/36).

Less significant, perhaps, but nevertheless worth mentioning, Du Bois also greatly enjoyed the proverbial German *Gemütlichkeit* and particularly the

Bavarian zest for life. Reflecting on his stay in Munich, the Protestant New Englander enthused about the city's Catholic *joie de vivre* embodied by the theater, art collections, music, dance, folk culture, graceful old buildings and, above all, beer – a drink which he appears to have savored in considerable quantities: "It is always astonishing, especially in South Germany, to see how much time is spent in the beer halls; and yet, one is still tempted now, as in other days, to say that it is hard to see how ordinary educated human beings could spend their time better" (11/14/36). Du Bois especially appreciated the social intercourse facilitated by beer halls, and lauded the carefree and uninhibited intermingling of people as a "public courtesy which one cannot find in the American attempt to be at once exclusive and public" (11/14/36). Finally, the "beauty", "freedom" and "natural development" (11/14/36) of the English Garden seem to have impressed him profoundly.

3.2. Science and Technology

In the essay "The Conservation of Races" (1897), which argued against the absorption of blacks by white America, Du Bois made the historical claim that while "the English nation stood for constitutional liberty and commercial freedom" and "the Romance nations stood for literature and art", the German nation came to represent "science and philosophy" (819)[5]. Similarly, as we will

[5] This is a recurrent theme in Du Bois's various writings on Germany, which, not surprisingly, also reappeared in his *Pittsburgh Courier* articles. While visiting Vienna as part of his trip to Europe in the second half of the 1930s, for example, he argued that "the most encouraging thing was to discover here that spirit of German science and happy freedom of thought that temporarily has fled from Germany" (1/9/37). This statement was prompted by his being acquainted with several cultural anthropologists. An idealistic young female ethnologist by the name of Etta Donner seems to have especially interested him. The "almost sly slip of a thing" (1/9/37), equipped with a self-compiled grammar of Grebo, was bound for "the magnificent and deadly West African bush" (1/9/37) of Liberia to instruct Africans in their native tongue.

discover as we progress in this investigation, Adorno believed that an "elective affinity" existed between the German language and philosophical inquiry. And although the stereotypical image of the mad German professor is nowadays not as prevalent as it once was, Germany is arguably still regarded as a country of technical innovation whose engineers still possess a certain renown. As a side note, one might add that it hardly appears to be coincidental that Thomas Pynchon's encyclopedic novel *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), which, among numerous other themes, deals with "modern civilization's obsession with technology" (Clerc 925), focuses on the German V-2 rocket – one of the Nazis' reprisal weapons.

Closely connected to Germans' scientific and scholarly interests, of course, was their penchant for traveling, which Du Bois regarded as another specifically German predilection (cf. 9/19/36). Their alleged passion to venture into new territory, in turn, corresponded to Du Bois's lifelong, radical openness to letting himself in for new things and his concomitant readiness to revise or jettison older views. This, of course, contrasted markedly with Adorno's parochialism, as did Du Bois's deeply held conviction that education was an ongoing, life-spanning process. Both of these points are nicely conveyed by a passage in Du Bois's *Pittsburgh Courier* article of September 26th: "I return in 1936 to London and Berlin, to Paris and Vienna, and perhaps to other parts of the world which I have never seen. And of the education I have ever had, these journeys among men and things have formed the major part."

Conscious of Germany's reputation for scientific and technological prowess, Du Bois visited the German Museum at Munich. He spent a total of

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He then went on to relate to his readers how cordially he had been received by Dominik Josef Woelfel, the girl's equally enthusiastic professor, and treated to tea, vermouth and honey-cake.

four days contemplating a large part of its 70,000 exhibits which extended over a length of almost 14.5 kilometers (cf. 10/3/36). He confessed that he had hitherto "never experienced more exhausting work than simply looking at this extraordinary collection" (10/3/36). His opinion pieces for the *Pittsburgh Courier* dated October 3rd and 10th, 1936, accordingly covered such diverse topics as "Mining", "Transport", "Mathematics and Electricity", "Sound and Music", "Chemistry", "Building", "Astronomy" and "Clothes and Food". The article was pervaded by an almost child-like enthusiasm for the wonders of technological advancement. This impression is all the more warranted because Du Bois apparently made ample use of the possibility to touch, operate and manipulate various machines – he even seems to have experimented with "Roentgen rays" (10/10/36)!

This suggests an important point: Du Bois, for whom technology held a great fascination throughout his life, seems to have been unsettled considerably less by technology's destructive, even barbaric characteristics than Adorno. Accordingly, although both men were left-wing intellectuals, Du Bois strongly believed in technological advancement as an end in itself (that is to say, even if it was not accompanied by emancipative progress), whereas Adorno was extremely hesitant to embrace the empowerment of mere instrumental reason (*instrumentelle Vernunft*) – i.e. reason not necessarily coupled to morality or humanity. This is probably best expressed by a vivid – arguably pessimistic – line from Adorno's late work *Negative Dialektik*: "Keine Universalgeschichte führt vom Wilden zur Humanität, sehr wohl eine von der Steinschleuder zur Megabombe" (314). What is more, one might even claim that Adorno's skepticism about the supposed boon of technological progress contributed to

his rejection of a myopic anthropocentrism. In fact, Adorno even wanted people to call him an "antihumanist" – out of fear that "anthropocentricity would mean the concomitant denigration of nature" (Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 348-49). Du Bois's writings contain no comparable skepticism about technology or anthropocentrism. Had Adorno been aware of Du Bois's enthusiasm about humankind's "mastery over material nature" (10/3/36), he would probably have dismissed it as undialectical.

Although Du Bois utterly enjoyed the German Museum in Munich, he nevertheless drew a twofold conclusion. On a positive note, Du Bois remarked that – despite his advocating technological progress for its own sake – advancement in the sciences might also contribute to the freeing of mankind in the future: "If now we are going to have in the future a civilization of art and thought, it must be because we know technique and rearrange it so that the mass of men have sufficient income to use their leisure for new ends" (10/10/36). On a negative note, he believed that commercialism and nationality had not been sufficiently restricted from the museum. He especially found fault with the marginalization of foreign inventions. That is to say, although such giants as Copernicus, Bunsen or Curie were prominently included in the relevant collections, many others were kept on the sidelines. Thus, for instance, "the German inventors of telegraphy are emphasized, while Morse's telegraph is simply there" (10/10/36). All in all, however, the extensive visit to the museum apparently was a rather agreeable experience for Du Bois.

3.3. Opera

I will now deal with Du Bois's cultural findings. An ardent lover of opera, he displayed – in Werner Sollors's words – a "predilection for Wagner and Verdi" (217) while in Germany. In Bayreuth, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Parsifal*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Lohengrin*[6], *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Tristan und Isolde* filled him with enthusiasm. Taking his diction into consideration, Du Bois's week-long stint in the Bavarian town[7] must have amounted to a quasi-religious experience: Bayreuth was metaphorically referred to as a "shrine", as a place where people "can renew their strength; where they can catch again faith in themselves and in their fellow men", and Wagner's art was called a "revelation", a "sacrament", that had "new meaning" to its devoted audience (10/17/36). It is not likely that Du Bois was aware of the fact that Adolf Hitler had seen an affinity between Richard Wagner's operas and the German variant of fascism. The German dictator had once spontaneously claimed that "whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must understand Wagner" (qtd. in Lewis, *Fight* 405). Similarly, Joseph Goebbels would extol the *Meistersinger* as Wagner's most German

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[6] A look into Du Bois's estate yields the tickets for the performance of *Lohengrin* and the *Ring* tetralogy as well as four sheets listing the casts of the latter (cf. Appendix). While *Lohengrin* was staged on Wednesday, August 19th, the individual parts of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which Heinz Tietjen directed in that year, were distributed over the following extended weekend. *Das Rheingold* kicked off the series on Friday, August 21st, *Die Walküre* followed it a day later, *Siegfried* was the weekend's last performance and *Götterdämmerung* finally concluded the cycle on Tuesday, August 25th.

[7] Even in the small Bavarian retreat of high culture, however, National Socialist race policy was – albeit subcutaneously – present. Beside its fame stemming from Richard Wagner and the Hungarian pianist and Romantic composer Franz Listz, Bayreuth had also earned notoriety as the home of adoption of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the Wagner aficionado and rabidly anti-Semitic English author of *Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1899), who "writing in German, did more perhaps than any one to establish in Germany the theory of Nordic superiority" (10/17/36), Du Bois enlightened his readers.

composition in 1939: “It is simply the incarnation of our national identity. In it is contained everything that conditions and inspires the German cultural soul” (qtd. in Gibson and Rubin 6). Yet knowledge of the Nazis’ laying claim to Wagner would have probably not entailed a change of mind on Du Bois’s part, just as the fascists’ laying claim to Friedrich Nietzsche has not deterred critical philosophers from occupying themselves with his thought.

Du Bois was convinced that the historical person Richard Wagner as well as his music could be especially meaningful to the education of African-Americans – not only because the German composer’s operas were “a serious form of Art calling for preparation, thought and knowledge” (10/31/36), but also because Wagner himself had triumphed over a whole host of adversities throughout his life. These obstacles included unemployment, debt, lack of education, society’s disapproval of his work, exile and disregard by his first wife. In the same vein, Du Bois interpreted three of Wagner’s operas: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was said to tell of “the effort of a natural untaught singer to triumph over the petty rules of a labor union”, *Parsifal* – a rendition of the Crucifixion – was told by “a genius who knew and sought to interpret the suffering and sacrifice of the human spirit”, and *Lohengrin* was allegedly “a hymn of faith” that gave the audience to understand that “somewhere in this world, and not beyond it, there is Trust, and somehow Trust leads to Joy” (10/31/36). Du Bois’s praise of the Wagner opera, of course, somewhat resembled Adorno’s claim that music’s ancient objection to the ways of the world had always promised life without fear (cf. *Wagner* 198).

Du Bois also believed Wagner to be musically progressive, even radical: “He wanted to carry his emotion and ideas not only with song but with every

striving and variety of sound, even to noise and discord. Imagine the reception such a heretic in music had in a musical world nourished on Italian opera!" (10/17/36). Likewise, Adorno, although he was far more critical of Wagner than Du Bois, felt compelled to concede that "jene schwarze, schroffe, gezackte Musik" (*Wagner* 198) of the "Fieberpartien" in the third act of *Tristan und Isolde* stood on the threshold of the *Neue Musik* aptly exemplified by Arnold Schönberg's first canonical composition, namely his Quartet in F sharp minor.

Du Bois was aware of the fact that from the perspective of starving African-Americans from the South or unemployed blacks from the North, the relevance of Wagner's operas was not immediately evident (cf. 10/31/36). Yet he nevertheless stuck to his conviction that "the musical dramas of Wagner tell of human life as he lived it, and no human being, white or black, can afford not to know them, if he would know life" (10/31/36). This was, of course, fully in line with his lifelong conviction that a thorough acquaintance with the liberal arts was the essential part of any solid academic education. What is more, Du Bois's penchant for (re-)discovering the world of European opera at the age of sixty-eight was also indicative of his notion of education as an open, ongoing and unfinished process. He was thus able to respond to his readers' inquiring about the end of his operatic adventures by simply but meaningfully stating: "To add to my imperfect education in Life" (10/31/36). As a left-wing intellectual, Du Bois naturally recognized that Bayreuth was bourgeois territory, whereas the less attractive Oberammergau folk festival, for example, was a festivity for the "less well-to-do", i.e. the people he actually sympathized with. While Bayreuth attracted the "cultured and the learning", Oberammergau

was organized by "peasants" (10/17/36). Nevertheless, he forthrightly indulged in opera-going because, as has been shown, he was convinced that Wagner's works in particular could, in their own way, empower African-Americans and thereby help a marginalized group of people.

In Wagner's operas Du Bois also rediscovered the Germanic notion of *Kultur*, which he had come to appreciate so much during his time as a student in Berlin and which had had a formative influence on him. In his quasi-autobiographic *Black Flame* novel *Worlds of Color* (1961), Manuel Mansart, one of Du Bois's fictional alter egos, equally immerses himself in Wagnerian opera and reacts thus: "What astonished Mansart was the picture of the German soul which this theater and music painted. He thought how among American Negroes, legend and fantasy might thus be wed to historic ability and imagination, to build a great dramatic tradition" (30). Apparently, Du Bois's enthusiasm for an essentialist conception of culture, whose perversion would prove to be so fateful in Germany, never abated. When one takes into consideration that *Worlds of Color* was written after the ordeal of the Shoah, this observation becomes even more disconcerting.

On the whole, Du Bois took an extremely favorable view of the German cultural scene in 1936: ". . . no German city of any size is without a theater and opera house, where from October to May citizens may hear the best in music and drama for the cost of a woman's spring hat" (1/9/37). In addition to immersing himself in Wagner, Du Bois also heard Bizet's *Carmen*, Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, Mozart's *Die Hochzeit des Figaro* and *Die Zauberflöte*, Verdi's *Rigoletto* and *Traviata* as well as Massenet's *Manon*. Criticizing his homeland, the Eurocentric intellectual lamented that

> These classics of popular music [Adorno would probably have fainted; M.K.] without knowing which one cannot talk to civilized folk, are practically unhearable for most Americans. They should be part of the education of every man of culture. They are costly luxuries for the most part in America, and unappreciated at that. Some day no school curriculum will be complete without such compulsory courses in the world of music and drama. (1/9/37).

At least from the perspective of a cultured person keen on increasing his knowledge, Germany appears to have been a quite pleasant place in 1936 – despite the infamous burning of books at German universities in 1933 and other repressive regime measures.

3.4. The Eleventh Olympiad

The staging of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin[8] was a massive undertaking. Up to 110,000 spectators witnessed the various competitions in what could be regarded as an epitome of fascist architecture – the German capital's huge, gray stone Olympic stadium. The legendary zeppelin *Hindenburg* hovered over the city, an enormous bronze bell atop a pylon more than 70 meters tall summoned the youth of the world, 40,000 black-clad SS

[8] Initially, U.S. participation in the 1936 Olympics was anything but certain. Many Americans feared that sending the country's athletes to Germany was tantamount to tacitly condoning Nazi anti-Semitism and compromising the U.S.'s ideal of equality. In November of 1933, the most important U.S. amateur sports body, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), issued a declaration stating that America should refrain from competing in the Olympiad unless the Jews' situation in Germany improved. In July of 1935, the passing of the Nuremberg Laws deepened the split between those who advocated a boycott of the Games and those who spoke out in favor of participation. Both factions (the former was led by AAU president Jeremiah T. Mahoney whereas the latter was led by American Olympic Committee official Avery Brundage) waged expensive media campaigns in order to sway public opinion. In the end, the proponents of participation prevailed: At its convention held in December of 1935, the AAU decided to send a U.S. delegation to Berlin. The African-American community followed the heated debate about participation closely. Like the majority population, it was initially split. In time, however, the advocates of participation (which included the majority of black newspapers and most intellectuals) gained the upper hand. Their main arguments: Black success at the Games was the best way to ridicule Nazi race theories. And: In the face of ongoing discrimination in the U.S., it was simply hypocritical to boycott the Olympics while at the same time tolerating racism at home (cf. Wiggins 67).

troops stood to attention along the "Via Triumphalis" (the stretch between the "Alexanderplatz" and the stadium) and a gigantic orchestra, which was conducted by Richard Strauss and accompanied by a chorus of 3,000 singers, struck up "Deutschland über alles" as well as the "Horst Wessel-Lied" (cf. Lewis, *Fight* 402). In spite of or precisely on account of the fascist bombast, Du Bois liked what he saw: "As a specimen of organization the games were superbly done"; yet he went even farther in his praise of the event:

> . . . as a gesture toward international peace and good will, their value cannot be over-estimated in a world that sees a Spanish civil war of terrible cruelty, the steady re-arming of the leading nations, and a world atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. (9/19/36)

Never mind that the German and Italian leadership had by then begun to assist Francisco Franco's Falange in its fight against the Spanish Republicans. Still, Du Bois's praise is nonetheless noteworthy in the context of this investigation. Moreover, he was probably ignorant of this recent political development.

The Olympic Games were – although he somewhat slighted them by only devoting short, rather uninspired article sections to them – more important to Du Bois in another respect: The whole Olympiad was, in a sense, over-shadowed by the issue of race relations. The African-American Jesse Owens of Ohio State University was *the* star of the event. Winning four gold medals, he basically refuted Hitler's notions of Aryan supremacy in a one-man-show. The German public (minister of propaganda Joseph Goebbels had granted his permission) was enthused by him – to the *Führer*'s great regret. Yet Hitler, who had failed to congratulate the black American athletes Cornelius Johnson and David Albritton for their medal wins (despite having lauded German and Finnish victors earlier), abstained from any further public congratulatory acts,

and thus was able to evade Owens.[9] It is valid to argue (as Richard Mandell has done) that Owens, who had his stellar moment when he won the 100-meter dash on August 3rd, and Hitler were rivals who basically vied for the public's admiration during the eleventh Olympiad (cf. Lewis, *Fight* 403).

Du Bois's attitude toward Jesse Owens in particular and the other seventeen African-American contenders[10] in general was ambiguous. On the one hand, he was, of course, delighted by the black athletes' success. Owens, he believed, was a model sportsman and thus perfectly suited to represent Afro-America: "There is no doubt about the fine effect which the work of Owens, Johnson, LuValle and others had on Europe. They were gentlemen. They were skilled. They typified a new conception of the American Negro for Europe, and also a new idea of race relations in the United States" (9/19/36). On the other hand, however, Du Bois's intellectual elitism crept to the fore when he demanded: "All this is going to be big with promise for the future, but it must be followed by other things. We must be represented not only in sports, but in science, in literature, and in art" (10/24/36). Accordingly, David Levering Lewis has convincingly argued that Du Bois's two dispatches on the Olympics seem "decidedly more dutiful than interested" (*Fight* 403), thereby reflecting one of Du Bois's core character traits.

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[9] In hindsight, Du Bois would later look back to Hitler's apparent shunning of the black athletes as not only disgraceful to them but also as shameful to the German spectators. The protagonist of *Worlds of Color*, Manuel Mansart, experiences the scene thus: "And then Hitler, who had paraded and poured praise on the white victors, failed to put in an appearance. It was a petty pout, but it spoiled Mansart's feeling of triumph, just as it shamed many Germans" (32). This again attested to Du Bois's determination to distinguish between the fascist regime and the German people.

[10] The U.S. Olympic team included twelve black track-and-field athletes, four black boxers and two black weight lifters. The African-American section of the American delegation did extremely well, winning six individual gold medals and scoring 83 (or 49.7 per cent) of the U.S.'s 167 overall points (cf. Wiggins 73).

Furthermore, Du Bois was suspicious of the Olympic Games in another respect: He was fully aware of the fact that public displays of anti-Semitic sentiment had been suspended by the Nazi leadership for the duration of the event (Jewish athletes were nevertheless excluded from participation). Such propagandistic staging reminded Du Bois of the American South. Drawing an analogy, he argued that "they [the international visitors; M.K.] saw no Jewish oppression. Just as Northern visitors to Mississippi see no Negro oppression" (12/19/36). He was convinced that the testimony of the average foreign sports spectator was "worse than valueless in any direction" (12/5/36). On the whole, however, it can safely be asserted that this German episode – like the ones mentioned before – did not amount to anything like "hell" for Du Bois.

Without a doubt, Du Bois's positive impression of the Berlin Olympics was reinforced by the fact that not only he but also all of the African-American athletes of the U.S. team were treated with extreme courtesy and hospitality during their stay in the German capital (cf. Wiggins 75). Finally, Du Bois always kept in mind that while Germany discriminated against Jews by excluding them from the Olympiad, the U.S. hardly did any better: With the exception of amateur track-and-field and professional boxing most sports remained segregated in America. Professional baseball's, football's and golf's racial policies in 1936, for instance, still prohibited any black players from participating in those disciplines. America's inconsistency (if not hypocrisy) of barring blacks from the mainstream of domestic sports while at the same time relying on African-Americans during international competitions such as the Olympics prompted the German media to refer to the U.S.'s black athletes as "black auxiliaries" (cf. Wiggins 71).

3.5. Educational Industry

In the fall, the time had finally come for Du Bois to fulfill his original promise for which he had been accorded the Oberlaender grant in the first place: A study of the relation between industry and education. In order to learn about the German system of industrial education, Du Bois visited the industrial "mammoth" Siemensstadt in Berlin which employed more than 60,000 skilled workers and represented a capital of one hundred million dollars (cf. 11/7/36). He compared Siemens's reputation in Germany to General Electric's, Westinghouse's and Baldwin's renown in the United States, and introduced Werner Siemens to his readers as the German Henry Ford. The Siemens enterprise, which was above all active in the fields of electricity, telephony, radio and locomotive building was described by Du Bois as "one of the most powerful of the centers, not only of world industry, but of social and political power" (11/7/36) – a company in comparison with which most states of the U.S.A. allegedly paled. And Germany, in turn, was regarded as "a country where the industrial and technical development has been greater in the last fifty years than in any other land on earth" (11/7/36).

The idiosyncratic German apprentice system – a paid four-year training program which sought to determine and further the individual ability of students – appears to have appealed to and even inspired Du Bois. He summed up his observations thus: "What Germany has is not Industrial Education, but Educational Industry . . . Germany . . . is not seeking to use industry and Industrial processes as a means of education, but on the contrary is using education as a means of carrying on and perfecting industry" (11/7/36). The German industry, he discovered, was not, in any way, reluctantly meeting its edu-

cational obligations. Instead, it self-interestedly made use of education as an industrial process, the chief aim being the "manufacturing" of "a human product of the most careful and precise nature which can be used in the productive processes of this mighty industry" (11/7/36)[11]. At least in this respect, Germany seems to have been everything but "hell" for the visiting scholar – in fact, "exemplary" is more like it. It opened his eyes and showed him what was – in his own words – "wrong with industrial training among American Negroes" (11/7/36). The only criticism Du Bois expressed concerned the fact that in the final analysis the Nazi leadership was in control of the educational process. In fascist Germany, he enlightened his readers, the state wielded power over industry, which, in turn, controlled education.

3.6. Race Relations

As has already been indicated, W.E.B. Du Bois – a champion of racial equality – traveled to Nazi Germany because of his profound interest in the topics of race, race relations, and – above all – racism or race prejudice (cf. Sollors 221). It hardly comes as a surprise, then, that a major part of his critical discussion of the fascist regime concerned itself with the National Socialists' "attack on civilization", i.e. their "world war on Jews" (12/19/36). Du Bois disapprovingly wrote about the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 which severely

[11] Du Bois subsequently compared men to the commodity of cotton as opposed to wool and argued: "Knowing exactly what it wants men for, Industry proceeds with painstaking care, endless experiment, and expert training to select the *human material*, give it long and careful training and deliver a *finished product*, which is unsurpassed in the world for efficient, delicate, precise and regular workmanship" (11/7/36 [italics added; M.K.]). It is quite likely that Adono, had he been aware of Du Bois's enthusiasm, would have lambasted it as dehumanizing and as the worst kind of reification.

curtailed the political and civil rights of Jewish Germans. Although he possessed first-hand knowledge about race prejudice himself (blacks in the U.S. were discriminated against by de facto disenfranchisement and social segregation) he stated that "there is a campaign of race prejudice carried on, openly, continuously and determinedly against all non-Nordic races, but specifically against the Jews, which surpasses in vindictive cruelty and public insult anything I have ever seen", adding "and I have seen much" (12/5/36). He convincingly and shrewdly condemned German anti-Semitism as a "tragedy" which "set civilization back a hundred years" (12/19/36) and could only be compared to the Spanish Inquisition and the African slave trade (cf. 12/19/36). What is more, he argued that to the attentive observer the oppression of the German-Jewish population was basically self-evident (even during the Olympic Games). Such obvious and undeniable oppression, in turn, "must comfort all those in any part of the world who depend on race hate as the salvation of men" (12/19/36), he complained. Although the worst was yet to come, Du Bois – an astute observer – had instantly recognized the seemingly unprecedented severity of the Jewish plight.

Yet Du Bois's attitude toward the complex subject of race relations in Nazi Germany was somewhat equivocal. Although he called attention to the extreme gravity of anti-Jewish discrimination, he nevertheless legalistically claimed that the situation of African-Americans and Jews was not comparable[12]: ". . .

[12] In a letter to the German writer Gerhard Hauptmann dated February 4th, 1937, Du Bois would echo these sentiments by clarifying statements he made to a reporter with the *New York Post* upon his return to the United States: "I did not mean to make any direct comparison between Negroes in America and Jews in Germany but did want to emphasize the extraordinary cruelty of the Nazi attitude toward Jews". In the piece of correspondence under scrutiny, Du Bois had also expressed his esteem of Hauptmann's work and career and declared himself honored by the prospect of meeting him and being one of many friends welcoming the author (who had recently arrived in New York) to the New World.

while I was in Germany the Nazi[s] had so changed the laws that practically anything they did to Jews was legal, and what you had was legal oppression rather than the illegal cast[e] and lynching of Negroes in the United States" ("W.E.B. Du Bois to Leo Stein", March 10th, 1937)[13]. More important than this grotesque sophistry, however, was Du Bois's claim that he himself had allegedly been treated politely and respectfully at all times by the Germans he met, finding them to be among "the warmest, most civilized of Europeans" (*Fight* 398), as David Levering Lewis remarks. In fact, Du Bois did not notice any racially motivated hatred of blacks at all while in Germany: "I have been treated with uniform courtesy and consideration. It would have been impossible for me to have spent a similarly long time in any part of the United States, without some, if not frequent cases of personal insult or discrimination. I cannot record a single instance here" (12/5/36). Du Bois happily pointed out that he was totally untrammeled in his actions: He was free to lodge in any hotel he could pay for, was allowed to eat where he pleased (the head-waiter would even bow to him), was not prevented from going to any theater of his choosing (the stranger on the seat next to him would bow as well), and was able to join a sightseeing tour without provoking any derogatory comments from other participants. He conceded that he might have, from time to time, been an object of curiosity, but not of insult (cf. 12/19/36). From his point of

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[13] By contrast, Martin Luther King Jr., another great civil rights activist, later considered such a distinction to be morally irrelevant. Justifying his civil disobedience, he wrote: "We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' . . . It was 'illegal' to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. But I am sure that if I had lived in Germany during that time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal". Not unexpectedly, King and Adorno – himself a victim of fascist persecution – saw eye to eye. In *The Authoritarian Personality*, the latter described it as common Nazi practice to legalistically disguise antidemocratic measures (cf. 974).

view, the German people were a "kindly folk, good-hearted, hating oppression, widely sympathetic with suffering, and filled with longing ideals for all mankind" (12/19/36). He allegedly knew no other European people of whom such a characterization would have been truer (cf. 12/19/36).

Du Bois concluded that while color prejudice apparently did not exist in any considerable measure, anti-Semitism was almost an "instinctive" (12/19/36) characteristic of Germans. Du Bois's assessment, one might add, contrasted markedly with the prevailing estimation among members of the Frankfurt School who claimed to have experienced more social discrimination in the United States than in Weimar – a republic, moreover, in which they had felt perfectly assimilated; Franz Neumann even referred to the German people as "the least anti-Semitic of all" (qtd. in Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 162).[14]

What did Du Bois's attempt to make sense of and explain this apparent racist inconsistency look like? In spite of his enjoying – as he claims – "complete civic freedom and public courtesy" (12/19/36) during his visit to the fascist country, he grasped that "theoretically their [the Germans'; M.K.] attitude toward Negroes is just as bad as toward Jews, and if there were any number of Negroes in Germany would be expressed in the same way" ("W.E.B. Du Bois to Leo Stein", March 10th, 1937).[15] Lewis concurs, arguing

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[14] The critical theorists' subjective impressions have been validated by contemporary historiography: Robert O. Paxton, for instance, found that during the 1920s Jewish academics could make more professional headway in the German system of higher education than at American universities (cf. 76).

[15] Du Bois would later "reiterate" this claim in his novel *Worlds of Color*. During his visit to Berlin, the somewhat autobiographic character Manuel Mansart goes to a movie theater to watch the boxing match between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling: "The audience was in turmoil. Their championship of the German fighter was uproarious. Their race hate of the young brown contender was frightening. When Louis was knocked out the whole audience went berserk. One would have thought that St. George had slain the Dragon" (32). Mansart's witnessing such fermenting racism beneath society's courteous and respectable surface might be regarded as an allegorical representation of Du Bois's suspicion that Germans' fury could theoretically also be

in a similar vein: ". . . to theorists of European racism, Negroes and jazz music could never pose a threat to white civilization in its Nordic, Teutonic, or Aryan incarnations comparable to that of the Jews" (*Fight* 399). The historian Susan Samples also agrees with Du Bois's theoretical explanation by pointing out that the approximately 1000 blacks who lived in the Third Reich were usually regarded as "exotic inferiors" (64). In contrast to the allegedly wealthy and powerful Jews, who were much more numerous and easily assimilated to mainstream society on account of their fair skin color, the miniscule African-German community was not perceived as a serious menace, and therefore not systematically persecuted (cf. Samples 59).

One could, of course, object and say that this – although it sounds plausible – is mere conjecture. In other words: Where's the proof? Du Bois might have had trouble coming by evidence to back up his claim in 1936. Today, however, there are plenty of sources demonstrating the regime's racist attitude towards people of color. In 1932, for instance, the NSDAP's *Völkischer Beobachter* had disapproved of blacks' participation in the Olympic Games with the following headline: "Neger haben auf der Olympiade nichts zu suchen"[16]. A propaganda poster from the year 1938 might be cited as another example sufficiently illustrating this fact (see Appendix). It is entitled *Entartete Musik* ("Degenerate Music"), and depicts a black jazz musician in a caricaturist and offensive fashion. Finally, recent scholarship has also established that although Afro-Germans were not systematically repressed they nevertheless suffered. In

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unleashed against an Afro-German minority. What complicates such reasoning, however, is the fact that *Worlds of Color* is a retrospective analysis, one that was written *after* the Holocaust.

[16] Cf. the documentary *Der schöne Schein* by Guido Knopp and Christian Deick broadcast by the Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen in 1996.

1937, for instance, the so-called "Rheinlandbastarde", i.e. the biracial descendents (who roughly numbered between 500 and 800) of Afro-French occupation troops and German women, were forcibly sterilized (cf. Samples 58). The sterilization campaign, of course, was the Nazis' way of containing what newspapers had inflammatorily referred to as the *Schwarze Schmach am Rhein* between 1920 and 1924. Moreover, black Germans were also discriminated against in the professional realm: Notwithstanding the comparatively impressive economic success of those employed in the movie industry and the bourgeois life-style a few other individuals enjoyed, most Germans of color were barred from working in the professional fields of their choice and consequently forced to make do with the employment they managed to procure as, for example, singers, circus performers, dancers or musicians (cf. Samples 56).

All in all, however, it is difficult to uphold the initial intuitive supposition that National Socialist Germany must have been "hell" for W.E.B. Du Bois. Although it was clearly "hell" for other people at the time (Social Democrats, emigrants, devout Christians, Jews, Gypsies, and others), Du Bois did not experience something akin to desperation. This finding is perhaps most impressively corroborated by Du Bois's astonishment at having being naturally treated with dignity by virtually all Germans he had met: "I cannot get over the continual surprise of being treated like a human being" (1/9/37). David Levering Lewis's assessment of Du Bois's elation while visiting France in the Fall of 1936 can thus be read as applying to his experience in Germany as well: "The relief at being able simply to be oneself [Adorno would have said: 'to be identical with oneself'; M.K.], dark-skinned and cultured in a sea of white

people, to be able to step from behind the veil almost without a care was intoxicating" (*Fight* 404). Critically, however, one should add that Du Bois also sought to instrumentalize the absence of systematically justified color prejudice in Germany: By pointing to a *fascist* country devoid of systematic discrimination against blacks, he believed he could criticize the circumstances in his native land even more effectively (cf. Mejias).

3.7. Fascism

In his article "W.E.B. Du Bois in Nazi Germany, 1936", Werner Sollors maintains that Du Bois excoriated National Socialist Germany as a "tyranny" (218). While this is by no means wrong, it is but a half-truth. On the one hand, Du Bois was indeed disgusted by various characteristics of the fascist state; on the other hand, however, there were plenty of features which appeared at least cogent to him. What follows will be an attempt to briefly answer the following questions: What did Du Bois's theoretical delineation of national Socialism look like? How did he account for Hitler's success? Which features of the system did he object to? And which did he find plausible? Did German fascism really amount to "hell on earth" for him?

To start with, I want to repeat that throughout his trip to Germany Du Bois exhibited the attitude of an unbiased social scientist: "It is always difficult to characterize a whole nation. One cannot really know 67 million people, much less indict them. I have simply looked on" (12/5/36). He claimed to have seen Germany not in a tourist's haste, but in contemplative leisure. This is the

context in which Du Bois attempted to typologically delineate the likenesses and differences of the communist and fascist political systems (12/26/36):

Russia	**Germany**
One party rule;	One party rule;
State organization of youth;	State organization of youth;
Assassination of opponents;	Blood purge;
Trade unions run by government;	Trade unions run by owners, workers and government;
Collective farms;	Experiments with collective farms;
Persecution of religion;	Persecution of religion;
Vacations, plays, entertainment for workers;	Vacations, plays, entertainment for workers;
Housing and public works;	Housing and public works;
Propaganda at home and abroad;	Propaganda at home and abroad;
Army;	Army;
Ownership of all land and nearly all capital; little private profit.	Government owns 15 % of all industry, strictly controls the rest, and steadily increases taxation of profit.

Du Bois's early explanation for Hitler's rise seems quite familiar: He basically attributed it to the *Führer's* ability to make the Germans believe that he was some kind of worldly savior, that he possessed supposedly messianic qualities. Four historical facts, Du Bois believed, above all contributed to the Nazi Party's rise: The Great War, the Versailles Treaty, inflation, and the Depression including the ensuing street clashes between the left and right extremes of the political spectrum. The African-American scholar added that from his point of view these four factors were "horrors . . . that no people can experience and remain entirely normal" (12/5/36). Among the vivid arguments he employed in order to support his explanation was a reference to the World War I monument in Hamburg, a massive gray granite shaft, which states that "40,000 sons of this city gave their lives for you in 1914-18". Sharing the "eloquent and ghastly memory" of this memorial structure with his readers, Du

Bois rhetorically exclaimed: "Forty thousand dead youth from a single German city!" (12/5/36). Hitler's popularity, Du Bois was convinced, was basically due to his social and economic achievements: Germany, he claimed, was now an internally peaceful nation whose population was prevailingly back at work; the erection of poorhouses, the construction of the famed *Autobahn*, an apparent cessation of the strife between labor and capital, unemployment insurance, public health, low prices and various recreational organizations for the old and young all contributed to the Nazi Party's ongoing triumph and undeniable popularity (cf. 12/12/36). Du Bois concluded by stating that Hitler had furnished "large and intriguing spiritual satisfaction" (12/26/36).

As already intimated, Du Bois's normative stance, his attitude, towards National Socialism was profoundly ambiguous. Among the things he loathed prominently ranked its tyrannical aspects, which included a large police force, the quick and cruel punishment of the mighty *Geheime Staatspolizei*, a growing *Wehrmacht* and the concomitant threat of war, innumerous spies and informers, the purging of institutions of higher education, the arbitrary observation of the regime's subjects[17], the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* and the loss of other civil liberties as well as the constant presence of propaganda. This last point is of especial interest to us, for Adorno experienced an allegedly comparable ubiquity of advertisement in the U.S.A.. From his point of view, ads were but a capitalist form of propaganda sustaining the

[17] German authorities, however, did not content themselves with closely watching citizens of the Third Reich. Surveillance of conspicuous and suspicious foreigners was also common. As a precautionary measure, Du Bois consequently deferred the publication of his political *Pitts-burgh Courier* articles on Germany until he had left the country. He justified his slightly belated comments on National Socialism thus: "I am sure my friends have understood my hesitations and reticence: it simply wasn't safe to attempt anything further. Even my mail, when Mrs. Du Bois sent me a minor receipt to sign, was opened to see if money was being smuggled in" (12/5/36).

culture industry. To be sure, Adorno would have accepted Du Bois's definition of propaganda with alacrity. Be that as it may, from Du Bois's perspective, the "systematic distortion of the truth for the purpose of making large numbers of people believe anything Authority wishes them to believe" (12/12/36) was one of the most regrettable features of fascism. Needless to say that Du Bois equally abominated the regime's specifically reactionary characteristics, namely its anti-Semitism, its opposition to female emancipation and, last but not least, its – albeit partly hidden and unsystematic – racism.

Yet – as has already been hinted at – fascism also had certain features which utterly appealed to Du Bois's mindset. This may sound strange, even disconcerting, but becomes at least somewhat understandable when one recalls that Du Bois's personality was always characterized by a strain of romantic authoritarian nationalism (von Treitschke's legacy). Accordingly, some of his readings of National Socialism were in fact "complimentary", and he did indeed – at times – express "indulgence" (Lewis, *Fight* 401) with regard to the fascist philosophy. He did not find fascism "wholly illogical and hypocritical", spoke of it as a "growing and developing body of thought" (12/12/36), and called it an "extraordinary straddle" (12/26/36) between communism and capitalism as well as "the most astonishing sight in modern history" (qtd. in Lewis, *Fight* 402) with regard to its taming of market dynamics. The institution of a dictatorship, he argued, had been "absolutely necessary to put the state in order" (12/12/36), i.e. to deal with the social fallout of the worldwide economic depression.

Moreover, although Du Bois refrained from praising Adolf Hitler, he did allow that the *Führer's* deputy Rudolf Heß had made a good impression on

him (cf. "Farbiger bereist Nazi Deutschland"). Considering the striking similarities between Soviet Russia and National Socialist Germany conveyed by Du Bois's typology above, one could even argue that his partial endorsement of fascism in 1936 somewhat anticipated his turn to left radicalism at the end of his life. Du Bois's assertion that – economically – Nazism, besides Bolshevism, represented "the greatest exemplar of Marxian socialism in the world" (12/26/36) also supports such conjecture. Finally, Du Bois's puzzling and rather incomprehensible claim that "none used to the freedom and discussion of a modern state can endure Germany, save as a dire necessity or *an ideal toward something better*" (12/12/36 [italics added; M.K.]), served to reinforce the impression that his stance towards fascism was highly ambiguous. The intuitive supposition, namely that fascism must have been "hell" for a man like him, does not prove to be tenable. Rather, he "only" objected to certain aspects of the fascist ideology and reality.[18]

During the next couple of years, neither Nazi Germany's increasingly aggressive persecution of its Jewish minority nor its external military expansion would prompt Du Bois to revise his ambiguity about German fascism. That is to say, while he still condemned the regime's racist and dictatorial measures, he simultaneously cautioned that it would be "a grave mistake to assume that Hitlerism either in method or will is all propaganda" ("Neuropa" 382). Rather, Nazism represented the consummation of a laudable

[18] Whoever is dumbfounded by this conclusion should also take note of the no less counterintuitive fact that Mussolini's fascist movement received strong backing by Jews. Several Jewish industrialists and landowners provided financial support to the Black Shirts. The *Duce's* fellow activist Aldo Finzi as well as his mistress and biographer Margherita Sarfatti were also of the Judaic persuasion. Approximately two hundred Jewish *squadristi* joined their gentile colleagues in the 1922 March on Rome (cf. Paxton 9). Perhaps most surprising: Up until the 1938 anti-Semitic radicalization of Italy, one third of all Jewish adults were members of the Fascist Party (cf. Paxton 253).

economic tendency, namely the gradual replacement of 'Manchester capitalism' by rationalization and planning. Du Bois argued that Germany's "technical efficiency" and "marvelous planning of industry" rendered it superior to the "so-called democracies" with their "façade of political 'freedom'", "anarchical disorganization" ("Neuropa" 385) and reign of the profit motive. Hitler's resolute leadership and "fairly well-conceived plan" ("Neuropa" 383) of socio-economic modernization were evidence that he had seen which way the wind was blowing. At the present, economic efficiency was probably only to be achieved through dictatorship, Du Bois reasoned. He even dialectically suggested that the coercive organization of the economy and the tyrannical "side-effects" it entailed (e.g. the suppression of civil liberties) might eventually bring forth "a new and broader freedom for the balance of human effort . . . and for the whole vast world of reason and emotion" ("Neuropa" 384). Finally, even in the first half of 1941 Du Bois still held on to the hope that Hitler's race theories might be a transient delusion. The German-Soviet Non Aggression Pact and the Axis Berlin-Rome-Tokyo, cornerstones of early Nazi foreign policy, warranted such optimism, he argued (cf. "Neuropa" 384).

3.8. Diaspora Dispute

In 1932, Du Bois had been effectively appointed editor-in-chief of the so-called *Encyclopedia of the Negro* project, which had been instigated by the Phelps-Stokes Fund a few years earlier. Du Bois, who had independently begun to plan such a work twenty-five years earlier under the title

Encyclopedia Africana, envisioned a hefty scholarly tome. He specifically had in mind an extensive encyclopedia (four volumes in scope), which covered blacks' ways of life in Africa, North America, the Caribbean and Latin America. The definitive entries, which an impressive array of possibly up to eighty scholars from three different continents was supposed to write, should literally cover everything from the English statesman and abolitionist Lord Aberdeen to the tribe of the Zulus (cf. Du Bois, *Preparatory Volume*). What was desired was a truly comprehensive and erudite compendium on people of color in Africa and the New World.

The star-studded roster of international scholars Du Bois proposed to the fund most prominently included Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, Melville Herskovits, Bronislaw Malinowski, Harold Laski and Diedrich Westermann (1875-1956). The latter had originally been a Lutheran missionary in Togo – one of the four Imperial colonies in Africa besides Cameroon, present-day Namibia and present-day Tanzania. In 1925, Westermann was appointed to the first German professorship for *Afrikanistik* at Du Bois's *alma mater*, the University of Berlin. The scholar is arguably most famous for his linguistic work which includes a groundbreaking publication on the *Languages of the Sudan* (1911); another major contribution of his to the field of African linguistics was *Language and Education* (1940) which contained a seminal classification of the continent's languages. However, Westermann's ethnological writings are also of interest – most notably his work *The African To-Day and To-Morrow* (1937) at which we shall shortly have a look.

Keeping the basic question of this investigation in mind, my present intention is to give an account of the working relationship between Du Bois

and Westermann with regard to the planning of the *Encyclopedia*. The *Du Bois Papers* at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst yield an eminently interesting – although incomplete – correspondence between the two scholars which covers the time span from October 21st, 1935 to January 14th, 1939. This exchange of academic opinions has not yet been systematically analyzed. The sentiments expressed in the correspondence range from initial sympathy and warmth to the ultimate surfacing of severe scholarly differences. In the first letter of their professional correspondence devoted to the *Encyclopedia*, Westermann lauds the project and – in preliminary fashion – suggests several topics he himself would like to tackle:

> I think your plan of producing an Encyclopaedia of the Negro is good and deserves every encouragement. I am sure the time has come for such a comprehensive survey and I have no doubt it will meet with a considerable interest from many sides . . . I am quite willing to cooperate in this undertaking and in a tentative way I propose that I could write an article on 1. Education in Africa, or 2. Christianity and the African Negro, or 3. African languages and the value of their study. I think you will also want to have one article on the activities of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures and I should of course write this article with particular pleasure. When your plan will be in a more advanced stage, I should like to publish a note on it in our Journal Africa and I hope you will then be willing to write such a note . . . I know our readers will be interested in this matter.

Having received this overwhelmingly positive response from Westermann, Du Bois used his 1936 trip to Germany to conduct "two interviews" ("W.E.B. Du Bois to Diedrich Westermann", February 9th, 1937) with the German scholar[19], the first of which took place in the Third Reich's capital at the

[19] These meetings were in full accordance with Anson Phelps Stokes' "hope that you will get some good letters of endorsement of the Encyclopaedia of the Negro project. It will help us to have men like Dr. Westermann and Professor Malinowski as supporters of the project, showing its international significance. We can show these effectively when we make our appeal to the Foundations after your return next year" ("Anson Phelps Stokes to W.E.B. Du Bois", July 13th, 1936). Almost three months later, Stokes solicited Du Bois to give Westermann his kind regards, adding: "I think he will be of invaluable aid in connection with our work" ("Anson

beginning of July. Roughly two months later, they managed to see each other again (cf. "W.E.B. Du Bois to Anson Phelps Stokes", October 7th, 1936). On these occasions, Westermann "had a full opportunity of discussing with him the plan of the Encyclopaedia of the Negro" ("Diedrich Westermann to Rayford Logan", November 9th, 1936). Du Bois was especially curious about Westermann's opinion regarding a tentative list of subjects[20] he and his Atlanta University associate Rayford Logan had sketched out. This list was also sent to prospective contributors as well as other experts. The responses ranged from Harold Laski's stating that "in general I thought the plan of the encyclopaedia excellent", over Robert Russa Moton's praise ("I think Dr. Du Bois has worked the matter out as perfectly as one would wish") and Franz Boas's endorsement ("I thoroughly approve of your plan") to Oswald Garrison Villard's (all too familiar) complaining about "much repetition and overlapping" and his demanding "a more careful working over" ("Rayford Logan to W.E.B. Du Bois", October 3rd, 1936). Presumably, Westermann's comments boiled down to a reiteration of the advice he had already given Du Bois in the letter of October 21st, 1935. In this piece of correspondence he had uttered the following request: "It is natural that the Encyclopaedia should deal mainly with the American Negro, but at the same time you ought to have a number of authoritative articles on Negro life in Africa". Westermann thereby already anticipated the cause of their disagreement that would fully emerge a few years later.

Phelps Stokes to W.E.B. Du Bois", October 6th, 1936). And on October 24th, 1936, Stokes even confided to Du Bois that he deemed it advisable to enlist Westermann as the *Encyclopedia's* European consultant.

[20] The 150-page mimeographed pamphlet containing the preliminary list allocated 71 pages to "The Negro in Africa", 65 pages to "The Negro in America" and 14 pages to "The Negro in Asia, Europe, West Indies and Latin America".

When Du Bois had returned to the United States he wrote to Westermann in order to "remind you of your kind promise that you would write out a list of subjects which in your opinion an Encyclopaedia of the Negro should treat"; he continued by asserting that "I should place the greatest value upon such a list" ("W.E.B. Du Bois to Diedrich Westermann", February 9th, 1937). The Africanist, who not only declared himself to be perfectly willing to contribute articles himself but also offered his help in recruiting other collaborators (i.e. in pulling strings), subsequently drew up "a preliminary list of subjects for the Encyclopaedia"; the enumeration of topics, he argued, was "no more than tentative" and gave "only the major subjects" which, in turn, would require a "subdivision" ("Diedrich Westermann to W.E.B. Du Bois", February 25th, 1937). Westermann's proposal for the section on Africa ran as follows:

Negro in Africa.
Suggested list of major subjects.

I
Enumeration of larger tribal and national units, in their alphabetical order, with short ethnographic description for each.

II.
African Anthropology.

Races and Cultures.
History, migrations, and immigration. Early relations to other races.
Historical traditions.
Political organizations.
Social organizations.
Group and Individual
Slavery and slave trade
Law
Land Tenure
Economic Life
Arts and Crafts
Games and Plays
Religion and Magic
Folklore
Languages
Educational Systems

African mentality.

III.
Africa under modern conditions.

Political divisions of Africa.
Colonial Policies.
Native Policies.
Indirect and Direct Rule.
Land question.
Liberia.
White settlement.
Indians and Syrians.
Modern education.
Culture Contact and Culture Change.
African Cultures and Languages and their place in Education.
Modern African Art
Reaction to European domination. Political aspirations
The educated African and his place in the New Order
The Changing African
Mission and Churches
The African Labourer
The " Producer
Trends of development and future prospects.
Race mixture
Racial attitude
Modern African Literature.

On March 25th, 1937, Rayford W. Logan, Du Bois's research assistant, sent a memo to his mentor in which he announced the drafting up of a dummy for April 30th. In addition to other experts' suggestions, Diedrich Westermann's list was "to aid in the preparation of the dummy" ("Rayford W. Logan to W.E.B. Du Bois", March 25th, 1937). Regrettably, the next letter of this correspondence preserved in the *Du Bois Papers* is dated January 14th, 1939. We are therefore compelled to rely on educated guesswork: Apparently, Du Bois had neither greatly appreciated Westermann's list, nor had the idea of devoting a comparatively large part to the way of life of the African really appealed to him. As a result, he seems to have put forward an alternative suggestion. Hence Westermann's perceptible irritation in the January letter:

> I have studied your proposed subject matter of the Encyclo-paedia. It is very difficult to judge the whole contents from such an outline. As far as I see the outline is alright as far as the American Negro is concerned. If the Encyclopaedia will in the first line deal with the American Negro, then I consider your proposals acceptable, but if the African Negro is to be included, the number of subjects must be very largely increased. The African names occurring in the list, seem to me altogether arbitrary, a few names of tribes and peoples are included, but others of far greater importance are omitted. I must confess that I do not at all understand this kind of selection. You should either exclude Africa altogether or you should include what is essentially important and then a corresponding list would have to be drawn up by *a person who knows about Africa*. (italics added; M.K.)

The preserved correspondence does not only climax at this point, but unfortunately also breaks off at this pivotal moment. Although Du Bois had originally shown a great deal of esteem for Diedrich Westermann, one is nevertheless warranted to surmise that this appreciation strongly abated in the wake of this last letter[21]. Being accused of ignorance with regard to his dear continent of Africa must have severely offended a glowing Pan-Africanist like Du Bois. Yet this falling out, which probably gave Du Bois a harder time than it did Westermann, was everything but a surprise, for both the encyclopedia's board of advisers as well as its board of directors had been well aware of the advisability of an additional editor capable of dealing with the African material (cf. Lewis, *Fight* 436). Why they failed to do something about this evident drawback, however, remains a mystery.

When one looks beyond the correspondence between Du Bois and Westermann and also takes into consideration the exchange of opinions

[21] Admittedly, two other possible explanations also present themselves: The petering out of their relationship might have simply been a result of the encyclopedia's eventual foundering and the concomitant loss of an occasion for concrete scholarly cooperation. Or, one might attribute the end of their "teamwork" to the eruption of World War II, which also disrupted Westermann's work as director of the International Institute of African Languages & Cultures as well as his editorship of the journal *Africa* (cf. Pasch).

between Du Bois and third parties, however, one manages to penetrate into the heart of the disagreement: The status of the African diaspora. As early as October 7th, 1936, Du Bois and Westermann had discussed the difficulty of agreeing on just what the term "Negro" signified. According to Robert E. Park, Du Bois employed the word to denote "a group of peoples, of diverse and mixed racial stocks, who because they have been identified with Africa have come to have common interests and a sense of sharing, somehow, in a common destiny" ("Robert E. Park to W.E.B. Du Bois", April 9th, 1937). Du Bois's "generous", internationalist understanding of the term, however, was fundamentally at odds with Westermann's stricter application of it. As far as I can see, Du Bois made this explicitly clear only once: On April 15th, 1937, he complained to Stokes that "Professor Westermann's idea of the Negro is a rather narrow one, and would not include American mulattoes at all or the mulattoes of Africa". Similarly, when Westermann had earlier recommended that Du Bois meet "the greatest living authority on racial differences", namely the Breslau anthropologist Freiherr Egon von Eickstedt[22], Du Bois had consented but simultaneously made clear his intention to ask the renowned scholar "why in his race map of the world he has no Negroes in America!" ("W.E.B. Du Bois to Anson Phelps Stokes", October 7th, 1936).

[22] In a *Pittsburgh Courier* opinion piece dated January 9th, 1937, Du Bois vividly recalled how he had met a German professor, whose name, however, he did not disclose. It is quite likely that the academic he had encountered had actually been von Eickstedt: "I wrote this professor, whose fame is world-wide, and told him I was passing through his German city; might I call on him? He was at my hotel to meet me; he begged me, after I had rested, to have a simple supper with him and his wife; he came later in his car and we went to his home. He showed me his work-room, his library, the unfinished manuscript of his book. Then we went to the dining room, where his wife made me welcome. We ate, with wine and cigarets. Above all, we talked, frankly and intimately". Yet neither in his *Courier* piece nor in a letter to Stokes dated November 12th, 1936, did Du Bois elaborate on their putative discussion about the status of the African diaspora.

Scrutinizing the encyclopedia's *Preparatory Volume*, which the Phelps-Stokes Fund published in 1945, one is confronted by two seemingly contradictory facts: On the one hand, Westermann's name is "only" mentioned in connection with nine topics (namely "Africa", "Clan in Africa", "Deities, African, Haitian, South American", "Languages of Africa", "Liberia", Missionary Societies", "Negro", "Religion, Negro" and "Shilluk"); on the other hand, however, roughly three-fourths of the topics he had originally proposed in 1937 reappear in the 207-page-long bibliographical publication. These observations support the conjecture that – although their relationship was probably strained by their scholarly differences – it was certainly not terminated. It is not clear whether Du Bois's counterproposal had amounted to something akin to the list of subjects contained in the *Preparatory Volume*. If it had, Westermann's irritation seems at least understandable, for the volume's assortment of topics does indeed convey the impression of a certain arbitrariness and dearth of systematization[23].

Slovenliness was also the verdict of Edwin W. Smith, who reviewed the publication for *Africa*, the organ of the International Institute of African Languages & Cultures, in October of 1945. In his unrelenting critique of the *Preparatory Volume*, Smith – although conceding that it possessed "some value" (222) – continued where his colleague Westermann had let off by not only lamenting the book's alleged sloppiness but also its lack of focus (i.e. its diasporic orientation): "The net is thrown very wide so as to enclose Barry

[23] Notwithstanding Du Bois's stated intention to advance "scientific knowledge" and "intelligent interpretation" (15) by means of the *Encyclopedia*, the *Preparatory Volume* allocates Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* to the topics "Aryan" and "Germany in Africa". Another interesting point: The volume under scrutiny does not list the term "Jazz". Although the editors might have intended to include it in the relatively extensive rubric "Music", this – from a scholarly point of view – flagrant omission nevertheless reinforces the impression of Du Bois's lingering cultural Eurocentrism, which – as is well-known – Adorno shared.

Barnato, Mark Twain, W.E. Gladstone, Rudyard Kipling, Lafcadio Hearn, the Code of Hammurabi and Buddhism. Who exactly are entitled to be called Negroes is not clear: articles are to cover the Tuareg, New Guinea, Australia . . . 'Malay', Melanesia, Polynesia, and Mesopotamia" (222). On the other hand, Smith complained, the volume failed to – among other things – treat various African notabilities, tribes or migrations. Nor did it mention African slavery or the African slave trade. The translation of the Bible or parts of it into 300 of the continent's tongues should have also merited an entry, Smith believed (cf. 222). He concluded by arguing that had his Institute – which, after all, had been one of the learned societies on the *Encyclopedia of the Negro's* advisory board – been properly consulted beforehand, many of the volume's faults could have been avoided (cf. 221).

Strictly speaking, it is somewhat strange that Du Bois – a man of firm anti-imperialist convictions – should have found Westermann likeable in the first place. The latter, after all, stood for a paternalistic colonialism – a legacy of the German *Kaiserreich*. It strikes one as even stranger that Du Bois especially appreciated Westermann's famous work of cultural anthropology *Der Afrikaner heute und morgen* (1937), the manuscript of which he was shown while in Germany. The way Westermann saw it in his book, "Africa will become what Europe and America make of it" (*African* 1). That such a statement went beyond a mere, seemingly objective prognosis is aptly illustrated by the following passage which urges the North not to renounce its paternalistic duties:

> If the white man leaves today, the indigenous peoples will soon relapse into their original apathy and self-limitation. The co-operation between white and black is thus not one of equity, but one of subordination, and it has adroitly been described as

> a collaboration between white brains and black brawn. (*Afrikaner* 7 [my own translation; M.K.])

Furthermore, Westermann not only regarded the social segregation between white and black in Africa as natural, but also as necessary; additionally, he deplored the biological mixture of races – although he conceded that the colonial masters and not the indigenous subjects were predominantly to blame for the already existing mixtures (cf. *Afrikaner* 10).

Yet one also has to acknowledge that Westermann's reasoning – although certainly authoritarian in nature – was by no means fascist. At a time when it was good form in Germany to be racist, Westermann exhibited extraordinary respect for Africans in general. He paid tribute to their enormous physical exertions and accomplishments (e.g. the building of the railway and numerous roads, the providing of plantation and workshop labor, the exploitation of mines)[24], demanded that the study of the African be impartial and unprejudiced, and displayed an almost Kantian approach in dealing with the continent's people when he claimed that every African individual possessed intrinsic value as well as the capability to personally develop and hence should never be treated as a mere tool – as a means – by other groups of people, but as an end in itself (cf. *Afrikaner* 6-9). Africans, he thought, should be judged according to their own standards – not in accordance with the tape of the so-called developed world.

Above all, the cultural anthropologist was convinced that Europeans and Africans were characterized by a common normative conception of humanity – an assertion which was reminiscent of a key concept of the Scottish

[24] It should be added that, in the long run, Westermann envisioned Africans entering the higher professions, arguing that "it can never be a colonial administration's task to artificially confine the African to a certain level of his development" (*Afrikaner* 7 [my own translation; M.K.]).

Enlightenment, namely the notion of the *moral sense*. Illustrating his argument, Westermann drew on the Ewe's practice of commenting on a kind and friendly person by stating *enye ame* ('he is a man') and of referring to a selfish and cruel person by uttering *menye ame o* ('he is not a man'). These West African expressions, he contended, corresponded directly to the Latin *humanus* and *inhumanus*. This led him to conclude that "the human ideal is the same in the case of the ancient Roman and the Negro. The present-day European and African both partake of human nature, and to that extent are not essentially different" (*African* 10).

It should now become clearer exactly why Du Bois was so fond of his professional connection to "the head of the scientific study of Africa in England, France and Germany" ("W.E.B. Du Bois to Anson Phelps Stokes", October 7th, 1936). He was impressed by the latter's extensive knowledge of the dark continent (including that of several African tongues), and arguably believed that the acquaintance with such a comparatively unbiased white scholar from a *fascist* country might contribute to an alteration of attitude on the part of America's White Anglo-Saxon Protestant elite. In spite of their conjectural falling out at the end of the 1930s, Westermann – from Du Bois's perspective – represented some of the best characteristics of German scholarship. His high esteem for both the man and the type of research he stood for also prompted Du Bois to become a member of the renowned London-based International Institute of African Languages & Cultures, which Westermann directed and which today trades under the name International African Institute (cf. "D.G. Brackett to W.E.B. Du Bois", March 24th, 1937).

Last but not least, it should be noted that Du Bois's scholarly appreciation of Westermann did by no means amount to a one-way street. In a passage of *The African To-Day and To-Morrow* dealing with Afro-America, Westermann compared Southern segregation to South African apartheid, but at the same time also claimed that blacks' self-consciousness and pride were on the rise. To substantiate his assertion, Westermann cited a *Crisis* contribution by Du Bois from the year 1932 in which the editor had belligerently contended: "White Americans are welding Negroes, first into a race despite their mixed blood; and secondly, into a fighting economic unit. It is impossible to starve twelve million people in a world of plenty unless they are incurably stupid" (qtd. in *African* 152). Du Bois consequently does not appear to have experienced any kind of worldly "purgatory" regarding his acquaintance with the Africanist.

To complete the picture: The *Encyclopedia of the Negro* project ultimately foundered under Du Bois's editorship. Its failure was due to severe funding problems, which, in turn, stemmed from the involved philanthropists' concerns not only about the inaccurate, unsystematic and make-shift nature of the encyclopedia's syllabus (cf. Lewis, *Fight* 437) but especially from their worries about the objectivity of the venture under the direction of the former *Crisis* editor. On April 6th, 1938, the General Education Board decided that it would not provide any financial contribution to the project. And when the Carnegie Corporation subsequently turned down a request by Anson Phelps Stokes and Du Bois for an appropriation of $ 156,000 (60 per cent of the project's budget) the *Encyclopedia* was doomed.

In 1941, Du Bois finally resigned as editor-in-chief, and thereby abandoned his beloved undertaking. In his *Autobiography*, he would later comment on the

matter thus: “Perhaps again it was too soon to expect large aid for so ambitious a project directed by Negroes and built mainly on Negro scholarship” (302). Du Bois was “replaced” by Karl Gunnar Myrdal, a relatively young Swedish social scientist, who, with the aid of a $ 300,000 subsidy from the Carnegie Corporation, published a hefty two-volume investigation into U.S. race problems entitled *An American Dilemma* in 1944. Yet by pinpointing what the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington has called the “IvI Gap”, i.e. the discrepancy between American ideals and American institutions, Myrdal also relinquished Du Bois’s intention to publish an international encyclopedia.

Interestingly, the Rockefeller Foundation, which backed the GEB, not only thwarted Du Bois’s coveted project. In 1941, it also failed to supply Adorno with a grant he had requested to be able to complete a book tentatively entitled *Current of Music*, in which he planned to unite the results of his Princeton Radio Research Project studies. Initially crestfallen, Adorno quickly realized that not he but rather the monopolistic way of the world was to blame: “es handelt sich gesellschaftlich um das Verhältnis von Kartell und selbstständigem Kleinbetrieb” (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 159). Horkheimer concurred and consoled Adorno by reassuring him that what had prevented the philanthropy from supporting him had been the IfS’s persistent refusal to adjust to the scientific mainstream. How familiar these machinations appeared to Horkheimer was made clear when he “accidentally” used the word “Arisierung” instead of “Amerikanisierung” to denote the Rockefeller Foundation’s putative desire to incorporate the IfS into itself (cf. *A.H. Briefwechsel II* 151). What Adorno’s efforts to hold his ground in America looked like in detail will be the topic of the next chapter.

4. Adorno's America

In the face of Theodor W. Adorno's Hegelianized Marxism[1] one might be tempted to regard his American exile as the decisive part of his *Bildungs-roman*, i.e. a subject's journey of self-discovery facilitated by the adventurous encounter with a wholly unfamiliar world functioning as "the other". Such an assertion of course rests on the assumption that the Hegelian dialectic of universal, particular and individual is a valid and useful way of modeling the act of acquiring experience. The first stage of this dialectical movement consists in a subject's childlike and essentially ignorant self-certainty. The universal, however, is particularized once the subject confronts the aforementioned "other", i.e. an alien object diametrically opposed to it. Such a sundering of the universal triggers an enriching phase of maturation and self-discovery. Finally, the negation is itself negated when "the subject recognizes itself in the object" (Edgar 114), giving way to the stage of the individual. To put it differently, sublation consists in the restoration of universality on a higher level characterized by self-consciousness. In short: The subject, which in the course of the tripartite journey has gained profound self-knowledge, eventually returns to itself (cf. Edgar 114).

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[1] In contrast to vulgar Marxists, Horkheimer and Adorno always stressed the important role that dialectics played. By dialectics, however, they did not mean an objective social process over which people had no control, but rather mediation, a "force-field", a mutual relationship between subject and object, consciousness and being as well as moment and totality (cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 54). What is more, the critical theorists always regarded cultural phenomena as more than merely derivative of the socio-economic base. Instead, super-structural manifestations had to be construed as mediated through the social totality. This meant that art, for instance, did not only reflect class interests, but also gave expression to contradictions inherent in the organic whole, along with those forces critical of the status quo (cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 55). The materialist Adorno devoted so much attention to the culture industry because he conceded *Geist* (i.e. consciousness) a certain autonomy. This brought him closer to Hegel than orthodox Marxists, who stubbornly insisted that being determined consciousness.

What did Adorno's immediate and utterly personal encounter with "the other" look like? Did it in any way differ from the more mediated, distanced and theoretical writings with which he was later to respond to this breaking up of the universal usually referred to as his American exile? And if it did, in what way? In order to thoroughly answer these biographic questions, I will take a detailed look at various informative pieces of life writing Adorno left behind, namely his extensive correspondences with his parents, Max Horkheimer, Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and Thomas Mann. While the exchange of letters with the former three encompassed his entire exile, his communication with the latter two only spanned certain parts of it. Nevertheless, they should enable one to gain decisive insight into his "damaged life". In order to come to terms with the immensity of his observations and opinions, I will analytically divide his residency in the United States into four categories, i.e. utterly personal statements about (1) the unfamiliar country, its often bewildering inhabitants and family matters, (2) the existential angst and harsh despair of the Jewish-German émigré, (3) professional and academic issues as well as (4) black cultural achievements and racism.

I want to say in advance that – in accordance with Adorno's notion of negative dialectics – this investigation will predominantly be of an antithetical and less of a synthetic nature. This choice of emphasis is necessitated by my interest in the years 1938-1949 rather than Adorno's second Frankfurt leg from 1950 until 1969. Second, I intend to examine subjective experience, or, put differently, a colorful and highly individual panoply of impressions and feelings. Although an analysis of Adorno's retrospective and theoretical texts

might seem to be more worthwhile from a scholarly point of view, it fails to take into account the essence of experience, i.e. the joys and torments that accompany a subject's exposure to a certain phenomenon *at the point in time at which he or she is confronted with the phenomenon*. It is precisely then that the impressions and feelings that constitute experience are most relevant to a person. Hence, I am less interested in experience in the Hegelian sense of "externalization" – i.e. *Geist's* devotion to and development through something alien and opposed to it (cf. Adorno, "Note on Human Science and Culture" 37). Rather, what interests me is the Epicurean question whether Adorno's American exile (as our intuition would make us believe) only consisted of concerns (*ataraxia*) and pain (*aponia*) or perhaps also had the opposite in store for him, namely happiness (*eudaimonia*). Finally, as I will argue in my conclusion, Adorno's *Bildungsroman* was not really consummated by a balanced synthesis. Although he preserved certain aspects of his American experience, the dialectic, in a way, remained negative.

As stated above, coping with the sheer quantity of information conveyed by Adorno's life writing on his American experience is everything but easy. Notwithstanding such difficulties, a comprehensive response to the overall question of this investigation demands a discussion not only of his theoretical but also of his autobiographic texts. Such a discussion is a fascinating undertaking, for it reveals the truly personal and as such not widely known side[2] of the philosopher. Hardly anything is more intimate than letters to one's

[2] Adorno's private sentiments about his exile have hitherto not played a very prominent role in scholarly undertakings attempting to make sense of his American experience. A possible explanation for such flagrant omission might be academics' perception that such personal documents are not theoretically sophisticated enough to deserve scholarly attention. In fact, this is the only explanation that seems plausible enough to be able to account for David

parents. Moreover, the attentive and knowledgeable reader will frequently recognize familiar arguments in the stage of their germination. For instance, various trains of thought which were later fully developed in *Minima Moralia* actually originated in Adorno's correspondence. Thus, apart from my interest in his general attitude towards the "administered world" epitomized by the United States, careful scrutiny of his letters is bound to yield results which might also contribute to an enhanced understanding of his celebrated theoretical arguments.

4.1. Bar Harbor = "Cronberg plus Côte d'or"

From the point of view of a person solely acquainted with Adorno's "theoretical side", the philosopher's observations of the external (i.e. physical or geographical) aspects of his host country will doubtless seem quite strange. In particular, Adorno's letters to his parents are filled with often disparaging remarks that concern various facets of America's more or less dissimilar regions, cities and towns. Strongly advising his parents against emigrating to Miami from Cuba (their first refuge in the New World) on December 19th, 1939, Adorno singled out the Florida metropolis as the primary object of his intense dislike: From his vantage point, it was one of the most dreadful places he had ever seen – "eine mit Zimmerpalmen und Nepplokalen bestandene Wüste" (*Eltern* 46). Although generally in favor of his parents' entering the United States, he nevertheless assured them that leaving Havana – "eine südliche, menschliche, unhygienische, mit einem Wort sympathische Stadt"

Jenemann's recent slighting of Adorno's letters to his parents in his otherwise insightful book entitled *Adorno in America*.

(*Eltern* 46) – for Miami was tantamount to a veritable nightmare. Similarly, Adorno felt strongly attracted to New Orleans – "eine offenbar ganz wundervolle, französische Stadt mit äußerst behaglichen Lebensbedingungen" (*Eltern* 52).

One might now infer that it is not so much Miami's *American* character but rather its artificiality that provoked Adorno's utter disgust. Havana and New Orleans, on the other hand, were perceived as embodying a certain Romance humanity. Such inductive reasoning is certainly supported by a passage from a letter to his parents written on May 8th, 1940, in which he predicted that they (who would reside in New York from August 1940 until the end of their lives) would severely miss "die humane romanische Stadt [i.e. Havana; M.K.] zwischen den drug-stores und Brooklyner Juden" (76). Just how important humanity in everyday affairs was to Adorno is further illustrated by a remark comparing the English and Spanish tongues: Writing to his parents on October 14th, 1939, (at a time when they still resided in Cuba), he half-comically urged them to eagerly learn Spanish, for "gegenüber einer Sprache wie dem Amerikanischen, das es vermag, im Nachruf auf einen Toten zu sagen: 'he was a very swell guy', muß die romanische und katholische Sprache allein schon etwas wie ein Glücksversprechen sein" (42). This last remark not only demonstrates how intricately Adorno believed the categories of place and language to be linked, but also how important they were to his psychological well-being.

In fact, they were so important to him that he occasionally did not shy away from utterly caustic remarks. When his parents finally joined him in his American exile, for example, he greeted them thus: "Seid aufs herzlichste auf

diesem zwar häßlichen, von Drugstores, Hot Dogs und Autos bewohnten, aber im Augenblick noch einigermaßen sicheren Boden willkommen!" (55). Such sentiments, one could argue, might not necessarily be construed as expressing gratitude. As we will later see, various comparisons Adorno made between America's culture industry and European fascism also evidenced such a dearth of gratefulness for having been saved. Yet, in this respect, the critical theorist by no means limited his scathing observations to the production of mass culture; of New York's La Guardia airport, for instance, he wrote:

> Er könnte in Deutschland sein. Die konkurrierenden Fluglinien sind offenbar nur noch Sektionen eines ausdrücklichen oder unausdrücklichen Konzerns, und die Verkehrsflugzeuge sind so modern, daß sie von Bombern oder Stukas schon nicht mehr zu unterscheiden sind. (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 77)

As will be shown later, there was definitely a theoretically convincing explanation for such undeniably irrational overreactions: To be sure, they at least in part stemmed from the particularly horrific nature of National Socialism. Whether such statements were justified, however, is a totally different question, which – owing to the primarily empirical nature of this investigation – I will not attempt to answer.

Yet Adorno did not lump everything together. The most notable exceptions were the California Republic, Bar Harbor in Maine and – at least to a certain degree – the New York borough of Manhattan. When Adorno and his wife had moved to the West Coast towards the end of 1941, they wrote an enthusiastic letter to his parents: "Die Schönheit der Gegend ist so unbeschreiblich, daß selbst ein so hartgesottener Europäer wie ich davor kapituliert." (107-08). He subsequently compared the landscape to both the French Riviera and the Italian Toscana, and remarked that – due to a certain reticence of advertisement – one

could almost refer to it as *Kulturlandschaft*, i.e. a countryside populated by human-like beings and not only by gasoline stations and hot dogs (cf. 108). A paragraph from a letter to his parents dated July 9th, 1942, further attested to his utter appreciation of Southern California, and simultaneously revealed a certain self-irony with regard to his aesthetic standards: "Ich wollte, ich könnte euch die Farben zeigen; oft sehen die Berge ganz violett aus und zugleich wie unter einer Lasur von Goldstaub. Man kann das nicht beschreiben und wenn man es malen würde, wäre es der grauslichste Kitsch, aber in der Realität ist's halt sehr schön" (153). Likewise, the small New England town of Bar Harbor, in which the Adornos frequently vacationed, appealed to the German intellectual as a combination of the Taunus village of Cronberg, Binz and Southern France, offering serenity, hiking trails, the Atlantic Ocean and mountains (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 36-37). Somewhat surprisingly, the core borough of New York City also appealed to the Adorno couple. Writing to Walter Benjamin on March 7th, 1938, the husband commented on it thus: "Es ist sérieusement viel europäischer hier als in London, und die 7th Avenue, in deren Nähe wir wohnen, erinnert so friedlich an den boulevard Montparnasse, wie Greenwich Village, wo wir wohnen, an den Mont St. Geneviève" (314).[3] The wife concurred, adding that – from her point of view – everything was by no means as new and advanced as one would expect it to be; moreover, Gretel Adorno noticed a juxtaposition of the most modern and shabbiest including an abundance of allegedly surrealistic impressions (cf. 314).

[3] Interestingly, Adorno would later look back to Manhattan less benevolently. In 1960 he argued that – compared to the Paris rive gauche of pre-Hitler times – Greenwich village had a fictitious, synthetic and phony quality to it; New York's bohemian district was a place where independence thrived as an "officially tolerated institution" ("Kultur und Verwaltung" 142). This shift in opinion pinpoints how far apart Adorno's immediate impressions and mediated analyses could be. However, it also constitutes an exception to the rule, for his later appraisals tended to transfigure his earlier ones.

Given the fact that, on the whole, Adorno's official publications conspicuously lack any extensive observations and descriptions of the New World, two other passages from his correspondence to his parents appear to be worth mentioning: In a letter dated November 30th, 1941, Adorno recounted Gretel's and his relocation to the West Coast. He seems to have been so fatigued by the train journey that his subsequent report to Oskar and Maria Wiesengrund took the shape of a well-nigh surreal panorama of America: Having left behind their first negligible stop (Cleveland), the Adornos traveled through "pretty" Indiana and finally arrived in Chicago. The Windy City's steel works appeared to Adorno to be roughly ten times larger than the German Leuna enterprise, and its operating on a Sunday positively influenced Gretel's and his mood. Notwithstanding some "splendid" streets near Lake Michigan, the city itself left a comparatively "hideous" impression on the critical theorist. The couple then passed through "monotonous" Nebraska, which appeard to consist only of cornfields, subsequently traversed the Wyoming Rocky Mountains without registering any altitudinal change and then entered the snowy state of Utah with its "great salt lake". Adorno depicted the state's landscape as "peculiar", and especially noticed mountains which suddenly rose out of the ground like pyramids. While approaching Nevada, however, the natural structures gradually disappeared, paving the way for the entrance of southern California's "palm trees and orange groves" (106-07). Granted: The dreamlike quality of Adorno's panorama of the United States probably has to be attributed to the fact that he occupied a cabin in one of the sleeping cars of the "Challenger" train and perhaps quite literally witnessed the landscape in a drowsy state. One might add that – in a curious way – the surrealism evidenced by the voyage's

portrayal inadvertently anticipated the unreal and phantasmagorical qualities of Los Angeles' movie industry. Undeniably, however, the voyage's primary significance to our investigation lies in the fact that it for the first time made Adorno aware of the immensity of the country.

The next passage meriting consideration is of an equally surreal but more personal quality. On September 17th, 1947, Gretel and Theodor Adorno visited forlorn Virginia City, Nevada, as part of their holidays. In the derelict settlement, they stumbled upon the decrepit Old Piper Opera House dating back to the "silver-rush" decades of the 1870s and 1880s when the town, by virtue of its vast mines, had been fairly wealthy. Alluding to Jenny Lind's (a Swedish soprano's) success in the United States as well as Maria Wiesengrund's[4] and Adelina Patti's (an Italian soprano's) North American opera tour in the 1884/85 season, Adorno wrote:

> Meine Nilstute, dieses unsägliche Opernhaus, das wir eben besichtigten, befindet sich in einem vollkommen ausgestorbenen und verfallenen aber ehdem berühmten Goldgräbernest – aber Jenny Lind und die *Patti* haben darin gesungen, und wir stellten uns dich zwischen den Kulissen vor. Die Männer mußten ihre Revolver an der Garderobe abgeben. (419)

This passage does not only merit attention, I believe, because of the curious cultural conflation of the Old and New World and the resulting unreal impression, but also because of Maria Wiesengrund's constant spiritual presence during Adorno's exile. It should be added that Adorno always attributed his musicality and interest in the art, which was less a pastime than an intrinsic part of his exploration of bourgeois culture, to his mother.

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[4] In her youth, Adorno's mother had been a fairly promising singer who had performed operas by (among others) Mozart, Meyerbeer and Wagner in Frankfurt, Vienna and Riga (cf. Müller-Doohm 26-27).

Notwithstanding the appreciation Adorno was able to muster up for specific American sceneries and settlements, one should always keep in mind that his absolute and therefore unapproachable normative standard was his childhood paradise – the small town of Amorbach situated in the Bavarian Odenwald. Having spent several happy vacations in the retreat with his mother and aunt, the "female tiger", Amorbach would always remain a place intimately connected with bliss in Adorno's mind. When his parents had emigrated to Cuba, for instance, he advised them to autosuggestively regard their exile as but a prolonged Amorbach (cf. 11). And shortly after the downfall of the National Socialist dictatorship, he voiced the hope "eines Tages in einem Häuschen in Amorbach die Sachen schreiben zu können, die mir am meisten am Herzen liegen" (*Eltern* 317). What is more, the concrete Bavarian utopia had allegedly even "prepared" him for New York City. Reflecting on one of his first impressions of electrical light, which he had gotten while staying in Amorbach, he argued that this experience had allowed him to anticipate the shock he would later feel when witnessing the glaring neon advertisement signs in New York: "So gut hatte mein Städtchen mich behütet, daß es mich noch auf das ihm gänzlich Entgegengesetzte vorbereitete" ("Amorbach" 22). It is self-evident that in Adorno's judgment any American geographical entity necessarily fell behind such an absolute norm.

At the heart of Adorno's critique of the United States, however, was not subjective nostalgia but rather his thesis that the culture industry as part of the capitalist socio-economic order brutally liquidated whatever was contrary, unkempt, nonidentical, deviant, individual, nonconformist – in short: *different* – and thereby potentially critical. Claiming that the whole effort of Walter

Benjamin's philosophy had amounted to an attempt to salvage the particular and arguing that experience meant the insistence on nonidentity, Adorno, in 1942, berated his safe haven with the following words: "Das Schändliche in Amerika besteht darin, daß gerade hier, wo das Besondere vom Allgemeinen völlig zerstört ist; wo anstelle der Erfahrung die Wiederholung des immer Gleichen tritt, der Versuch gemacht wird, das Besondere als überlebend darzustellen" ("Anthropologie" 456). And in 1966 he would continue in the same vein: "Kommt man nach Amerika, so sehen alle Orte gleich aus. Die Standardisierung, Produkt von Technik und Monopol, beängstigt. Man meint, die qualitativen Differenzen wären derart real aus dem Leben verschwunden, wie sie fortschreitende Rationalität in der Methode ausmerzt" ("Amorbach" 23). As will later be reiterated, the choice of language reminiscent of fascism was by no means accidental. Indeed, Adorno always believed that the culture industry and fascist or communist totalitarianism shared decisive characteristics. Closely connected to this was, of course, Adorno's sense that America was the globe's economically most rationalized and thus also most administered society. Passing through Chicago on his way back to Europe in October of 1949, he jotted down the following observations in the only diary he ever kept after his youth: "Chikago bleibt doch, dem bloßen Eindruck nach, die unmenschlichste aller Städte, dabei das merkwürdig verödete der Straßen, weil die Hunderttausende von Angestellten, die in dem Viertel sich konzentrieren, jetzt allesamt in den Bureaus der Wolkenkratzer eingesperrt sind" (qtd. in Gödde and Lonitz 202).[5]

[5] Interestingly, besides sharing his lack of gratitude for having been saved, Adorno's fellow émigré and Santa Monica "neighbor" Bertolt Brecht also shared the critical theorist's belief that the U.S. economic order negatively influenced the American landscape and architecture: "Kein Wunder, daß etwas Unedles, Infames, Würdeloses allem Verkehr von Mensch zu

Tentatively concluding this brief look at Adorno's impressions of the geographical dimensions of his U.S. safe haven, one is compelled to claim that his normative stance towards the category of place in America was at best ambivalent. Shortly before his return to Germany, he admitted in a letter to Horkheimer that – throughout his exile – it had been his dream to return to Frankfurt together with his mentor once circumstances would permit such a move. Towards the end of his refugee existence, he also confessed to be possessed by a lingering predilection for France or Italy as possible places of permanent settlement. Having disembarked the "Queen Elizabeth" on his way back to Frankfurt, Adorno captured the following impressions in his diary: "Unbeschreibliche Schönheit der Bretagne, in wechselnd bewölktem Licht . . . Dörfer, Kirchen aus Stein. Wege mit Rainen, nicht chaussiert . . . Gespräch mit dem klugen Kellner. Türen, die man schließen muß; die amerikanischen Reisegefährten, die das nicht wissen (qtd. in Gödde and Lonitz 206). Perhaps most impressive and telling, however, are his remarks about his sojourn to Paris:

> Die Rückkunft nach Europa hat mit einer Gewalt mich ergriffen, die zu beschreiben mir die Worte fehlen. Und die Schönheit von Paris leuchtet durch die Fetzen der Armut rührender noch als je zuvor . . . Ich übersehe all das Negative nicht . . . Aber was ist das alles dagegen, daß das Leben noch lebt? (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 301)

Adorno's comments on the American as a "type of man" were characterized by a largely comparable ambivalence; however, I also want to suggest that one might read these remarks as being indicative of a slightly more positive attitude

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Mensch anhaftet und von da übergegangen ist auf alle Gegenstände, Wohnungen, Werkzeuge, ja auf die Landschaft selber . . . Die Wohntürme von Manhattan in der Dämmerung sind atemberaubend, aber sie können keine Brust schwellen. Die Schlachthöfe in Chicago, die Elektrizitätswerke in den Kanyons, die Ölfelder Kaliforniens, alle haben dieses Zurückgehaltene, Frustrierte, alle wirken wie failures. Überall ist dieser Geruch der hoffnungslosen Rohheit, der Gewalt ohne Befriedigung" (297-98).

than his commentary on the physical aspects of the country. That is to say: Beyond the familiar and frequently pejorative generalizations about *the* psychologically crippled and "verangestellteten" Americans (cf. *Eltern* 78), who lacked any true spontaneity and were moreover hostile to thought as such (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 116)[6], one nevertheless discerns the loomings of a more nuanced and appreciative opinion of Americans. In the letter to his parents cited above, Adorno also expressed his relief that his mother and father (who had recently relocated to Florida) had moved in with Americans and not with "deutschen Landsjuden": "Ich bin überzeugt, daß ihr es bei den Amerikanern, wenn sie nur einigermaßen kultivierte Menschen sind, unvergleichlich viel besser haben werdet, als bei dieser Sorte, die aus dem gemeinsamen Schicksal nichts als das Recht zur Distanzlosigkeit und Unverschämtheit ableitet" (74). Another American trait (besides decency and respectfulness) for which he had a high regard was a certain spirit of independence and psychological imperturbability with respect to one's own financial situation and future, or as Adorno termed it, "eine gewisse Unabhängigkeit vom Sekuritätsideal" (*Eltern* 82). This corresponded to an appreciation of the fact that the American did not view his or her social fate as predetermined: "Der entscheidende Eindruck, den man in Amerika hat, gegenüber *allen* europäischen Ländern, ist der des 'Offenen'" (*A./K. Briefwechsel* 385).

[6] Anyone doubting my thesis that – although Adorno later tended to somewhat transfigure his American experience – no real synthesis occurred, should take a look at his 1958 talk on "Kultur und Culture". In this lecture the critical theorist imparted to his German audience that young students of art history at Columbia University were greeted by their professor with the words: "You are here in order to do research and not to think".

Yet one of the most telling remarks about Americans Adorno ever uttered can be found in a letter to Horkheimer dated March 19th, 1945, which was written after a long train ride from Chicago to Los Angeles: "Die Reise war ganz angenehm, in amerikanischer Gesellschaft mit viel Whisky, wobei sich wieder einmal zeigte, daß die Menschen immer noch besser sind, als die Welt, die sie gemacht haben" (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 54). The most important point here is, I believe, the claim that this was by no means a singular observation but rather one made repeatedly. Still, as if to deliberately complicate the task of the historian and exegete, Adorno – having returned to Europe in October of 1949 – confided to his diary that he finally did not have to feel embarrassed about being as polite as he was any more (cf. Gödde and Lonitz 207). It goes without saying that a diary – being the most personal of media – is arguably also the place where one shows one's most honest side.

4.2. American Cinema & Art

Adorno's exile in Los Angeles was characterized by curious antinomies: On the one hand, he lived in the heart of the American motion picture industry, frequently consorted with Hollywood celebrities and, what is perhaps most striking, collaborated with people in the film business; on the other hand, however, he regularly excoriated Hollywood as probably the most pernicious aspect of the entire cultural-industrial complex, and, for the most part, withstood the temptations of the cinema – a place he rarely went to "voluntarily". It is important to keep in mind that Adorno by no means scorned the medium of film as such. Although he was never as enthusiastic about it as Walter

Benjamin, he nevertheless acknowledged – as we will shortly see – that it was capable of being used to create something worthy of the name of "art". Furthermore, as will also be pinpointed, Adorno's work on the aborted American Jewish Committee (AJC) film *Below the Surface* demonstrated that, from his point of view, the celluloid medium could serve the purpose of political enlightenment.

Considering his cultural socialization (i.e. by his standards), Adorno thoroughly immersed himself in American cinema while in California. He and Gretel Adorno sometimes deliberately went to see movies in order to be entertained. Usually, he informed his parents or Max Horkheimer about these experiences afterwards, and, perhaps most surprisingly, his judgment was seldom malevolent. Among the films which received benevolent reviews by Adorno most prominently ranked Lloyd Bacon's and Byron Haskin's *Brother Orchid* (" . . . wirklich von einer überwältigenden Komik . . . so sind wir über den Tag so gut hinweggekommen, wie es sich nur hoffen läßt" [*Eltern* 88]), Irving Cummings' *Sweet Rosie O'Grady* (" . . . geradezu zauberhafte Farben . . . es ist unglaublich, welche Fortschritte die Technicolor Technik gemacht hat und was man damit alles kann" [*Eltern* 226]), Charlie Chaplin's *Mr. Verdoux* ("äußerst spannend, zum Teil sehr komisch und sicher seit dem Goldrausch das beste, was Chaplin gemacht hat trotz der zu dick aufgetragenen Ideologie" [*Eltern* 396]) and *Thank You Madam* starring Luli Deste ("eine weit bessere Schauspielerin, als sie uns glauben gemacht hatte – nicht um eine Nuance schlechter als irgendeiner der anderen Stars" [*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 423]) – an acquaintance of the Adornos.

Moreover, Adorno had been introduced to various people working in Hollywood and even befriended a few. As will later be reiterated, his most meaningful and – from his vantage point – impressive acquaintance consisted in his getting to know Charlie Chaplin. In a letter to his parents he related how he and the American comedian had fooled around at a party:

> Er, ein amerikanischer Parodist und ich haben aus Unfug zusammen eine Verdi, eine Wagner- und eine Mozartoper frei erfunden. Er ist phantastisch musikalisch, hat all das gemimt und gesungen, ich am Klavier und auch gesungen. Ich glaube es war wirklich hübsch. Alle möglichen Zelebritäten wie Clifford Odets, ein Vanderbilt usw. dabei. (396)

An arguably less meaningful but equally humorous meeting occurred when Adorno was introduced to Greta Garbo at a friend's, namely Salka Viertel's, house. The world-famous actress apparently announced that she wanted to see the Adornos' Afghan dog "Alibaba", which was waiting in the car. The Adornos' host, however, owned three dogs herself. Consequently, when "Alibaba" was brought in, it picked up the scent of its fellow creatures, went wild, and, as Adorno's parents were informed by their son, immortalized itself on a book by Osa Johnson in the presence of the allegedly most beautiful woman on earth; the zoologist Adorno then went on to speculate that since Salka Viertel's dogs had probably done the same before, "Alibaba" simply wanted to leave behind its calling card to inform them of its presence (cf. 245). Silly and petty as this episode may be, it nevertheless demonstrates that Adorno's exile – as will frequently be restated throughout this investigation – did have its comic and carefree sides; moreover, it – and not only it, but all of Adorno's occupations with fauna – offers a glimpse of what he meant by the term "humanity" understood in a normative sense.

That Adorno by no means only detested the film industry is further demonstrated by a variety of ambiguous remarks to his parents as well as the fact that he and Horkheimer collaborated with the German director William Dieterle. In a letter dated March 8th, 1943, Adorno wrote the following lines to his parents:

> Wenn wir mitmachen wollten, könnten wir auf dem Hollywoodstrom schwimmen und jeden Abend eine andere Celebrität haben, da wir aber sehr angestrengt und ernsthaft arbeiten, so haben wir nicht die Nerven dazu und halten uns sehr zurück, wodurch jedoch, so ist die Welt, unser Wert als Einladunsgobjekt offenbar nur steigt. (187)

The pride and vanity that these lines implicitly convey need not be further commented on. In September of 1941, Dieterle asked Horkheimer to give his opinion on the script of a movie to be entitled *Syncopation* (1942), whose shooting was imminent. Adorno (who frequently ghost-wrote in Horkheimer's name) complied, hoping – as he confided to his mentor – that they would be rewarded with a job – preferably that of the person coordinating either the plot or the music of the film (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 269). Although this wish never materialized, a look at Adorno's comments is nonetheless worthwhile, for they can be interpreted as testimony to the fact that he not only haughtily scorned American cinema, but also – however negligibly – tried to improve it. On the one hand, Adorno found the film[7] to be wholly innocuous and ideologically decent. On the other, however, he called it a B-Movie, and advised that it should be transformed into a "Revuefilm" showcasing the various historical types of jazz bands in order to compensate for the dearth of

[7] As its title implies, *Syncopation* was to be a jazz film, whose narrative core was to consist in the vying of "NONMUSICAL PAUL PORTER" and "POOR HOT JAZZ MUSICIAN JOHNNY" for the affection of the "BEAUTIFUL GIRL KIT LATIMER" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 273).

dramaturgical quality. Or, as he confidentially wired to Horkheimer who, in turn, was to inform Dieterle:

> MY PRIVATE OPINION THAT IT WILL BE FLOP AGAIN BECAUSE OF DISORGANIZED PLOT AND LACK OF CLARITY OF MUSICAL ISSUE. PRAISE BASIC IDEA OF ADVOCATING JAZZ IN ITS BOLDEST FORM AGAINST PURITAN HYPOCRISY IN COURT SCENE OBJECT TO LACK OF COORDINATION BETWEEN PLOT. EITHER SHOW CHARACTER OF THE WHOLE OUGHT TO BE STRESSED BY EXPENSIVE STAGING AND MUSICAL SETUP OR PLOT SHOULD BE UNIFIED. (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 273-74)

Horkheimer used the contents of this telegram to make suggestions to Dieterle, which, however, do not seem to have made a huge impression on the director. Adorno's colleague, one might add, was even more critical of the picture, calling it one of the usual stories to extol the ideology of the American Dream. What is more, he contended that it exemplified the dialectic of the enlightenment: "je gewaltiger die Maschinerie und die menschlichen Kenntnisse und Kräfte sich durchsetzen, umso grauenvoller der Inhalt" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 276). Yet he was equally convinced that Dieterle was one of the few people in Hollywood who still believed in anything at all.

On the whole, Adorno's attitude towards American *Kultur* was characterized by an utter disdain for the production of mass culture (as will be extensively shown in the next chapter); curiously however, this contempt was not really supplemented by a converse appreciation of praiseworthy American cultural phenomena. When Walter Benjamin, for instance, asked him in 1938 and in 1940 if he knew Herman Melville's oeuvre and William Faulkner's *Light in August*, and, if he did, what he thought about them, Adorno simply did not answer. To somewhat exonerate Adorno, however, it ought to be noted that, prompted by Benjamin's enthusiastic response to paintings from the

"American Folk Art Gallery" exhibited in Paris ("Ich habe niemals Bilder dieser Art gesehen, die mir einen größeren Eindruck gemacht hätten" [*A./B. Briefwechsel* 339]), Adorno – guided by Columbia University's Meyer Schapiro – pledged to take a look at these pictures himself. Although Adorno also arrogantly scorned Schapiro, a Trotskyite art historian, because he believed Benjamin's seminal "Reproduction" essay to be compatible with logical positivism ("Ich sage Ihnen das nur, um sie darüber zu informieren, daß bei der hiesigen Avantgarde die Bäume genauso wenig in den Himmel wachsen wie bei der Pariser" [328]), he was also impressed by Schapiro's curiosity about the relationship between Benjamin's critique of aura and the auratic character of Benjamin's own writings ("Wenn einer ein Ehrenexemplar der Einbahnstraße verdient, dann ist es gewiß Schapiro" [346]).

Notwithstanding this exoneration, Adorno usually did not seek out the forces of aesthetic resistance in American culture, but instead routinely turned to Europe. Accordingly, in the rare instances in which he lauded the cinematic medium, his praise was for the most part heaped on European films. In a letter to his mother dated August 26th, 1949, for example, he said of several French productions (among them the movie *Le Puritain*): "Obwohl die französischen Filme viel von Exportartikeln haben, wirken sie doch gegenüber den geschleckten Erzeugnissen des hiesigen Monopols, als spiegelten sie noch etwas von unreglementiertem Leben wider" (522).

Adorno, however, did not simply content himself with the "mere" negation of the American film industry's standardized and – from his vantage point – utterly lifeless products. As with his various engagements with radio, he was eager to demonstrate that a better cinematic job could be done. This "better

job" was supposed to consist in the approximately 20-minute experimental short film *Below the Surface* – a movie harnessing Hollywood's technological potentialities in the pursuit of political enlightenment. *Below the Surface* (or *The Accident*, as it was originally called) was the preliminary title of a cinematographic project Adorno and Horkheimer worked on during the mid-1940s in the service of the American Jewish Committee. The plotline of the picture set in the crowded New York City underground system roughly ran as follows: A female passenger falls out of a subway car during rush hour. The search for the cause of the accident or crime implicates a rowdy Jewish fellow subway rider. As the onlookers take sides, the situation heats up – not least because an anti-Semitic peddler stirs up tempers by shouting "Why, if I told you what I've gone through – being persecuted in my fight against them – my blood would boil in my veins!" (qtd. in Jenemann 140). As it turns out, however, the putative victim is not injured; moreover, the situation is finally defused by the woman's admission that she cannot for sure ascertain whether she was pushed or accidentally fell.

In this cinematic anticipation of *The Authoritarian Personality*, Adorno's and Horkheimer's aim was to test[8] the audience's Judeo-phobic potential. The hypothesis guiding their research assumed that those viewers who introduced a causal relationship where it did not exist (namely between the Jewish passenger and the woman) did so on account of a determining Judeo-phobic attitude (cf. Jenemann 139). Yet precisely how the testing was to be accom-

[8] Ironically, Adorno at one point even proposed that the audience be given a so-called "program analyzer" to impart their agreement or disagreement with certain film characters (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 92). As we will later see, the device under scrutiny was a machine Adorno had fundamentally loathed as an integral part of Paul Lazarsfeld's positivist radio research.

plished remained as vague and tentative as the whole project itself. Although considerable sums of money were invested, the project was ultimately aborted. What prevented the film from being realized were its staggering costs estimated to amount to around $ 50,000. Among other cost-reducing suggestions, Adorno proposed the emulation of Walt Disney's revolutionary "industrial-light-and-magic" cartoon technology – or, as he put it: The synchronization of "stills" and gramophone records (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 97). Such a measure, which substituted actual cinematography with animation, would bring down the costs to around $ 3,000, he hoped. Ultimately, however, the movie foundered because it was conceived as an ambitious experiment in social psychology. A propaganda film or simply a standard Hollywood picture without any ambition to unearth the prejudiced and potentially fascist personality structure would have fared much better. As Jenemann eloquently puns: "Perhaps the reason why *Below the Surface* was doomed is embedded in the title" (146). Despite the short film's ultimate failure, Adorno's and Horkheimer's considerable efforts to turn their cinematic research project into reality do attest to their desire to distinguish between the dream factory's usual practice of churning out reified products of distraction and its technological capabilities which – at least in theory – possessed the potential to advance human emancipation.

4.3. Family Matters

Adorno's relationship to his parents during his American exile was colorful, dramatic, moving, comic, revealing – in short: Immensely complex and

therefore utterly deserving of a detailed discussion. In general, it may be claimed that Adorno's affection conformed – from a masculine perspective – to a perhaps familiar pattern which might be summarized as follows: A loving adoration vis-à-vis his mother which somewhat contrasted with a more restrained love for his father; the latter emotion – although not characterized by outright fear – was nevertheless fraught with tension. Notwithstanding such differentiation en détail, he earnestly loved his parents, and was naturally worried about their well-being. In a letter to Benjamin dated February 1st, 1939, he communicated his dismay if not horror at the way they had been treated and what they had been forced to endure in Nazi Germany: Imprisonment, physical injury, the wrecking of his father's office, expropriation, protective custody and pneumonia (cf. 389). From Adorno's point of view, his home country had turned into an atrocious land, and his eventually successful attempts to help Oskar and Maria Wiesengrund escape from Europe wholly absorbed him for several weeks.

In the discussion that follows I will confine myself to analyzing Adorno's – to a certain degree conflictual – relationship to his father. At the close of this investigation, however, I will return to Adorno's devotion to his mother and try to relate it to the similar attraction of W.E.B. Du Bois to the feminine in general and the maternal in particular. The first father-son episode I want to consider concerns Adorno's proposal that Oskar Wiesengrund (a wine merchant who had by then arrived in Florida)[9] pen a book about the alcoholic beverage. The culture of growing and consuming wine, Adorno was convinced,

[9] Oskar Wiesengrund had managed to salvage a part of his considerable wealth from Nazi Germany (cf. Müller-Doohm 418). This at least dispensed Adorno's parents from having to worry too much about their economic well-being in the United States.

was in the process of becoming extinct, calling for experts capable of handing down the tradition. Secondly, Adorno was of the opinion that such a project would be successful precisely *because* the United States was allegedly a country devoid of a culture pertaining to the grape – an assertion which, as we will see at a later point, played an important role in Adorno's distinction between German *Kultur* and American *culture*. Adorno's father, however, modestly declined the offer because he did not believe himself to be knowledgeable enough to accomplish such an undertaking. Notwithstanding, Adorno assured him of his confidence in his abilities, arguing that Oskar Wiesengrund could work as some kind of "adviser". This, however, would require that his father put down some ideas on paper in the form of memoranda, which – just like new techniques and specialized economic skills – allegedly possessed magical powers and were almost superstitiously revered in the United States (cf. *Eltern* 48). Adorno further advised his father to compensate for the lack of an American wine culture by employing U.S. marketing methods (e.g. fostering "wine appreciation" through advertisement) in order to find new markets. "Je hochtrabender um so besser. Dies ist das Land der Marktschreier – Du brauchst dir nur eine amerikanische Station auf dem Radio zu suchen" (48). From my vantage point, this exchange between father and son is noteworthy for two reasons: First, Adorno's comments contain certain early perceptions of his American exile which would not greatly change in the course of it. Second, Adorno's proposals can be construed as being indicative of a profound sense of both guilt – and, resulting from that "debt" – responsibility with regard to his father.

What did this sense of indebtedness look like? And did it permanently divide father and son, or was there a deeper bond that – notwithstanding all apparent differences – nevertheless tied them together? In an utterly candid letter to Oskar Wiesengrund dated February 12th, 1940, Adorno confessed:

> . . . ich habe manchmal das Gefühl, als ob in einem Winkel deiner Seele und dir ganz unbewußt eine Instanz säße (meine Tigerin hat sie 4000 Jahre zurückdatiert), die all das Unheil dieser Zeit als eine Art gerechter Strafe für ein Wesen wie mich auffaßt, das so vollständig allem widerspricht, was von nützlichen Mitgliedern der Gesellschaft erwartet werden kann. (67)

Simultaneously, however, Adorno was profoundly grateful for the fact that his parents had been and were morally and financially supportive of him, thereby enabling him to pursue his very own interests. He acknowledged his thankfulness for the fact that his parents had – in order to furnish him with the necessary resources required by his life plan – denied themselves the realization of various wishes. The most heartfelt of these wishes, of course, had been his father's hope that his son would continue in his footsteps. In this context, Adorno tried to pinpoint a certain continuation between him and his father[10], arguing that he found nothing despicable about his own attempt to salvage some of the independence which his father had always believed to be the prerequisite for true productivity (cf. 67).

Yet Adorno also pointed out a rupture between his bourgeois father and himself when he tentatively declared himself to be free of any kind of naïve belief in success; put differently: The good or right was not of necessity a function of the successful (cf. *Eltern* 101). Strangely though, this difference

[10] One might humorously add that Adorno, congratulating his father on his 75th birthday in a letter dated July 27th, 1945, took comfort in the fact that – in the face of the world's infantile-collectivist tendencies – children and their parents appeared to have become *one* generation (cf. 323).

also united the generations, for if his father had failed (which, by bourgeois standards, he probably had), such failure was not at all reprehensible, but rather moving and human. As Adorno put it: "Ich habe im tiefsten den Verdacht, daß alles Anständige und Gute, was es in der so eingerichteten Welt überhaupt gibt, sich eigentlich nur daran bewähren kann, daß es *nicht* gelingt" (*Eltern* 101). Similarly, when Horkheimer's father had succumbed to the rigors of the Swiss winter in early 1945, Adorno consoled his colleague with the following words: "Es hat etwas Biblisches, 85 Jahre alt zu werden und gerade noch den Niedergang des Todfeinds zu erleben, um dann doch zu sterben . . . Alles, was mit unseren Eltern zusammenhängt, hat etwas unbeschreiblich Trauriges und damit freilich auch Versöhnliches angenommen" (42). Still, such a dialectical volte-face could not really conceal or mitigate actual fissures between father and son. The most obvious cleavage separating the two pertained to their distinct professions, and it plainly pained Adorno that his parents and especially his father hardly displayed any genuine interest in his writings: On January 17th, 1944, he complained: "Ich will nicht sticheln sondern offen sagen, daß ich ein wenig traurig bin über eure Indifferenz gegen meine Arbeit, während verhältnismäßig fern stehende Menschen und noch gar solche, die im Ruf besonderer 'Kühle' stehen, wie Thomas Mann, mir manchmal mehr Sinn für mein Spezifisches zu haben scheinen, als Ihr, die Nächsten" (238). Twelve days later Adorno continued in the same vein, and complained that Oskar Wiesengrund allegedly esteemed his nephew and niece higher than "sein eigenes Kind . . . das Wundertier, das er selber produzierte" (241).

Given the fact that the nature of this investigation's overall question is an inquiry into personal experience, I believe Adorno's relationship to his parents

to be of paramount importance. To make a long story short: The expulsion of the Adorno family from Germany definitely caused a considerable amount of physical and psychological distress; yet it also prompted them to pull together, giving rise to a surge in mutual feelings of solidarity and affection. Such bonding, however, by no means excluded candidness. In fact, the resulting frankness of discussion might even be regarded as being indicative of a healthy family life brought about by the common trials of exile.

The themes of bourgeois independence and personal guilt would reappear in the correspondence between Adorno and his parents only when his father had died of a stroke in the summer of 1946. Writing to his mother, he communicated thoughts which could also be read as if he were at least partly commenting on his own fate:

> . . . daß ich den Tod im Exil, trotzdem es gegen die Existenz drüben ein Glück bedeutete, als besonders grauenvoll empfinde – daß einem Menschen die Kontinuität seines Lebens sinnlos entzweigeschlagen wird, daß er gewissermaßen nicht sein eigenes Leben zu Ende leben darf sondern am Schluß das ihm ganz Äußerliche des "Emigranten", des Repräsentanten einer Gattung eher als eines Individuums, aufgebürdet wird. (368)

These sentiments are, to be sure, also expressive of the value Adorno himself placed on *autonomy* – a concept which was intimately connected to Kant's deontological ethics and which served as common ground uniting father and son. The other point worth mentioning pertained to Adorno's profound sense of indebtedness to his father which lingered even when Oskar Wiesengrund had already perished: "Daß man, wenn einem der Vater stirbt, das eigene Leben wie Raub, Frechheit, ein dem Älteren Entzogenes fühlt – das Unrecht des Weiterlebens, wie wenn man den Toten um Licht und Atem beträge. Die Ahnung dieser Schuld ist unendlich stark in mir" (368). Although Adorno

subsequently denied that this had anything to do with *actual* guilt, he also confessed that his attempts to free himself of this feeling had been all but futile. To conclude: Although their refugee existence gave rise to mutual bonding and the practice of candidly giving each other a piece of their minds, it is self-evident that the distress of persecution in and emigration from Germany as well as his father's passing away in a foreign country had a devastating impact on Adorno's experience of exile.

4.4. Animal Matters

The abundant use of animal metaphors is perhaps the one aspect of Adorno's letters to both his parents and Horkheimer which most startles the unprepared reader. In fact, the correspondences under scrutiny are well-nigh rife with appellations derived from the colorful world of fauna. The reasons for this are, of course, debatable. I have argued elsewhere (cf. "Kritische Theorie und Tiere"), that this practice can plausibly be interpreted as a reaction towards the – from Adorno and Horkheimer's vantage point – disastrous phenomenon of reification. Moreover, one might claim that by drawing on animal imagery the two philosophers did not only reject stereotypical thought and perception by setting an example for spontaneous experience and unmediated interhuman relations against it. Rather, this airy-fairy practice might also be construed as testimony to their actual *humanity* as opposed to the ideology of *humanism*. Adorno's humane attitude towards animals was also evidenced by the fact that he – a life-long and ardent visitor to zoological gardens – demonstrated an earnest interest in fauna for its own sake. On May 20th, 1941, Adorno sent

Horkheimer a letter in which he told his mentor about his visits to the Bronx and Central Park Zoos: "Das Okapi ist quite an experience. Haben Sie es gesehen? Mit einem Snobismus, der bei Proust nicht weniger als 50 Seiten füllen würde, ist es ganz unscheinbar im Antilopenhaus untergebracht und findet kaum Zuschauer" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 119).

As hinted at earlier, Adorno and Horkheimer were always extremely critical of anthropocentricity and humanism (even when the latter came in a dialectically-materialist guise)[11], for "man as the measure of all things meant the denigration of nature into an external other"; humanism's reckless instrumentalization and manipulation of nature smacked of "species im-perialism" (Jay, "Marxist Humanism" 296). Closely connected to this, of course, was their rejection of the Marxist tendency to idolize labor and turn it into mankind's "ontological" activity (cf. Jay, "Marxist Humanism" 295)[12] as well as their refusal to endorse the "church father's" inconsiderate notion of progress as the incessant growth of productive forces that accompanied such reasoning. Adorno's reading of Marx had even led him to conclude that the bearded philosopher had dreamed of turning the whole world into one "giant workhouse" (qtd. in Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 259). In a letter dated August 17th, 1943, Adorno – who was vacationing in Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania, at

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[11] See, for example, Adorno's aphorism "Menschen sehen dich an" in *Minima Moralia* or Horkheimer's essay "Erinnerung", in which he – at least to a considerable degree – excoriated factory farming and animal experimentation (*Gesammelte Schriften Band 7: Vorträge und Aufzeichnungen 1949-1973*. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr [Hrsg.]. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1985. 104-07).

[12] Marx had argued that – since human beings (as opposed to animals) were able to produce in accordance with universal standards (i.e. criteria not necessarily subject to immediate physical needs) – unfettered productive activity constituted man's 'species-life', the essence of human existence (cf. Singer, *Marx* 26). By working on nature and manufacturing material objects humans 'objectified' their 'species-life' and thereby fulfilled themselves.

the time – told Horkheimer about an enterprise he had discovered nearby whose purpose it was to extract serum from several hundred horses:

> Sie [the horses; M.K.] bewegen sich langsam, denn sie haben keine Hufeisen an, damit sie bei den Manipulationen nicht ausschlagen können. Gegen Menschen sind sie äußerst scheu. Ich gehe täglich hin wie sie [Horkheimer; M.K.] es auch täten. Die Tiere erinnern mich sanft und unerbittlich an das was wir zu tun haben. (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 301)

Even more than reification or instrumentalization, the universal exchange of equivalents – the decisive characteristic of capitalism – was a *bête noir* to Adorno. In *Minima Moralia's* "Kaufmannsladen", however, he claimed that animals, whom Marx had not even grudged that they generated surplus value as "laborers", existed without any discernible purpose. Thus the creature, as an "An-sich", was an alien element to the encompassing exchange relationship. It represented as an expression, Adorno argued, nothing but its distinct and unmarketable name – a fact which endeared it to children and made its contemplation blissful (cf. 261). Utopia, Adorno even held, had assumed the disguise of animals. Seen in this light, of course, the critical theorists' rampant use of references to fauna receives a messianic touch.

To give the reader a general idea of the names used within the Adorno family as well as within the circle of Adorno's acquaintances, a few examples should suffice: In their correspondence, Max Horkheimer became the "Mammoth", whereas Adorno alternatingly referred to himself as the "Hippopotamus" or "Archibald Bauchschleifer". Gretel Adorno, in turn, was playfully baptized "Giraffe-Gazelle". Adorno's father was termed "Wild Boar King", and his mother bore the even less flattering name "Marinumba" which apparently denoted a "Nile Mare" or "Nile Sow". The German director Fritz Lang was called "Badger", and his partner Lilly Latté was referred to as

"Micky". Adorno planned his and Gretel's move from the East to the West Coast as an "Equine Transport". And the little animal figurines (mainly horses, giraffes and hippos) that adorned the Adorno home bore the slightly disconcerting name "Domestic Abomination". As if that were not enough, Theodor Adorno, Gretel Adorno and Max Horkheimer also jokingly gave each other the names of spurious Native-American chiefs, such as "Large Cattle" (Th. Adorno), "Three Vultures" (G. Adorno) and "Soft Pear" (Horkheimer).

The intrusion of fauna into the harsh reality of exile, however, might also have served a slightly different – i.e. psychological – purpose suggesting itself. One might regard it less as a political critique than simply as a way of expressing one's affection and yearning for meaningful interhuman relations. Moreover, the animal names provided protection against "the outside", against a hostile environment. Indeed, when one takes Adorno's frequent sense of utter isolation and complete loneliness into account, the playful appellations suddenly appear as a code signifying personal warmth, intimacy, common habits, understanding, closeness, shared interests and purposes – in short: A sense of home. From my point of view, these pet names simply compensated for the feeling of being homeless and having no one to talk to, thereby making Adorno's exile a little more bearable. Thus, the terms of endearment enumerated above were especially often used in connection to a coveted or actually impending physical reunion between Adorno and Horkheimer. In 1941, Adorno still resided in New York, whereas Horkheimer had already moved to Los Angeles. In order to express his longing for Horkheimer's homecoming, Archibald Bauchschleifer also known as Theodor W. Adorno

composed the song *Rüsselmammuts Heimkehr* for one vocal part and pianoforte:

> "Was fährt denn dort auf einem Wagen und streckt den langen Rüssel aus? Was fährt denn dort auf einem Wagen und streckt den langen Rüssel aus? Es ist ein Mammut, es ist ein Mammut, es ist ein Mammut und er fährt nach Haus. Es ist ein Mammut, es ist ein Mammut und er fährt nach Haus, er fährt nach Haus". (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 122)

People not previously acquainted with the critical theorist's playfully-humane side will doubtless conclude that he must have verged on utter despair to have felt compelled to write such verse. And although Adorno also employed animal imagery in less desperate moments, there is, I believe, a certain truth to such an assessment. The song definitely exemplifies how closely felicity and sorrow were intertwined.

4.5. Confessions

This investigation – although also taking into account intellectual matters – ultimately probes Adorno's emotional well-being during his exile. That is to say, notwithstanding the intellectual subtlety and sensitive spiritualization which were so characteristic of him, Adorno also had a sensual side, whose importance to him should not be underestimated in this scholarly endeavor. To put it differently, throughout his life Adorno had various hopeless love affairs. In this respect, his years as a refugee did not constitute an exception. What follows will be a brief look at two instances in which Adorno was crossed in love. Needless to say, they had an utterly detrimental effect upon his psychic equilibrium. What perhaps distinguishes them from later amorous adventures was the fact that he documented them fairly well in his letters to his parents.

Before relating the episodes of infidelity, however, I would like to touch on an erotically-tinged 1940 encounter between Adorno and a fellow emigrant in the New York subway. Riding home one night, the critical theorist occupied a seat opposite the young European foreigner and smiled at her. She, however, did not return the greeting, but instead pulled her skirt over her slender knees and then turned her face away. The apparently very attractive Viennese or Berliner, for whom Adorno felt "Mitleid, Härte und saugende Sehnsucht" ("Kein Abenteuer" 585), seemed to be intimating: "Wissen Sie nicht . . . daß wir in Amerika sind, wo man Frauen nicht ansprechen darf? ("Kein Abenteuer" 585). From Adorno's point of view, the contrary emigrant had already successfully internalized that the price one had to pay for having been spared one's life was that one did not live anymore, that not even for a single minute could one "digress" without exchange or shrewdness. But not only America was to blame: "Das ist Hitlers Triumph", Adorno lamented, "er hat uns nicht nur Land, Sprache und Geld fortgenommen, sondern noch das bißchen Lächeln konfisziert ("Kein Abenteuer" 586). Utterly dejected, Adorno got off at his stop, and, hoping for news of a or possibly *the* victory, bought a paper – only to be disappointed again.

Adorno's first real erotic affair abroad involved Renée Nell, an old Berlin friend, whom he had met in Los Angeles on November 30th, 1942. On February 10th, 1943, he informed his mother about the emotional roller coaster ride which his allegedly manically-depressive nature had had in store for him during the previous months:

> Und von allem anderen abgesehen ist meine Arbeit . . . nicht nur ein solches Glück sondern nach meiner Überzeugung auch so eine ernste Verpflichtung, daß nichts Privates mich unter-

> kriegen könnte. Das Unglück ist nur, daß ich wahrscheinlich die Eigenschaften, die mich bei der Arbeit vielleicht zu etwas besonderem qualifizieren, nicht hätte, wenn sie nicht mit einer grenzenlosen Fähigkeit zum Leiden, zum Hingerissen-Werden, zum sich Verlieben gepaart wären. (181)

This view of his mental state, which Adorno offered his mother, is, of course, also of interest to us because it unambiguously documents the fact that the work which he conducted in America was at least partly a result of his very own impetus. Yet what presently interests us is the passage's savage truth-fulness with regard to Adorno's sensual needs. As he put it, his lack of what Anglo-Saxons allegedly called "sense of proportions" clearly defied people's expectations of a philosopher. In the letter under scrutiny, however, he also assured his mother that – although the months before had been extremely difficult for him – they had not adversely affected his marital relationship, for the "novel" had largely been "set" within himself (cf. 182). And on March 29th, 1943, he further calmed his mother by informing her that he had not seen his Baudelairian sweetheart since the middle of January; the four month-old gothic novel – partly Balzac, partly *monologue intérieure* – had thereby come to end (cf. 190). Adorno went on living – albeit with little talent for renunciation – adding that his current work on Homer, which would later appear in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, was a critique of renunciation (cf. 190).

Adorno's next amorous entanglement occurred a couple of years later. In a letter dated January 12th, 1947, he put down an ulcer of the stomach to Charlotte Alexander, the wife of his personal physician Robert Alexander, who – in the face of Adorno's hypochondriac tendency – was a fairly important person in his life (cf. 389). On February 20th, 1947, Adorno disclosed further information: He and Charlotte had made it up again after a rupture in their

relationship of about nine months – yet bad feelings apparently still lingered on: Adorno attributed her fury to the fact that he had not married her, whereas he himself felt deep bitterness for all the things she had done to him (cf. 393). Adorno then went on to justify his imparting such delicate things to his mother:

> Ich habe mir oft gesagt, ich sollte von dieser Sache, die mich bis ins Innerste erschüttert hat, Dir nichts sagen, aber wozu hat man eine Mutter wenn man nicht mit allem zu ihr kommen kann . . . Daß alle meine Leiden mit C. zusammenhängen, daran zweifele ich so wenig wie Robert. Verzeih den Geständnisbrief, ich hatte ein unwiderstehliches Bedürfnis danach. (393-94)

A few weeks later, their relationship had again reached rock-bottom. As Adorno confided to his mother, the whole affair was much more difficult than it appeared from afar; the whole issue of guilt could not easily be resolved (cf. 395). In a piece of correspondence dated May 1st, 1947, Adorno then surprised his mother with news about complete reconciliation between him and Charlotte. The philosopher, however, had mixed feelings about this settlement of differences: On the one hand, he called it a great triumph and declared Charlotte's position to be objectively pitiable; yet on the other hand, he lamented her continuous wedding-mania and wrath at his decision to stay true to Gretel. These points, however, were fairly unimportant, for their making up resolved the whole affair once and for all: "Ich finde sie immer noch das reizvollste und bezauberndste Wesen von der Welt (– ein Wesen: kein Mensch), aber mit ihrer Rückkehr hat die Sache ihre Gewalt über mich verloren. Ich stecke ganz in der Arbeit und bin vergnügt mit der Giraffe" (401).

It is indicative of the stability and candidness of Theodor and Gretel Adorno's union that the wife should have the last word in the matter: On May 14th, 1947, Gretel informed the Wiesengrund widow that her son had basically tortured himself, argued that the object of his desire as such had not been that

important after all and surmised that his depression might also be attributed to their emigration; hoping that "Teddie's" realization of Charlotte's true design (namely to marry him at all costs) would spare him from future suffering, the giraffe promised to be a good hippopotamus keeper (cf. 401-02). To conclude this episode: Although Adorno's amorous failures can certainly not be construed as having turned his entire exile into a "hellish" experience, they nevertheless (as indicated by his frequent references to recurrent streaks of depression) lent it "infernal" touches. Occasionally, the temptations of the other sex even tantalized Adorno in his dreams: On February 1st, 1942, he, for instance, took the minutes of a nightmare in which crocodiles bearing the heads of apparently extraordinarily attractive women attempted to entice him. One of the reptiles tried to assuage the dreamer's fears by reassuring him that being devoured would not hurt. "Um es mir leichter zu machen, verhieß sie mir die schönsten Dinge" (qtd. in Schütte 136), Adorno disclosed. W.E.B. Du Bois, by the way, was equally susceptible to extramarital amorous entanglements throughout his life. Unlike Adorno, however, the putative suffering Du Bois thereby inflicted on his wife does not seem to have caused him sleepless nights: "Most of my friends and helpers have been women . . . Sex indulgence was never the cause or aim of these friendships. I do not think my women friends ever gave my wife harm or unease" (*Autobiography* 281).

4.6. Citizen Adorno

At the outset of this investigation it was asserted that Adorno generally remained aloof from politics throughout his life. Yet does such a claim also

hold true for his exposition to "the other" embodied by the successful and ingrained liberal-democratic polity of the United States? Was his attitude towards bourgeois democracy epitomized by the American political system perhaps altered – from his vantage point – by the increasingly bleak way of the world? Put differently: Could Adorno – in the face of what was then known about the Holocaust – even remain aloof? Or were the moral imperatives simply too pressing? In order to come to terms with these questions, I will take a look at his reactions towards the major U.S. political events of the 1940s, namely the presidential contests of 1940, 1944 and 1948. Moreover, how did he react to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945? All of these events, after all, decisively set the course for the second half of the "American century".

From my point of view, the scarce evidence which exists supports the thesis that Adorno participated in the political process (at least by fulfilling his civic duty to vote), and simultaneously became much more pragmatic. In fact (as will become evident in the discussion of his attitude towards the nuclear razing of the Japanese cities), the horrendous prospects of victorious European and Asian "fascisms" seem to have prompted him to shed deeply held moral convictions. One might add that this tendency towards political pragmatism was consummated by Adorno's decisive participation in the conception of *The Authoritarian Personality* during the second half of the 1940s.

Even before he was naturalized in November of 1943, Adorno showed an interest in U.S. political developments. In 1940, for instance, he declared himself relieved when he heard that the Republican party had nominated Wendell Willkie as its presidential candidate on June 26th. Adorno deemed Franklin

Delano Roosevelt's main challenger to be the most democratic, anti-fascist and Allied-friendly of all major Republican politicians:

> Es ist zwar anzunehmen, daß Amerika zwangsläufig wesentliche Elemente des Faschismus wird übernehmen müssen . . . aber Wilkie bietet noch die optimale Garantie, daß es für die nächsten vier Jahre ohne Terror und Rassenverfolgung abgehen wird, und was nach vier Jahren sein wird, läßt sich ja nun wirklich nicht mehr absehen. Jedenfalls sollte ich denken, daß man eine gewisse Atempause hat. (*Eltern* 91)

Adorno's sympathy for Willkie, however, did not affect his general support for FDR and his rigorous conduct of the war. In a letter to his parents dated November 22nd, 1944, he imparted his initial reaction to Roosevelt's third re-election on November 7th – a major historical event the news of which intruded into a private party he attended: "Die Wiederwahl von FDR ist ein größeres Glück als man sagen kann, vor allem als Garantie dafür, daß die Nazis wirklich gebrochen werden. Ich war recht nervös vorher. Hörte die Wahlresultate, bis um 3 Uhr, auf einer großen Gesellschaft bei Kortners" (294). A part of "breaking" oriental fascism, of course, was the use of nuclear weapons against Japan in 1945, which Roosevelt's successor as commander-in-chief, Harry Spencer Truman, ordered to be carried out. Adorno's comment could not have been more succinct: "A propos, was sagt ihr zur Atombombe?" (*Eltern* 326). Admittedly, judging history from hindsight is a lot easier than from within it, i.e. as it evolves. Nevertheless, this comment, which – one might normatively argue – seems disturbingly cynical from today's point of view, demonstrates how strongly the war and the concomitant news of mass slaughter emanating from Europe had compelled Adorno to move in the direction of cold pragmatism, detached means-end-calculation and pseudo-utilitarian *Real-politik*, thereby not only endorsing a just war, but also a massacre. There is

more to come: Having read the anti-Semitic testament of the director of the "German Labor Front" (DAF), Robert Ley, and having heard about the death of the Hahn family, who had apparently been friends with the Wiesengrunds, Adorno expressed his rage thus: "Wenn man das hört, bedauert man nur, daß die Atombombe nicht an Deutschland ausprobiert wird" (*Eltern* 339).

Four years later, Adorno again appeared to be approaching traditionally leftist positions, as evidenced by his sympathy for FDR's former vice-president Henry A. Wallace[13] – the candidate of the Progressive Party. Yet rational calculations stemming from America's majority electoral system finally compelled Adorno to vote for Truman. In a letter to his mother dated November 12th, 1948, he commented on the latter's electoral victory thus: "Das Resultat der Wahl ist hocherfreulich und gibt einem Aussicht auf 4 einigermaßen friedliche Jahre . . . Wir wählten, im letzten Augenblick, Truman, da die Wallacestimmen ja doch nur Herrn Dewey mit dem Schnurrbart zugutegekommen wären" (481). These examples of Adorno's civic activities in the United States document that he by no means withdrew from the political decision-making process, but instead actively participated in it and thereby acted rationally and pragmatically according to its standards. What is more, his eager involvement in the American democratic process – his deliberate exercise in democratic citizenship – might be regarded as an anticipation of the more appreciative attitude he would later develop in Germany towards the United States' democratic political system.

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[13] Much to the dislike of NAACP offcials who supported Truman, W.E.B. Du Bois also made no secret of his sympathy for the third-party candidate; during the 1948 presidential campaign, he donned a Wallace button, and advised an audience at a non-political meeting in Philadelphia to vote for the incumbent's challenger from the left (cf. *Autobiography* 334). As Du Bois told Wallace, he regarded the Progressive Party as the true successor and modern variant of the Liberty party (cf. Horne 138).

4.7. Moral Imperatives

Besides fulfilling his civic duty of voting, there were other ways in which Adorno felt compelled to shed his usual aloofness and aid in the downfall of the Axis. His letters to both his parents and Horkheimer contain numerous passages testifying to his involvement in the Allied war effort by donating blood, writing reports for agencies of the federal government and carrying out empirical projects on anti-Semitism. Regarding his career as a whole, Adorno's willingness to step out of the ivory tower during his exile is certainly of a singular quality. However, the European Jews' plight simply did not leave him any other choice. To give Horkheimer an idea of the extreme distress to which the Nazis' treatment of German Jewry subjected him, Adorno – in a piece of correspondence dated July 23rd, 1938 – informed him about the fate of Ludwig Kahn, his father's cousin. The 72-year-old man had been carried off to the Dachau concentration camp and, after a few weeks, his wife had been laconically notified about his cremation (cf. 38). To be sure, Adorno's utter anguish was heightened even more by the fact that, at the time, his parents had not yet managed to leave Germany.

Adorno's habit of donating blood – besides implying the degree to which European fascism had psychologically afflicted him – is also of interest to us because of the donor's comments about American hospitals. Adorno, who planned to give blood eight times[14] in order to be eligible for membership in the "gallon club" (*Eltern* 252), let the first drops of his "precious Corsican-

[14] A humorous side-note: After his fourth donation, Adorno reported to his parents that things had gone as smoothly, rationally and well as was to be expected, with the exception that he had felt like Tristan at the end of the third act this time (cf. 185).

Jewish blood" (*Eltern* 132) on March 12th, 1942. In a letter to his parents dated March 26th, 1942, he related some of his impressions of the American health system, which, one might add, contrast markedly with the impression European observers nowadays receive of U.S. healthcare. From Adorno's point of view, all of the involved, namely physicians, nurses and other donors, exhibited a humanity and friendliness which one did not encounter in a European administrative office; he was further surprised by a truly democratic spirit of helpfulness and cooperation in the emergency room, which, he claimed, had something to do with substantial democracy (cf. *Eltern* 132). As we will later see, these sentiments would not only be attributed to the American health system, but to U.S. society in general in his essay "Kultur und Culture".

Although Adorno was by no means as active a government consultant as Herbert Marcuse, for instance, he did relate to his parents his work on two reports, which he submitted to an official agency in 1942 and which were apparently well received. The first of these reports, which was written for the Office of the Coordinator of Information and to which Washington responded "enthusiastically" (as he proudly informed his parents), dealt with "Private Morale in Germany", that is to say, it centered on the forces which made the German population – despite the suffering they were made to endure – stick at it (cf. *Eltern* 142). His thesis boiled down to the claim that an "organized mechanism of competition", which had been created by the National Socialist state apparatus and worked with positive and negative selective incentives, rewarded the compliant with privileges and simultaneously instilled the fear of not belonging in the population, thereby motivating them to obey; at the same time, it was out of the question, Adorno asserted, that Germans had been

convinced by fascism in the sense of genuine belief in Nazi ideology: "Gegenüber dem Irrglaube, daß die Deutschen vom Nazismus 'betrunken' seien, habe ich das System und seine Anhänger als eine eminent nüchterne, praktische, in Wahrheit äußerst desillusionierte Sache dargestellt" (*Eltern* 143)[15]. The critical theorist always rejected the assumption that the German national character had been particularly susceptible to fascism: "Die Bildung solcher Kollektivbegriffe scheint mir selbst in jenes [sic] Bereich zu gehören, das den Faschismus hervorbrachte" ("Warum sind sie zurückgekehrt" 394). Adorno even assumed that Nazism's irrationality actually amounted to an unarticulated but relatively exact consciousness of the contradiction between the forces and relations of production; what was disastrous about this realization, however, was that it again expressed itself in categories of domination and oppression (cf. *Eltern* 143). The second report, which treated the problem of German chauvinism and was drawn up with the help of Herbert Marcuse, had been eagerly awaited by the government and was consequently received equally well, even generating a "hochoffizielles Dankschreiben aus Washington" (*Eltern* 173), which undeniably flattered Adorno. By enabling him to combine practical contributions to the anti-fascist cause with critical social research, these papers definitely influenced Adorno's mood in a positive manner.

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[15] In contrast, Du Bois's position vis-à-vis fascism's societal foundation and potential longevity was ambivalent. As has already been propounded, Du Bois was of the opinion that Hitler, by virtue of his charismatic qualities, had managed to convince the German population that he was the right man to lead them out of their squalor, and, perhaps even usher in the millennial Reich (cf. 12/12/36). On the other hand, however, Du Bois also had an unbroken trust in the rationality of 67 million Germans and consequently assumed that National Socialism would survive only as long as it would be able to deliver palpable socio-economic results (cf. 12/26/36).

Having dealt with Adorno's lesser known anti-fascist commitment, I will now turn to the empirical studies of anti-Semitism which the Institue of Social Research conducted while in exile by virtue of both the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC). These studies can be analytically divided into three categories: The first type of research project attempted to unmask fascist agitators such as the West Coast demagogue Martin Luther Thomas; the second category comprised a study of Judeo-phobia among American workers, which, however, was never completed let alone published; the third type of research project consisted of the renowned "Studies in Prejudice"[16], of which *The Authoritarian Personality* was arguably the most influential. Since the agitator studies and the scientific scrutiny of authoritarianism have been published and sufficiently discussed, I want to limit myself to a look at the yet unpublished *Labor Study* lying dormant in the IfS archive. A brief analysis of the study's findings will give the reader an – albeit not wholly representative – idea of the scope of American anti-Semitism, which, in turn, enables one to better grasp Adorno's fears.

Yet before I commence, I would like to illustrate the German philosopher's theoretical reasoning underpinning the choice to conduct empirical social research probing the contemporary "Schwerpunkt des Unrechts" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 255), i.e. the area where the world showed itself in its most atrocious colors. Adorno participated in the anti-Semitism projects because he distrusted two "extreme" possibilities of remedying the situation: On the one

[16] Conducting the studies in prejudice was anything but innocuous. In fact, the Frankfurt School was always acutely aware of the danger into which their critical work thrust them. Thus, as a precautionary measure, Leo Löwenthal, for example, was not explicitly mentioned as the author of *Prophets of Deceit* by the American Jewish Committee's organ *Commentary*. They were dealing, Adorno informed his mother, with dangerous agitators. Excoriating them entailed the risk of getting into serious personal "trouble" (334).

hand, he believed that reification (i.e. thinking and perceiving in stereotypes) and the concomitant lack of the ability to spontaneously and thus genuinely experience the world and its inhabitants was a defining characteristic of authoritarian personalities and potential fascists which could not simply be altered by superficial measures. He therefore, for instance, distrusted the simplistic proposal to bring authoritarian minded people and Jews into close contact, of acquainting the two with one another with the hope of fostering rapprochement: "daß der Antisemitismus damit geheilt wird, daß man die Antisemiten in den swimming pool der Young men's Hebrew Association einlädt, schlägt denn doch allem ins Gesicht, was man mit der einfachsten Menschenvernunft erkennen kann" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 406). Instead, he was convinced that only by scientifically studying the phenomenon of anti-Semitism rather than by mere prattle could one seriously contribute to its repulse (cf. *Eltern* 186).

On the other hand, however, Adorno never saw a reasonable alternative in Zionism either. Writing to Horkheimer on August 21st, 1944, for instance, he referred to an inquiry by the American Yiddish Research Institute thus: "They are apparently fanatical Zionists and their questions are a kind of nationalist Jewish trap. I have tried a little *Eiertanz* in order to avoid the fallacies of both naïve assimilation and Jewish Nationalism" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 318). Apart from the obvious consideration that Adorno was simply too German to ever become a full-fledged Zionist partisan, he seems to have regarded the ideology as a desperate capitulation before the regrettable status quo. Such an assumption is at least suggested – if not implicitly proven – by the fact that he painstakingly helped to conduct various research projects on the phenomenon

of Judeo-phobia instead of becoming resigned and turning his back on the Diaspora.

Finally, there was also a philosophical reason which impelled Adorno to reject Zionism: While Marx had argued that the emancipation of the Jew could only result from the emancipation of society, Adorno – holding fast to Marx's notion of 'the unity of theory and practice' – asserted that Judeo-phobia could only be overcome by a reconciliation of man with nature. Fascism, Adorno believed, throve on the rebellion and revenge of suppressed nature against man's domination. What was tragic about nature's uprising and retaliation, however, was that it was used by fascism for renewed domination – namely against the Jews: "Der Faschismus ist totalitär auch darin, daß er die Rebellion der unterdrückten Natur gegen die Herrschaft unmittelbar der Herrschaft nutzbar zu machen strebt" (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 194). Anti-Semitism, Adorno was convinced, would end only once domination – in particular the enlightenment's instrumentalization and manipulation of nature – ended (cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 233). In short: Not only Adorno's cultural particularism (i.e. his German nationality), but also his normative universalism prevented him from embracing Zionism.

As Martin Jay has pointed out, the more Marxist the members of the Frankfurt School were, the less concerned they were about Judeo-phobia as a threat to be dealt with in an isolated manner (cf. "The Jews" 138-39). Similarly, although the overwhelming majority of the theorists associated with the IfS were Jewish (Karl August Wittfogel and Paul Massing constituted notable exceptions), their denominational backgrounds were at best of indirect importance to their scholarly work. Granted: Over time, the political radicalism of

most Frankfurt School members waned, giving way to a more forthright and unashamed identification with the Jewish people. In this respect Horkheimer, who towards the end of his life explicitly aligned himself with the Jewish tradition, figured as a case in point. Yet even Horkheimer could not unequivocally welcome the creation of Israel, for the birth of a Jewish home merely ushered in the existence of yet another nation state, and thereby inadvertently did away with the Jews' traditional association with negation and nonidentity (cf. Jay, "The Jews" 148). As will later be reiterated, even when Adorno had moved closer to the political center later in his life, his identification with his father's people only increased slightly, and always lagged behind Horkheimer's more resolute "partisanship".

The study *Antisemitism Among American Labor*, conducted in 1944 and 1945, was a truly cooperative IfS endeavor on which Adorno worked with Friedrich Pollock, Arcadius R. L. Gurland, Leo Löwenthal, Paul Massing, Felix Weil and Herta Herzog who was associated with Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research. The study's findings were based on 566 "screened" interviews, which had been conducted by 270 labor "agents" among American workers on the eastern (mainly Detroit and Pittsburgh) and western (Los Angeles and San Francisco) seaboards. As stated above, the research project was financed by the JLC, which, at the time, was headed by Charles S. Zimmerman. It should be reiterated that neither the agitator studies, the massive *Authoritarian Personality* nor the *Labor Study* were in any way representative of attitudes characterizing American society at large. Still, although the latter was not even truly representative of American labor, it was nevertheless the *most* representative of the three study types. From my point of

view, this warrants an analysis – not least because the results certainly contributed to Adorno's "Jewish" fears which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

The "Statistical Introduction", which – like the rest of the project's parts – lies dormant in the Frankfurt IfS archive and represents a summary of its most important results, paints a fairly clear picture: The 566 workers questioned showed considerable anti-Jewish attitudes. A proportion of 18 per cent of the sample approved of Hitler's treatment of German Jews, 26 per cent demanded that comparably aggressive policies be applied in the United States, 28 per cent objected to working with Jews, 40 per cent had the feeling that Jews were not contributing their fair share to the war effort and 61 per cent attributed negative characteristics to Jews (cf. 2). Although the study's authors commented on the figures with the hopeful observation that at present Judeo-phobia was (still) not so much a program but rather a feeling (cf. 2), the next figures meriting citation (which are to be found in the chapter entitled "Discriminatory Gradations of Attitudes") created an unequivocal impression: (a) 10.6 per cent of the workers considered in the sample did not conceal their extreme hostility to the ethnic group and ultimately envisioned its physical extermination, (b) 10.2 per cent demonstrated only slightly less extreme enmity aiming at the throttling of articulate Jewish life, (c) 3.7 per cent made no bones about their active – albeit inconsistent – hostility, (d) 6.2 per cent demonstrated strong enmity opting for segregation and other forms of social discrimination, (e) 19.1 per cent displayed emotional resentment of Jews coupled with a wavering attitude as to just what should be done with the ethnic group, (f) 19.4 per cent rejected discrimination but still flaunted their emotional dislike for Jews, (g) 10.8 per

cent were friendly and only "rationally" criticized certain alleged character traits and (h) 20 per cent where wholly free of discriminatory sentiments (cf. 10).

When one breaks down these figures into categories they – normatively speaking – paint a fairly alarming picture, which, to be sure, negatively impressed Adorno and contributed to his fears. Taken together, groups (a),(b),(c) and (d) could quite legitimately be referred to as unequivocal anti-Semites (30.7 per cent); group (e) might be regarded as comprising the prejudiced yet undecided (19.1 per cent); and groups (f), (g) and (h) might be (although this is certainly contestable) described as the non-anti-Semitic (50.2 per cent). However, one might also break down these numbers in a slightly different fashion. Considering the fact that two-fifths of this supposedly unprejudiced group displayed emotional dislike for Jews and one-fifth rationally criticized certain supposedly Jewish features, one might also argue that about three-tenths of the sample consisted of truly Judeo-phobic workers, about 40 per cent belonged to a prejudiced intermediate group and another three-tenths comprised definitely non-anti-Semitic wage laborers (cf. 10-11). Or, and this is probably the most disconcerting way of making sense of these numbers, one might argue that around *80 per cent* of the workers in the sample communicated critique of the ethnic minority – be it manifestly hostile, latently prejudiced or even ostensibly friendly (cf. 12). The authors pessimistically concluded: "Actually, it is not the open and active hostility to Jews which is the menace, for active and openly hostile attitudes can be spotted and isolated. It is the prejudice itself that constitutes the menace" (12).

Admittedly, doubts remain if these findings do not still actually beg the question. In other words: How representative are the figures? The authors were quite clear about this by conceding that the results were not representative of American labor let alone U.S. society. Yet the researchers also pointed out an important fact: Breaking down the figures into an east coast and a west coast category, they discovered that the differences between the results for the respective subgroups were of a minor magnitude (cf. 14). This, of course did not prove that the sample offered a representative and thus valid account of the phenomenon, but it did reduce doubts as to the significance of the collected data (cf. 14). In fact, Adorno and his colleagues even interpreted the quantitative similarity of the attitudes measured on both coasts as "reflecting certain trends of attitudes prevailing among the American workers at large" (cf. 14). From the point of view of this study, such methodological questions as to the *objectivity* of the numbers are not as relevant as the well-founded surmise that these figures produced an enormously detrimental *subjective* impression on Adorno.

I would now like to pinpoint several of the study's comparisons between anti-Semitism and racism – phenomena which are definitely related but should nevertheless not be classified as essentially the same thing. According to the researchers, anti-Semitism was not as ingrained in the American psyche as racism and therefore was still relatively diffuse and unpatterned. They illustrated their argument by claiming that racist attitudes were relatively uniform, meaning that most prejudiced people would agree on objecting to racial mixture, but would differ in opinion when it came to the equality of educational facilities (cf. "Introduction" 4). In contrast to this, the authors

could discover no common anti-Semitic denominator, which would have allowed them to claim that Judeo-phobia was also patterned.

There were further differences: Since, as the researchers argued, color prejudice was more established in the United States than anti-Jewish paranoia, it required less rationalization. Moreover, due to blacks' relative social powerlessness, they seemed less "uncanny" ("Chapter V") than the socially mobile Jew whose image blended that of the "scavenger" with that of the "banker" ("Chapter V"). The menace the Jew posed to the worker, the authors continued, possessed a "secret", even "mystic" quality ("Chapter V"), whereas the threat of competition posed by the African-American was much more palpable. While favorable treatment and professional success of blacks were more or less comprehensible, it was much more difficult to verify if Jews were in fact in control of all business (cf. "Chapter V"). In short: Although the prejudiced might be much more prone to take violent action against African-Americans, it was really the Jewish "phantom" ("Chapter V") which haunted their day and night dreams and provoked a readiness to institute a veritable policy of persecution (cf. "Chapter V"). To sum up: To the prejudiced, the black worker appeared as an actual and able competitor; the Jew as the "'money-grabber', predatory businessman, parasitical non-worker", however, rather amounted to an abstract menace superstitiously believed in (cf. "Chapter V")[17].

[17] As has been shown in the last chapter, Du Bois observed an almost inverse relationship between Judeo-phobia and racism in Germany. While "Teutonic" anti-Semitism derived from centuries of living in close proximity to and mutual dependence on Jews predominantly employed in the sphere of circulation and was therefore concrete, German color prejudice was largely an abstract phenomenon, for the average German simply did not come into contact with people of African descent on a regular basis. Thus, as has been stated before, National Socialist race propaganda was forced to attach itself to such nonrepresentational phenomena as jazz music or such "threats" as black athletes at the Olympics.

Having pointed out the differences between the two variants of paranoia, I now want to fix the reader's attention on striking similarities: The authors claimed that only African-Americans and Jews "attract criticism on all counts from members of all national groups" ("Chapter V"). That is, only blacks could vie with Jews regarding the reproving attitudes they managed to provoke. What is more, the study also found that the image of the lascivious Jew (i.e. the projection of alienated id traits on Jews), which the Nazis had eagerly promoted and instrumentalized, had no Judeo-phobic equivalent in the U.S., but rather a racist one. That both Jewish Germans and African-Americans were stereotyped as lustful was an observation that Du Bois, by the way, had also made, as he imparted to an anonymous newspaper reporter after his return to the United States (cf. "Farbiger bereist Nazi Deutschland"). The researchers conjectured that – since anti-Semitism was not as ingrained in the U.S. as it was in Europe – "sex envy and sex resentment as an integrating factor of anti-minority resentment" ("Discriminatory Gradations" 24) were still mainly directed at African-Americans. This, however, did not exclude the possibility that they might someday also be exploited by American fascist propaganda in order to be aimed at Jewish U.S. citizens.

Did black workers also display anti-Semitic attitudes, or where they possibly immune to such bouts of phobia? Although African-American workers were also characterized by anti-Jewish views, such prejudices were not as rife within their ethnic group as they were within others: 55.4 per cent of the Irish, 52.1 per cent of the British, 54.1 per cent of the German, 68.2 per cent of the Scandinavian, 57.1 per cent of the Italian, 47.1 per cent of the Mexican, 50 per cent of the Polish but "only" 26.8 per cent of the African-American wage

laborers minded working with Jewish colleagues (cf. "Discriminatory Gradations" 57).

Similarly, African-American anti-Semitism was largely of a "rational" type. It stemmed from actual and concrete confrontations between blacks and Jews in certain professions such as the real estate business or retailing as well as encounters with Jews working as "loan sharks" (cf. "Chapter V"). As the *Labor Study's* authors expressed it: "It does not matter whether the beneficiaries of the Negro's exploitation are really Jews; what counts in the stimulation of anti-semitic feelings is that the Jews function as agents of this exploitation" ("Chapter V"). To reiterate: Genuinely negative experiences with concrete Jewish individuals were at the root of most of the justified anti-Jewish feelings among African-Americans, prompting the authors to concede that African-American Judeo-phobia was to be located on "a much more rational level" ("Chapter V") than white anti-Semitism. The researchers also identified another possible source of black resentment, namely the fact that a widespread willingness among African-Americans to progressively cooperate with Jews was not reciprocated; this, in turn, resulted in prejudice.

Curiously, some of Du Bois's utterances, as has already been pointed out, might also be construed as anti-Semitic; yet they were also almost exclusively of a "rational" type. In the essay "The Black Belt" contained in *The Souls of Black Folk*, for instance, he speaks about Yankees and Jews – not in the sense of particular Northern or Jewish individuals, but in the sense of "the Yankee" and "the Jew" – as squeezing blood from debt-cursed tenants (cf. 105). In the essay "Of the Sons of Master and Man" of the same work, he argues that political, social and economic influence in the South passed from the planter

aristocracy to – among others – "thrifty and avaricious Yankees, shrewd and unscrupulous Jews" (138) after the war. Although these anti-Jewish sentiments are somewhat "rational" by not necessarily being directed at the whole Jewish people, but rather at the Jews financially active in the postbellum South they are nevertheless undeniably expressive of hostility towards more or less concrete Jews.

Before discussing Adorno's analysis of the *objective* dimension of anti-Semitism, it should be made clear that – from his point of view – the most frightening finding which the inquiry into the *subjective* side of (American) Judeo-phobia had unearthed was the discovery that hatred of Jews was no longer confined to the *ressentiment*-filled *petite bourgeoisie* (cf. Jay, "The Jews" 143). As has been shown, the *Labor Study* painfully made clear that now not only members of the lower middle class but also proletarians attributed menacing characteristics to Jews.

A careful scrutiny of the correspondence between Adorno and Horkheimer is not only worthwhile because it grants the reader precious insight into how Adorno attempted to carry out his civic duties; it is also of immeasurable value because it uncovers Adorno's first and still tentative steps towards a theory of anti-Semitism, which would later famously be propounded in the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*. A robust theory of Judeo-phobia (i.e. one that was simultaneously uniform and non-rationalist), Adorno believed, was predicated on the feasibility of an "ur-history" of anti-Semitism. Hatred of Jews, the critical philosopher believed, was an archaic phenomenon, which could not exclusively be explained by recourse to "the Jew's" relationship to Christianity, the money economy, the Age of Reason, liberalism or capitalism.

Instead, Adorno decided to deeply delve into the "chosen people's" history and subsequently speculated that the Jews had always possessed a "nomadic" character. The Israelites, Adorno argued, were the secret gypsies of history (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 101). Moreover, their retention of monotheism, which – Adorno claimed – was antimythological and possessed a special relationship to the Enlightenment, as well as their "progressive attributes" allegedly also stemmed from their eschewal of a settled form of existence. In fact, Adorno discerned a direct relationship between Jews' consistent rejection of particularistic polytheism and their refusal to accept a concrete geographical home, for "es gibt nur soviel Mythologie in der Welt, wie es Bindungen an die Erde und den bestimmten Wohnsitz gibt" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 101).

Having speculatively marked out the most important peculiarities of Jewish history, Adorno proceeded to link them to the phenomenon of Judeo-phobia. According to him, humankind's gradual abandonment of the nomadic lifestyle was one of the hardest sacrifices history demanded, for the occidental concept of work and the renunciation and suppression of natural desires accompanied it. In contrast, Jews, Adorno argued, had resisted being "civilized" and had not succumbed to the primacy of work. On the contrary: They stood for a putative state in humanity's genesis in which the concept of work had been unknown: "Dies Festhalten am ältesten Bild des Glücks ist die jüdische Utopie" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 102). In the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, the utopia Jews embodied would later be summed up as follows: "Glück ohne Macht, Lohn ohne Arbeit, Heimat ohne Grenzstein, Religion ohne Mythos" (208-09). Yet in the painful course of mankind's developmental progress, which was facilitated by sedentariness, life was increasingly defined by work, which, in turn,

reproduced the suppression of natural urges. This seemingly inevitable tendency of civilization, however, only made the original nomadic state seem all the more blissful and desirable. According to Adorno, Jews were resented precisely because they – in the eyes of the anti-Semites – appeared to reject renunciation for the sake of progress. To put it differently: Their supposed clinging to a utopian form of existence created envious *ressentiment*, even *rancune*, among gentiles precisely because non-Jews had "played along", i.e. complied with the demands of civilization. The formulation of these thoughts, which basically represent Adorno's critical theory of anti-Semitism in a nutshell, seems to have derived from a sense of duty in the face of the Jews' unprecedented plight[18]. This impression is reinforced by Horkheimer's approving reply in which he shows himself to be convinced that "die Judenfrage die Frage der gegenwärtigen Gesellschaft ist – da sind wir mit Marx und Hitler einig, sonst aber hierin so wenig wie mit Freud" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 103). Interestingly, Horkheimer's assertion parallels Du Bois's celebrated claim at the beginning of *The Souls of Black Folk* that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line" (1).

When analyzing Adorno's theoretical exploration of Judeo-phobia as delineated in his letters to Horkheimer, one should marginally also take note of his interpretation of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (ca. 1596)

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[18] Adorno, as he confided to Horkheimer on August 5th, 1940, also increasingly had the impression that world Jewry was now replacing labor as the main victim of global oppression: "Oftmals kommt es mir vor, als wäre all das, was wir unterm Aspekt des Proletariats zu sehen gewohnt waren, heute in furchtbarer Konzentration auf die Juden übergegangen" (84). The Jews, Adorno believed, represented the counterpole to the concentration of power (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 84). Whether coincidence or not, the narrator of one of Adorno's *Exillektüren*, namely Sinclair Lewis's somber book *It Cant't Happen Here* (1935), expresses similar thoughts by declaring Jews to be seismographs of barbarism: "There is no greater compliment to the Jews than the fact that the degree of their unpopularity is always the scientific measure of the cruelty and silliness of the régime under which they live" (293).

– a play which after the experience of the Holocaust has been strongly contested on account of its apparently stereotypical conception of the Jewish character Shylock. Notwithstanding the drama's contentiousness, Adorno argued that an analysis of the play was indispensable to a thorough understanding of the "ur-history" of modern anti-Semitism. Shakespeare, Adorno believed (and here he included Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* in his analysis), came out against *both* Angelo and Shylock because *both* of them represented an abstract principle, namely the universal exchange of equivalents (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 12). As has been stated before, Adorno and Horkheimer always considered exchange rather than reification or alienation to be the defining characteristic of capitalism. Adorno went on to argue that both Angelo's and Shylock's downfall stemmed from their very own principle of "Maß für Maß", i.e. law that made a mockery of justice (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 12). Adorno disputed any allegedly anti-Semitic tendencies of the play; instead, if one follows his construal the play seems to be characterized by an anti-capitalist impetus: "Die modernen Antisemiten schreien der "Händler" und meinen den Juden; Shakespeare sagt: der Jude, und meint den Bürger" (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 12). Adorno's vivid dialectical imagination prompted him to not only regard Shakespeare as an exponent of the rising bourgeoisie. Rather, the dramatist – by virtue of *The Merchant of Venice* and other plays – appeared to him to lag behind "his" class; to the same degree that he lagged behind, however, Adorno also believed him to be (morally) ahead of his class "fellows". Getting to the heart of the issue, the German philosopher argued that Shakespeare had decidedly more in common with Thomas Morus than he had with Francis Bacon. In summary, one can say that – to anti-Semites – Jews

stood for both uncivilized (i.e. unrepressed) nature *and* the ongoing 'disenchantment of the world' which the liberal and rationalist enlightenment so relentlessly pushed ahead. The former, "meta-historical" point, however, was arguably the true innovation of Adorno's analysis of anti-Semitism.

4.8. Jewish Fear

In one of the first letters to his parents that Adorno wrote during his exile, he proudly told Oskar and Maria Wiesengrund about an encounter with the U.S. sociologist Robert S. Lynd in New Hampshire. In this piece of correspondence dated July 8th, 1939, Adorno did not go to great lengths to conceal his pride about the fact that the world famous author of *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (1929) had invited him to his New England home. According to Adorno, the U.S. academic had taken notice of several of his writings, and had shown himself to be very impressed by them. Yet as he insisted in the letter to his parents this was not as important to him as the fact "daß ich schließlich trotz der mir vorgeworfenen jüdisch-hegelschen Dialektik mit Amerikanern von arischstem Geblüt zurandekomme" (17). I want to use this telling and humorous self-assessment as a starting point for my discussion of three different types of dread which vexed Adorno throughout his exile. These anxieties corresponded directly to his tripartite identity hinted at in the quote above: Jew[19], German, and critically-dialectical intellectual.

[19] How Jewish Adorno really was, i.e. how important his assimilated father's Jewish heritage was to him, cannot presently be clarified. Adorno's and Horkheimer's correspondence, however, suggests, that the former perceived the latter and not himself as the "genuine" Jew. Such an assertion is suggested by several passages in which Adorno invoked aspects of Jewish culture, but simultaneously attributed them to his mentor and not himself. On March 10th, 1946, for instance, he advised the AJC advisor Horkheimer to not let himself be made

Moreover, one might – returning to the dialectical model put forward earlier – argue that it was only his confrontation with "the other" (i.e. the United States), which made Adorno *fully* aware of his identity.

References to the fate of the other European Jews, anti-Semitism in America, Jewish characteristics, the progress and setbacks of the Allied war effort and the accompanying mood vacillations between hopeful relief and utter despair abound in the correspondence between Adorno and his parents. Focusing on the most "impressive" ones, I would like to convey an – albeit far from exhausting – impression of his Jewish fear. This preoccupation with Jewishness – as will later be reiterated – was by no means deliberate, i.e. it was never really an outpouring of his very own interests. On the contrary: The world events – and not any autonomous stirrings – compelled him to preoccupy himself with questions of identity. In a letter dated April 15th, 1943, for example, he uttered in passing the following lines: "Ich bin ganz verjudet, d.h. denke nur noch über den Antisemitismus nach. Es ist so schwer was Neues zu finden weil die Juden so gescheit sind – 'Judde wisse alles'! Gestern habe ich einen (arischen) Assistenten engagiert. Hoffentlich funktioniert er" (192). A passage from a letter to his parents dated March 11th, 1946, offers further insight into his fragmented, almost shattered sense of identity:

> Nachdem 6 Millionen ermordet worden sind, geht es mir wider den Strich, mich über die Manieren der paar Überlebenden, die mir im übrigen auch nicht zu gefallen brauchen, aufzuhalten. Dazu kommt, daß die 50% Goj in mir sich irgendwie an der Judenverfolgung mitschuldig fühlen und daß ich deshalb ganz

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"mefulbel" by the Jews. "To make someone mevulbl", of course, is the Yiddish expression for "to confuse someone". To provide another example: On March 24th, 1948, Adorno first wished his mentor happy Easter, and then, realizing his mistake, wished him happy "Purim mit Hamännchen". "Homentashn", as they are called in Yiddish, are a sort of pastry eaten on the rabbinically decreed holiday.

> besonders allergisch auf alles reagiere, was gegen das auserwählte Volk gesagt wird. (352-53)

Referring to such sentiments as irrational is putting it – I believe – mildly. They are nevertheless relevant, for they inform us about the fact that even in the wake of the Shoah Adorno could not unconditionally identify with the Jewish people; and although (normatively speaking) it should be no contradiction, his sense of being European and especially German was simply stronger than his sense of being a Jew.

Which other strange fancies did German fascism and Adorno's confrontation with "the other" produce? In two pieces of correspondence (July 15th and 25th, 1939) Adorno informed his parents about the so-called Alaska project into which they had been initiated by a colleague of the former Hamburg banker and émigré Max Warburg who was apparently working on the venture for the Roosevelt administration. At the time, the American government was contemplating the settlement of persecuted Jews in the arctic territory or on the Virgin Islands in order to relieve some of the immigration pressure which was weighing heavily on the country. Adorno commented quite enthusiastically on the project:

> Wenn nicht alles täuscht, verspricht Alaska, das ja politisch zu USA gehört, und das wirtschaftlich noch ganz unerschlossen ist, wirklich der Hafen für die verfolgten Juden zu werden . . . Wirtschaftlich läuft der Plan darauf hinaus, eine Holzindustrie aufzubauen, die das amerikanische Zeitungswesen weithin von Rohmaterialien aus Deutschland, Canada und Skandinavien unabhängig macht. In ganz Alaska wohnen bis heute nur 60,000 Leute, davon 30,000 Weiße, der Rest Eskimos, Japaner, Chinesen und Neger durcheinandergemischt. Die südlichen fruchtbaren Teile von Alaska sind ganz leicht von Seattle aus zu erreichen. Insgesamt scheint mir das Projekt unvergleichlich viel solider und gesünder als etwa das Guyana-Projekt, gar nicht zu reden von Shanghai. (23-24)

In order to be able to correctly appraise Adorno's enthusiasm, one should mention that he was utterly pessimistic with regard to the Jews' fate. In fact, in a letter to Horkheimer dated Febraury 15th, 1938, he had shown himself wholly convinced that the remaining Jewish-German population would be exterminated, for, expropriated as they had been, no country would deem it rational to admit them: "Und es wird wieder einmal nichts geschehen: die anderen sind ihres Hitlers wert" (29). To shed light on Adorno's relief at these freezing prospects, it ought to be said that the National Socialist "Reichszentrale für jüdische Auswanderung", which had been founded in 1939 and was directed by Heinrich Heydrich, at the time seriously considered the relocation of Jews to areas outside of Europe and Palestine. Shanghai (which did not require a passport or visa for entry) and Madagascar ranked among the favored "destinations". Moreover, the Dutch fascist Anton A. Mussert (1894-1946) had suggested that European Jews be sent to Great Britain's and France's Guyana territories as well as the Netherlands' Surinam colony (cf. *Eltern* 26). Clearly, none of these options were ever seriously pursued either by Nazi Germany or the United States. How preoccupied Adorno was with the question of Jewish identity and the people's dire fate is further demonstrated by a remark contained in a letter dated February 7th, 1940, concerning the Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus. In the piece of correspondence, Adorno casually remarked on a recent publication by Salvador Madariaga apparently proving that the celebrated mariner was Jewish. He continued by encouraging his parents to promote it: "Das Buch macht hier viel Sensation und man sollte aus apologe-

tischen Gründen in Amerika soviel darauf hinweisen wie möglich" (59)[20]. Clearly, this remark further attested to his utter desperation and outright fright.

Yet how could these fears be alleviated? With regard to this question, Adorno and Oskar Wiesengrund somewhat differed in opinion. The latter contended that the only true solution deserving of such a name lay in the abolition of the "Rassendifferenz" (190). This was to be accomplished by the blending of Jew and gentile (cf. *Eltern* 66). Although Adorno generally concurred (despite the idea's running counter to thoughts he would later propound in *Minima Moralia*), he nevertheless argued that *Christians* and not Jews were mainly to blame for their unwillingness to accomplish this melting down of differences. Finally, he saw little use in blaming Jews for their isolation and clannishness at a time when millions of them were being murdered (cf. 190). The only immediate way out which Adorno saw lay in an Allied victory.

Certainly, Adorno was everything but a rabid warmonger. When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, he reflected on the dialectic of the enlightenment thus: "Daß die Menschheit, die es soweit gebracht hat, einen solchen Krieg führen zu können, es nicht soweit gebracht hat, ihn nicht führen zu müssen, ist nichts anderes als Grund zur absoluten Verzweifelung" (*Eltern* 35). Still, this war had to be fought and ultimately won – pacifist refusal would have been sectarian. Consequently, it is of little surprise that Adorno reacted to

[20] Interestingly, W.E.B. Du Bois also remarked on the legendary explorer in a *Pittsburgh Courier* opinion piece written after a visit to the German Museum at Munich (10/3/36). In the part of the museum illustrating the history of transportation, Du Bois stumbled upon a model of the "Santa Maria", the mariner's vessel. Thus, while Adorno highlighted the importance and timeliness of Columbus' *Old World* cultural baggage (i.e. his supposed Judaism) for the containment of anti-Semitic tendencies in the *New World*, Du Bois emphasized the technical exactingness with which the craft that opened up the *New World* had been replicated by an *Old World* institution. This chiasmus also attests to the abiding presence of Christopher Columbus as a topos of transatlantic cultural transfer.

every tiny piece of good and bad news like a seismograph; disastrous accounts from the European or Asian fronts could plunge him into veritable depressions, whereas accounts of success left him elated for weeks.

In the first years of the war, Adorno was above all concerned about the English willingness and ability to confront Hitler as well as America's hesitation to join in the Allied war effort. Throughout his life Adorno – as has already been hinted at – had a special aversion to and contempt for Great Britain; these sentiments were only reinforced by such appeasement-statesmen as Neville Chamberlain or the Duke of Windsor as well as the allegedly fascist yearnings of the country's capitalists. It thus hardly came as a surprise when he accused the British of secret sympathy for the barbarians, of actually craving to live under the Nazi whip (cf. *Eltern* 76-77). English hesitancy threatened to uproot the "zarte Pflänzchen unseres Krieges" (*Eltern* 53). The mood conveyed by a letter dated May 20th, 1940, was typical of the times when the Allied war effort appeared to be all but doomed:

> Ich übertreibe nicht, wenn ich sage, daß diese Tage für mich schlimmer sind als alles, was voranging mit Ausnahme des Pogroms 1938 . . . Ich halte den Krieg für verloren durch die bodenlose Leichtsinnigkeit, Unfähigkeit und Kleinlichkeit der Alliierten – es ist wie in Hebbels Haideknaben, die entsetzlichsten Angstphantasien werden immer noch von der Wirklichkeit überboten. Ich bin bis jetzt, was bei mir nie vorgekommen ist, noch nicht fähig, auch nur einigermaßen meine Balance wiederzugewinnen, schlafe fast überhaupt nicht mehr und starre wie gelähmt auf den schwarzen Abgrund, der in seinen Wirbel alles und alles vernichtend hineinreißt.
> (*Eltern 79*)

What is more, Adorno believed that he was not only witnessing a global war but rather the total collapse of culture in the sense in which the world had known it since the migration of the peoples (cf. *Eltern* 80). In his darkest moments and most somber moods, Adorno even reverted to desperate irony

and black humor as the only feasible means of coping with his dread. While still in London, for example, Adorno informed Horkheimer about the progress of his article on Richard Wagner thus: "Schon jetzt ist soviel an Text da, daß, wenn ich wider Erwarten doch noch hier vergast werden sollte, das Institut aus diesem, zusammen mit den restlichen Aufzeichnungen, eine ganz ansehnliche Nachlaßpublikation machen könnte" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 27). In an equally somber but more telling letter to his parents he conveyed the impression of being trapped and argued that – since history had assumed the character of permanent calamity and one must by all means be beaten to death – one might as well undergo such a procedure "dort, wo man mit all seiner Beschaffenheit und auch dem Charakter seiner Erkenntnisse nach am ehesten hingehört" (66). In another piece of correspondence to his parents he conceded that his aim was survival, but not survival for its own sake. Rather, he conjured up the metaphor of a message in a bottle, and argued that a temporary reprieve would enable him to wrap up work and insights which might not prove wholly useless for other people at another time (cf. 85).

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941, and the United States' entry into the war, however, Adorno became increasingly hopeful[21]. Although Allied setbacks occasionally darkened his mood again, the situation appeared much more promising to him and he tended to stick to his "bourgeois" thesis that the struggle would eventually be decided in favor of the

[21] Adorno's increasing hopefulness and deep gratitude for Roosevelt's tough stance against Nazi Germany was also reflected in his dreams. In a *Traumprotokoll* dated Febraury 1st, 1942, for example, he gave an account of a personal encounter with the 32nd American head of state which reads like a loving portrayal of an affectionate father figure (cf. "[Aus den Traumprotokollen (1)]" 136). Notwithstanding the fact that the Roosevelt of Adorno's dreams excluded him from a discussion of sensitive "defense issues" (which might be read as a symbolic expression of Adorno's sense of being an "enemy alien"), his appreciation of FDR remained strong up until the president's premature death.

contestant with the superior productive forces and capital power. He also stayed true to his assessment of National Socialism as a dictatorship that essentially lacked *true* support among the population. In a letter dated November 11th, 1943, he for example compared the fascist hierarchy to the dictatorship of the *Comité de Salut Public* during the French Revolution, which had also had the power to behead anyone in the year 1794 but then basically collapsed overnight because there was nothing to sustain it except isolated and socially detached might (cf. 225). And in January of 1944, he thought it possible that underground anti-Hitler groups had already organized themselves and were basically just waiting for the day of the Allied invasion in order to strike (cf. *Eltern* 238). The advent of D-Day on June 6th, 1944, of which Lou Eisler informed Adorno in the middle of the night, served both to confirm his general predictions and consolidate his cautious optimism.

When the news of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender on May 8th, 1945, reached Adorno he breathed a sigh of utter relief in the form of a letter to Max Horkheimer in New York. And although the looming conflict of the "two total tickets" (101) cast a shadow over his joy, he did express his happiness:

> Trotz der schwarzen Perspektive – über die wir uns ja stets einig waren – ist aber doch Grund zu Freude, einmal, weil in einer Welt, die von einer Katastrophe in die andere zu stürzen scheint, schon jede Atempause ein Glück vorstellt, und dann weil das äußerste Entsetzen eben doch Hitler und Himmler hieß und anderswo zwar möglich aber doch nicht wirklich ist. (102)

These lines express an important point: In spite of the fact that in the 1940s both Adorno and Horkheimer still clung to the orthodox Marxist view that capitalist societies were characterized by two developmental tendencies (competitive capitalism giving way to monopolistic capitalism and liberal democracy leading to authoritarian statehood), they nevertheless had to

concede that fascism had occurred in Europe and not in America (cf. Offe 101). To express it even more pointedly: Although the mass-psychological and economic prerequisites for fascism (e.g. the demise of the sphere of circulation and the obsoleteness of trade)[22] had not only been given in Germany but were also present in the "barbarischen Halbzivilisation dieses Landes" (*Eltern* 66) and fascist symptoms abounded (e.g. the agitation of members of the "America First Committee" such as Robert R. Reynolds, Burton K. Wheeler and Charles A. Lindbergh or the anti-Semitic activism of such media figures as Gerald Lyman Kenneth Smith or Robert Rutherford McCormick), around six million Jews had been exterminated in Europe and not in the United States.

Profound joy and gratitude, however, were but one part of the story. Simultaneously, Adorno's rejoicing and thankfulness were dampened by the awareness that the long-awaited Allied victory, although certainly desirable, had actually come too late; one was painfully aware of the fact, he claimed, that fate could not be averted, for the catastrophe had already occurred: "Dem gegenüber liegt allein Hoffnung bei dem, was wir nun bald zu tun in der Lage sein werden" (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 84). As is well known, part of what the critical theorists accomplished after the war was to formulate a new categorical imperative, which demanded that one should always act in such a manner as to prevent everything connected to the name of Auschwitz from being able to repeat itself.

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[22] Adorno was not the only intellectual in 1930s and 40s America who was convinced that it *could* happen here. Sinclair Lewis's dystopian or counterfactual historical novel (depending on the point of view) *It Can't Happen Here*, for instance, depicted a fascist take-over in the United States and thereby apparently capitalized on free-floating apprehensions, for the book was extremely successful and sold more than 350,000 copies. Adorno's reading of *It Can't Happen Here* prompted him to predict that the horror of a home-grown form of fascism – National Socialism draped in red, white and blue, so to speak – would be Nazism's equal in every way (cf. *Eltern* 66). Adorno was so unsettled by Lewis' bleak scenario that he recommended and sent the novel to his parents in 1940.

The catastrophe had not only *not* been averted; it could even repeat itself. Thus, although Adorno expressed utter relief with regard to Hitler's defeat, predicted that the days of Umberto II and Francisco Franco were numbered and showed himself to be enthralled by unexpected social reforms in Great Britain initiated by the Labour government, he deemed the situation too good to be true. For in an increasingly socialist world, American capitalism would of necessity be pushed into the fascist direction. On the other hand, however, Adorno thought it difficult to imagine that the American masses would put up with totalitarianism in the face of a Europe which, although bled dry, basked in full employment while nine million Americans were idle in the richest country on earth (cf. *Eltern* 322).

Be that as it may, Adorno would remain distrustful of the ways of the world even after fascism had been defeated. What is more, his "public" wariness would continue to be translated into the "private" sphere. Desperately looking for a house to rent in April of 1945, Theodor and Gretel Adorno had suddenly been denied a seemingly certain bargain for dubious reasons, which, Adorno thought, merely covered up anti-Semitic prejudice on the landlord's part (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 92). Three months later, he commented on their increasingly pressing "house situation" thus: "Es ist kein schönes Gefühl, wenn einem gesagt wird: 'you are no longer wanted here', selbst wenn man weiß, daß man in der Welt überhaupt no longer wanted ist" (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 142).

4.9. "Enemy Alien"

Adorno, however, was not only plagued by a diffuse "Jewish fear", but also by an almost constant apprehension stemming from his German nationality. After all, he was – as about 110,000 Japanese-Americans who were evacuated to internment camps painfully had to discover – considered an "enemy alien" by the U.S. government as propounded in Congress' Alien Enemies Act of 1918 and Franklin D. Roosevelt's decree Proclamation 2526, which had been issued on December 8th, 1941, as a direct response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. And unlike most of his Asian fellow-sufferers, he was not even an American citizen until 1943. Adorno was at a loss: Weren't the German émigrés and Japanese-Americans the most reliable anti-fascists in the whole country (cf. *Eltern* 132)? I would now like to take a closer look at his depressing experiences as an "enemy alien". Furthermore, related issues of naturalization and, paradoxically, conscription will also be taken into consideration in order to furnish a relatively complete picture of the fears related to his German nationality.

Long before the United States' entry into the Second World War Adorno told his parents that Gretel and he were wary not to out themselves as German in the public or on the telephone (cf. 41) – the reason being a veritable "Fremdenpsychose" (85). Three-quarters of a year later, he advised his parents to refrain from speaking German on the street or in the subway (cf. 85). Near the end of 1941, Gretel and he had to register as refugees and were subsequently prevented from traveling (cf. *Eltern* 129). By March 26th, 1942, measures taken against the supposedly hostile individuals and the complete

uncertainty of circumstances had plunged Adorno into a general state of depression (cf. *Eltern* 131). Not only had a curfew (which stipulated that one was not allowed to leave a five-mile zone and had to be home by 8 p.m.) been enacted against the alien elements, but an evacuation was also looming on the horizon. These measures, which – in the face of North American distances – amounted to virtual imprisonment seemed all the more grotesque to Adorno, as he had just recently finished a large report for a government agency in order to fulfill his "defense obligations". And although the Adornos would not be evacuated, the curfew was strictly enforced: He, for example, imparted to his parents that the FBI had paid Bertolt Brecht a visit at 9:30 p.m. to see if the playwright was home (cf. 145).

Closely connected to Adorno's dismay at being treated like an "enemy alien" were his efforts to attain American citizenship. Having resided in the United States for five years in February 1943, Adorno and his wife decided to apply for the naturalization process. Despite doubts at first, the process went faster than expected. When he and two witnesses (Max Horkheimer and his landlady Mrs. Colburn) appeared at the first hearing, he still expected the procedure to take another year. Yet in November of the same year he and another 800 applicants were already sworn in at a merely formal hearing, on the occasion of which the judge held an exceedingly friendly and humane speech (cf. *Eltern* 231). This, of course, should be noted as another instance of what Adorno came to appreciate as the humanity of everyday life in America. But his naturalization was not an end in itself. Immediately upon reception of his certificate, Adorno told his parents that Gretel's and his U.S. citizenship could prove to be of value when demanding restitution for their loss of

property in Germany. Adorno summed up his unsentimental and perhaps ungrateful attitude towards the document thus: "Es [the naturalization; M.K.] ist eines von den Dingen, die wenig bedeuten wenn man sie hat, und *sehr* unangenehm sind wenn man sie (wie zahlreiche Bekannte von uns) *nicht* bekommt!" (*Eltern* 341). In the unpublished *Minima Moralia* aphorism "Key people", Adorno, as if to carry his lack of gratitude to extremes, even referred to the requirement that one name one's club memberships as one of the control mechanisms of what Alexis de Tocqueville had described as the 'tyranny of the majority' in the United States: "Wer nirgends Mitglied ist, macht sich verdächtig: bei der Naturalisation wird ausdrücklich verlangt, daß man seine Vereine aufführe" (285-86).

If Adorno's fears were somewhat allayed by the prospects of being naturalized, they were also – at least initially – incited by the prospect of being drafted into the armed forces. In a letter dated September 15th, 1942, he informed Horkheimer that the problem of being conscripted was becoming ever more pressing (cf. 289), sending him a cutting from the *Los Angeles Times*. Adorno had highlighted the following lines: "Married men in California between the ages of 20 and 45 can expect to be subject to call for military service in draft calls which are received in November . . . those with only collateral dependents will be required" (qtd. in *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 292). However, in a piece of correspondence to his parents dated May 14th, 1943, he was able to somewhat disperse their worries about his having to see actual combat as opposed to desk duty: Since he had been given his medical of "4h", a classification which declared him unqualified for service because of his age, he had not heard anything from the authorities. Moreover, his work was so

intimately connected to the war effort and his Institute colleagues so scarce that he did not believe that he would have to pick oranges in southern California either – which, however, would not have been the worst thing in the world, he joked (cf. 194). Curiously, had Franklin D. Roosevelt not issued an executive order on December 5th, 1942, which excused men older than thirty-eight from conscription and thereby invalidated the age limit of forty-five, the at that time thirty-nine-year-old German citizen Theodor W. Adorno might have been drafted into the American armed forces (cf. Flynn 56). Thus his German nationality was not only responsible for his status as an "enemy alien". It would have also failed to protect him from being forced to fight for a suspicious, and, at times, unwelcoming country.

4.10. A Left-Hegelian in California

Having touched on Adorno's fear as Jew and German, I would now like to turn to the pressure of political adjustment weighing on the critically-dialectical intellectual in exile. Adorno, one might argue, generally managed to escape any outright ostracism because he – unlike W.E.B. Du Bois who espoused numerous causes throughout his life – refrained from active political involvement and in general remained politically reticent. Still, even he came very close to being proscribed, and only managed to evade such persecution by exercising the utmost prudence. Moreover, Adorno's reading of Sinclair Lewis's – albeit satirical and possibly exaggerated – bestseller *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) did not necessarily serve to allay his worries either, for it offered a fictional account of Columbia University's being purged of "subversive

elements", i.e. its being cleansed of "all willful and dangerous thinkers, especially the pacifists in the medical school" (202), with the generous assistance of its President Nicholas Murray Butler. The IfS, of course, was affiliated with the New York university for years during the Frankfurt School's exile in America. One should also not forget that the presidential decree with which Roosevelt had responded to Pearl Harbor had effectively forbidden "enemy aliens" from "interfering by word or deed with the defense of the United States or political processes and public opinions thereof" (qtd. in Jenemann 181). As we shall see, the Frankfurt School was well aware of these legal constraints and conducted their business accordingly.

In a letter to his parents dated December 21st, 1942, Adorno informed them of his intention to co-author a book on film music together with Hanns Eisler. He enthusiastically announced that he expected the endeavor to be extremely successful and added that Eisler's behavior was very loyal (cf. 176). The book went into print at the end of 1946. Yet its publication was overshadowed by the denunciation of Eisler's brother, Gerhart, as a communist spy. The brother, who had been an active KPD member in the Weimar Republic and who had left Germany in flight when the Nazis seized power, had emigrated to the United States in 1940. Likewise, his sister Ruth Fischer had been an active party and ComIntern activist in the 1920s, but had been expelled from the party on account of charges alleging left-radicalism. In November of 1946, Fischer had denounced her brother Gerhart as "The Komintern's American Agent" in a six-part series published in *Journal America*. In her articles, Fischer had also mentioned Hanns Eisler's name, which, at a time when the brother was being targeted by the Senate committee on "Un-American Activities", also pulled

him into the atmosphere of suspicion (cf. *Eltern* 382). To make a long story short: By the middle of the next year, Adorno had warily renounced his co-authorship in order to evade the putatively compromising association with the "subversive" Eisler. As he would put it in 1969, Adorno did not see a reason why he should become the martyr of a cause that was not his own: "Damals [in 1944; M.K.] schon zur Rückkehr nach Europa entschlossen, fürchtete ich alles, was sie hätte behindern können" ("Originalfassung" 144).

Although the affair was publicly over for him, he nevertheless privately expressed his fury at Eisler's conduct. As Adorno lamented in a letter to his parents dated June 13th, 1947, had his co-author been slightly more loyal he would have humbly renounced his authorship – given the fact that Adorno allegedly had not only written but also thought up 90 per cent of the book's content (cf. 407). Yet, as Adorno surmised, Eisler's vanity had kept him from acknowledging reality. Be that as it may, Adorno was eventually only credited in the book's preface. In the end, Adorno did not grudge Eisler (who would be interrogated by the House Committee on Un-American Activities and confronted with threats of deportation in 1947 [cf. *Eltern* 438-39]) his relative success. What outraged him, however, was the preface to the German edition which Eisler rewrote in 1949 without consulting Adorno beforehand as well as other unauthorized alterations (cf. *A./M. Briefwechsel* 49). In particular, Adorno abominated the now violently anti-American introductory remarks[23] as

[23] Attempting to make *Composing for the Films* compatible with the Marxist-Leninist state doctrine of the German Democratic Republic, to which Adorno and Horkheimer always scathingly referred as "homeopathy", Eisler now claimed that the book had been written while bearding the lion in his den. He then went into an anti-American rant: "Die Kulturindustrie Amerikas hat eine ungeheure Macht; sie verödet und korrumpiert nicht nur die Empfindungswelt des amerikanischen Volkes, sondern sie droht die Kulturen anderer Völker mit ihrem Schmutz zu überschwemmen. Durch ihre Massenproduktion von Schund und Kitsch wird sie zum gefährlichsten Feind des kulturellen Fortschritts auf der ganzen Welt" (29).

well as other pro-Soviet changes (cf. *A./M. Briefwechsel* 53). On the whole, the affair not only offers insight into the pressure to adjust to the U.S. liberal-democratic consensus, but also represents an anticipation of Adorno's later defense of the country that saved him.

During his exile, however, the intellectual pressure to conform to the American political mainstream carried more weight than his eventual sense of gratitude. Correcting Horkheimer's preface to the third *Zeitschrift für Sozial-forschung* in 1941, for example, he advised his mentor against explicitly mentioning Marx ("die Eingeweihten wissen es ohnehin, die anderen brauchen es nicht zu merken, und Grossmann soll sich ärgern" [*A.H. Briefwechsel II* 196]) and also suggested that a passage about America might be misconstrued as a concealed attack on the Roosevelt administration (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 196). Furthermore, when discussing the magazine's future, Adorno proposed to let Lazarsfeld primarily use it to publish his pulp, paddings and success; this, he reasoned, would let the former Austro-Marxist's publications even serve a purpose, namely to function as camouflage for the Frankfurt School's serious writings (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 173).

Yet at the same time, Adorno and Horkheimer – as opposed to Du Bois – also fundamentally abominated Stalinism. When an excerpt from the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* was published in the East German journal *Sinn und Form* in 1949 without their permission and the philosopher Max Bense submitted his conspicuous article "Hegel und die californische Emigration" to the West German *Merkur* publication, the *Dialectic's* authors felt compelled to clarify their attitude towards the Soviet Union. The text, which Adorno penned but which apparently was never published, offers excellent insight not only into

their enmity towards totalitarian Russia, but also into their general appreciation of American democracy:

> . . . Wir vermögen in der Praxis der als Volksdemokratien getarnten Militärdiktaturen nichts anderes zu sehen als eine neue Form von Repression und in dem, was man dort positiv 'Ideologie' zu nennen pflegt, das gleiche, was in der Tat einmal mit dem Begriff der Ideologie gemeint war: die Lüge, die einen unwahren gesellschaftlichen Zustand rechtfertigt . . . Jede Interpretation unserer Arbeit im Sinne einer Apologie Rußlands lehnen wir aufs schärfste ab und glauben, daß das Potential einer besseren Gesellschaft dort treuer bewahrt wird, wo die bestehende analysiert werden darf, als dort, wo die Idee einer besseren Gesellschaft verderbt ward, um die schlechte bestehende zu verteidigen. (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 360)

At this point, I would like to go slightly beyond the scope of this investigation and, in a brief digression, discuss Adorno's thoughts about McCarthyism. The German political scientist Iring Fetscher has argued that the political and legal onslaught on the CPUSA and putatively associated front organizations between 1946 and the middle of the 1960s was the actual reason why the critical theorists eventually left America (cf. "Nahaufnahmen [2]" 280). I would like to dispute that claim. As will be shown in subsequent subchapters, Adorno's personal and professional rather than political considerations accounted for his decision to pack his bags in 1949. Hypothetically, however, one might maintain that if the main Frankfurt School members had for the moment not left the United States, they would have probably done so at the height of McCarthyism, i.e. in the early 1950s.

In October of 1952, Adorno returned to his old Santa Monica home for a time span of roughly ten months, the ostensible reason being a collaboration with the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Frederick Hacker. The critical theorist had been hired as a research director to help establish the scientific department

of Hacker's Beverly Hills-based foundation. The obligation to work as an instructor had also been part of the agreement. On the whole, Adorno was supposed to assist in turning the psychiatric clinic into a research institution.

The true reason for his return to the U.S., however, was his intention to obtain an extension of his American passport, which threatened to forfeit its validity after a three-year stay in Germany. On October 20th, 1952, Adorno (shortly before crossing the Atlantic) wrote to Horkheimer from Paris: "Ceterum Censeo daß wir auf diese Seite des Teiches gehören aber mit dem beruhigenden grünen Dokument" (*A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 57). Apparently, Adorno thought of the passport as a safeguard against a possible fascist relapse of the Federal Republic of Germany. Since the document's extension hinged on a continuous residence in the U.S. of at least six months, he found it convenient to link the bureaucratic act to the employment with Hacker. In the end, it would take a considerable effort of pulling strings on Horkheimer's part (the Frankfurt University rector's connections to James B. Conant, the High Commissioner in Germany and future ambassador, were crucial in this respect) to wrest a two-year extension of Adorno's passport from the State Department.[24]

What is of interest to us in this context is that Adorno's increasing anxiousness to return to Germany as soon as possible was as much a result of disagreements with Hacker and renewed intellectual isolation in Los Angeles as it was of the more and more hostile political climate. Anyone even remotely

[24] In contrast, Horkheimer had been granted an individual act by Congress on account of his rectorship at the University of Frankfurt. This so-called Private Law 1023, which had been passed on July 18th, 1952, permitted him to retain his American nationality another two years before having to return to the United States in order to prolong it. While Adorno would be re-naturalized as a German citizen in 1954, the eminently crafty Horkheimer would discover a way to keep his American passport even when permanently residing in Germany (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 69).

connected with Marxism was now not only eyed with suspicion but also bluntly persecuted. Commenting on the election of the Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower (a fellow party member of Senator Joseph McCarthy) as president in November of 1952, Adorno wrote to Horkheimer that – far from being hysterical – he was simply reacting to a paranoid reality with a paranoid imagination, which, he added, was more rational than reverting to the stupidity of common sense (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 67).[25] On November 16th, he not only complained to his mentor about social isolation, which was hitting him hard, but also about the impossibility of talking to anyone in a reasonably open manner (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 73-74). Four months later, he hinted that the country's overall development was one of rapid deterioration (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 151-52). Adorno's apprehension becomes comprehensible when one recalls that between 1946 and 1966 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) tried to deport 15,000 foreign-born radicals and succeeded in 250 cases. At the time, the Supreme Court did not regard deportations as criminal proceedings, and thus denied alien communists the constitutional principle of due process of law (*Rechtsstaatlichkeit*); this meant that the INS could incarcerate and expel foreign-born leftists at will (cf. Schrecker 46). The government agency thereby reinforced the impression of numerous Americans that (just as a century before Nativists had accused Catholics of first and foremost being loyal to Rome) communists were un-

[25] At the center of this "paranoid reality" was McCarthy's conspiracy theory that left-wing elements within the Roosevelt and Truman administrations were to be blamed for having enabled the expansion of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence over Eastern Europe as well as Chiang Kai-shek's defeat by Mao Zedong in China (cf. Oshinsky). Wild, offensive and irresponsible allegations against the Secretary of Defense General George C. Marshall, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, President Harry S. Truman and the 1952 Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson were also a decisive part of McCarthy's anti-communist campaign. It is quite likely that his deliberate confusion of Stevenson's and Alger Hiss's (a putative Soviet spy's) first names contributed to Eisenhower's victory at the polls.

American and alien elements, which obeyed Moscow. This is the context in which an increasingly desperate Adorno fretted to Horkheimer:

> Sie wissen, daß ich auch über Deutschland keine Illusionen hege, aber mein Gefühl ist, daß die Atempause dort drüben länger sein wird, und vor allem, daß der institutionelle Schutz, den man an der Universität genießt, den Unterschied von Leben und Tod ausmachen kann. Hier die Möglichkeit zu einer akademischen Tätigkeit zu finden, halte ich bei der herrschenden Xenophobie für ausgeschlossen". (*A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 79)

On April 11th, 1953, Adorno did not even shy away from an explicit comparison to Nazi Germany: "Wir können uns der Einsicht nicht verschließen, daß hinter der jüngsten Entwicklung eine unbeschreibliche Gewalt steht – daß wirklich, wie drüben vor 20 Jahren, der Wille der Extremisten zugleich der objektive Geist ist" (*A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 170).

Roughly one month later Adorno showed himself to be surprised by an Eisenhower comment denouncing anti-Semitism ("Das wäre vermutlich ohne die Studies in Prejudice nicht möglich gewesen" [*A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 187-188]), but simultaneously lamented that the Internal Security Act of 1950[26] would not be revised. The purpose of the so-called McCarran Act, which Truman had in vain vetoed with the words "the greatest danger to freedom of speech, press and assembly since the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798" (219), had been to force CPUSA and communist front organization members (i.e. potentially anyone voicing liberal or leftist opinions) to register with the newly instituted Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB). The non-compliant were fined or even imprisoned. The law also enabled the authorities to revoke the citizenship of politically suspect people and jail them during emergency situations (cf. Schrecker 47).

[26] For W.E.B. Du Bois, the Supreme Court's 1961 decision to uphold the Internal Security Act would be the final straw, inducing him to apply for membership in the CPUSA and set off for Ghana (cf. Lewis, *Fight* 567).

Adorno's edginess was further increased by the inspection of German *Amerikahaus* libraries, which the two McCarthy advisors Roy Cohn[27] and David Shine conducted in 1953. Among other books, the two jurists put the works of John Steinbeck and William Shakespeare on the index. Understandably, Adorno again reacted with dismay:

> Im Augenblick gilt meine Nervosität besonders der durch Leute wie Cohn und Shine inaugurierten Untersuchung der Bibliotheken der Amerikahäuser. Denn dort befindet sich die Prejudice-Serie. Und wenn man das mit einem bösen Blick liest, kann man alles Mögliche aufbringen, obwohl jedem Unbefangenen der liberale, nach jeder Hinsicht antitotalitäre Geist der Serie klar sein muß. (*A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 190)

Two apparently hostile articles by the Hungarian émigré Paul Kecskemeti in *Commentary* also terrified Adorno, and prompted him to plead with Horkheimer to speed up his return to Germany, for „wenn ich einmal drüben bin, so braucht man von derlei Attacken gar keine Notiz zu nehmen" (*A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 191). These comments warrant the supposition that Adorno, although he did not leave the United States for political reasons in 1949, would have probably done so if he had stayed in the country into the early 1950s. His witnessing the anti-communist "witch-hunt" in America arguably also reinforced his conviction that political extremism had to be put down to a universal social tendency rather than to (German) ethno-cultural characteristics.

While Adorno only worried about McCarthyism, W.E.B. Du Bois was actually targeted by it. In 1951, Du Bois – by then a leading member of the Peace Information Center – faced a Grand Jury indictment for having failed to

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[27] It hardly comes as a surprise that in his hunt for "subversive" literature Cohn also targeted Du Bois. When the Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes was called before Senator McCarthy's Permanent Investigating Subcommittee in 1953, the artist gave in and obsequiously agreed not only to the removal of his own works from *Amerikahaus* libraries but also to the deletion of Du Bois from future editions of his books *Famous American Negroes* and *Famous Negro Music Makers* (cf. Lewis, *Fight* 556).

register as an agent of the Stockholm-based World Peace Council, which, in turn, was accused of aiding the Soviet cause. Although the allegation was founded on the 1938 Foreign Agents Registration Act, it – like all other indictments during McCarthyism – was clearly politically motivated. Unlike various CPUSA members, however, Du Bois was eventually acquitted in 1952. The Justice Department had failed to convince the presiding judge that the peace organization was enlisted in the service of a foreign principal.

This was not Du Bois's only brush with the anti-communist purges. During the so-called Smith trials – i.e. legal actions which targeted CPUSA functionaries on the basis of a 1940 sedition law – Du Bois in several cases served as character witness and offered testimonies on behalf of friends such as the union activist Ben Gold or the publisher Alexander Trachtenberg. In one of these cases the presiding judge by the name of Alexander Bix asked Du Bois whether he himself was a communist. When the witness, under oath, answered in the negative, the incredulous judge retorted that Du Bois was "a fella who would decide who and what was a Communist for himself" (qtd. in Lewis, *Fight* 556).

In the early 1950s, Du Bois also voiced his support for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who had been charged with having committed atomic espionage in the service of the Soviet Union. In contrast to the happy outcome of his own trial, Du Bois could do nothing substantial for the Rosenbergs. They were electrocuted on June 19th, 1953. In all of these encounters with McCarthyism it was characteristic of Du Bois to revert again and again to sectarian (i.e. Marxist) arguments instead of exclusively sticking to a "political" (i.e. civil libertarian) defense strategy which relied on the freedom of speech enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution. Had Adorno been accused of a

similar offense as Du Bois in the Peace Information Center case, he would have probably (not least on account of Horkheimer's prudent guidance) eschewed any arguments based on a comprehensive moral doctrine – although in private he certainly adhered to one.

4.11. Hippo Woes

"Exile", the Palestinian-American scholar, Edward W. Said, observes, "is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (173). Anyone who takes a closer look at Adorno's enforced homelessness will discover just how true these lines are. Despite recurring bouts of bliss as well as the tremendous intellectual stimulations of exile which manifested themselves in such works as *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, *Minima Moralia* or *The Authoritarian Personality*, long streaks of depression resulting from utter isolation[28] marred Adorno's refugee-existence. Moreover, as Said goes on to inform us, "the achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever" (173). Adorno's expulsion from Germany and emigration to the United States had damaged, even maimed, his life, which would have developed in a totally different fashion without this caesura. To argue that exile was simply the price Adorno had to pay for the momentous

[28] Without a doubt, Los Angeles' notorious sprawl and car culture exacerbated Adorno's social isolation. While Manhattan – on account of its very compactness best exemplified by its high-rise buildings and subway lines – at least resembled a European metropolis, life in the West Coast city was very atomistic: 1925 already witnessed a car density of one vehicle for every 1.6 inhabitants; five years later, no less than 94 per cent of Los Angeles homesteads were single-family houses (cf. Jenemann xxiii).

works he conceived during this time, is, I believe at best presumptuous and at worst disgraceful.

During his first stint of vacationing in July of 1938, which he spent in Bar Harbor, Adorno confided to Horkheimer how contented and relieved he was that his four years of isolation in England had finally ended (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 38). In other words: He literally and metaphorically had somebody to talk to again. Ironically, this blissful togetherness was to be but fleeting, for Horkheimer soon moved to the West Coast to which Adorno was to follow only a few years later. Similarly, their reunion in Los Angeles was again to be but a short-lived phenomenon, for Horkheimer soon moved back to New York where he was employed as a consultant by the American Jewish Committee. It then hardly comes as a surprise that their recurrent separation bestowed two hefty volumes of exile correspondence on posterity, which, to paraphrase Said, is a boon for scholarship, but amounted to a frequently excruciating experience for Adorno.

Accordingly, the most insistent, even desperate, leitmotifs of their letters pertained to a longing to work and truly communicate with the distant colleague. Their paramount aim during the war was to find enough occasions to pen – what they would call – their "holy texts", i.e. in particular the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*. Toil on the "actual" or "true things" – as opposed to empirical studies of anti-Semitism and the like – was what made life worthwhile for them. As Adorno saw it, the writing and publishing of their common philosophical texts was not only the sole thing that gave meaning to their existence but also the only reason why – in God's name – they were alive in the first place. In a letter dated May 3rd, 1941, for instance, the younger of

the two expressed his sorrow thus: “Hier haben wir nichts zu verlieren als uns selbst. Wie traurig es ohne Sie ist, brauche ich Ihnen gar nicht erst zu erzählen. Es ist noch trauriger wahrscheinlich, als Sie es sich vorstellen. Völlig einsam. Die Unmöglichkeit, auch nur mit einem Menschen darüber zu reden, worauf es uns ankommt” (107). Since they always regarded their philosophical approaches and accomplishments as essentially the same, as one, as a collaborative and common project, it is self-evident that their physical separation entailed severe suffering, for it prevented them from – as redundant as it may sound – truly autonomous self-realization.

In fact, their mutual identification grew so strong that – as Adorno put it – it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between what one desired for oneself and what one wished the other. What is more, when Adorno’s joining Horkheimer on the West Coast became imminent, the critical theorist even argued that his allegedly private and thus subjective interest “to go home” was actually an *objective* interest based on their scrupulous deliberation and common decision (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 271). Their – and in particular Adorno’s – sense that their separation was not only subjectively painful but also objectively irresponsible (a not exactly modest claim), prompted them to write lines like the following to each other: “Glauben Sie mir heute, daß ich auch vor dem Nichts, vor dem wir einmal stehen können, keine Angst habe, wenn wir gemeinsam davor stehen; denn diese Gemeinsamkeit ist die Negation des Nichts” (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 190).

What is more, their postal exchange during exile (but also when they would have returned to Germany in the 1950s and 1960s) frequently gave the impression that they themselves were the only people in the world that could

understand each other. In fact, one might argue that their sense of loneliness not only produced a very intimate intellectual bonding but also the sense of being "chosen" and uncorrupted outsiders entrusted with an almost sacred mission. Thus, discussing existential angst, for example, Adorno wrote to his mentor on August 17th, 1941:

> Ich werde den Unbelasteten, unbedenklich Existierenden gegenüber, die keine Angst zu kennen scheinen, den Verdacht nie ganz los, daß sie nur darum die Angst nicht kennen, weil ihnen längst das Rückgrat gebrochen ist, das wir noch haben, und daß sie sich daher wie die Hirnverletzten benehmen. *Uns* [italics added; M.K.] ist das Glück viel zu heilig, als daß wir nicht das Unglück fürchteten. (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 191)

The attainment of true happiness was dependent on – besides the obvious requirement of a certain level of material security – their being united. Accordingly, in a letter to Horkheimer dated August 10th, 1941, Adorno greeted their impending reunion as *une promesse de bonheur*, as the only felicity worth living for (cf. 182).

In addition to the separation from Horkheimer, Adorno's psyche was above all terrorized by the overwhelming sense of not really being able to act in accordance with his actual destiny, of being forced to heteronomously adjust to the demands of the market[29]. He never reconciled himself to what he – in a letter to his parents dated July 27th, 1942 – called the refugee's calling, namely "to hope". This, of course, was an allusion to a critical poem by Adorno's fellow exile Bertolt Brecht (or, as Fritz Lang once referred to him, *Le Pauvre B.B.*) entitled "Hollywood": "Jeden Morgen, mein Brot zu verdienen / gehe ich

[29] Later in his life Adorno would name his reluctance to succumb to the heteronomy of the culture industry as one of the factors motivating him to relocate to Germany: "In Deutschland fühle ich mich keinem Druck von Markt und öffentlicher Meinung ausgesetzt, der mich zur Anpassung des Ausdrucks dessen nötigte, was mir vorschwebt" ("Warum sind sie zurückgekehrt" 394).

auf den Markt, wo Lügen gekauft werden. / Hoffnungsvoll / Reihe ich mich ein zwischen die Verkäufer." (qtd. in *Eltern* 157). Conversely, when Horkheimer poured balm in Adorno's wounds, the latter was enthralled. Commenting on Adorno's *Philosophie der Neuen Musik*, Horkheimer wrote: "Wenn ich je in meinem Leben Enthusiasmus empfunden habe, so war es bei dieser Lektüre . . . Wenn es literarische Dokumente gibt, an denen heute die Hoffnung einen Anhalt findet, dann gehört ihr Werk zu ihnen" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 212); to Horkheimer, this was proof that Adorno was fully aware of the responsibility weighing on him after Walter Benjamin's suicide the year before. This was the kind of recognition that – as we will see – ultimately persuaded Adorno to return to Germany.

His relationship with Thomas Mann was another source of that scarce and elusive acknowledgment which he so futilely sought in America. Having already touched on their professional cooperation which primarily manifested itself in the novel *Doctor Faustus* above, I would now only like to remark on their interhuman relationship. Although there were certainly differences between the two, Adorno was nevertheless fascinated by the aging writer:

> Als ich Sie, hier an der entlegenen Westküste, treffen durfte, hatte ich das Gefühl, zum ersten und einzigen Mal jener deutschen Tradition leibhaftig zu begegnen, von der ich alles empfangen habe: noch die Kraft, der Tradition zu widerstehen. Dies Gefühl und das Glück, das es gewährt – Theologen würden von Segen sprechen – wird mich nie mehr verlassen. Im Sommer 1921 bin ich einmal, in Kampen, unbemerkt einen langen Spaziergang hinter Ihnen hergegangen und habe mir ausgedacht, wie es wäre, wenn Sie nun zu mir sprächen. Daß Sie zwanzig Jahre später wahrhaft zu mir gesprochen haben, das ist ein Stück verwirklichter Utopie, wie es einem kaum je zuteil wird. (*A./M. Briefwechsel* 17)

Since Adorno always believed that the utopian was something concrete rather than abstract, these lines do not at all seem to be exaggerated. Moreover, they

betray how loyal he was to the German cultural tradition, how intimately it corresponded to his very own being – even at the historical moment when it seemed most discredited, i.e. shortly after the downfall of the Third Reich and the extermination of the European Jews. This, of course, only reinforces the overall impression that his exile must have been extremely depressing at times. In a letter dated June 3rd, 1950, Adorno gave Thomas Mann the advice to regard the German trauma and his having been exiled as "unbeseeltes Unglück", as "ein objektiv Entgegengesetztes, dem der Stachel der leibhaftigen Erfahrung ausgebrochen ist. Zu soviel sollte doch die schlechte Verdinglichung des Politischen gut sein" (60). One is warranted to suspect that Adorno himself managed to regard German fascism as "soulless unhappiness", which, in turn, enabled him – in contrast to numerous other Jews – to finally return to Germany.

It should not be withheld from the reader that there were other, perhaps minor, things of utter importance to Adorno as well. Negotiating the details of his move to Los Angeles with the "Mammoth" in 1941, the "Hippo" declared that he wished to be able to take his furniture with him, for a provisional arrangement could not be endured for several years without depressing him and the "Giraffe". How attached Adorno was to his home country is conveyed by his emphasizing the fact that their furniture was the only part of their possession which the couple had been able to salvage. Adorno pleaded with Horkheimer, who was a shrewd calculator, to show mercy and grant the "Schutz einer gewissen bürgerlichen Gediegenheit", to let them hold on to "das letzte bißchen empirisches Europa" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 184) they had.

Having discussed what felicity in exile looked like to Adorno, we should now turn to the question what shape unhappiness took for him. Throughout his correspondences, Adorno's woes perhaps most conspicuously manifested themselves in his apparently hypochondriac spells and the concomitant, almost religious reverence for the physician Robert Alexander, a family acquaintance, about whom he well-nigh went into raptures: "Die Behandlung durch Robert Alexander ist ein Glücksfall, wie er einem nur ganz selten zuteil wird" (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 98). In addition to these recurrent "physical crises" such as "general toxic symptoms", headaches, fevers, neuralgia, circulatory troubles and the like, however, Adorno was also plagued by more substantial mental troubles such as severe feelings of trepidation and depression (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 102). In this respect, the winter months of 1942 to 1943 were the blackest (cf. "Drei Traumprotokolle" 197). Strangely, though, his mental ailments – in contrast to his more imaginary hurt – do not appear to have been adequately (i.e. psychotherapeutically or pharmacologically) treated. Horkheimer – with his idiosyncratic fear of the common cold (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 69) – did not exactly help Adorno cope with his troubles either.

Bringing this passage to a close, I want to point out that by creating the protagonist of his novel *Pnin* (1957), which some critics (e.g. Ulrich Raulff) have read as a fictional portrayal of or at least artistic approach to Adorno, Vladimir Nabokov managed to capture the essential sadness of Adorno's exile experience as well as its accompanying psychological ailments such as the compulsive disorder of hypochondria. Other striking resemblances between Timofey Pnin and the German philosopher include a constant preoccupation with one's own (European) culture, a pronounced dislike of jazz, nostalgia for

one's childhood and home, dismay at the fateful sterility of *Geisteskultur*, a certain physical likeness (Pnin's characterization as childlike especially compels one to think of Adorno), social isolation, linguistic insecurity, the inability to gain a real foothold at an American university as well as a blossoming out only when one is among one's fellow exiles. When Adorno had signed up for the Princeton Radio Research Project early in 1938, the project's émigré director Paul F. Lazarsfeld remarked that he "looks exactly as you would imagine a very absent-minded German professor, and he behaves so foreign that I feel like a member of the Mayflower Society" (qtd. in Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 189). Substitute "Russian" for "German", and you have a fairly good approximation to Pnin.

4.12. Theoretical Obligations

How did Adorno assess the opportunities for the professional self-realization of a critical social philosopher in America? Although this question will be examined in some detail in the next subchapter, I now want to consider his rather private and perhaps "under-theorized" statements about the United States' world of academic work. It seems indispensable to me to mention in advance two decisive observations Adorno made in letters to Max Horkheimer. They are of paramount importance because they, in a way, mark out the territory in which all other subordinate professional considerations of his must be located. In the first letter under scrutiny, which is dated July 4th, 1940, Adorno drew up a text for Horkheimer soliciting financial support from Mrs. Charles E. Mitchell – a prominent enthusiast of the *Neue Musik*. Adorno hoped

that a grant of $ 1,500 by Mitchell would enable him to complete his book *Current of Music*. The letter's pertinence lies in the fact that Adorno unequivocally described the IfS's aim as the intention to hold on to significant parts of the German cultural tradition; paradoxically, this was presently deemed to be possible only in the United States:

> Our Institute, formerly at Frankfurt University, now at Columbia, New York, consists of a group of exiled German scholars. We try to preserve certain elements of German cultural tradition which may be valuable for American intellectual life – this country being the only place where this tradition has any chance of surviving. (69)

The second letter of "programmatic" importance is dated October 2nd, 1941; its significance lies in the fact that – besides containing further evidence of the resentment and jealousy fostered by exile – it is characterized by Adorno's severe rejection of Herbert Marcuse's alleged tendency to make a fetish of academia.

> Ich habe darauf sehr gebellt und ihm gesagt, daß die Qualität unserer Arbeit nicht von der Anerkennung eines akademischen Betriebs abhängt und daß ich es außerdem in einer Welt, in der seit Schopenhauer und Feuerbach kein ernsthaft in Betracht kommender Denker sein Leben ohne schwerste Konflikte mit den Universitäten zugebracht habe, für eine größere Ehre betrachte, ein Literat zu sein als einer von jenen. (253)

These two arguments – i.e. a largely unperturbed faithfulness to substantial aspects of the German cultural tradition as well as a truthfulness to one's original critical intentions unconcerned by the demands of official academia – aptly summarize Adorno's general attitude towards his working conditions in the United States.

Consequently, it is hardly surprising that Adorno's official academic work in connection with Columbia University, Princeton University and the University of California at Berkeley consisted of relatively loose cooperative

arrangements. These arrangements never lost their transient character; they remained more or less successful projects. Adorno's ties to Columbia never went beyond a series of lectures which he delivered in his first years, the most rewarding of which were probably "Husserl and the Problem of Idealism" (May of 1939), "On Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Love" (February 23rd, 1940) as well as "Über das Problem der individuellen Kausalität bei Simmel" (April 19th, 1940). Although other IfS members also gave talks at Columbia (e.g. Marcuse's, Gurland's, Neumann's, Kirchheimer's and Pollock's lectures on "National Socialism" held between November 7th and December 19th, 1941, as well as Horkheimer's "Eclipse of Reason" series held in February and March of 1944) they do not seem to have spurred Adorno on to increase his own output at Columbia. Of course, by the end of 1941 he and Gretel Adorno had already joined Max Horkheimer on the western seaboard.

Adorno's work for the Princeton Radio Research Project, which investigated radio listeners' habits of media consumption (1938-39), was as temporary as his cooperation with the New York university. This was mainly due to the fact that his collaboration with the project's director Paul Lazarsfeld was uneasy at best. Owing to their conflicting scientific creeds, they essentially remained at odds until Horkheimer "delivered" Adorno from the former Austro-Marxist in early 1940 by making him a full-time IfS member. Among other things, critical theory differed from traditional theory in that it exhibited an emancipatory impetus. Yet one might humorously contend that during his first two years in America, Adorno's main concern was less the general emancipation of mankind from enslaving social arrangements than his own

emancipation from his personal "pest" Paul Lazarsfeld (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 42).

Although I will at present defer a more detailed elaboration of their scientific differences, one should nonetheless make clear that the main disagreement between them stemmed from Adorno's conviction that the analysis of radio *production* as an objectively ascertainable phenomenon ought to take precedence over the analysis of radio *consumption*. Yet even when one turned to the reception of radio and tried, for example, to account for 'the regression of hearing' one could only do so, Adorno held, by recourse to *the social tendency of the consumption process* rather than arbitrarily isolated and quantified acts of reception (cf. "Prokrustes" 296). Lazarsfeld, by contrast, contended that scientific investigation should primarily focus on the quantifiable subjective reactions of individual listeners rather than on the – from an empirical standpoint – elusive phenomenon of the radio "physiognomy" (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 428). The vociferous discussion of these differences in letters between January 24th and September 6th, 1938, also brought about mutual misunderstandings and insults, which ultimately poisoned the relationship and entailed its dissolution. In a particularly aggressive letter written in the course of two days at the beginning of September 1938, Lazarsfeld, for example, accused Adorno of neurotic fetishism, outright ignorance with regard to proper empirical research as well as a flagrant lack of interest in alternative view points, which made his work susceptible to being "wrong or unfounded or biased" (qtd. in *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 437). The former charge was directed at Adorno's widespread use of *Fremdwörter* – a practice he felt compelled to justify throughout his life.

Thus, when Lazarsfeld objected to such jargon as *prima facie* or *conditio sine qua non* ("you evidently feel magically more secure if you use words which symbolize your education although they are a trouble for any stenographer and a hidden offense against any American colleague" [qtd. in *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 445]), Adorno defiantly responded in his next letter dated September 6th, 1938, by deliberately using the term *captatio benevolentiae* (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 448).

Although Adorno still worked for the Princeton Radio Research Project throughout the subsequent year, he tried very hard to receive full-time employment with the IfS. Moreover, when his part of the project (the so-called "Music Study") encountered financial difficulties, Adorno developed a veritable paranoia with regard to his "nuisance" Lazarsfeld whom he accused of consciously manipulating the "Study's" financial crisis. Allegedly, Lazarsfeld's aim in conspiring against Adorno was to stir up the Rockefeller Foundation officials against the German in order to either reduce Adorno's price or to get rid of him altogether as inconvenient (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 49). As Adorno confided in Horkheimer in the letter under scrutiny (dated January 6th, 1939), he felt utterly isolated and claimed that – except for Gretel and his mentor – there was nobody towards whom he could behave in a completely unqualified and unfeigned manner (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 51). Adorno went on to confess that he was plagued by existential angst, but at the same time also apologized for this lack of dignity. Yet he was convinced that dignity was also dependent on objective circumstances, i.e. circumstances to which his dependence on Lazarsfeld certainly did not belong (cf. 52). When Adorno had finally been freed from this involuntary connection he – in a piece of corres-

pondence dated January 14th, 1940 – expressed his utter relief and thankfulness thus: "Ich habe nur die eine Hoffnung, es möchte die Zukunft auch für Sie etwas von dem Glück bedeuten, dessen Möglichkeit Sie mir geschaffen haben" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 63).

Besides initiating Adorno into empirical research, which he would later somewhat transfigure, the Princeton Project achieved another thing: It acquainted him with a young and – as Adorno thought – quite intelligent research assistant by the name of George Simpson (1904-1998). Adorno would later give Simpson credit for having helped him with the report "On A Social Critique of Radio Music", which he presented to the Princeton Radio Research Project's members on October 26th, 1939. Their appreciation seems to have been reciprocal, for Simpson appears to have invited Adorno to dinner at the beginning of 1940. In a letter to Oskar and Maria Wiesengrund dated January 13th, 1940, Adorno wrote:

> Im übrigen bin ich auf nächsten Mittwoch bei einem Southerner (aus Georgia) eingeladen, aus einer sogenannt feudalen aber verarmten Familie (einer meiner Assistenten vom Projekt), der mich sicher gut beraten wird und der mir unter Umständen auch eine Familie nennen kann [sic] die bereit wäre [sic] euch aufzunehmen. (55)

As Adorno's parents planned to move to New York City from Florida in the second half of 1940, one might simply interpret Adorno's esteem for his slightly younger assistant as self-interested. Such an interpretation, however, would be too narrow. If that had really been the case, why did he later bother to reflect on his *professional* collaboration with Simpson in his clarifying essay on his "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen in Amerika"?

Adorno's stint at the Princeton Radio Research Project, however, also had the very opposite in store for him. Another research assistant of his – a former jazz musician, and, as if that were not enough, of old German and Mennonite extraction – represented the very antithesis to Simpson. Although his subordinate was supposed to assist Adorno in the analysis of popular music, the mysterious "Mennonite", whose name Adorno did not disclose, wrote a protest memorandum instead. In the memorandum, which must have almost amounted to a diatribe, Adorno's assistant laid out his scientific philosophy, setting it against what he perceived as Adorno's wild and irresponsible speculation. Adorno then went on to inform the reader of his "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen in Amerika" that

> Was ich wollte, hatte er kaum recht verstanden. Bei ihm war ein gewisses Ressentiment unverkennbar: die Art von Bildung, die ich nun einmal mitbrachte, und auf die ich, gesellschaftskritisch wie ich schon dachte, mir wahrhaft nichts einbildete, erschien ihm als ungerechtfertigter Hochmut. Er hegte gegen den Europäer ein Mißtrauen, wie man es im achtzehnten Jahrhundert in bürgerlichen Schichten gegen emigrierte französische Aristokraten hegen mochte. Ich erschien ihm als eine Art falscher Prinz, wie wenig ich auch, bar jeglichen Einflusses, mit gesellschaftlichem Privileg zu tun haben mochte. (713)

Yet Adorno did not only stay on the scientific and critical sidelines. Instead of merely analyzing and condemning the output of the culture industry, he also joined in – in order to, as he would later state, do a better job. Such "constructive" motivation prompted him to organize and introduce American listeners to radio concerts. On February 22nd, 1940, for instance, he organized a concert for "diese sehr anständige Station" (*Eltern* 62) WNYC at which Rudolf Kolisch and Eduard Steuermann interpreted compositions by Arnold Schönberg, Hanns Eisler, Alexander Zemlinsky and Ernst Krenek. As Adorno

told his parents: “Ich werde bei jedem Wort [sic] das ich durch die Luft sage [sic] an Euch denken!” (*Eltern* 62). And on May 8th, precisely five years before Nazi Germany unconditionally capitulated, Adorno introduced his radio listeners to another performance by Kolisch and Steuermann (this time of Bela Bartok’s music) by conducting an interview with the Hungarian composer. According to Adorno, Bartok was the most peculiar person imaginable – an artist whom he described as a combination of a child and an old man as well as an extraordinary but utterly naïve musician (cf. *Eltern* 75). Although Adorno judged the Bartok interview as having gone quite well, he nevertheless caustically added: “Bartok ist zu jeder theoretischen Äußerung so unfähig, daß große Weltweisheiten dabei nicht herausgekommen sind” (*Eltern* 81). Still, these and other radio introductions appear to have constituted a quite enjoyable pastime for the cultural critic Adorno.

Before progressing to a discussion of Adorno’s typological delineation of the authoritarian personality, I want to continue my digression and restate that Adorno by no means deliberately isolated himself from the American scientific community. Although by the middle of the 1940s this sometimes appeared to be the case, it was never the whole truth. At the beginning of 1942, for example, he wrote nineteen musicological entries for the *Dictionary of the Arts* to which he and Gretel privately referred to as their “19-Zitzenschwein”; as Adorno saw it, “unter diesem Namen soll diese jüngste Arbeit, wenn überhaupt, in die Geistesgeschichte eingehen” (*Eltern* 126). Although the project largely fell through (only Adorno’s contribution on “Jazz” would eventually be included), the effort does attest to his desire to join in the common scholarly endeavor in America.

Adorno's short-lived professorship at the Los Angeles University of Applied Education at La Habra is another case in point meriting citation. The newly founded institution of higher education, which was about 35 miles from his Santa Monica home, hired Adorno in July of 1947 to teach all subjects of musical composition, "also Harmonie, Kontrapunkt nebst Fuge, Formenlehre und freie Komposition" (*Eltern* 410). In the fall of 1947, he started instructing his young students once a week, and, as he told his mother, was very pleased to be able to concern himself with music in such a responsible way. Although his disciples were utterly ignorant even of keys, his job delighted him. The university had even, he enthusiastically informed his mother, announced that it would allow him to expand his teaching activities to sociology and philosophy if he wished to do so. Unfortunately, however, and despite the fact that the university had been officially recognized by the Veterans Administration, the music department was soon after shut down and another of Adorno's forays into American academia thwarted – just at a time when his students had started to make progress (cf. *Eltern* 430).

Judging by his varied letters to Horkheimer, his engagement with the work of American scholars at times also seems to have filled him with genuine joy. In a piece of correspondence dated June 8th, 1941, for instance, he informed his mentor about his having reviewed a book on Wagner by the American scholar Ernest Newman for the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. In this letter, Adorno appears to have been in an utterly enthusiastic mood, for he – as his letter turned into a veritable stream-of-consciousness – got carried away by his associations. Beginning with a description of Richard Wagner as a proto-Nazi – i.e. someone opposing both feudalism as a progressive and liberalism as a

monopolist –, Cosima Wagner as a vicious anti-Semite and the allegedly mad Bavarian King as the sole representative of reason and only decent character in the whole story, he touched on their impending purchase of a car and finally arrived – at least mentally – in California. Adorno then promised Horkheimer that he would not resort to Wagnerian philology and name their future Los Angeles home "Niflheim", nor would he drape it with purple velvet, nor would Gretel Adorno administer their new home as strictly as the Wahnfried tradition would require it. His wild associations climaxed with the letter "S" of a versified alphabet he had created: "Die Sodomie kommt meist aus Not, / Sadismus macht die Backen rot" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 142). Admittedly, such elation still begs the question how genuine it really was. It might, after all, simply have been a symptom of his apparently manic-depressive disorder.

To further illustrate to what crackpot ideas Adorno's confrontation with "the other" led, I want to briefly touch on his August 1941 suggestion that he, Gretel and Max let themselves be instructed as practitioners of psychoanalysis in order to open a sanatorium in conjunction with the American psychiatrist Karl August Menninger. Horkheimer, however, dismissed the idea for three reasons: First, the financial situation of non-medical analysts was becoming increasingly precarious; second, their spare time was already very limited; and

> drittens übt die Analyse, wenn man sich praktisch mit ihr befasst, einen furchtbar verdummenden Einfluss aus. Die Orthodoxen sind natürlich die einzigen, die für uns in Frage kommen und sie haben wohl kaum eine Vorstellung, wie borniert die Lehren, die in unserer eigenen Dialektik eine positive Rolle spielen, klingen, sobald man sie naiv nimmt. (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 206)

Horkheimer's authoritative words quickly put an end to the discussion.

It is hardly an exaggeration to claim that the only American academic project that filled Adorno with lifelong pride was *The Authoritarian Personality*. The massive tome was the result of a collaboration between the *Institut für Sozialforschung*, the Berkeley Public Opinion Study Group and the American Jewish Committee, which financed the undertaking. It was eventually published as part of the AJC's "Studies in Prejudice" series. As Martin Jay has aptly put it, the aim of the researchers was to offer a "descriptive typology of authoritarian and nonauthoritarian characters" (*Dialectical Imagination* 249). Thus, the investigation was even less representative in nature than the aforementioned *Labor Study*. This fact, however, did not detract from its extremely important role in the development of the social sciences.

Adorno was utterly instrumental in designing the study's core device for measuring a person's fascist potential, namely the famous "F-Scale" of which I will say more in the following subchapter. What concerns us now is the gratification this task gave him. In a piece of correspondence to his parents dated December 8th, 1944, Adorno informed Oskar and Maria Wiesengrund about his present work: "Unsere Arbeit geht stetig und intensiv weiter und wir haben viel Freude daran. Im Augenblick bin ich hauptsächlich damit beschäftigt, den Grundfragebogen des neuen Berkeleyprojekts fertigzustellen. Es ist das eine besonders interessante und reizvolle Sache" (296). The basic idea behind the scale was to determine whether a person possessed an underlying psychic structure that could translate into authoritarian political views or possibly even into authoritarian action. This was to be achieved merely by the use of *indirect* indices, i.e. without *actually* asking questions about Jews, blacks or other minorities (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 330). Adorno also

envisaged the study's being put to propagandistic use. One approach that seemed feasible to him would be to reliably prove that a comparatively high percentage of the inmates in the infamous St. Quentin penitentiary were high F-Scale scorers; such a result, Adorno thought, would automatically be propaganda (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 332). Adorno seems to have been intrigued both by the possibility of combating fascism as well as the fact that he was breaking new ground in social science.

Yet – although he greatly enjoyed such empirical work and was utterly conscious of its necessity – he did not truly lose his heart to it. This fact is more than supported by a perhaps casual but nevertheless utterly telling remark made in a letter to Horkheimer dated June 4th, 1949: "Ich kann mich nicht dagegen verschließen, daß ein von uns gemeinsam formulierter Satz die ganze authoritarian personality aufwiegt" (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 269). Jumping ahead for a second, this contention would be echoed in March of 1953 when Adorno, referring to a bar in Frankfurt's Bockenheimer Warte, wrote: "Noch jeder Kirsch im Schlagbaum hat mehr mit unserer Philosophie zu tun als [David; M.K.] Riesmans gesammelte Werke" (*A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 152). As stated before, only when the two were engaged in advancing the "actual things", i.e. the things they were in all likelihood alive for, did Adorno have the impression that he was accommodating his very own (autonomous) stirrings. Contrary to what Adorno later told his IfS assistant Ralf Dahrendorf who would ask him how two people went about writing a book together (that is to say, whether it was even possible), Adorno and Horkheimer at least *appear* to have actually coauthored the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*. As Adorno stated

it in a memorable passage (dated November 22nd, 1944) worth quoting in its entirety:

> Die Zusammenarbeit mit Max ist jetzt äußerst eingespielt. Manchmal machen wir beide, nach vorheriger eingehender Besprechung, jeder für sich einen Entwurf, meist aber diskutieren wir, einigen uns und formulieren dann zusammen, oft so, daß der eine einen Satz anfängt, der andere zuende diktiert, was ja möglich ist, da immer vorher genau feststeht, was wir sagen wollen. Bis es zur Niederschrift kommt ist es zur Vereinigung der Meinungen immer schon gekommen. In der Dialektik der Aufklärung, der Kulturindustrie und den „Elementen des Antisemitismus" steht überhaupt kein einziger Satz, der nicht gemeinsam, oft viele Male, formuliert worden wäre. (*Eltern* 294)

It is not very hard to grasp that if his exile had any truly "redeeming" aspects at all – that is to say, instances that still made living truly worthwhile – they probably consisted in such moments of theoretical self-realization accomplished by his symbiotic relationships with the people closest to him besides his parents, namely his wife Gretel and his friend Max. In the final analysis, everything else was mere "Research-Kram" (*Eltern* 400) which of necessity conformed to the dictates of the "Betrieb" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 386). Writing to Horkheimer on December 14th, 1944, Adorno tried to cheer up his colleague who at the time worked for the AJC in New York. Adorno assured his mentor of his unwavering solidarity by asserting that from their point of view a research project was but a means to the end of gaining insight but not a means in itself as American scholars and scientists had allegedly been taught to internalize. As Adorno saw it, they could not really understand their American colleagues and their U.S. counterparts could not really understand them (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel II* 386). In other words: Actual communication let alone true understanding were essentially unattainable. In the face of such a stark contrast between Adorno and "the other" embodied by American academia one

is tempted to ask how Adorno at all managed to survive. In a letter dated July 1st, 1948, he conceded that had it not been for Horkheimer's reciprocation of spiritual and human solidarity he would not have been able to muster up the strength to withstand, to have faith in the curing power of the 'determinate negation' (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 236).

Adorno's sense of himself as an academic outsider in the U.S. is perhaps best reflected in a dream he had in the night from May 21st to 22nd, 1942. The minutes with which Adorno recorded this dream inform the reader about an imaginary walk he, his aunt and his mother went for on the West Coast. Strolling along on an ascending path overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Adorno broke loose from the group and attempted to find a way to bypass the steep climb. At first he believed to have found an accessible plateau on which he discerned "beängstigend regelmäßig, Gruppen von Menschen mit Apparaten . . . Geometer vielleicht" (qtd. in Schütte 136). The plain, however, turned out to be inaccessible, and Adorno and his relatives were forced to march on until they reached a gateway that led them to the square in front of the royal seat at Bamberg – the "Miltenberger Schnatterloch". It would not be farfetched, I believe, to interpret the haunting geophysicists as an allegorical depiction of Adorno's specter of positivism, whereas Bamberg might simply be read as standing for the intimate and familiar, i.e. for home. This dream perfectly illustrates what scholars mean when they refer to Adorno's sense of American empiricism as uncanny, i.e. *unheimlich*.

In the conclusion of this thesis I will, of course, evaluate the long-term effect of Adorno's American experience on his general scholarly and political outlooks. What interests me at this point is to explore Adorno's reaction to

German academic life immediately after the end of his exile. Retrospective reflection always bears the risk of involuntary transfiguration and thus of reconciliatory tendencies. Direct comparisons however, although admittedly lacking a profoundly thought-through weighing up of the facts and thus theoretical depth, can more aptly highlight the possible differences between two phenomena.

Perhaps the most impressive remarks contained in letters to Max Horkheimer, his mother and Thomas Mann concern Adorno's enthusiasm about his eager university students in Frankfurt. In a letter to Mann dated December 28th, 1949, he informed the novelist about the academic youth's passionate participation in a seminar treating Kant's transcendental dialectic. According to Adorno, the students' zealous interest in the subject virtually prevented him from speaking himself; what is more, ending the course again and again proved utterly difficult; and last but not least, his students even asked him to let the class continue during the vacation (cf. 46). He could finally, Adorno confided to his travel diary on November 10th, 1949, discuss the philosophically most demanding topics in a differentiated manner without having to fear the sabotage of common sense (cf. Gödde and Lonitz 212). What especially appealed to Adorno was the fact that the seminar discussions almost always revolved around questions of *exegesis* and not around issues of *truth*; it was, he argued, a – from an American standpoint – despicably aesthetic game *Geist* played with itself (cf. *A./M. Briefwechsel* 46). Or, as he hauntingly put it: "Der Vergleich mit einer Talmudschule drängt sich auf; manchmal ist mir zumute, als wären die Geister der ermordeten Juden in die deutschen Intellektuellen gefahren" (*A./M. Briefwechsel* 46). In the face of this and other pleasant

academic experiences, Adorno saw himself compelled to declare the thesis of *Bildung's* dying out in Germany to be manifestly untrue (cf. *A./M. Briefwechsel* 129).

Yet Adorno was not only greeted with open arms by his students, but also by his fellow professors. When he gave his first lecture, for instance, the dean (donning the obligatory robe) and various faculty members gathered to listen. Moreover, Adorno – who was now an *außerordentlicher Professor* and thus a part of the faculty – also promptly received the concomitant right to vote. What is more, he managed to enter into or seamlessly reestablish friendships with other professors such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Karl Reinhardt, Julius Schwietering or Willy Hartner as well as Friedrich Podszus – an editor of the Suhrkamp publishing house. The much-scorned radio also showed interest in him and invitations to lecture in Marburg, Stuttgart and other places poured in. And the publishing house of the *Frankfurter Hefte* already demonstrated interest in bringing out *The Authoritarian Personality* in Adorno's mother tongue. Once Horkheimer would have joined the faculty, Adorno's dream would truly be consummated: "Es sieht aus, Max, als gelänge es uns wirklich, und als setze auch in einem gewissen Sinn das Einzigartige unserer Beziehung in der uns fremden Welt sich durch. Und das ist es was mich glücklich macht" (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 354). In another letter to Horkheimer written roughly a week later, namely on December 6th, 1949, Adorno even referred to their impending academic reunion and future collaboration as a veritable fountain of happiness (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 370).

Still, a few days of distancing himself from his work and taking some time out to reflect on the new impressions in Germany sufficed to instill a certain

caution – even doubt – in Adorno. In a piece of correspondence to Horkheimer dated December 23rd, 1949, he suddenly complained about the alleged fictitiousness of German democracy and, somewhat more strangely, the political apathy of his students:

> Ich kann mich auch dem nicht verschließen, daß die unbeschreibliche geistige Leidenschaft der Studenten, die mich ebenso anzieht wie Sie, auch ein Element des Abgeschnürtseins, ordinär gesprochen: der Ersatzbefriedigung hat, ganz Selbstzweck, ohne Intention und vor allem ohne Relation zur wahren Praxis, die uns am Herzen liegt. (*A./H. Briefwechsel III* 396)

The hectic pace of *Geist*, which Adorno encountered in the form of his students' lively interest in his person and work, was for the time being – as he told Horkheimer – a phenomenon of regression (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 396)[30]. By behaving "tatenarm und gedankenvoll" (qtd. in *A./M. Briefwechsel* 47) – as Friedrich Hölderlin had written in his poem "An die Deutschen" – the German students were doing their nationality credit, Adorno thought. Yet he was hopeful that the joint effort of Horkheimer and him would be able to reverse the fatal course intellectual inquiry seemed to be taking. As is now known, Adorno would soon be instructing students who were much more politicized and entertained that interest in *Praxis* which he had so missed at the end of the twentieth century's first half. Ironically, it was precisely the students' desire to change the world and not only to interpret it which

[30] Regression, in fact, was a mental condition which Adorno diagnosed for the whole country. This lamentable finding encompassed the readiness to adjust to any power regardless of its aims, the inability to clearly enunciate political persuasions, a damaged self, the predominance of heteronomy and a lack of spontaneity. In a more agitated (and perhaps hyperbolic) mood, Adorno complained to Thomas Mann: "Es ist manchmal schwierig, angesichts solcher Innervationen des Gefühls der Vergeblichkeit dessen sich zu erwehren, was man geistig beginnt, und der kalifornische Standort, gegen den ich zuweilen um seiner Unwirklichkeit willen aufbegehrte, hat gegenüber dem, was es hier zu beobachten gibt, geradezu den Vorzug des Realeren. Mit anderen Worten, man ist nirgends mehr zu Hause, und darüber sollte freilich wiederum der, dessen Geschäft die Entmythologisierung ist, nicht allzu sehr sich beklagen" (62).

undeniably contributed to his premature death in 1969. In a piece of correspondence to Horkheimer composed on December 27th, 1949, Adorno argued that – since they were actually the ones who were *giving* something without simultaneously *receiving* something in return and German academia was still on this side of the critique of ontology – the sole justification for their return lay in the attainment of material security (cf. 398). Furthermore, Adorno wondered whether his mentor had not actually been correct when he had asked his younger colleague to consider whether the United States was perhaps the more fitting place to conduct their critical analyses of society than the "colony" of West Germany (cf. 398-99).

But such rationalization of subconscious fear[31] never amounted to anything more than *mental* wavering. The course had been set. Notwithstanding Adorno's critical reflection which – as we have seen – soon set in, I think it can convincingly be claimed that the critical theorist clearly preferred the largely positive academic response he generated in Germany to the academic oblivion into which he had sunk in the United States. In March of 1953, Adorno would argue that – in view of the fact that he and Horkheimer could no longer hope to become the subjects of the *Praxis* that might turn the course of history as permanent disaster – it was of paramount importance that they worked where

[31] Adorno, however, did not believe that the Germans were still or again Nazis. Although reactionary attitudes undeniably existed, "die berühmte Suche nach einem Halt, also doch einer auswendigen, nicht der konsequenten Reflexion sich verdankenden Autorität" (*A./M. Briefwechsel* 47), merely tended to entail the embrace of a Heideggerian or Catholic ontology rather than old-style fascism. Besides the philosopher Martin Heidegger and parts of the Catholic clergy, Adorno singled out the writer Ernst Jünger and the impending reopening of Bayreuth as the most alarming signs of German reaction. Even his ruminations about the Nuremberg Trials could not really harm his cautious optimism: "Die extreme Beobachtung an den Nürnberger Prozessen: daß die unsägliche Schuld gleichsam ins Wesenlose zerrinnt, wiederholt sich bis in die unscheinbarste Alltäglichkeit hinein. Drastischer Ausdruck dessen: ich habe, außer ein paar rührend marionettenhaften Schurken von altem Schrot und Korn, noch keinen Nazi gesehen, und das keineswegs in dem ironischen Sinn, daß keiner es gewesen sein will, sondern in dem weit unheimlicheren, daß sie glauben, es nicht gewesen zu sein" (*A./M. Briefwechsel* 45).

they could express themselves freely and had the addressees who might preserve a little of what they had in mind (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 151). In the same piece of correspondence Adorno also severely accused other Jewish-German emigrants of surrendering to American conformism:

> Außerhalb jener [deutschen; M.K.] Tradition ist noch bei den Wohlmeinenden der Zwang der Tauschgesellschaft bis in die innersten Verhaltensweisen hineingedrungen; selbst die, welche eine Ahnung vom Besseren haben, können von Vorstellungen wie einen Beitrag leisten, sich mitteilen, sich einer Kundschaft anpassen . . . sich nicht frei machen, und in dem Klima der allgegenwärtigen Zurichtung läßt sich so wenig atmen wie sprechen. So groß das Glück war, überleben zu dürfen, so wenig dürfen die vergangenen Bedingungen dieses Glücks zum Fetisch werden und die alte Regel, daß der Vertriebene zurückkehrt und sieht, was er ausrichten kann, scheint mir mehr Wahrheit zu enthalten, als die heute institutionalisierte Forderung des Gegenteils, die von den Spießbürgern vertreten wird, welche ihre gekränkte Menschenwürde als Vorwand des erbärmlichsten Konformismus mißbrauchen. (*A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 151-52)

Written in 1953, these lines support my thesis that Adorno's attitude towards the U.S. would never really lose its antithetical nature.

4.13. "Sinister Negro Bars"

What perhaps startles the reader of Adorno's various correspondences the most are his scant references to black cultural achievements and the ongoing political and social subjugation of their creators. Moreover, in the few instances in which Adorno did mention African-American culture, he appears to have done so in a derogatory if not racist way. Writing to his parents on October 14th, 1939, for instance, he told them how he had taken a German acquaintance out for a drink one night – "aber nach Harlem in einige der finstersten Negerlokale" (41). Although the use of the term "Negro" was more

or less common in the Germany of his lifetime and not generally considered offensive as it is today, the critical theorist's insistent and recurrent usage of the word does strike one as peculiar – especially when one takes into consideration the important role which a self-reflective use of language always played for him. What is more, an utterance such as "Ich habe nichts gegen die Neger, als daß sie von den Weißen durch nichts sich unterscheiden, als durch die Farbe" ("Replik" 809) conjures up strange associations of which one is the common appeasement used by anti-Semites when questioned about their prejudiced attitude: "How could I be an anti-Semite? Some of my best friends are Jews!".

More disconcerting than such linguistic conformism (which also appeared in Adorno's incessant references to jazz musicians – the "jazz subjects" – as "Negroes"), was Adorno's ambivalent attitude towards – if not endorsement of – the Nazis' proscription of the African-American musical genre in 1933. Factually, he contended in the essay "Abschied vom Jazz", the fate of the musical form had been sealed a long time ago, "denn gleichgültig, was man unter weißem und unter Negerjazz verstehen will, hier gibt es nichts zu retten" (795). He dismissed the notion that the Nazis' aim in prohibiting the art form was to eradicate the influence of the "Negro race" or cultural bolshevism on "Nordics"; the banishment of jazz from the airwaves simply sped up an inevitable process, namely the unavoidable obliteration of "ein Stück schlechtes Kunstgewerbe" (796) on account of its own stupidity. From a normative point of view, one could certainly, I believe, express dismay at the thin line which separated Adorno's rigorous aesthetic critique from outright National Socialist ideology. The critic Roger Behrens not only goes so far as to

call Adorno's conflation of jazz, the music's prohibition, aesthetic critique and fascism both astonishing and shameful; to him, it is even indicative of ignorance and stupidity (cf. 117).

When Adorno expanded his sweeping critique to include contemporary American prose literature, he inexplicably singled out the black author Richard Wright as a primary object of his contempt and ridicule. Accusing all newer American novels of fraud or deception and alleging pseudo-individualization – i.e. the camouflaging of standardization with the pretense of the particular – Adorno lamented: "Alle diese Romane scheinen implizit zu sprechen: es ist noch gar nicht alles gleich, es ist noch gar nicht alles vom Monopol beherrscht, vor allem aber: man kann noch Erfahrungen machen. Noch in den Negergreuelgeschichten von Wright steckt etwas von dem Anspruch episch so berichten zu können, als wäre man Johann Peter Hebel" ("Anthropologie" 455). From today's vantage point, a generic classification such as "Negergreuelgeschichten" would, I am convinced, almost generally be deemed unacceptable.

However, to somewhat exonerate Adorno one should note that his sometimes harsh aesthetic judgments were always embedded in his theory of the culture industry. Put differently: His aesthetic critique was always a result of *material* disagreement with popular culture. The Jewish clarinetist Benny Goodman represented a case in point: Discussing the musician's merits, he had to concede that Goodman had originally been one of the most gifted swing musicians as well as an excellent clarinetist who had superbly interpreted compositions by Aaron Copland, Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud, Bela Bartok and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; yet according to Adorno, Columbia

Broadcasting System's "plugging" had all but ruined him (cf. *Eltern* 139-140). The monopolistic structure of radio, Adorno explained to his parents, did not leave Goodman a choice: His art of necessity sank to the level of pulp. On the one hand, the cultural-industrial complex in 1942 did not seem to Adorno to be as air-tightly sealed, secure and inevitable as it did in the following years; on the other hand, however, he at that time already somewhat discerned the individual's ultimate hopelessness in the face of the mass cultural powers that be: "Die Ankündigung der most popular tunes bezieht sich auf eine Schlange, die sich in den Schwanz beißt: es sind nämlich die most popular tunes ausschließlich, weil sie als solche propagiert werden und natürlich [sic] weil das Publikum längst gar keine Wahl mehr hat" (*Eltern* 140). Apparently, Adorno's scorn was directed less at the musicians that played jazz than at the music's fettering function within the works of the culture industry.

This impression is also corroborated by Adorno's script-doctoral comments about the plot of William Dieterle's *Syncopation*. In naïve defiance of Hollywood's contemporary racial and possibly racist standards, Adorno had suggested that the "NEGRO PLAYER REGGIE" and not Johnny, the film's actual protagonist, should prevail in the final musical showdown. As one might recall, Adorno had praised the film's advocacy of jazz in its most primeval and rugged form. Thus it is hardly a surprise that he wanted to see Reggie's "EARLY HOT STYLE" defeat Johnny's "SOPHISTICATED SWING BROWNINGS SWEET LOMBARDO STYLE". Apparently, even Adorno's critique of jazz could at times assume a more nuanced tone. Yet there is more to come: Adorno also envisioned an alternative climax for the Dieterle picture. Set in a record store, the movie's "HIGH POINT" should consist in a solo

dance by Kit to the acoustic backdrop of six simultaneously playing records, which, Adorno imagined, integrate into "ONE MIGHTY JAZZ PIECE" – a veritably "SATANIC CONCERT" (*A./H. Briefwechsel II* 274). Such a "utopian jazz symphony" (Jenemann 115), i.e. one that subverts the culture industry's enveloping and stifling administration of the music, would have been able to restore at least vestiges of immediacy and nonidentity.

Notwithstanding some of the more dubious statements pertaining to people of African heritage mentioned above, Adorno was certainly not a racist – at least not in any conscious sense. When discussing the dialectical intricacies of William Shakespeare's attitude towards the *bourgeois* as propounded in *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, Adorno also considered the play's implications with regard to skin color and racial prejudice. To highlight Shakespeare's comparative progressiveness, Adorno recalled the beginning of the second act. At this point of the play, the Prince of Marrocco asks for Portia's hand in marriage, simultaneously entreating her not to turn him away because of his skin color: "Mislike me not for my complexion" (131). Portia replies that her pick is unfortunately not a result of her own free choice, but if that were different "Yourself, renowned prince, then stood as fair, / As any comer I have looked on yet, / For my affection" (132). From Adorno's vantage point, this passage of the drama was of paramount importance, for it allegedly represented Shakespeare's a priori rejection of race mischief and terror (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel III* 13). It is above all this unequivocally anti-racist assertion, which – in the eyes of the attentive reader of his correspondences – manages to absolve Adorno of any true suspicion; the common image of him as a critical theorist engaged in humanity's emancipatory struggle is thereby largely restored.

Admittedly, the question whether W.E.B. Du Bois would have also considered Adorno vindicated by his construal of Shakespeare's *Merchant* unfortunately remains unanswered.

5. Theodor W. Adorno's Exile in the Land of the Culture Industry

Just as the term "United States of America" denoted a plurality of states before and a single country, a nation, after the War of Secession (1861-1865), Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno tellingly changed his name during his American exile[1]. In the time before his "American experience", he had referred to himself as Theodor Wiesengrund, and had thought of himself as a free-floating, avant-garde artist and speculative philosopher. Yet during his exile in the U.S. – a time in which he greatly grew and developed – he decided to permanently alter his name in order to reflect this change of personality. From now on, he would call himself Theodor W. Adorno – a name which would later refer to a truly unmistakable thinker and scholar in the Federal Republic of Germany (cf. Claussen 219).

It is not only fair to call his time of exile in the epitome of the West, America, a time of intellectual maturation. As we have seen, it was equally a period of both sporadic happiness and extremely harsh despair. Adorno arrived

[1] Grammatically, Americans' change of consciousness expressed itself thus: Before the Civil War, it was common to say "The United States *are* ..."; after the violent caesura, however, one began saying "The United States *is* ...". Due to the fact that Adorno never definitely elucidated the factors motivating his change of name, we are forced to rely on surmises and vestiges of explanation contained in the correspondence to his parents. In a letter dated January 17th, 1944, for instance, he half apologetically averred that, all along, he had internally objected to the shortening of his father's name to a "W." – let alone the complete blotting out of "Wiesengrund" by the American immigration authorities. On the other hand, however, he conceded that the alteration of name was convenient. Be that as it may, his sole "Entschädigung für den Verlust des ordentlichen jüdischen Namens durch die stupide Pedanterie der Behörde" (237), he argued, lay in the fact that Thomas Mann – in return for Adorno's musical advice pertaining to the conception of the novel *Doctor Faustus* – had artistically mentioned the word "Wiesengrund" three times in a single chapter of the book. From my point of view, it seems cogent to assume that by consenting to the shedding of "Wiesengrund" in 1943 and deliberately confirming this decision in 1954 when being re-naturalized in Germany, Adorno not only expressed that a sea change had taken place in his life but also "made official" the fact that he had always felt closer to his mother and her putatively noble ancestors than to his father's Jewish heritage (cf. Schütte 15).

in the U.S. in 1938, residing in New York City for a couple of years. In 1941, he then eventually moved to Los Angeles in order to work on the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* with his mentor Max Horkheimer. Their time on the West Coast, as well as that of several other German-speaking emigrants, has repeatedly been referred to as "Exile in Paradise". As was intimated by the synchronic contextualization in Chapter Two, this is not altogether misleading. Although Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Fritz Lang, Alfred Döblin, Arnold Schönberg, Bruno Frank, Ludwig Marcuse, Hanns Eisler, Bertolt Brecht and others were basically "homeless" strangers in a completely unfamiliar place, they nevertheless lived in a cheerful and largely carefree environment. Despite recurring financial worries, they did not have to fear fascist persecution (cf. Jäger, *Adorno* 156). An aphorism from Adorno's *Minima Moralia* perfectly illustrates the comparable happiness he must have felt at times: "Schönheit der amerikanischen Landschaft: daß noch dem kleinsten ihrer Segmente, als Ausdruck, die unermeßliche Größe des ganzen Landes einbeschrieben ist" (78). Notwithstanding, his well-known work was unequivocally subtitled *Reflexionen aus dem beschaedigten Leben*. The most widely known sentence of the whole book denied that a true life could be lived within a false one (cf. 59). The empirical whole, Adorno famously concluded, was the untrue (cf. 80).

Having scrutinized Adorno's private correspondence, I am now going to take a closer look at the theoretical texts illuminating his American exile in order to see whether these apparent inconsistencies – this striking ambiguity – can somehow be resolved or not. How did he "really" experience the U.S.,

which, after all, was *the* land of the culture industry when he lived there?[2] Was it outright "hell" for him? Or did he remain confused about its real character, unsure how to judge its seeming contradictions? Did he criticize the country in a differentiating and fair manner? Or did he condemn the place as such? I am going to approach these questions by examining Adorno's attitude towards two distinct subjects, namely the "universal victory of the Enlightenment" in the United States (as opposed to Germany's "economic backwardness") as well as the encompassing system of the culture industry. Careful scrutiny of these interrelated themes is arguably at the heart of Adorno's repeated attempts to come to terms with America.

5.1. The Universal Victory of the Enlightenment

In "Kultur und Culture"[3], an autobiographically tinged lecture on the differences between European/German and American culture first delivered in 1957, Adorno claimed that the historical process of the Enlightenment – both

[2] I hereby do not want to privilege Adorno's theoretical texts over his autobiographical ruminations. Rather, I regard the former as his final – but not exclusively authoritative – verdict on the question that concerns us.

[3] The lecture was recorded in 1958 and later re-broadcast as part of the series "Vorträge, die von sich reden machten" by the Bayrischer Rundfunk. Interestingly, "Kultur und Culture", which arguably contains Adorno's most benevolent comments about America, was published against his explicit will by the *Hessische Hochschulwochen für staatswissenschaftliche Fortbildung*. As he noted in a "Vorbemerkung" to the text, he feared that his "improvisation", "dogmatic claim of results", as well as "stimuli" on a "fatally general" (246) topic might be misconstrued and therefore refused to assume responsibility for them. The ostensible reason for this was that the spoken word could not live up to his standard of *"Le bon Dieu est dans le détail"* (Gustave Flaubert), which he applied to texts: "Darin, daß allerorten die Tendenz besteht, die freie Rede, wie man das so nennt, auf Band aufzunehmen und dann zu verbreiten, sieht er [the speaker; M.K.] selbst ein Symptom jener Verhaltensweise der verwalteten Welt, welche noch das ephemere Wort, das seine Wahrheit an seiner eigenen Vergänglichkeit hat, festnagelt, um den Redenden darauf zu vereidigen. Die Bandaufnahme ist etwas wie der Fingerabdruck des lebendigen Geistes" (246). Adorno's argumentative acrobatics notwithstanding, I think it is pretty clear that he was aware of just how sweepingly his utterances contradicted such overly critical writings as the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

in its political and in its scientific form – had been wholly successful, even "victorious", in the United States. From his perspective, the bourgeois and republican revolution of 1776 had created a purely bourgeois and democratic social order, a society which lacked any traces of an old gentry or aristocracy, and was consequently comprised of free and equal citizens. Moreover, he saw in America a purely capitalist and commercial society, or, as he put it, a "barter society", in which the "exchange principle" reigned supreme. What he meant was that its free and equal citizens constantly engaged in market exchanges as free agents (i.e. as buyers and sellers of goods and services), who were un-trammeled by any market-distorting feudal and thus pre-capitalist residues.[4] This universal "exchange relationship", Adorno believed, also accounted for Americans' obliviousness to historical memory. The exchange of equivalents was a process where nothing was "left over". Like mathematical operations, it was essentially a pure, formalistic and timeless transaction. Such considerations as well as Henry Ford's telling exclamation "history is bunk" led Adorno to infer that in America the European beheld the "Schreckbild einer Menschheit ohne Erinnerung" ("Aufarbeitung").

Yet America also differed from Europe in another sense which pertained to the sphere of culture. The origin of the term "culture" is to be found in the Latin word *colere* (*colo*, *colui*, *cultus*) which means both (1) "to care for", "to

[4] These points were also illustrated, Adorno contended, by the fact that in Europe a certain amount of the aristocratic reluctance to receive financial remuneration in return for rendered services or favors had survived. Making money by other means than privileges or control (by production, for instance) had been decidedly bourgeois and American. While every child of the European upper class had blushed when he or she had been given money as a present, no U.S. child (not even one who could boast wealthy parents) had qualms about earning a few cents by delivering a paper (cf. *Minima Moralia* 371-72). Yet Adorno also claimed (and this is where the dialectical twist came in) that the American "Demokratie des Erwerbsprinzips", i.e. the absence of airs and graces as well as the belief that labor did not sully, directly contributed to the continuation "des schlechthin Antidemokratischen, des ökonomischen Unrechts, der menschlichen Entwürdigung" (*Minima Moralia* 372).

look after", "to farm", "to till" as well as (2) "to worship". As a side-note one could infer that tilling the earth (unlike hunting) and worshipping deities (i.e. engaging in agri*culture* and practicing *cults*) were thus actions which distinguished early humans from animals (cf. Hansen 14-15). In America, Adorno argued, "culture" was grasped as signifying the exertion of control over one's natural surroundings as well as human nature (particularly the subconscious). From the vantage point of Americans, the term "culture" referred to the active shaping of the social and natural reality. Europeans' understanding of the word under scrutiny, however, was much less assertive. As Adorno saw it, the Old World was "cultured" because it cared for, looked after and conserved nature. The example he drew on to illustrate his point was a certain type of wine whose unadulterated taste reminded its consumer of earth and grapes. The European notion of culture thus did not come on as strong as the American; in a sense, it was more hesitant, diffident and conservative and thereby indicative of the fact that the enlightenment in the sense of an increasing technical mastery of nature had – in contrast to America – not yet been wholly victorious in the Old World. Parenthetically, one should add that although Adorno explicitly distinguished between European and American understandings of culture, he simultaneously rejected the anti-American opposition between an allegedly profound German "culture" and the United States' (according to the prejudiced) mere "civilization". In the famous post-war *Gruppenexperiment*, Adorno and his colleagues at the Institute of Social Research had traced such stereotypes back to the psychological motive of 'collective narcissism' (cf. 487).

5.1.1. The Positive Aspects of the Enlightenment's Universal Victory

Adorno, in his dialectical and normative analysis of this phenomenon, subsequently distinguished between the positive and negative aspects of such a "universal victory of the Enlightenment". He felt that its positive sides rendered the U.S. less authoritarian than Europe, whereas its negative features made it more authoritarian than the Old World and especially than Germany. According to the scholar, the successful application of Enlightenment principles had brought about a freedom from want and a material abundance that was reminiscent of the land of milk and honey. In fact, he believed that America was endowed with millennial and utopian characteristics. In order to illustrate this argument, he cited the familiar image of American children serenely running around with ice-cream cones. Although even in America nothing was free of charge, the country did give the immigrant the partly true impression that the time of privation was over.

Furthermore, he detected a certain humanity of everyday life in America. This, he believed, stemmed from its commercial character. The universal principles of mutuality and reciprocity which reign in a barter society allegedly also positively influenced other (i.e. non-market) relationships between people. The example he cited in this context was the phenomenon he called "keep smiling". Although he was aware of the fact that the smile of female store clerks was obligatory – that it was forced upon them – he did believe that it nevertheless contributed to the overall humanity of a society. The exchange principle even had a positive influence on such an hierarchical and putatively undemocratic and inhumane institution as the American military. As Adorno

informed Horkheimer in a letter dated October 25th, 1957, his giving the first version of his talk (initially entitled "Some Aspects of a Comparison Between German and American Culture") at the "Historical Society" of the U.S. Army's 3rd Armored Division in Hanau on December 17th, 1956, had been a great success: The atmosphere had been extremely pleasant, he recounted, and the generals had exhibited a friendliness and humanity – even towards their own soldiers – which had had something surprising and very agreeable about it (cf. *A./H. Briefwechsel IV* 453). Like Goethe and Hegel, Adorno was of the opinion that to become fully human one had to step out of one's shell, enter into relations with other people and, in a sense, abandon oneself to them. Such *Entäußerung* or "externalization", of course, was entirely at odds with the essentially inhumane German habit of being identical with oneself, of being one with one's inwardness, which usually manifested itself as uncommunicative grouchiness.

What is more, he endorsed the idiosyncratic freedom of discussion and speech in America. He believed that this freedom hardly knew any taboo subjects, and that it enabled truly critical discussions – as opposed to what was allegedly possible in Germany at that time. In a murky Germany of togetherness, the dictum "Es kommt nicht auf Diskussionen, sondern auf Begegnungen an" (a hallmark of 'the jargon of authenticity') reigned supreme, whereas in America the idea of friction between competing and perhaps irreconcilable thoughts was an accepted part of everyday life. Similarly Adorno praised the U.S. education of children, calling it comparatively progressive, for it appeared to be freer, less suppressing, and less violent than what was being

done in German households and schools in the 1950s – not to mention the preceding decades.

Throughout his exile, Adorno was moreover always aware of the fact that he was deeply indebted to America's venerable democratic traditions. Later, he would look back happily to the experience of the substantiality of democratic forms, the potential of actual humanity (cf. "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 735)[5]. As he saw it, the democratic idea and polity were immeasurably closer to the average American than they had ever been to the common German. Such a democratic spirit on the part of the U.S., Adorno believed, went hand in hand with a certain peacefulness, good-naturedness and generosity, whereas in Germany pent-up malice and envy had well-nigh exploded between 1933 and 1945 (cf. "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 735). While in Germany freedom was only apprehensively thought about and even degraded in the idea of voluntary submission, the energetic American intention to establish a free society did not forfeit its praiseworthy character simply because the social system put a limit on its realization (cf. "Was ist deutsch" 697). Although he did not dare to exclude the possibility of America's tipping-over to totalitarianism, he thought it was unlikely, for America – by virtue of its democratic tradition – allegedly had a much greater power to resist fascist tendencies than Germany. Writing on "Anti-Semitism and Fascist Propaganda" in the U.S., he argued that

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[5] Adorno's comments about concrete humanity and democracy as characteristics of everyday life in America again refer the reader to Sinclair Lewis's novel *It Can't Happen Here*, in which the Marxist immigrant Karl Pascal also praises America's humane and democratic features: "Sure I like America . . . I think we've got the Old Country beat, lots of ways. Why, say, Julian, I'd have to call you 'Mein Herr' or 'Your Excellency,' or some fool thing, and you'd call me, 'I say-uh, Pascal!' and Mr. Jessup here, my Lord, he'd be 'Commendatore' or 'Herr Doktor'! No, I like it here. There's symptoms of possible future democracy" (130).

> very few American agitators would dare openly to profess fascist and anti-democratic goals. In contrast to Germany, the democratic ideology in this country has evolved certain taboos, the violation of which might jeopardize people engaging in subversive activities. Thus the fascist demagogue is much more restricted in what he can say, for reasons of both political censorship and psychological tactics. (399)

Moreover, the Ku Klux Klan never received the kind of widespread popular support which the NSDAP or the *Fasci de Combattimento* (and later the *Partito Nazionale Fascista*) had received in the 1920s and 30s in Germany and Italy, respectively. And unlike its European "counterparts", the KKK encountered fierce opposition in the form of a Catholic clergy, Jewish organizations, black activists and liberals (cf. Werz 224-25).

Last but not least, "the universal victory of the Enlightenment" was also responsible for three other remarkable aspects: First, as has already been intimated, Adorno lauded America's open-mindedness when it came to criticism. In the U.S., Adorno was taught "not to take things for granted" ("Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 734), that is to say, not to conceive of historically arisen circumstances as something natural, possibly unalterable. Second, Adorno stated that America had freed him of a certain naiveté with regard to culture. During his exile, he allegedly developed the ability to view culture "from the outside". The fact that in America *Geist* was not as relevant and respected as in Europe – that one could by no means speak of its primacy in the land of the culture industry – prompted healthy critical self-contemplation on the part of *Geist*, Adorno thought. He thenceforth strongly questioned cultural criticism which reified and made a fetish of "culture": "Ihr [cultural criticism's; M.K.] oberster Fetisch aber ist der Begriff der Kultur als solcher . . . Nur als neutralisierte und verdinglichte läßt sie sich vergötzen. Der Fetischis-

mus gravitiert zur Mythologie" ("Kulturkritik" 16-17). By becoming fixed and an end in itself, *Geisteskultur* also tended to self-sufficiently release itself from true humanity (cf. "Was is deutsch" 697). Third, although Adorno always rejected a conception of the social sciences which amounted to nothing more than common sense and empiricism, he simultaneously believed – and here his exile experience was instrumental – that the speculative philosopher, who wanted to go beyond the two, must first prove that he or she possessed common sense and was capable of conducting empirical research (cf. "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 737-38).

5.1.2. The Negative Aspects of the Enlightenment's Universal Victory

Having mentioned the aspects of the "universal victory of the Enlightenment" which Adorno deemed praiseworthy, I am now going to turn to the features he viewed more critically. As has already been said, Adorno was convinced that the United States of America represented the utter realization of the bourgeois principle of a purely commercial society: "Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft ist beherrscht vom Äquivalent. Sie macht Ungleichnamiges komparabel, indem sie es auf abstrakte Größen [prices; M.K.] reduziert" (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 13). In such a society, Adorno thought, everything that lacked market or exchange value – i.e. a price – was automatically "confiscated". What it boiled down to was that only things which could be remunerated financially existed, Adorno believed. In their *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and his younger colleague expressed it in the following way: "Alles hat nur Wert, sofern man es eintauschen kann, nicht

sofern es selbst etwas ist" (167). Manifestations of *Geist* (e.g. autonomous and therefore critical art[6]), and generally all ideas that transcended the limits of such a barter society, were a priori considered to be nonconformist and dissenting. The thinkers and cultural outsiders Adorno invoked in this context were Edgar Allen Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, as well as Herman Melville. Commercial mutuality and reciprocity, which Adorno had earlier praised because they contributed to a certain humanity in everyday affairs, were now understood as accounting for the pressures of assimilation and conformity. The sociologist explained the negative aspects of the "universal victory of the Enlightenment" by reminding the listener of the historical fact that America had never possessed an old aristocracy or upper class – let alone a nobility – that might have protected and fostered avant-garde art.

An artist himself, Adorno furthermore criticized that America – in spite of the freedom it afforded its children through progressive education – allegedly put under taboo artistic imagination and expression as such. He believed that in the U.S. an artist was stereotypically perceived as being either an introvert, an egocentric fool or an homosexual. Such a perception entailed the phenomenon that any spontaneous, socially uncontrolled artistic stirring was a priori eyed with suspicion. As Adorno saw it, kids who preferred listening to serious music or playing the piano instead of watching a baseball game or sitting in front of the tube, were deemed to be "sissies", i.e. effeminate weaklings by their class-

[6] In his fragmentary and posthumously published *Ästhetische Theorie*, Adorno contended that art – simply by being something individual and unique instead of conforming to social norms or qualifying as socially useful – ran counter to society (cf. 335). In other words: Art criticized the social order merely by existing: "Nichts Reines, nach seinem immanenten Gesetz Durchgebildetes, das nicht wortlos Kritik übte, die Erniedrigung durch einen Zustand denunzierte, der auf die totale Tauschgesellschaft sich hinbewegt: in ihr ist alles nur für anderes. Das Asoziale der Kunst ist bestimmte Negation der bestimmten Gesellschaft" (335).

mates. The only "artist" tolerated in the U.S. – Adorno maintained – was the entertainer, who, like a higher paid head waiter offered his services to an audience which snorted with laughter (cf. "Zeitlose Mode" 135). Similarly, the philosopher believed that the lack of *Geist* in America stemmed from the fact that the whole sphere of speculative metaphysics had never been able to gain a real foothold. According to him, Americans had directly moved on from what he called "religious fundamentalism" (i.e. Puritanism) to a rigid belief in the falsifiable results of empirical science. Compared to the free thought associated with speculative metaphysics, the difference between the inflexibility of religious and scientific "sectarianism" appeared negligible to Adorno.

5.1.3. Questioning the Positivist and Empiricist Hegemony

How do Adorno's scientific experiences in the U.S. fit into the encompassing paradigm of the "universal victory of the Enlightenment"? To start with, one has to make clear that in this regard Adorno again displayed a profoundly ambivalent stance. Writing on his "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen in Amerika" he stated that from the first to the last day of his American exile he had always regarded himself as a European. Yet at the same time he asserted that any contemporary consciousness devoid of a comparable American experience had an undeniably reactionary quality to it. He consequently referred to his stance towards America as a combination of "Outsidertum" ("Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 705) and impartial inspection.

In the text under scrutiny, Adorno first of all set out a premise: If anything, the first thirty-four years of his life had shown that he possessed a propensity

for philosophical speculation: He stated that it was only natural for him and objectively imperative to *interpret* phenomena, not to establish, sort out and classify facts – let alone place them at someone's disposal (cf. 703). Such hermeneutical steadfastness was bound to collide with the prevailing methodological tendencies in America (namely positivism and empiricism) – and collide it did. This was most evident when Adorno collaborated with the Princeton Radio Research Project whose aim, as will be recalled, was to examine the habits of radio listeners.

The general conflict that arose between Adorno and his co-workers at the Project can best be summed up as follows: Before turning to the subjective and mediated side of radio music by collecting data on the individual impressions of radio listeners, Adorno wanted to describe the "objective spirit" of the music, the stimulus to which these listeners reacted in the first place. Yet his conviction that radio music was a phenomenon which could be ascertained as something objective and unmediated, was not appreciated by his co-workers. "Allein jedoch, daß ich von objektiven Implikaten der Kunst ausging, anstatt von statistisch meßbaren Hörerreaktionen, kollidierte mit den positivistischen Denkgewohnheiten, wie sie in der amerikanischen Wissenschaft fast unbestritten gelten" ("Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 708). What Adorno totally disagreed with was his colleagues' readiness to unabashedly quantify cultural phenomena. When it came to culture, he utterly rejected the notion that *science is measurement*: "War ich etwa mit der Forderung konfrontiert, wie man wörtlich sagte, "Kultur zu messen", so besann ich demgegenüber mich darauf, daß Kultur eben jener Zustand sei, der eine Mentalität ausschließt, die ihn messen möchte" ("Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 712). What Adorno

feared most about quantification was that it entailed the danger of bringing about a lack of discrimination as well as an undue emphasis on the average. He also opposed what he believed to be a methodological circle: One could not, he thought, come to terms with the phenomenon of (cultural) reification (i.e. perceiving and thinking in stereotypes) if one made use of reified methods (cf. "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 712). Among the reified methods Adorno harshly criticized was a so-called "program analyzer" – a little machine whose various buttons test persons pressed to indicate which song parts they liked and which they did not.

In general, Adorno was bewildered by the fact that in America his philosophical work on cultural phenomena such as jazz music bore the blemish of the unproven. As a free- and critically-thinking intellectual and philosopher, he especially lamented that as soon as one made a certain claim, the unavoidable response of the scientific community was: "Where's the evidence?". His musical analyses were merely considered to be "expert opinions" – nothing more. According to logical positivism, if the content of a statement can neither be verified nor falsified by way of scientific observation – i.e. if the statement is neither true nor false – then it is simply devoid of meaning. Most of Adorno's speculative work was thus branded "meaningless" in America. It was deemed alien and non-transferable; as a result, the emigrant had the feeling that his refuge declared his entire past life null and void (cf. *Minima Moralia* 73-74). Hence his – surprisingly moderate – reaction:

> Offenbar war es außerhalb der Spezialsphäre von Geisteswissenschaft in Amerika sehr schwierig, den Gedanken einer Objektivität von Geistigem zu fassen. Der Geist wird umstandslos dem Subjekt gleichgesetzt, das sein Träger ist, ohne daß seine Verselbständigung und Autonomie zugegeben würde. Vor allem realisiert die organisierte Wissenschaft kaum, wie wenig

> Kunstwerke aufgehen in denen, die sie hervorbringen.
> ("Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 715)

These observations again betrayed the Hegelian roots of Adorno's thought. Like Hegel, Adorno – owing to the universality of reason – believed that individual human minds were merely aspects of an inherently universal "factor", namely mind itself (cf. Singer, *Hegel* 89). In the *Minima Moralia* aphorism "Bangemachen gilt nicht", Adorno also spelled out his conviction that in this world age only the subject preserved objectivity. This, of course, was diametrically opposed to the American view which allegedly presumed that the adjective "objective" referred to a phenomenon's uncontroversial side, its unquestioned imprint, its mere façade, which consisted of classified data; in contrast, Adorno contended that objectivity could only be attained by breaking through the façade, by entering into the specific experience of a thing, by shedding conventional judgments and substituting the subject's relationship to the object for the majority opinion of those who did not even contemplate the object – let alone reflect on it (cf. 120). In view of such Continental speculation, it is hardly a wonder that Adorno's collaboration with the Princeton Radio Research Project's administrative researchers soon ceased. When their cooperation ended, Lazarsfeld voiced his utter unhappiness with Adorno's contempt for Anglo-American scientific methodology, accusing him of "grave deficiencies of elementary logical procedure", and adding that "your disrespect for possibilities alternative to your own ideas becomes even more disquieting when your text leads to the suspicion that you don't even know how an empirical check upon a hypothetical assumption is to be made" (qtd. in Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 223). Although Adorno conceded that only in America did he become fully aware of what empiricism really meant, he

conversely claimed that the breadth of experience was nevertheless narrowed down by empirical rules, which, paradoxically, stressed the primacy of experience[7].

However, Adorno's scientific experiences in America were not wholly negative. The major non-IfS project of his exile, *The Authoritarian Personality* (which the American Jewish Committee helped to fund), was a much more delightful endeavor. Together with the Berkeley scholars Nevitt Sanford, Else Frenkel-Brunswick and Daniel Levinson, Adorno inquired into the phenomenon of social and racial prejudice. As has already been delineated, the group's aim was to describe the potentially fascist personality structure and devise an instrument (namely the "F-Scale") with which to indirectly measure a test person's fascist potential. What the social scientists were interested in was to what degree the interviewees' personalities were characterized by "conventionalism", "authoritarian submission", "authoritarian aggression", "anti-intraception", "superstition and stereotypy", a pre-occupation with "power and toughness", "destructiveness and cynicism", "projectivity" as well as an exaggerated concern with "sex". These variables, the researchers thought, constituted an anti-democratic syndrome which made a person susceptible to anti-democratic propaganda. *The Authoritarian Personality* was a seminal sociological work which still reflects its authors' enthusiasm. Retrospectively, Adorno praised the perfect team-work and absence of any hierarchical factors during its conception. He lauded the democratic spirit of the team's cooperation and extolled the fact that there had been absolutely no friction,

[7] In a way, Adorno even believed that methodologically controlled empiricism was a contradiciton in terms, for true insight could only arise in a "Geflecht von Vorurteilen, Anschauungen, Innervationen, Selbstkorrekturen, Vorausnahmen, und Übertreibungen, kurz . . . in der dichten, fundierten, aber keineswegs an allen Stellen transparenten Erfahrung" (*Minima Moralia* 143).

obstruction or competition between the scholars (cf. "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 724). The group had apparently enjoyed true academic freedom. Moreover, "das Moment des Spielerischen, von dem ich denken möchte, daß es jeder geistigen Produktivität notwendig ist, fehlte bei der Entwicklung der F-Skala keineswegs" ("Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 726-27). It is hardly surprising that Adorno especially praised the *playfulness* of their collaboration. After all, the *child* with its uncorrupted, open-minded and uninhibited nature served as the latent redemptive counter image of *Minima Moralia's* pessimistic portrayal of twentieth-century mass culture (cf. Drews and Nusser 107).

In a way, *The Authoritarian Personality*, which well-nigh gushed with Freudian terminology, represented a successful example of what might be referred to as the motto of Adorno's American exile: "Transferring the non-transferable". In fact, Adorno wholeheartedly condemned the alacrity with which other emigrants – who, after all, had not migrated voluntarily – sought to please their new compatriots by making useful "contributions" to their safe haven and new home. Adorno utterly resented other German Jews' eagerness to shed their cultural baggage and please the United States, for such contributions were in reality false contributions, which – lacking the moment of choice or deliberateness – merely transfigured adjustment and self-denial. After all: "Die Menschenrechte waren nicht als Belohnung für fügsames Benehmen gedacht" ("Fragen an die intellektuelle Emigration" 353).

Yet there was a further reason Adorno distrusted the over-zealous talk about doing one's share. "Contributions", he argued, belonged to the sphere of the (natural) sciences, in which scientific progress was the result of a cooperative and collective effort, i.e. an area in which one really picked up where others

had let off. Such a notion of science, however, was not applicable to the humanities, which, in contrast, were above all characterized by a *critical* moment. The principal witness Adorno thought of in this context was the person he arguably considered to be the most important German philosopher of all time, namely Georg Wilhem Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel, he believed, had rightly equated the "work of the mind", i.e. the task of the philosopher, with "the principle of negation". Adorno always felt equally obliged to transcend the merely given, not only to preserve the possibility of something better but also to be able to comprehend the merely given in the first place (cf. "Fragen an die intellektuelle Emigration" 355).

This is precisely the point where Adorno found fault with the other emigrants, for they generally contented themselves with making "contributions" while eschewing any uncomfortable deviations which questioned the worth of the order to which they contributed instead of naively presupposing such a worth. In other words: They sought to conform, whereas the emigrants' task would really be

> einen Beitrag genau dadurch zu leisten, daß wir, soweit es nur möglich ist, dem etablierten Betrieb dem ihn entsprechenden, genormten Beitrag verweigern und die in unserem Denken heimischen und in Europa ausgerotteten kritischen Gedanken an der neuen Situation entwickeln, anstatt sie hier uns selber nochmals zu verbieten. ("Fragen an die intellektuelle Emigration" 355)

Adorno acknowledged that the organization of U.S. intellectual life resembled that of the industrial sphere, eliminated almost all "loopholes" and subjected intellectual work to the control by consumers. These adverse circumstances notwithstanding, he encouraged other German Jews to get into contact with those (relatively few) American intellectuals who were different, who did not

conform (cf. “Fragen an die intellektuelle Emigration” 354-55). Adorno was also of the opinion that the refugees could thank the United States precisely by standing by their German intellectual convictions. If they failed to engage in self-contemplation with the goal of withstanding the pressures exerted on them in the New World, they actually also – contrary to their intentions – betrayed the American spirit of freedom, which they were taking advantage of (cf. “Fragen an die intellektuelle Emigration” 353).

Besides urging his fellow-sufferers to reject the fictitious assumption that one could start one’s intellectual biography anew, Adorno warned them against idolizing the immense industrial apparatus, which not only dominated but also threatened to virtually devour the individual. He also advised them to express themselves intellectually in such a way as was necessitated by the *content* of what they had to say. And fourthly and perhaps most importantly, he furiously demanded of them not to let themselves be browbeaten by the demand to rid themselves of conceptual thinking and to solely express themselves in the form of facts, numbers and formulae: “Während wir alles hier lernen sollen, was uns vom wahnhaften Moment am deutschen Denken heilen kann, sollen wir darüber nicht Phantasie, Spekulation, unverkümmerte Einsicht uns beschneiden” (“Fragen an die intellektuelle Emigration” 358). In reality, only those thoughts contained truth, Adorno believed, which managed to slip through the universal mechanisms of control stifling academia and intellectual production.

5.1.4. Germany's "Economic Backwardness"

If the United States was rendered unique by the "universal victory of the Enlightenment", what, then, demarcated the realm of German identity? Adorno's argumentation took as its starting point Richard Wagner's complacent claim that "deutsch sein heißt, eine Sache um ihrer selbst willen tun" ("Was ist deutsch" 693). Although Adorno clearly abominated the motivation behind this smug remark (Wagner had sought to delimit the supposedly pure will of the Germans from Anglo-Saxon petty-mindedness), he nevertheless believed that the statement possessed a grain of truth: The spread of the exchange principle, of the commodity character, of commercialization over practically all spheres (including that of *Geist*), had – Adorno claimed – not been as advanced in Germany as it had been in the classically Western countries (the U.S.A., Great Britain, France, the Netherlands) in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Adorno inferred that this phenomenon gave the cultural, intellectual and spiritual production (*geistige Produktion*) a certain power to resist. In Germany, Adorno supposed, a manifestation of *Geist* was still rated as an "An-sich", as something in itself obligingly true, and not only as a "Für-anderes" and "Für-andere-Sein" – i.e. as a mere object of barter.[8] In this regard, Adorno deemed Johann Gottlieb Fichte's comment about the "Tathandlung als Selbstzweck" ("Was ist deutsch" 693) instructive. The model of the capitalistically advanced nations, Adorno pointed out, was the entrepreneur who acted in accordance with the laws of the market, whereas

[8] Adorno, for example, lamented that the first question with which an American publisher confronted his or her author was: "At which audience do you aim?". The book in question was thereby not primarily assessed as an "An-sich", but rather seen in terms of its potential "Wirkungszusammenhang" (cf. "Kultur und Culture").

the paragon of "capitalistic backwardness" was the civil servant who fulfilled his duties imposed on him by the powers that be.

Yet Adorno conceded that this was but half the truth. He maintained that Germany was and had historically also been an exchange society. The principle of doing something for its own sake was not as pure as it liked to think of itself. What was different about the Middle European country – in contrast to the West – was that the various manifestations of *Geist* (besides being an "An-sich") were conceived as a "Für-anderes" in the service of the authorities – but not as a means to further one's own, individual interests: "Die großen deutschen Konzeptionen, in denen die Autonomie, das reine Um seiner selbst willen, so überschwenglich verherrlicht wird, waren durchweg auch zur Vergottung des Staates bereit" ("Was ist deutsch" 694). The temporarily restrained self-interest of the individual was gratified by the aggressive expansion of the state. Adorno then critically added that a "Für-anderes" in the service of the state was not the only potentially inhumane trait of German manifestations of *Geist*; even an "An-sich" – with its relentless dearth of regard for others – could entail inhumanity. Such negation of humanity, Adorno thought, was exhibited by the "brutality" of the greatest manifestations of *Geist* as well as by their will to wield power and perpetuate the status quo. Hence Adorno's more fitting illumination of what it meant to be German:

> Wenn man etwas als spezifisch deutsch vermuten darf, dann ist es dies Ineinander des Großartigen, in keiner konventionell gesetzten Grenze sich Bescheidenden, mit dem Monströsen. Indem es die Grenzen überschreitet, möchte es zugleich unterjochen . . . ("Was ist deutsch" 695)

On the one hand, it was certainly true – Adorno argued – that the great German philosophy and music could not have existed without a certain

prevalence of the principle of "doing something for its own sake", which, in turn, resulted from Germany's "economic backwardness", its lack of *Verbürgerlichung*; on the other hand, however, Adorno also detected a "Vorrat unerfaßt naturhafter Kräfte" ("Was ist deutsch" 695) as a specifically German characteristic. Such dormant natural forces were responsible not only for the unerring radicalism of *Geist*, but also for the permanent possibility of a barbaric relapse. As a consequence, the proverbial German seriousness, which stemmed from the pathos of the absolute, was always accompanied by a danger: "Der heilige Ernst kann übergehen in den tierischen, der mit Hybris sich buchstäblich als Absolutes aufwirft und gegen alles wütet, was seinem Anspruch nicht sich fügt" ("Was ist deutsch" 695).

These perils notwithstanding, I think it is fair to argue that, on the whole, Germany's "economic backwardness" was largely viewed positively by Adorno. Although he frequently complained that the German *Geisteskultur* lacked practical relevance, that it refrained from actively shaping and changing the political reality, he nevertheless appreciated the fact that it did not demand "adjustment", for

> Anpassung schneidet ab, wodurch geistige Gebilde über das selbst bereits gesteuerte Konsumentenbedürfnis sich erheben, ihr, vielleicht, Neues und Produktives. Hierzulande ist die Forderung, auch den Geist anzupassen, noch nicht total. Noch wird, sei's auch oft genug mit problematischem Recht, zwischen seinen autonomen Erzeugnissen unterschieden und solchen für den Markt. ("Was ist deutsch" 699)

The fact that in Germany the Enlightenment project had not yet been wholly victorious – the country's dearth of *Verbürgerlichung* – furnished a hideout for progressive thought which refused to accept the notion that society's current *règles du jeux* were to be the final word on the question of mankind's progress.

Paradoxically, then, Germany's feudal or pre-bourgeois residues were simultaneously ferments of the new (cf. *Minima Moralia* 372).

5.2. The Culture Industry

I am now going to turn to Adorno's almost notorious standpoint on the culture industry. If he in any way made contact with something akin to "hell" in the United States, it was definitely his acquaintance with the American entertainment industry. This branch of the capitalist economy most prominently included jazz music, Hollywood, the automobile craze, astrology, the radio, advertisement, magazines and TV-series. Adorno – a decidedly Eurocentric and extremely cultured person – was of the opinion that the culture industry was "the genuinely American form of a totalitarian system" (Jäger, *Adorno* 175) – a true dystopia[9]. Together with Horkheimer, he referred to it as "mass deception" in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (128). What other contemporary observers might have understood to be a comparatively democratic popular culture, Adorno exposed as a wholly undemocratic, inescapable and coercive system in which capitalism and mental manipulation converged to negate freedom and individuality. From Adorno's vantage point, talk of "popular" culture was mere ideology, i.e. a lie justifying an untrue social state. As he saw it, the American market economy confronted him with a

[9] Anyone doubting that there could be any connection whatsoever between America's seemingly innocuous automobile euphoria and National Socialism, for instance, ought to take into consideration the *Minima Moralia* aphorism "Nicht anklopfen", which laments the tendency of technical progress to purge individuality and spontaneity from the operation of machinery as well as its impetus to force people to become more like machinery themselves: "Und welchen Chauffierenden hätten nicht schon die Kräfte seines Motors in Versuchung geführt, das Ungeziefer der Straße, Passanten, Kinder und Radfahrer zuschanden zu fahren? In den Bewegungen, welche die Maschinen von den sie bedienenden verlangen, liegt schon das Gewaltsame, Zuschlagende, stoßweis Unaufhörliche der faschistischen Mißhandlungen" (60).

novel kind of dictatorship. In this world age, he believed, society's objective tendency was embodied in the subjective, dark intentions of the culture industry's general managers: "Hinzu tritt die Verabredung, zumindest die gemeinsame Entschlossenheit der Exekutivgewaltigen, nichts herzustellen oder durchzulassen, was nicht ihren Tabellen, ihrem Begriff von Konsumenten, vor allem ihnen selber gleicht" (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 130). The systemic totality of the culture industry, Adorno believed, encircled its victims' consciousness from all sides, i.e. through various media appealing to different senses, for "je vollständiger die Welt als Erscheinung, desto undurchdringlicher die Erscheinung als Ideologie" ("Prolog" 508). What is more, he was even convinced that the culture industry's shallow diversions and kitsch basically enslaved not only the masses of consumers, but instead the whole of society – including its bourgeois producers (*die Verfügenden*).

From Adorno's point of view, "the culture industry administered a nonspontaneous, reified, phony culture rather than the real thing" (Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 216). "Reification" was one of the key terms of his analysis: The culture industry's commodities were not the product of spontaneous (and thus genuine) experience, but rather reflected rigid preconceptions. Its products did not stand for directness and life, but rather for mediation and lifelessness. Another key term of his was "standardization": In "Kultur und Culture", Adorno employed the metaphor "veil of standardization" to convey the point that the culture industry enveloped absolutely everything, leaving nothing outside the systemic totality it created. This "veil", he believed, standardized art, resulting in stereotypical monotony and predictability of film scenes, measures of music and other artistic

manifestations: “Sie [art; M.K.] ist eine Warengattung, zugerichtet, erfaßt, der industriellen Produktion angeglichen, käuflich und fungibel“ (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 167). The culture industry also standardized scientific publications through “editings”. This essentially excluded the possibility of structuring a piece of research dialectically or in any other deviating fashion (cf. Claussen 244). Perhaps even more disturbing, mass culture not only standardized its products but also the individuals involved in it, turning them into pseudo-individuals who resembled an industrial novelty at the time: “Gerade die trotzige Verschlossenheit oder das gewählte Auftreten des je ausgestellten Individuums werden serienweise hergestellt wie die Yaleschlösser, die sich nach Bruchteilen von Millimetern unterscheiden” (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 177-78).

The culture industry’s manifestations were not autonomous works of art, but instead heteronomous commodities; they did not obey their own intrinsic laws, but rather abided by the extrinsic laws of the market:

> Noch die mit größtem Aufwand in die Welt gesetzten und verteilten Kulturerzeugnisse wiederholen . . . die Gesten des Wirtshausmusikanten, der nach dem Teller auf dem Klavier schielt, während er seinen Gönnern ihre Lieblingsmelodie einpaukt. Die Budgets der Kulturindustrie gehen in die Milliarden, aber das Formgesetz ihrer Leistungen ist das Trinkgeld. (*Minima Moralia* 373)

Purposelessness in the service of purposes defined by the market – the tenet of bourgeois art – had supplanted the principle of idealist aesthetics, i.e. purpose-fulness without purpose (cf. *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 167).

What vexed the critical social philosopher the most was the fact that the culture industry’s commodities did not vie with the present state of affairs, that they did not object to the “verhärteten Verhältnisse” (“Résumé” 62). In fact,

mass culture's ideology could be summed up as parody on the invitation 'to become what you are' (cf. "Ideologienlehre" 477). The axiom that something other than the status quo was inconceivable constituted the culture industry's chief untruth (cf. "Ideologienlehre" 477). As Adorno saw it, art was not only characterized by a relationship to the objective spirit of the era in which it was created, but also by a momentum that transcended this era by giving its recipients *"une promesse de bonheur"*[10] – a foretaste of the "entirely other" (Horkheimer, Foreword xxvi) society. The culture industry's products, however, did not interfere with the reified consciousness of its audience. By reproducing this consciousness with hypocritical devotion to its recipients, the culture industry prevented it from changing; yet change, Adorno thought, was precisely what mass culture's victims secretly desired. The culture industry, however, was only interested in perpetuating the audience's status as consumers. Thus, it could by no means be called "consumers' art" (as a liberal counterargument liked to claim), because it did not work in favor of its recipients' unacknowledged wishes, it did not deliver what people *truly* wanted. Hence Adorno's unsparingly sober conclusion: "die Kulturindustrie . . . verlängert den Willen der Verfügenden in ihre Opfer hinein. Die automatische Selbstreproduktion des Bestehenden in seinen etablierten Formen ist Ausdruck der Herrschaft" ("Filmtransparente" 88).

On the whole, Adorno was of the opinion that the overall effect of the culture industry's vicarious satisfaction amounted to a sort of anti-Enlightenment. The increasing technical dominance over nature had become a means not

[10] In his late work *Ästhetische Theorie*, Adorno dialectically argued that – since happiness in the existing order was vicarious and false – art had to break the promise of felicity in order to keep faith with it (cf. 461). Such a true *"promesse de bonheur"* contrasted markedly with the false pledge of the culture industry, which cynically exploited people's need for happiness and pretended that its immediate and physical offers were the real thing.

of freeing mankind, but of fettering people's consciousness, of deceiving the masses. This, of course, did not lead to autonomous, independent and consciously judging and acting individuals, to the mature and responsible citizen, i.e. the backbone of democracy, but instead entailed new dependency. Psychoanalytically, the culture industry further promoted and exploited a severe ego-weakness and regression of consciousness that were – according to Adorno – already well-nigh rife in contemporary industrial society (cf. "Résumé" 68). Making people the much-scorned "masses" in the first place, the culture industry in the final analysis prevented people from achieving true and long overdue emancipation. It is important to keep in mind that from Adorno's point of view the culture industry was not a specifically American phenomenon; rather, its emergence was predetermined by the logic of the enlightenment process. America was only the world's most advanced "look-out".

From the various manifestations of the culture industry Adorno singled out seven forms that he especially condemned: Advertisement, radio, jazz, film, television, print media and astrology. Delineating Adorno's examination of these seven phenomena systematically, I will try to convey an impression of the culture industry's anatomy to the reader. What did this virtually airtight, coercive system – this negative utopia – really look like? And why did Adorno object to it with such intransigent vehemence?

5.2.1. Advertisement and Radio

The sheer quantity of ads Adorno encountered when he arrived in the United States shocked him. Their numerousness and seeming ubiquity was an unprecedented sight to him. The only approximation to an equivalent he could think of was the National Socialist propaganda he knew from Germany. It then hardly comes as a surprise that he compared the use of advertisement by the culture industry to the use of propaganda by fascism, for both appeared to appeal to people's lowest, most primitive instincts. In 1936, he wrote to Horkheimer:

> Man wird ja endlich doch das Fascismusproblem in Angriff nehmen müssen und dabei stellt sich sogleich das Problem der sozialpsychologischen ‚Vermittlung'. Die aber lässt sich an einem scheinbar ‚harmlosen' Modell studieren, nämlich der Reklame. Man kann wahrscheinlich zu den tiefsten Einsichten in die Struktur des Faschismus gelangen durchs Studium der Reklame, die in ihm erstmals ins politische Zentrum – oder besser in den politischen Vordergrund – tritt . . . (*A./H. Briefwechsel I* 165-66)

What is more, the critical theorist argued that the dissemination of and advancement in technology served authoritarian and totalitarian systems: "Die Nationalsozialisten selber wußten, daß der Rundfunk ihrer Sache Gestalt verlieh wie die Druckerpresse der Reformation" (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 168). Just as the German *Volksempfänger* had aided fascism by spreading propaganda, the American *radio* helped the culture industry by broadcasting advertisement. To make the affinity between propaganda and advertisement even clearer Adorno cited the common case of a commercial for a famous "name band" demanding of its recipients to "Follow Your Leader, X. Y." ("Zeitlose Mode" 132). To Adorno's mind, "mass culture was the seed-bed of political totalitarianism" (Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 218).

Adorno keenly comprehended that radio's sway over its listeners above all stemmed from both its ability to create the illusion of proximity as well as the generally one-sided nature of mass communication. Together, these characteristics accounted for the medium's actual reactionary leverage and immense authoritarian potential. The latter characteristic especially frightened Adorno, for the radio consumer's inability to argue with anyone entailed the danger that the radio speaker's voice would gradually be perceived as the voice of truth, perhaps even as a medium of divine revelation, i.e. as the mouthpiece of the supreme being itself; and in contrast to cinema or television, radio's authoritarian power was exacerbated by the invisibility of the radio commentator – a fact which, Adorno reasoned, further endowed a broadcast over the airwaves with the illusions of infallibility and objectivity (cf. Jenemann 64). By refraining from levying a charge on its listeners, commercial radio further contributed to the deceptive impression of being a disinterested and unbiased authority – which made it just the medium for the transmission of the fascist message (cf. *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 189). Interestingly, these themes had already been touched upon by Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*. At the novel's inception, the narrator introduces the radio agitator and forerunner of American fascism Reverend Paul Peter Prang, whose weekly address holds millions in suspense, as "the very oracle of God" (39). It is highly likely that Adorno's analysis of fascism's and the culture industry's domination by virtue of its reliance on radio was influenced by Lewis's bleak scenario. Finally, Du Bois also acutely apprehended the affinity between totalitarianism and the mass medium under scrutiny: Hitler, he enlightened his *Pittsburgh Courier*

readers, had been "a popular orator just at the time that the radio and loud speaker made speaking a possible state monopoly" (12/12/36).

Yet the triumphant advance of the radio in America, Adorno argued, also had disastrous aesthetic implications. In accordance with Ernst Krenek, he was convinced that the radio – although it preserved the *nunc* ("nowness") of a musical performance – nevertheless divested it of its *hic* ("hereness"); the medium thereby destroyed what Walter Benjamin had called the "aura" (the presence of the non-present) of a piece of music in particular and a work of art in general (cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 191). A piece of music played over the radio thus forfeited its ritualistic, its cultish quality. The radio listener heard maimed or amputated art. Thus, what was broadcast over the air waves were merely concerts in a "depersonalized, collective, objectivized form" (Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 191). More importantly, art was thereby stripped of its negative moment, that is to say, it was deprived of its potential to negate the deplorable present. To be sure, the increased reception of musical performances played on the radio was not confined to the U.S.. However, the habit was much more widespread in the New World than in the Old. Hence Adorno's devastating diagnosis from the year 1962:

> Anders in Amerika: dort kann man unter Wissenschaftlern solchen begegnen, die es Anstrengung kostet, auch nur sich vorzustellen, daß man Musik anders erfahren hat als durchs Radio. Die Kulturindustrie ist weit mehr zur zweiten Natur geworden, als bislang auf dem alten Kontinent. (*Musiksoziologie* 321)

5.2.2. Jazz

Similarly, Adorno harboured a lifelong contempt for jazz music. He abhorred it, and denied that it possessed any artistic value. Jazz, he was

convinced, "does not transcend alienation, it strengthens it. Jazz is commodity in the strictest sense" (qtd. in Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 186). He argued that it was merely – contrary to common assumption – pseudo-individualistic and pseudo-spontaneous, for its improvisation was standardized and consisted of certain recurring patterns. Anything that dynamically deviated from certain tried and tested tricks, formulae and clichés was a priori excluded by the logic of the static system (cf. "Zeitlose Mode" 126). Far from being the culture industry's least shallow branch, jazz also shared paradigms of standardization with other mass cultural phenomena: It, for example, constantly employed and resolved "jams"; this, Adorno thought, resembled the soap operatic formula of "getting into trouble and out again" ("Stars" 41) as well as astrology's strategy of conjuring up threats while simultaneously suggesting ways to deal with them. Adorno argued that jazz's characteristics – such as its syncopation, its partly instrumental and partly vocal sound or its "gliding" impressionist harmonic – were features that had once proven to be successful and were thenceforth perpetually reproduced by the rationally planning music industry. As a result, jazz was not even a fashion, for it lacked a trend's dignity, that is to say its transience. In short, jazz was simply "eine Sache, an der es wenig zu verstehen gibt, außer Spielregeln" ("Zeitlose Mode" 132).

Furthermore, Adorno frequently spoke of the music by employing terms reminiscent of totalitarianism, as when referring to the "Jazzführer Benny Goodman" (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 144) or to "purges" (Jäger, *Adorno* 175). He even compared the relationship between jazz's "core troops" and its "unarticulated followers" to that between the "elite of a totalitarian party" and the party's "rank-and-file comrades" (cf. "Zeitlose Mode" 132-33). Moreover,

by spatializing instead of temporalizing musical development, jazz contributed to the liquidation of the individual – at least if one assumed that temporal development as opposed to mythic repetition was one of the salient aspects of autonomous individuality (cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 187). According to Adorno, jazz was an integral part of the totality of the culture industry: "Ewig grinsen die gleichen Babies aus den Magazinen, ewig stampft die Jazzmaschine" (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 157). It has often been remarked that Adorno's dislike of the music was due to the fact that he was mainly concerned with the solely commercial jazz "produced" by Tin Pan Alley. Yet Adorno denied that this was the case. He found jazz in general to be – in Martin Jay's words – a "capitulation before the powers of the status quo" (*Dialectical Imagination* 188). From Adorno's perspective, the music – like all manifestations of the culture industry – had no negative function and instead persistently exalted the existing: "Jazz ist die falsche Liquidation der Kunst: anstatt dass die Utopie sich verwirklichte, verschwindet sie aus dem Bilde" ("Zeitlose Mode" 137).

Yet some of Adorno's arguments also smacked of irrefutable irrationality and ignorance. When he first heard the word jazz, for instance, he immediately associated it with the German word *Hatz* which conveyed the impression of hounds trailing and ultimately killing slower and weaker prey. It is likely that his pseudonym "Hektor Rottweiler" – under which his first paper "On Jazz" was published – stemmed from this initial association. Furthermore, Adorno believed that jazz's syncopated rhythm, which allegedly expressed "Stolpern und Zufrühkommen" ("Zeitlose Mode" 131), intimated sexual deficiency, i.e. impotence, *Coitus interruptus*, failed orgasm, or even a fear of castration. How

utterly ludicrous such an interpretation is, becomes evident when one recalls how sexually charged and dissolute live jazz performances have been, and that the music was initially also played in brothels. New Orleans – jazz's birthplace – is not necessarily renowned for its chastity. In the same vein, it is assumed that etymologically the word "jazz" derived from "jass" – an early twentieth-century slang term for semen (cf. Cochrane 200).

Although Adorno acknowledged the existence of African elements in jazz, he claimed that the music's possibly unruly and rebellious qualities had soon submitted to its strict scheme; similarly, he claimed, that – as a precursor of blues and jazz – "Negro spirituals" had in the past not only lamented the slave's serfdom, but at the same time submissively confirmed it (cf. "Zeitlose Mode" 124). Unfortunately, we lack Du Bois's response to Adorno's assertions. A description of the "Sorrow Songs" published half a century before Adorno made his comments, however, suggests that Du Bois would have strongly disagreed: "They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world" (*Souls* 207). Clearly, the American slaves did not liberate themselves. However, there were various uprisings in the course of the "peculiar institution's" existence which sufficiently contradicted Adorno's spurious analogy. The two most famous (and notorious) of these rebellions, of course, were Nat Turner's (1831) and John Brown's (1859) uprisings in Virginia. One could, in this context, also mention that numerous blacks had fled to the North, sabotaged plantation operations and enlisted in the Union army. Adorno's disparaging remarks about the African contribution to jazz music reflected not only cultural Eurocentrism, but also a mild form of

parochialism: Adorno – in contrast to Du Bois who travelled widely throughout his life – was not really interested in seeing any continents other than Europe; apparently, he *never* travelled abroad out of the plain desire to personally witness the way of life in a non-European country (cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 186-87).

Besides condemning jazz per se, Adorno also worried about what the culture industry did to classical music. The maiming of the art form by its being broadcast has already been mentioned. Likewise, Adorno excoriated a book by Sigmund Spaeth entitled *Great Symphonies: How to Recognize and Remember Them* (1936), which, for instance, advised its readers to memorize the following lines in order to be able to recognize a theme from Tchaikovsky's symphony *Pathéthique*: "The music has a less pathetic strain, / It sounds more sane and not so full of pain. / Sorrow is ended, grief may be mended, / It seems Tchaikovsky will be calm again!" (qtd. in "Halbbildung" 113). This "explosion of barbarism" ("Halbbildung" 113), Adorno lamented, had probably damaged the musical consciousness of millions of listeners. Although the composer under scrutiny had himself been an exponent of the culture industry, such (further) popularization of his work was especially detrimental, for it emphasized an individual melody, i.e. the atomistic, instead of drawing the listener's attention to the structure, i.e. the totality, of a particular piece of music. Moreover, Adorno deemed it well-nigh satanic that Spaeth's victims who had internalized the proposed lines would never again be able to free themselves of them and appreciate Tchaikovsky's symphony for what it was.

5.2.3. Film

As Adorno saw it, if one were to regard the culture industry as a spatial entity, as an actually existing "evil empire", Hollywood could be considered its geographical, its physical center. What is more, Adorno thought of the movie industry as the sector of mass culture which most closely resembled industrial production in the literal sense of the term. Technical procedures, an extensive division of labor, an inclusion of machines and a separation of workers from the means of production (i.e. the conflict between artists and film studios) – all of these characteristics accounted for his assessment.

It could be regarded as a great irony that – during the greater part of his exile – Adorno resided in Santa Monica (Los Angeles) of all places. This, however, did not in any way mollify him. From his perspective, the American film industry basically (i.e. with the few exceptions discussed earlier) possessed no redeeming traits. Its products – just like other manifestations of mass culture – emphasized adjustment over consciousness. In fact, Adorno primarily imputed the aforementioned regression of consciousness to the influence of Hollywood pictures: "Nicht umsonst kann man in Amerika von zynischen Filmproduzierenden hören, ihre Streifen hätten auf das Niveau Elfjähriger Rücksicht zu nehmen. Indem sie das tun, möchten sie am liebsten die Erwachsenen zu Elfjährigen machen" ("Résumé" 68). Notwithstanding the vigilance he exercised and the fleeting enjoyment it may have granted him, every visit to the movie theater allegedly left him "dümmer und schlechter" (*Minima Moralia* 29) than before (which is rather difficult to believe when one takes into account his positive cinematic experiences mentioned in an earlier

part of this thesis). Adorno once even claimed that what bothered him most about film were the pictures (cf. Scherpe 7). What is more, commercial films resembled one another so closely that a movie was basically but a preview of or an ad for itself. No matter how hard it tried, it could not cover up its commodity character. Last but not least, a film bluntly deceived its audience: "Jeder kommerzielle Film ist eigentlich nur die Vorschau auf das, was er verspricht und worum er zugleich betrügt" ("Filmtransparente" 88).[11]

Basically, the only major exceptions to the rule were the films of Orson Welles and Charlie Chaplin. The latter, whose oeuvre includes such milestones as *Modern Times* (1936) and *The Great Dictator* (1940), seems to have especially appealed to Adorno. On one occasion, which has already been touched on, he even met the British comedian: At a party in Malibu, Adorno inadvertently started when the amputee Harold Russell – one of the main characters in William Wyler's post-war classic *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) – shook his hand. Russell – who had been maimed in combat – had been given two iron hooks which served as hands. Chaplin, who witnessed the encounter between the German philosopher and the American actor, astutely noticed the sudden expression of shock and bewilderment on Adorno's face as well as the ensuing involuntary grimace. Once the actor had left, Chaplin immediately re-enacted the scene. Later, the German intellectual would reflect on the privilege of having been imitated by Chaplin thus: "So nah am Grauen ist alles Lachen, das er bereitet und das einzig in solcher Nähe seine Legitimation gewinnt und sein Rettendes" ("Zweimal Chaplin" 93). Like all

[11] By contrast, Walter Benjamin viewed the characteristic art form of twentieth century mass culture much more positively. In his most acclaimed essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) he contended that a film's lack of aura (which, in the case of traditional art, resulted from a work's absolute uniqueness) had democratic implications.

great art, Chaplin's films – despite their legendary humor – possessed a critical moment by virtue of their preserving the "Gedächtnis des akkumulierten Leidens" (*Ästhetische Theorie* 387)[12]. They captured suffering and contradiction, and thereby negatively held onto the idea of a true life, i.e. life as it could be, Adorno believed.

5.2.4. Television

Adorno regarded television as a voice of the objective spirit – notwithstanding the fact that it was industrially planned and not the involuntary outcome of the interplay of social forces (cf. "Prolog" 513). Although the medium under scrutiny and film were somewhat related, television was younger and arguably already more influential, for it addressed a much larger pool of recipients as opposed to the cinematic medium. Yet Adorno denied that the socially effective or prevailing (*Wirksame*) was also the socially appropriate or desirable (*Richtige*); rather, the former was the opposite of the latter (cf. "Prolog" 516). The vocabulary of television's "hieroglyphics", Adorno thought, consisted of stereotypes; moreover, the TV-audience did not grasp the medium's products as an "An-sich" whom it owed concentration, attention, understanding and intellectual effort, but instead as a mere favor. What is more, TV-shows – as expected – did not transcend the realm of the status quo; instead, the present was perennially reinforced, for "was anders wäre, ist unerträglich, weil es an das erinnert, was ihm [the viewer; M.K.] versagt ist" ("Prolog" 510).

[12] It does not seem to have occurred to Adorno that this aesthetic characteristic also applied to jazz.

What struck Adorno as another fundamental characteristic of television was the apparent dearth of distance between the constructs of the medium and reality. The tube, Adorno argued, avoided anything which in any way might remind its viewers of the ritual and celebratory origin of the work of art in antiquity; rather, the medium's constructs were regarded as an inseparable part of reality, as pieces of housing accessory, as something that one possessed. Furthermore, Adorno was convinced that the closeness between the tube's constructs and reality served to disguise the actual alienation between people on the one hand and people and things on the other. Such proximity, which he called a parody on brotherliness and solidarity, was a substitute for the spontaneity and directness for which people yearned, but which society nevertheless refused to grant them: "Sie [the spectators; M.K.] verwechseln das ganz und gar Vermittelte, illusionär Geplante mit der Verbundenheit, nach der sie darben" ("Prolog" 512). The outcome, the German intellectual thought, was further regression of consciousness.

It is important to note, I believe, that Adorno merely talked about *commercial* television (cf. "Prolog" 511). That is to say, he indeed differentiated between TV-programming engaged in as a private enterprise and public television (*öffentlich-rechtliches Fernsehen*). While this is certainly a relevant distinction when considering various European and even Anglo-Saxon countries (for instance, Great Britain's BBC or Canada's CBC), the distinction is not at all pertinent when one regards the U.S. which has never had a real national public television station. America's copious local PBS-stations cannot, I am convinced, be compared to typical public TV-programming because they are partly dependent on voluntary private contributions and can usually boast

but limited financial means. And, since there is not even a political consensus regarding their basic legitimacy, their future existence remains precarious. To conclude, Adorno certainly did not condemn the medium per se. His open-mindedness would have surely excluded such irrationality. Rather, he believed that the tube as a medium of private enterprise excluded the possibility of its being used as a tool of enlightenment. As long as sponsors determined (Adorno would have said: "dictated") the medium's content, it could only deliver shallow, infantile and regressive diversion: "Damit Fernsehen das Versprechen hält, das in dem Wort immer noch mitschwingt, muß es von all dem sich emanzipieren, womit es, verwegenste Wunscherfüllung, deren eigenes Prinzip widerruft und die Idee des großen Glücks verrät ans Warenhaus fürs kleine" ("Prolog" 516-17).

5.2.5. Print Media and Astrology

Adorno's criticism of the culture industry also included American print media in general and magazines in particular. Comparatively renowned newspapers, however, were also part of his critique. What he fiercely attacked was the fact that even a paper like the *Los Angeles Times* catered to its readers' basest instincts in its astrology column. In their seminal study *The Authoritarian Personality*, Adorno and the Berkeley scholars had already discovered that test persons who otherwise scored relatively high on the F-Scale also tended to concur with the ominous and destructive content of superstitious statements (cf. "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen" 733). One of the items with which the researchers measured the belief in supernatural forces determining

one's fate was the following: "Although many people may scoff it, it may yet be shown that astrology can explain a lot of things"; another ran: "It is more than a remarkable coincidence that Japan had an earthquake on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1944" (*Authoritarian Personality* 191). The theoretical explanation Adorno et al. had proposed for this hitherto repeatedly verified empirical finding was that authoritarians – due to aggression, anxiety, or the feeling of guilt – tended to shirk responsibility and transfer it to external forces beyond their control, i.e. they tended to become reconciled to their "fate" (cf. Beit-Hallahmi 149). Moreover, the professional astrologer, who interpreted celestial constellations and then disseminated these "findings" in a standardized and commercial form, shared crucial character traits with the demagogue and agitator, Adorno believed.

Yet Adorno did not only dread the fact that astrology – like fascist propaganda – reinforced conformist views. More importantly, he recognized that the tendency to accept occult "reasoning" reflected a regression of consciousness, a retrograde step to magical thinking. The alacrity with which the readers of astrology columns concurred with the superstitious "explanations" and "prognoses" was indicative of an anti-Enlightenment undercurrent in the era of late capitalism, Adorno believed (cf. *Minima Moralia* 463-64). The regressed consciousness

> hat die Kraft verloren, das Unbedingte zu denken und das Bedingte zu ertragen . . . Der Monotheismus zersetzt sich in zweite Mythologie. „Ich glaube an Astrologie, weil ich nicht an Gott glaube", antwortete ein Befragter in einer amerikanischen sozialpsychologischen Untersuchung. Die rechtsprechende Vernunft, die zum Begriff des einen Gottes sich erhoben hatte, scheint in dessen Sturz hineingerissen. Geist dissoziiert sich in Geister und büßt darüber die Fähigkeit ein zu erkennen, daß es jene nicht gibt. (*Minima Moralia* 462)

In irrationally relating the unrelated (i.e. stellar movements on the one hand and man's empirical life on the other), astrology also resembled the pathological condition of paranoia. And by suggesting that the performance of certain unpleasant tasks could free its readers of guilt feelings or offer other compensations, it instilled compulsive behavior in them (cf. "Stars" 53). These points in particular made clear what Leo Löwenthal had referred to when describing mass culture as 'psychoanalysis in reverse': The exploitation of astrology by the culture industry did not dispel neuroses but rather strengthened them.

On a more basic level, astrology simply dulled its recipients' minds. Adorno exemplified such stultification by citing the well-known advice of an astrologer to drive particularly carefully on a given day. Although innocuous at first sight, it was nevertheless harmful. The claim that the always valid and therefore simply idiotic advice had required a careful reading of stellar constellations was the exact opposite of Enlightenment – of what Kant had envisioned when he demanded the "Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit" (37). Astrology both throve on and reinforced 'semi-erudition'. Again, superstition in print media was not a specifically American phenomenon. But the U.S. was indeed the country in which the culture industry displayed itself in its most advanced and potent form.

Yet what perhaps shocked Adorno even more than the print media's avaricious involvement in the dissemination of the esoteric and the occult, was the fact that superstition also appeared to be making headway in putatively enlightened circles. The anti-Enlightenment undercurrent of contemporary society, i.e. the social totality's disastrous if not fatal tendency to renounce *logos*

and re-embrace *mythos*, began to engulf academics with whom Adorno and Horkheimer collaborated during their banishment from Germany. On November 9th, 1944, Adorno wrote to his mentor that he had attended a large reception at Ernst Simmel's house – a fellow refugee from Germany, physician and president of San Francisco's psychoanalytic association. On this occasion, Adorno imparted to his friend, a woman practicing chiromancy had given a talk, the content of which he furiously called "ein abscheuliches Konglomerat aus Kaffeesatzaberglauben, faschistoider Ausdruckslehre und pseudowissenschaftlicher Nomenklatur" (346). What was worse, however, was that his former mistress Renée Nell had served as the presenter's assistant showing pictures of the "mysterious" lines in the palms of hands – "ganz in der Haltung des hübschen Mädchens, das mit dem Ventriloquisten auftritt" (346). And the worst thing was, Adorno thought, that in the ensuing discussion only he and Otto Fenichel denounced the "Zinnober" (346). What strikes one as especially noteworthy is that Simmel, who would edit the famous, multilayered, well-reasoned and insightful collection of essays *Anti-Semitism: A Social Disease* in 1946, also endorsed the fortuneteller's "arguments".

This brings me to a conclusion of this investigation's main part. Adorno's "American experience" was a profoundly ambiguous one. He very much appreciated the "peaceful, unaggressive, good-natured, friendly humanity of everyday life" (qtd. in Schefczyk) in the United States, and was even convinced that the work of several fairly popular artists (among them Charlie Chaplin and Orson Welles) showed a certain measure of artistic resistance against the pressures of the culture industry (cf. Edgar 105). On the whole, however, a man with his leftist instincts and critical personality could not really

feel at home in a society where the market reigned supreme. In his definitive *Autobiography*, which was published shortly before his death, W.E.B. Du Bois displayed a remarkably similar attitude, lamenting not only an increasing commercialization but also drawing attention to the dialectic of the enlightenment:

> Perhaps the most extraordinary characteristic of current America is the attempt to reduce life to buying and selling. Life is not love unless love is sex and bought and sold. Life is not knowledge save knowledge of technique, of science for destruction. Life is not beauty except beauty for sale. Life is not art unless its price is high and it is sold for profit. All life is production for profit, and for what is profit but for buying and selling again? (418)

Furthermore, Adorno was homesick. This fact was aptly demonstrated by the quote at the beginning of *Minima Moralia*: "Das Leben lebt nicht" (17). The statement was taken from the arguably anti-American novel *Der Amerika-Müde* (1855) by the Austrian writer Ferdinand Kürnberger, who had originally been a fire-eating Forty-Eighter democrat. The *roman à clef*, however, in which Kürnberger had alluded to the disappointing sojourn of the Austrian writer Nikolaus Lenau to the U.S., had amounted to a condemnation of America's alleged materialism rather than a praise of its republican polity. The quote Adorno borrowed from the novel adequately summarized the disappointment of his "damaged life". Even in 1939, he had already referred to himself as "amerikamüde" (*Eltern* 18). And a little less than three years later he had come to realize that he was extremely unsuited to be an emigrant (cf. *Eltern* 143). From his perspective, his experience in the purely bourgeois country of the inescapable culture industry was largely one of conformist constraints. Gretel Adorno, in a letter to Maria Wiesengrund composed on May 23rd, 1947, had argued that the lure Europe exerted on them was stronger than

ever. She had then gone on to quote the writer Friedrich Thorberg: “Ein Bekannter . . . hat den schönen Satz gesagt: er hätte zwar kein Heimweh nach Europa, aber Wegweh” (403) – a sentiment Adorno apparently shared.

Moreover, he missed speaking and hearing the German language of which he said the following: “Die deutsche Sprache hat offenbar eine besondere Wahlverwandtschaft zur Philosophie, und zwar zu deren spekulativem Moment” (“Was ist deutsch” 699). He claimed that an objective characteristic of German – namely its metaphysical surplus, its metaphysical excess – accounted for its elective affinity to speculative philosophy: “Geschichtlich ist die deutsche Sprache . . . fähig dazu geworden, etwas an den Phänomenen auszudrücken, was in ihrem bloßen Sosein, ihrer Positivität und Gegebenheit nicht sich erschöpft“ (“Was ist deutsch“ 700). His mother tongue, he argued, had retained a greater part of the power of expression than other Western languages. To back up his claim, Adorno spoke of the practical impossibility of translating German philosophical terms such as “Geist”, “meinen“, “Moment”, “Selbstbewusstsein“ or “Erfahrung” into another language without forfeiting some aspects of their meaning (cf. “Was ist deutsch” 700). “Aufheben“, a term from Hegelian dialectics, was another case in point: Besides signifying “to preserve”, it also meant “to cancel” and “to transcend”. In America, Adorno contended, he was expropriated of his beloved language and cut off from the historical dimension which lent force to his insights (cf. *Minima Moralia* 44). Reflecting on the reasons which had impelled him to return to his home country, he would later argue that, even in those instances in which his thinking sharply opposed the German tradition, the substance of his thoughts was still inescapably linked to this tradition; had he tried to continue his work

in English, it would have been tantamount to denying his intellectual disposition (cf. "Warum sind sie zurückgekehrt" 394).

Yet although Adorno disliked copious American characteristics and missed the place where he had spent his childhood, "the" land of the culture industry was not necessarily "hell" for him. Writing to his mother on April 12th, 1946, after his father had suffered a severe stroke, Adorno lamented that the fate of emigration seemed to have hit them with full force only after the downfall of Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, when one read the letters of his much-despised uncle Louis, Adorno pointed out, "hat man das Gefühl, daß wir alle selbst im Unglück noch glücklich sind, verglichen mit denen, die in die deutsche Hölle gerieten" (359). Writing about a publisher's rejection of his *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (it was allegedly "badly organized"[13]), the scholar remarked: "Ich nenne diese Beispiele nicht, um mich über das Land zu beklagen, wo ich gerettet ward, sondern um zu verdeutlichen, warum ich nicht blieb. Verglichen mit den Grauen des Nationalsozialismus waren meine literarischen Erlebnisse läppische Bagatellen" ("Was ist deutsch" 698).

Adorno's concession notwithstanding, one should critically add that his analyses of American mass society more often than not blurred the boundaries between fascism and the culture industry. Although such lack of discrimination can be explained psychologically with recourse to the traumatic experience of

[13] This allegation was first addressed and rejected by Adorno in a piece of correspondence written to Horkheimer on the day after Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender. In the letter under scrutiny, Adorno reflected that, although fascism had been the cause of their lives' becoming one, it was strange that in the course of their exile their existence had assumed such a weight of its own that the initial cause of their cooperation and fellowship had all but faded in importance. He then compared this observation to Goethe's *Faust* and argued that it resembled the bet to which the protagonist's fate is originally bound, but which, in the course of the drama, also falls into oblivion in relation to his life. And, although Goethe finally reinserts the wager into the drama, it is done so in a makeshift manner and hardly possesses any relevance in relation to Faust's existence, which, by then, has become wholly independent of it: "Es ist genau dies überaus tiefsinnige Moment in der Konstruktion des Faust, um dessentwillen man das Stück hierzulande, wie Sie es einmal nannten, 'badly organized' schelten würde" (101).

Nazism, it is nevertheless untenable from a scholarly point of view. Moreover, the Institute's stubborn preconception that fascism was the ultimate upshot of liberalism and not its direct opposite, severely hampered the convincingness of its analysis of U.S. society; for, if liberal democracy of necessity entailed totalitarianism, why did America with its paragon of a liberal polity fail to undergo such a transformation (cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 297)?

Although the U.S. plainly refuted Adorno's assumption, he would stay true to it into the 1960s – at least with regard to the German development. As late as 1962 he argued that the Weimar Republic had itself hatched out the catastrophe that superseded it, that Weimar's celebrated and putatively liberal culture had established the fascist decade. To substantiate his claim, Adorno referred to such expressionists as Hanns Johst ("Wenn ich Kultur höre . . . entsichere ich meinen Browning") as well as to certain phenomena in the musical sphere:

> Gerade jene Operngebilde, an die Ruhm und Skandal sich hefteten, nehmen in ihrem zwielichtigen Verhalten zur Anarchie heute so sich aus, als wäre es ihre Hauptfunktion gewesen, dem Nationalsozialismus die Parolen zuzuspielen, die ihm dann zum Kulturterror dienten; als hätte die geflissentlich hervorgekehrte Unordnung schon nach jener Ordnung gegiert, die dann der Hitler über Europa brachte. ("Jene zwanziger Jahre" 62)

These lines betray a lingering distrust of liberal democracy, and lend credence to my argument that Adorno – for all his America-friendly declamations in the 1950s and 60s – would never *fully* become reconciled to the United States and its arguably most salient feature, namely its political system.

6. A Comparative Assessment

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was a restless man. As a civil rights activist and eventual Marxist, he was always in search of the proper, decent, emancipated, and just society which would offer every human being a life in dignity regardless of his or her skin color. Given the fact that he was a man who knew the world from extensive traveling, it is not surprising that for him "hell" on earth was not located in one country. Instead, he believed that the term was an apt metaphor for a certain set of racist "values". And he grasped that these "values" were not only embodied by the German Nuremberg Laws, but also by American Jim Crow (cf. Lewis, *Fight* 400). As a result, he always took great pains to differentiate between the German population on the one hand, and the authoritarian regime which was fast turning into a totalitarian nightmare on the other hand. Hence his balanced newspaper accounts.

Du Bois's general fondness of Germany and its people was also evidenced by the penultimate article he wrote for the *Pittsburgh Courier*. In the opinion piece under scrutiny he related how he had met "an important government official" (1/2/37) on the eve of his departure from Berlin. As he saw it, the middle-aged German friend – an academic who had served in the First World War – stood for "a type of German thought and feeling for which I had deep respect"; Du Bois further described him as having "the eyes and deep earnestness of the German idealist – the sort leidenschaft and empfindlichkeit that in the past has made Germany great" (1/2/37). Apparently, Du Bois still (even at the age of sixty-eight) greatly admired what he believed to be distinctive elements of the German intellectual tradition, such as determination,

serious-ness, passion and sensitivity. Positive encounters – like the one with the government official – definitely helped to shape his ultimate evaluation of Nazi Germany, and contributed to the fact that he did not perceive it as a worldly "purgatory".

Du Bois's esteem for his German acquaintance was intensified by the latter's forthright criticism of Nazi anti-Semitism. Although the government official – whose name Du Bois did not reveal – attempted to explain and thereby rationalize how the German hatred of Jews had been unleashed (namely by jealousy and fear), he nevertheless accused Julius Streicher of fanaticism and argued in favor of banning *Der Stürmer*. With regard to the regime's treatment of Jewish Germans, Du Bois's acquaintance frankly stated that "much has been done of which we are ashamed"; he was – erroneously – certain that "the worst is over" and that "betterment will slowly follow in time" (1/2/37). Such humane sentiments were obviously in line with Du Bois's uncompromising anti-racism. Moreover, it might be claimed that from Du Bois's perspective they represented the most admirable aspects of the German intellectual tradition. Clearly, such feelings above all stemmed from the country's (comparatively few) exponents of Enlightenment thought such as Immanuel Kant, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, Moses Mendelsohn, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing or Georg Forster.

Likewise, it is only fair to reiterate the finding that America – despite its being "the" land of the much despised culture industry – was not "hell" for Adorno either. Although his exile devastated him at times, he was nonetheless aware of the fact that the United States had saved him and his parents from the Nazi death camps. Even several years before the large-scale extermination of

the European Jews, Adorno had already written the following about Germany: "In Deutschland war es grauenvoller als je, das Land ist wirklich bis in den kleinsten Alltag hinein zu einer Hölle geworden" (*A./H. Briefwechsel I* 85). Evidently, German fascism, as was suggested at the outset, was "hell" on earth for him.

Still, one could argue that, owing to the fact that Adorno's experience abroad was comparatively long and enforced whereas Du Bois's visit was relatively short and voluntary, Adorno's transatlantic sojourn was *subjectively* worse than Du Bois's foreign experience. Said distinguishes between two forms of exilation, namely an involuntary type encompassing exiles and refugees and a voluntary form composed of expatriates and émigrés (cf. 181). It is fairly evident that Adorno's case has to be categorized under the first type, whereas Du Bois was "only" an expatriate (studies at the University of Berlin from 1892 to 1894) and émigré (Ghanaian naturalization in 1963) throughout his life. *Objectively*, however, the normative comparison between the United States under Roosevelt and Truman and Nazi Germany in 1936 appears to be a no-brainer. Another reason why Adorno's final verdict was more negative than Du Bois's pertains to the fact that he perceived the culture industry as gradually annihilating cultural nonidentity, whereas, from Du Bois's vantage point, Nazi Germany was not as hostile towards racial (but not religious) difference as the United States. For the African-American, Germany was a place where one could be different without fear, whereas for the critical and speculative philosopher, America (in an intellectual sense) was *not* a place where one could be different without fear.

Adorno perhaps made this point most explicitly clear in an essay on Aldous Huxley's dystopian novel *Brave New World* (1932), in which he forthrightly – some would say: unabashedly – made use of fascist terminology to express the predicament of the European refugee devoted to *Geist*: "Dem Intellektuellen von drüben wird unmißverständlich bedeutet, daß er sich als autonomes Wesen auszumerzen habe, wenn er etwas erreichen – unter die Angestellten des zum Supertrust zusammengeschlossenen Lebens aufgenommen werden will" ("Huxley" 98). If the refractory intellectual, however, refused to surrender to America's cultural-industrial *Gleichschaltung*, if the recalcitrant émigré spurned being made into a thing, then he or she inevitably exposed him- or herself to the shocks of the "zu Riesenblöcken aufgetürmte[n] Dingwelt" ("Huxley 98). In the face of such shocks, the powerless intellectual could only react with outright panic (cf. "Huxley" 98). What gives these lines their particular relevance is that they were written *during* Adorno's exile, and therefore convey an impression of the ordeal to which his confrontation with "the other" at times amounted. Although from hindsight even Adorno might have regarded his American experience as a necessary and, in the final analysis, fruitful part of his *Bildungsroman*, such surmises are irrelevant, for they hardly compensate for the damage inflicted on his life by both Nazi Germany and his American exile.

One should add that Adorno's relationship to the United States changed drastically during the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, his increased activities in the field of practical political pedagogy and enlightenment were accompanied by a radical reassessment of American democracy and, in the final analysis, an appreciation of the United States as a "Leuchtturm freiheitlicher Zivilität, die

sich Europa und insbesondere das in seiner moralischen Katastrophe untergegangene Deutschland zum Maßstab zu nehmen und zu erarbeiten hatte" (Offe 115). Adorno's volte-face, i.e. his now largely appreciative position which was diametrically opposed to parts of the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, was characterized by such phenomena as an esteem for the demise of authoritarianism among German university students (which he regarded as an assimilation to American conditions), the relative weakness and unobtrusiveness of the American state (e.g. the absence of a civil service with tenure) as well as the fact that U.S. citizens tended to regard democracy as a polity of their own choosing and, consequently, themselves not as the objects but rather as the subjects of the political process. Similarly, Adorno later self-critically reevaluated the status of empirical social research in relation to theory, and conceded that the latter tended to produce false (but nevertheless necessary) generalizations (cf. "Halbbildung" 101). The Nazis' deprecation of "public opinion research", Adorno contended, had been an essential part of their anti-liberal agenda, for statistical evaluation treated every voice equally and thereby inadvertently reminded interviewees of the free and secret elections which fascism had abolished; the relatedness of character between an empirical survey and a democratic election was perhaps best expressed by the term "poll", Adorno admitted (cf. "Empirische Sozialforschung" 478-79). It is highly likely (as contemporary exponents of critical theory such as Jürgen Habermas and Claus Offe have convincingly argued) that Adorno's (and Horkheimer's) seeking a way out of the aporia of a "sich selbst überbietenden Ideologiekritik" (qtd. in Offe 113) was to be facilitated by a *Praxis* of democratic pedagogy in the venerable tradition of the Enlightenment.

In a similar vein, David Jenemann argues that Adorno's relationship to the United States was not marred by a dislike of the American political system but rather by his revulsion at American chumminess which flatly negated his intellectual sophistication, refinement, rigor and exactingness (cf. 183). Thus Adorno's unwavering devotion to theory was at the heart of his objection to the more pragmatic American ways. Jenemann even goes so far as to claim that "his criticisms of America are inseparable from his genuine *love* for it" (188). Although I think he is correct in assuming that precisely because Adorno whole-heartedly appreciated various aspects of U.S. life he also criticized them as unrelentingly as he did, I believe Jenemann is mistaken in supposing that Adorno actually *loved* America. In fact, much of what Offe and Jenemann highlight strike me less as deliberate syntheses but rather as *post facto* transfigurations Adorno undertook for different reasons.[1] Such transfigurations are certainly justified and instructive. But they nevertheless fail to capture the essence of experience, i.e. the impressions and feelings towards a certain phenomenon *at the point in time at which the subject is confronted with the phenomenon*. Impressions and feelings affect individuals above all when they are relevant, for it is precisely then that people are subjected to the joys and torments that constitute certain experiences. Theoretical retrospective texts are certainly more balanced, refined, enduring and worthwhile to read, but they can also entail the severe distortion of experience. Hence this investigation's emphasis on Adorno's private and professional correspondences. I would agree with Jenemann, however, in claiming that Adorno's differentiated reaction to

[1] Iring Fetscher, a contemporary and acquaintance of Adorno, more than supports this conclusion. In a personal e-Mail message sent to me on February 14th, 2008, he claimed that the critical theorist never revised the dismal "Amerikabild" propounded in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

the United States was – in a positive sense – neither fish nor fowl, and that Adorno was thereby in keeping with the tenet of nonidentity propounded by a famous assertion to be found in the *Minima Moralia* aphorism "Musterung": "Freiheit wäre, nicht zwischen schwarz und weiß zu wählen, sondern aus solcher vorgeschriebenen Wahl herauszutreten" (245-46).

Yet this general inclination to carefully differentiate, "to mediate between conceptual poles and span the space between, thereby resisting being pinned down in any one camp or other" (Jenemann 189), did not prevent Adorno from stubbornly criticizing the empowerment of the dark side of the Enlightenment in America throughout his life – although his later analyses were perhaps not as harsh as his original ones[2]. From Horkheimer's and Adorno's vantage point, the Enlightenment – i.e. the increasing technical mastery of nature – was a twofold phenomenon which referred to both social emancipation and scientific reason[3]. However, the critical theorists believed that these two characteristics had drifted apart, and that mere instrumental, calculating and formal reason had

[2] What makes an understanding of Adorno's attitude towards his American exile so difficult is that even in his putatively synthetic and more mature later texts he sometimes lapsed back into his original pugnaciousness. Writing on "Halbbildung", for instance, he complained that "das bis in die letzten Verästelungen nach dem Äquivalenzprinzip gemodelte [American; M.K.] Leben erschöpft sich in der Reproduktion seiner selbst, der Wiederholung des Getriebes, und seine Forderungen ergehen an den Einzelnen so hart und gewalttätig, daß er weder dagegen als ein sein Leben aus sich heraus Führender sich behaupten, noch sie als eins mit seiner menschlichen Bestimmung erfahren kann" (107). Such relapses "prove" that – although America freed him of naïve self-certainty – the dialectic between himself and his American experience basically remained negative. Even Adorno does not really seem to have been able to overcome the "tragic fatality" ("Kultur und Culture") of German-American relations, i.e. the stark contrast between uncritical over-identification with the U.S. on the one hand and disapproving isolation from America on the other.

[3] Only in rare cases did a single individual stand for both sides of the Enlightenment: the German Georg Forster (1754-1794), for example, participated in Cook's second voyage around the world and later supported the French Revolution as a Jacobin in Mainz. Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902) is another case in point: The physician was not only a pioneer in the fields of cellular pathology (*omnis cellula e cellula*) and anthropology, but also represented the social-liberal *Fortschrittspartei* in the Prussian Parliament.

gained control in the Western world, and especially in the United States. Karl Kraus's pun "Fordschritt" (a blending of Henry Ford's name and the German word for progress) perfectly illustrated that modernity did not necessarily imply humanity (cf. Jäger, *Adorno* 172). It was Adorno's lifelong wish and scholarly endeavour to bridge the dangerous gap between the light side of the Enlightenment, namely the emancipative idea, and its potentially dark side, i.e. mere technical and scientific rationality.

To Adorno's mind the United States was the most rationalized country in the whole world. His disappointing acquaintance with the American scientific community and its belief that *science*, above all, meant *measurement* solidified this impression. His brief collaboration with the Princeton Radio Research Project had painfully driven home the fact that the number had practically become the canon of the Enlightenment: "Der Aufklärung wird zum Schein was in Zahlen . . . nicht aufgeht; der moderne Positivismus verweist es in die Dichtung . . . Beharrt wird auf der Zerstörung von Göttern und Qualitäten" (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 13-14). The Enlightenment, Adorno was convinced, thereby lapsed back into myth. Conceptual thinking, which not only captured the positive and negative moments of the actual but also of the possible, was gradually made to yield to "one-dimensional" (Herbert Marcuse) thought which expressed itself through mathematical formulae; such formulae, however, were unable to express negation and thus incapable of pointing beyond the given. Instead of criticizing the social totality, empirical social research isolated and analyzed particular aspects of reality, thereby inadvertently reproducing and affirming them: "Im Research spielt der Geist dieser Welt mit sich selber, aber so wie Kinder Kondukteur spielen, indem sie

Billette verkaufen, die nirgendwohin führen" ("Prokrustes" 296). On the whole, Adorno deemed the United States' tendency towards "utilitarian" thinking blind because it shut itself off from the incessantly growing contradictions and consequently believed that everything was fine as long as it worked (cf. "Was ist deutsch" 697).

Yet what horrified him most was the totality and systemic character of the culture industry which – from his point of view – stifled intellectual maturity in the form of independent and critical thinking by instilling passivity, conformity and resignation into its recipients. He believed that the power which the production of mass culture wielded over Americans prevented their true emancipation and basically perpetuated their mental bondage. Adorno refuted the liberal counterargument that consumers were simply supplied with what they demanded. People, Adorno, argued, were not the culture industry's subjects but rather its objects:

> Scheinheilig beansprucht die Kulturindustrie, nach den Konsumenten sich zu richten und ihnen zu liefern, was sie sich wünschen. Aber während sie beflissen jeden Gedanken an ihre eigene Autonomie verpönt und ihre Opfer als Richter proklamiert, übertrifft ihre vertuschte Selbstherrlichkeit alle Exzesse der autonomen Kunst. Nicht sowohl paßt Kulturindustrie sich den Reaktionen der Kunden an, als dass sie jene fingiert. Sie übt sie ihnen ein, indem sie sich benimmt, als wäre sie selber ein Kunde. (*Minima Moralia* 382-83)

The concept of "taste", which stemmed from the heyday of liberalism, had become outdated and meaningless; it was no longer relevant at a time when the culture industry was gradually liquidating all traces of autonomous subjectivity and replacing them with manipulation (cf. Jay, *Dialectical Imagination* 178). Although Adorno's utter disgust of the culture industry and the reification of life to which it contributed never subsided, he abstained from wholly condem-

ning the United States. Despite its apparent and gross flaws, he still realized that it was one of the "homes" of two Enlightenment – even bourgeois – values he fought for all his life: Humanity and critique[4].

I want to close this scholarly investigation by pinpointing a peculiar symmetry: While Du Bois was utterly concerned about the fate of blacks in Nazi Germany, he was interested in the situation of German Jews only to a lesser extent. His declining Franz Boas's invitation to join the American Committee for Anti-Nazi Literature in 1935, his correspondence with Victor Lindemann as well as his disconcerting legalism attest to this claim. My argument is also sustained by Du Bois's ambivalently paraphrasing his aforementioned German acquaintance on the topic of the *Ostjuden*: "The German people in the depths of their post-war misery felt a bitter jealousy and fear of this foreign element that was usurping power in their own state" (1/2/37). Likewise, Adorno, as opposed to Horkheimer, did not demonstrate any real interest in the lot of African Americans. One well-nigh yearns for Du Bois's reaction to a passage from *Minima Moralia's* "Mélange" on the importance of diversity: "Attestiert man dem Neger, er sei genau wie der Weiße, während er es doch nicht ist, so tut man ihm insgeheim schon wieder Unrecht an. Man demütigt ihn freundschaftlich durch einen Maßstab, hinter dem er unter dem Druck der Systeme notwendig zurückbleiben muß, und dem zu genügen überdies ein fragwürdiges Verdienst wäre" (185). In order to somewhat exonerate Adorno, however, it should be added that he did not take any real interest in the fate of the American Jewish community either. In fact,

[4] In the last year of his life, Adorno claimed that critique was not only essential to but even constitutive of democracy (cf. "Kritik" 10). He regarded a system of checks and balances, a free press as well as a mature and autonomous citizenry not only as prerequisites to but also as expressions of a democratic polity.

Adorno, in contrast to Du Bois, appears to have altogether rejected the politicization of identity. Moreover, his dismissive attitude towards identity politics was even conducive to his theoretical arguments, for it allowed him to freely excoriate the culture industry – a sphere, after all, in which Jews wielded immense influence.

Such speculation inadvertently draws one's attention to another major difference between the two: While Adorno's transatlantic negotiations throughout his life were largely involuntary and bipolar, Du Bois's were largely voluntary and triangular. Throughout his life, Du Bois always took Africa into consideration as part of his analyses, a fact which is also nicely illustrated by his *Pittsburgh Courier* articles in which African phenomena always figured as latent comparative entities. Only when he was forced into exile by the Nazis did Adorno – albeit reluctantly and merely in part – shed his parochialism. By contrast, Du Bois's outspoken internationalism impelled him to explore the world from an early age onwards. While Adorno's sense of identity was firmly German and therefore relatively unproblematic, Du Bois's life was spent searching for just such a secure sense of belonging. Only in his late *Autobiography* did he retrospectively proclaim himself to have been a "Negro" (cf. 108), whereas in *The Souls of Black Folk* he had famously lamented that African-Americans lacked true self-consciousness, i.e. an uncontestable identity. In other words: Du Bois's life-long search was only consummated once he had emigrated to Africa.

Towards the end of their lives, Adorno and Du Bois would not only be at odds culturally but also at loggerheads politically. In an ironic twist of fate, the two thinkers ended up on different sides of the conflict usually referred to as

the Cold War, thereby thematically coming the closest to one another precisely at the moment when they were politically the farthest apart. Partisanship in the world-spanning standoff brought them in relatively direct opposition to one another. By 1950, Du Bois had shifted his internationalist commitment from Pan-Africanism to peace advocacy. A co-founder of the Peace Information Center, Du Bois attended international disarmament conferences and spoke out on behalf of the "Stockholm Appeal" whose purpose it was to abolish nuclear weapons and create an international consensus that the government which would first make use of the atom bomb be branded a war criminal. When Adorno and Horkheimer were asked to give their opinion about the endorsement of the "Stockholm Appeal" by an organization of university students from Heidelberg, the critical theorists responded utterly dismissively. Correctly discerning a Soviet initiative behind the ostensibly neutral cause, the two excoriated the proposed absolute ban on nuclear weapons, which Du Bois did so much to advance, with the following words:

> Es ist Ausdruck der verstrickten und verblendeten Situation, die auf jenes absolute Grauen hintreibt, daß sie noch die Wahrheit darüber in die Lüge zu verkehren droht, indem sie sie in den Dienst der Lüge nimmt. Friedensaufruf und Ächtung der Atomwaffe sind ein Stück der Sowjetpropaganda, die darauf abzielt, allerorten die humanen Regungen dafür zu mißbrauchen, daß der Widerstand gegen die Gewalt gebrochen werde, die von der Sowjetunion ausgeht und die nicht zögern wird, den Krieg zu entfesseln, wenn die Moskauer Gewaltherrscher glauben, daß sie ihn gewinnen können . . . Die jetzt am lautesten die Ziele der Menschheit ausposaunen, sind die gleichen, die die Menschheit an die Kandare nehmen und ihnen jenen Geist der Kritik und Freiheit austreiben wollen, der allein menschenwürdigere Zustände zu erreichen vermöchte. ("Die UdSSR und der Frieden" 390-91)

While Adorno and Horkheimer tried to stay true to Marx as one source of influence besides others by treating him merely as a critic of the political

economy, Du Bois had made him into the inventor of a world formula, into the founder of a positive system, which, for instance, prompted him to defend the suppression of the 1956 uprising in Hungary or the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959.

Du Bois did not merely condone Stalinism, but rather wholeheartedly endorsed it. When he was offered an honorary doctorate in economics by East Berlin's Humboldt University in 1958, he accepted the degree, which had been withheld from him sixty-four years earlier, with alacrity. With Du Bois's approval, Prof. Mohrmann, the dean of the economics department, situated Du Bois's life within a Marxist historical narrative. The struggle for liberty and justice, the dean argued, had been a holy tradition in Du Bois's family: His mother's progenitors had included participants in the anti-imperialist fight of the North American colonies against Great Britain, and Du Bois's father had himself taken part in the Union's effort to abolish slavery. Du Bois's entire life, Mohrmann explained, had epitomized what Marx had allegedly called for in his Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, namely "eine enge und tiefe Verbindung zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis im Dienste des gesellschaftlichen Fortschritts" ("Festrede" 1). According to the dean, Du Bois had devoted his lifetime to the *actual* emancipation of African-Americans as well as the building of a *true* democracy in the United States. Even when Du Bois had "only" excelled academically or offered an alternative account of the Reconstruction period, he had done so, Mohrmann claimed, in order to refute the "reactionary thesis" that blacks were not fit for higher education or to disprove the claim of "bourgeois historiography" that Reconstruction had been lawless and chaotic. During World War II and in its wake Du Bois had

furthermore discerned the interrelatedness between his own endeavors and other progressive social movements in the world (cf. "Festrede" 9).

Even when Mohrmann talked about Du Bois's time as a student in Berlin, leftist politics played a role. He thus not only mentioned that the laureate had been matriculated on October 17th, 1892, under the rectorship of Rudolf Virchow and that he had brought along his former membership card of the *Staatswissenschaftlich-statistisches Seminar* as a valuable keepsake, but also that Du Bois had attended worker rallies organized by the SPD. At one of these events, Morhmann highlighted, August Bebel had talked about "Die Frau und der Sozialimus" (cf. "Festrede" 5) – an experience which, according to the dean, had especially impressed Du Bois. The speaker then ended his talk with the following words: "Voll Bewunderung und Ehrfurcht, hoch verehrter Herr Professor Du Bois, erkennen wir die einzigartige Synthese zwischen Wissenschaft und politisch-gestaltendem Handeln, die ihr ganzes Leben auszeichnet ("Festrede" 11). By finally being granted "the most difficult of German degrees" (qtd. in Lewis, *Race* 143) Du Bois did not only go full circle but also confirmed his more or less pronounced affinity for German authoritarianism – be it of a blue, brown or red shade. Yet to be fair to him we should note that in his *Autobiography* he especially stressed an achievement by the G.D.R. which would today meet with almost general approval, namely the fact that in 1958 not only men but also women swelled the student ranks, whereas in 1892 they had been barred from attending the university; moreover, by remarking that he received the degree to "the soft music of Sebastian Bach" (*Autobiography* 23) he made clear that even on the verge of his emigration to – or, to be more precise – in Africa Du Bois held fast to cultural Eurocentrism.

The late Adorno and Du Bois, however, were not only separated by differences but also united by an – arguably more speculative – symmetry pertaining to Karl Kraus's famous aphorism "Ursprung ist das Ziel". Both Du Bois and Adorno attempted to return to their origins toward the end of their lives. Not surprisingly, in both cases the maternal was intimately connected to their notion of origin. Du Bois emigrated to the Gold Coast prior to his death, and, although he had actually not been born in Ghana, he thereby, in a way, nevertheless consummated his life's journey back to his roots. His mother Mary Sylvana and especially her progenitors were Du Bois's main link to Africa. In "The Shadow of Years" he writes of his first African-American forefather's (Tom Burghardt's) female companion: "His wife was a little, black Bantu woman, who never became reconciled to this strange land; she clasped her knees and rocked and crooned: 'Do bana coba – gene me, gene me! Ben d'nuli, ben d'le–'" (3). As Du Bois tells us in his late *Autobiography*, "the song came down the years and I heard it sung at my grandfather's fireside" (62). Thus, by returning to Africa at the end of his life he in a sense also returned to his origin.

Similarly, Adorno returned to his roots by leaving the country that had saved him and moving back to Frankfurt am Main. He thereby also went back to where his beloved *mother* tongue was spoken. The world might have come to an end, he penned in his travel diary on November 10th, 1949, but he could still – as in his childhood – tell the difference between streetcars number one and four on account of the fact that the former bore two green lights and the latter a gray and a white one: "Das ist geblieben" (qtd. in Gödde and Lonitz 213). Besides Frankfurt, the place most intimately associated with childhood

bliss was, of course, Amorbach. On September 24th, 1950 (two years before his mother passed away), he wrote to her from the beloved Odenwald retreat: "Es ist schließlich doch das einzige Stückchen Heimat das mir blieb . . . und wenn irgendwo, dann habe ich hier das Gefühl als ob du bei mir wärest wie früher, mit der Tigerin . . . Mein größter Wunsch: daß wir uns bald wiedersehen. Am Ende gar in Amorbach…" (536). While Du Bois's conception of origin was closely connected to the singing of his Bantu foremother, Adorno's mother had herself been a singer. Later, the critically-dialectical theorist reflected on his decision to return to Germany thus: "Ich wollte einfach dorthin zurück, wo ich meine Kindheit verbracht hatte, wodurch mein Spezifisches bis ins Innerste vermittelt war. Spüren möchte ich, daß was man im Leben realisiert, wenig anderes ist als der Versuch, die Kindheit einzuholen" ("Was ist deutsch" 696-97). Although the imagined reunion of mother and son was thwarted by Maria Wiesengrund's death, Adorno's conflation of origin, the maternal and the coveted return to both somewhat paralleled Du Bois's withdrawal to Africa.

Bringing this investigation to a close, I would like to classify Adorno's and Du Bois's foreign experiences. In his collection of lectures entitled *Selbstbetrachtungen aus der Ferne*, a comparison of Alexis de Tocqueville's, Max Weber's and Adorno's sojourns to the U.S. (as well as G.W.F. Hegel's thoughts about the U.S.), Claus Offe proposed a matrix that distinguished between a positive (A1) and a negative (A2) view of America as an avant-garde nation on the one hand and a favorable (B1) and a disfavorable (B2) impression of the United States as a latecomer or straggler nation on the other. Emphasizing Adorno's earlier writings about America, Offe categorized him under A2:

	1	**2**
A	Tocqueville	Adorno
B	Weber	Hegel[5]

I hope that I have succeeded in making clear that I would let Adorno occupy a niche somewhere between A1 and A2 – although perhaps somewhat closer to the latter. Curiously, if I were now to classify Du Bois's impression of Germany I would let him occupy the same "spot". Like Adorno, he thought of his host country as being more advanced than his home country with its largely poor and powerless African-American populace. Germany, he believed, was ahead of America on the path of a universal development:

> All over the world the State is redistributing income by an increasing body of law . . . laws are today furnishing individual citizens with recreation, insurance, pensions, education, public expositions, lectures and theaters. Increasingly everywhere the State is assuming the responsibility of furnishing remunerative work for all workers at all times. (9/19/36)

Like Adorno's, Du Bois's attitude towards his host country was profoundly ambivalent – although the case can, of course, be made (and has hopefully been made) that he viewed it in a slightly more positive light.

As a postscript to this thesis, I would like to return to the subordinate, normative aim of this investigation. As one might recall, I initially expressed the desire that this inquiry ought to help bridge the current gap between the Old and New World by – however negligibly – contributing to mutual understanding. The Institute of Social Research recently made a comparable attempt. In May of 2006, it organized a conference probing the critical thrust of Bob Dylan's oeuvre. From Lorenz Jäger's point of view, the German Left –

[5] From the vantage point of Adorno's philosophical lodestar, the United States had not yet become an organic community, nor had it realized the necessity of a constitutional monarchy (cf. 169-70).

represented by the IfS – had finally made its peace with the United States – not least because Dylan's music had impelled it to interpret American democracy in a utopian and egalitarian fashion (cf. "Denk zweimal"). As Adorno had already contended in *Minima Moralia*, the United States – despite its "melting pot" ideology and other pressures to adjust – preserved at least the idea of a concrete utopia ("den besseren Zustand aber denken als den, in dem man ohne Angst verschieden sein kann" [185]) which was also a defining characteristic of the emancipated society. Hence Jäger's conclusion which shows great insight: "Wir erlebten nichts anderes als die Gründungsveranstaltung eines linken Flügels jenes deutschen Amerikanismus, dessen rechten Flügel die Atlantik-Brücke bildet" ("Denk zweimal"). In the same vein, the American philosopher Susan Neiman referred to Dylan's songs as the true national anthem of the United States. Apparently, transatlantic reconciliation is possible after all.

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Deutsche Kurzfassung

Im Jahre 1936 bereiste der afroamerikanische Intellektuelle W.E.B. Du Bois fünf Monate lang Nazi-Deutschland. Zwei Jahre später begann für den deutschen Philosophen Theodor W. Adorno die Zeit seines elfjährigen Exils in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika – der „Heimat" der Kulturindustrie. Intuitiv geht man unweigerlich davon aus, dass diese beiden Auslandsaufenthalte sowohl für den schwarzen Bürgerrechtsaktivisten Du Bois wie auch für den feinsinnigen Geistesmenschen Adorno einer „Hölle auf Erden" gleich gekommen sein müssen. Doch war dies wirklich so? Oder fielen ihre Urteile möglicherweise ganz anders aus? Diese Dissertation geht diesen Fragen nach und versucht, die subjektiven Erfahrungen der beiden auszuloten. Mittels einer systematischen und vergleichenden Analyse von veröffentlichten Texten, bislang unveröffentlichten Schriftstücken sowie Sekundärliteratur werden Du Bois' und Adornos transatlantische „Verhandlungen" über den Begriff „Hölle" zunächst kontextualisiert und dann nachgezeichnet.

Das Themenspektrum, mit dem sich die beiden auseinandersetzten, war vielseitig. Im Falle von Du Bois umfasste es Europa, Wissenschaft und Technologie, Wagner-Opern, die Olympiade in Berlin, betriebliche Ausbildung, Rassenbeziehungen, Nationalsozialismus und den deutschen Afrikanisten Diedrich Westermann. Als eine Hauptquelle dieser Arbeit dienen Meinungsspalten, die Du Bois für die Zeitung „Pittsburgh Courier" geschrieben hat. Adorno konzentrierte sich auf die in Amerika seiner Meinung nach vollends entfaltete Aufklärung und die dort aus seiner Sicht alles beherrschende Massenkultur. Diese Untersuchung beleuchtet außerdem die von der Wissenschaft bislang vernachlässigten Briefwechsel zwischen dem Philosophen und Max Horkheimer, Thomas Mann, Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer und Oskar und Maria Wiesengrund. In diesen autobiografischen Texten kreisen Adornos Gedanken um so unterschiedliche Themen wie die amerikanische Landschaft, Ängste als Jude, Deutscher und Linkshegelianer oder aber die Einsamkeit des Flüchtlings.

Diese Dissertation muss der intuitiven Annahme, es müsse sich bei den Auslandserfahrungen von Du Bois und Adorno um für sie entsetzliche

Ereignisse gehandelt haben, eindringlich widersprechen: Beide fällten äußerst differenzierte und subtile Urteile. Du Bois etwa wurde in Nazi-Deutschland wegen seiner Hautfarbe nicht diskriminiert und erfreute sich an dem reichhaltigen Kulturangebot; und Adorno lobte die Alltagshumanität und den demokratischen Geist Amerikas. Kurzum: Obwohl die beiden zum Teil tatsächlich äußerst negative Erfahrungen machten, ist die Metapher der „Hölle auf Erden“ als Gesamtfazit unhaltbar.

Lebenslauf

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