There had been considerable work done on the Weimar period and the rise of fascism from a variety of perspectives, including political, cultural, and psychohistorical. Although valuable and important, many of these perspectives have underemphasized what we consider to be key elements in an understanding of the rise of fascism and the collapse of liberal bourgeois democracy in the Weimar Republic as a prelude to the Holocaust, namely, factors directly resulting from the socioeconomic (structural) problems and contradictions of Weimar society. This book attempts to highlight these factors. In particular, the focus of the essays collected in this volume has shifted from the political and constitutional structures of the Republic to the social and economic determinants of this underlying weakness. Rather than examining the Weimar Republic just as a failed democracy, the emphasis herein has moved towards examining Weimar Germany as a developed capitalist society with structural problems which served to undermine the political system that took shape after the defeat in the First World War. The picture that emerges from these essays is that of a republic fatally flawed at the outset by a failure to effect structural changes which would have secured a democratic order—of a republic that consequently was undermined because the bourgeois elements which should have defended it would not do so, and the working-class and minority group elements which tried to defend it, could not do so. Several of the essays dealing with these structural factors are written from a Marxist perspective, a perspective that has been relatively little noticed among American scholars writing on the Weimar period. For that reason, we have included essays from two West German scholars who operate within this tradition. We have also included essays on ideology and culture because they demonstrate that ideology generally reflects the structural dimensions and contradictions of Weimar society. "All myths," as Aschheim points out, "if they are to function, must have some basis, however, tenuous, in social reality."
Petzina's socioeconomic historical analysis provides the reader at the outset with a factual background against which certain political and ideological developments during the Weimar Republic can be seen. Given the fact that the National Socialist German Workers Party's (NSDAP) mass support came primarily from the old and new "middle class," it is important to note that there had been continuous economic pressure to migrate out of agriculture, that monopolization and concentration of industry had been increasing, and that the percentage of self-employed individuals had been decreasing. It is also important to note that post-World War I inflation was most damaging to members of the old "middle class" and that, relatively speaking, the income of the self-employed rose more slowly than that of the non-self-employed and that the civil servants failed to regain their privileged pre-World War I income level. When the NSDAP rose to power during the Great Depression, its supporters did not come, for the most part, from the ranks of the poor or unemployed workers suffering most from the depression, but came instead from the ranks of those whose status and economic standing had become threatened. In many ways, however, their support of the Nazi movement was in vain since, despite the NSDAP's promise to economically save the middle class, relatively more individuals lost their self-employed status during Nazi rule than did during the Weimar Republic.

Internationally speaking, Germany, despite having an industrial potential second only to that of the United States, lagged behind other nations in its ability to increase industrial output relative to pre-World War I levels. The years of the Weimar Republic were characterized by economic stagnation, while many other countries were increasing their industrial output during the same period. However, Petzina maintains that this anomalous situation was not caused by war reparation payments, which in his view had, if anything, a stimulating effect since they were tied to a loan program. All things considered, more capital was flowing into Germany during this time than was flowing out of Germany.

Petzina focuses on socioeconomic developments during the Weimar Republic and how they affected various segments of the population. With this approach, he points to the structural processes and bottlenecks that tended to induce certain groups to support the NSDAP. Tilton also uses this type of analysis in his essay, which deals specifically with reasons for the NSDAP's strong rural appeal. Both Petzina's and Tilton's macrostructural analysis is supplemented by Nagle's study investigating the socioeconomic background of NSDAP deputies to the Reichstag, thus providing a more detailed insight into the nature of the NSDAP's mass support.

Kühnl recognizes the domestic political conditions particular to Weimar Germany that were conducive to the rise of fascism. However, he particularly focuses on Germany's competitive standing
relative to other industrialized countries at a time of imperialist expansion. According to him, fascism in Germany was just as much a response to a particular international situation as it was a response to domestic conditions. Klähnl maintains that even though Germany had achieved an industrial potential surpassing that of France and Britain, it had no basis for further expansion. Thus, the First World War, as well as World War II, represented Germany's attempts to break out of this situation, in part by allying itself with other similarly "disadvantaged" nations like Italy and Japan. Germany strove for and demanded a new distribution of the world's territories, markets, and resources.

Klähnl's position is based on the observation that any capitalist economy depends on possibilities for expansion. Germany was no exception. It too relied upon a capital accumulation rate that would allow it to maintain or improve its position relative to other capitalist countries. Since it could not do so satisfactorily, major segments of big business, (including banks and landowners) as well as segments of the military and the top civil servants, had never accepted the defeat during World War II. They were bent on pursuing a strongly expansionary course. Within this scheme, the parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Republic, a result of the worker movement's November Revolution of 1918, would have to be abolished in favor of an authoritarian regime. Under this rubric, an expansionary course could be pursued more effectively. Authoritarianism, furthermore, served as a means to maintain or speed up capital accumulation by robbing the working class of parliamentary mechanisms to articulate demands and effectuate social and economic changes, and by increasing possibilities to stifle workers' extraparliamentary attempts to achieve social change. Fascism then, a particular form of an authoritarian regime, is, in Klähnl's view, only possible with the full backing of the ruling class, which directly depends on capital accumulation if it is to maintain its economic and political position as a ruling class.

While Klähnl gives us a theoretical framework within which the persistent push for expansion, increased capital accumulation, and an authoritarian regime can be understood, Hörster-Philips documents in detail the ways in which the Weimar Republic was undermined and replaced by authoritarian regimes. She shows how already at an early stage of the Weimar Republic, big business, the military, and certain parties were again aiming for an expansionary course and an authoritarian government.

Although it may be true that fascism generally has not been observed to exist without the consent and backing of the ruling class, Germany during the 1930s being no exception, it nevertheless must be investigated how it was possible for the NSDAP to gain mass support in addition to ruling class backing.

We know that Nazi supporters were primarily not recruited from the ranks of the working class or the poor and unemployed but
from the **Mittelstand**, whose status and economic position had become threatened. Numerous other similar structural circumstances, however, did not result in a fascist mass movement, raising the question as to whether or not the Nazi party had a specific strategy enabling it to exploit the structurally caused anxiety to its fullest. Did the NSDAP resort to a special technique which allowed it to mobilize the masses behind its program? Klüßnich suggests that this was the case. He maintains that the NSDAP's mass support was not due to the party's ideology, which in many ways was not unlike that of other right-wing, nationalistic, and militantly anti-Communist parties. According to him, the NSDAP's success in mobilizing the masses lay in the employment of strategies, like mass rallies and meetings, which were known to be successful in the worker movement.

Although the NSDAP was highly successful in mobilizing the **Mittelstand** and gaining its support, it largely failed to convince the working class. Except for the cases which Stachura shows to be exceptions, the NSDAP (upon assuming power) was confronted with a working-class opposition that had to be broken with terror and violence on the one hand and with techniques of seduction and intensive supervision on the other. According to Stachura, it is not the case that the NSDAP was uninterested in receiving a strong working-class support. Subjectively speaking, its position was not an ant working-class position, although objectively speaking its policies were not in the interest of the working class. Stachura points out that, to a great extent, the NSDAP's failure must be seen in its inability to circumscribe what it meant by socialism and to arrive at a concrete socialist program that, although different from previously existing programs, would at least be plausible and win the support of workers organized in trade unions, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the German Communist Party (KPD). Instead, the Nazi party's radical rhetoric about socialism remained nothing but rhetoric. Stachura maintains that, as a rule, the party showed little interest in going beyond this level of discourse.

If, however, the Nazis failed to get a strong working-class endorsement, why was the working class unable to prevent the NSDAP from coming to power? Tobin explores the nature of the circumstances surrounding the November Revolution of 1918 on the basis of which certain political trends can be detected that tended to weaken the German working-class movement in the long run. She suggests that the failure of the SPD leadership to respond to the rank-and-file demands for democratization of the military, bureaucracy, and industry led to widespread disaffection and political defection to the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) and the KPD. Thus, at the beginning of the Weimar Republic, the working class was split in ways not necessarily conducive to most effectively resisting authoritarianism and the fascist movement. Indeed, as Geary shows in his essay, resistance against fascism was weakened as the split between the KPD and SPD continued and was repeatedly
reaffirmed. However, this was not the only reason why working-class resistance to the fascist onslaught was quite weak. Geary mentions that the SPD tended to underestimate the Nazi movement. Breitman explores this issue further. He shows how the SPD largely failed to deal with the fascist movement both in theory and in practice and that the party's perception of the nature of German fascism was, despite the availability of some competent left-wing analyses, seriously flawed.

Parallels can be found between the working-class movement and Catholic political organizations insofar as both were very resilient to fascist appeals, and both were equally ineffective in preventing the fascists from assuming power. Once the fascists were in control, these organizations tended to become rather passive onlookers. Hunt investigates the role Catholicism played during the Weimar Republic. He demonstrates that the Catholic population before and during the Weimar Republic was structurally in a marginal position, even while slowly becoming more integrated. Thus, the Catholics had a serious dilemma. Wanting to become fully integrated, they could not afford to strongly oppose the persistent trend towards right-wing authoritarianism and fascism.

The Jewish community of Weimar Germany found itself in a similar bind. Split between the newly immigrated East European Jews and German Jews, it failed to decisively combat, as Aschheim shows, the anti-Semitic tendencies directed against the Ostjuden. Rather, while often internalizing these negative attitudes towards Ostjuden themselves, Jews tended to remain ambivalent and ineffective in fighting what, as Aschheim suggests, was the radical right's prelude to an all-out attack on the entire Jewish population.

Similarly, a further subject of concern is the role some women played in supporting the Nazi movement, even when it appeared to be so overtly misogynist. Bridenthal's study sheds some light on the dynamics that may have been involved in women's attitudes towards the NSDAP by analyzing the long-lasting tug of war between the middle-class Housewives Union and the Central Union of Domestic Employees concerning the contractual regulation of domestic work. She points to the circumstances under which the Housewives Union abandoned its officially nonpolitical stand and expressed its gratitude to Hitler in 1933 for his interest in a domestic service year. This was not, however, without cost. It simultaneously also symbolized the submission of many women to Nazi notions and policies concerning the role and rights of women in society. That these notions and policies were in stark contrast to developments during the Weimar Republic is shown by Grossmann's study of the sex reform movement and the fascist response to it in August 1933. She also speaks to the problem of the internal fractionalization of the left, eventually effecting the sex reform movement itself.

To this point we have been speaking of the structural aspects of
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Weimar society and how they contributed to the demise of the republic and the rise of National Socialism on the one hand, and the failure of the various subgroups—be they political, labor, religious, or gender—to meet the challenge, on the other. In the process, we have alluded to the ideological notions held at the time. At least in some respects, as Burns, Meyer, and Pois illustrate, the ideology generally reflected the structural dimensions of Weimar society, although the correspondence may not have been a perfect one.

Burns, Meyer, and Pois discuss National Socialism as a cultural phenomenon, not in the liberal or bourgeois sense of culture as having to do solely with literature, art, film, or music in isolation from the social, economic, and political developments in Germany, but rather culture as an attitude, as a reflection and result of the fissures, crises, and fears in society that are structurally determined. They argue that National Socialism and the culture that supported it and that it produced was a culture fueled by a sense of crisis and by an elaborate mythology—a mythology by which people define themselves and their place in the world. But this mythology connects to reality because it functions within a social and economic context. Thus there is a dialectic between people’s vision of their place in the universe as expressed by literature, music, and film and reflections on the health and function of the arts generally and the reality with which they live. These authors remind us of the role of culture as a barometer of attitudes and social reality and thus contribute to a Marxist approach that is based on a dialectic.

National Socialism, having a great talent for mass organization, they argue, combined politics and aesthetics. Politics and aesthetics are always combined as long as people think in stereotypes, as long as ideas of beauty and ugliness, be they visual, auditory or literary, are so all-embracing in people’s lives that they become political categories. People in Nazi Germany had very definite ideas of what was beautiful and what was ugly and, of course, racism made an alliance with beauty and defined ugliness in its own terms. So in fascist politics, aesthetics played a very important function because politics was defined in a totalistic context as subsuming attitudes toward life.

Naziism put forward a myth—the myth of "bourgeois return," of a restoration of a happy and healthy world, of a simpler, purer, more authentic culture, of a new man, the myth of race in Germany—and then it tried to actualize this myth. It used this kind of appeal to the völkish populist past, but at the same time it promised a future outside the problems of industrialization, outside the problems of inflation—‘in other words, outside the problems of the day, including unemployment—all the problems which actually existed. It said that by recapturing a völkish past, Germans will determine a future which is a German future when every German will get back his individual dignity and sense
of worth. The notion of a genuine social revolution as we have seen, was anathema to many Germans, yet they were profoundly dissatisfied with their world. This tension was exploited by the Nazis. They played upon this bourgeois fantasy to create a bourgeois revolution, a revolution of attitude which actually threatened none of the vested interests of the middle class. Instead, *Völkisch* thought concentrated upon another enemy within. That is why the Jews and the Jewish question are central. The Jew stood for modernity in all its destructiveness. It can be argued (as George Mosse and Pois do) that the attitude toward the Jew provided much of the cement for this thought and gave it a dynamic it might otherwise have lacked. The Jew, or rather the stereotype that *Völkisch* thought made of him, is therefore central to any analysis and understanding of this ideology. This was appreciated by Theodore W. Adorno, as well, in several works including his sociological analysis of music, described by Meyer. Adorno's extended examination of Richard Wagner, Meyer notes, for example, is crucial for the study of pre-Nazi fascism and anti-Semitism in view of the importance of Wagner as perhaps the outstanding cultural hero of the Nazis who captured, in their view, the spirit of *Völkisch* Germany in his music.

However, *Völkisch* anti-Semitic ideology is insufficient by itself to explain Germany's anti-Jewish passion. In most contemporary analyses of German anti-Semitism in the Weimar and early Nazi periods, there has been a disturbing separation of the phenomenon from an analysis of capitalist development, thereby locating the German-Jewish problem in a structural vacuum, independent from other economic or social tendencies. There has been much valuable work done on the role of image, ideology, and myth in the development of German anti-Semitism. There has not, however, been sufficient reflection on socioeconomic factors independent of ethnic, religious, or national characteristics. We know, for example, from sociological literature, that there is a well-established tendency as economic competition increases, whether it be real or imagined, for ethnic antagonisms to increase if competition takes place between discernible groups. This is true for wage-labor, certain economic dependency relationships, or business competition. Max Weber pointed to the antagonisms which can result if a particular group is identified with a particular economic activity or position such as debtor or creditor. Similarly, ethnic antagonism has been observed between retailers and consumers when the two tended to belong to different ethnic groups.1 Were such mechanisms, for instance, also present in the German-Jewish situation? Was the Jewish community in any way discernible as a competitor of other non-Jewish segments of the German society, and could such be targeted for political exploitation by a rising Nazi movement?

By 1910, for example, 54.4 percent of Prussian Jewry resided in cities of 100,000 or more and by 1925 half of German Jewry lived in the seven major cities of that country in contrast to
13 percent of the general population. In 1933, on the eve of the Holocaust, 70.7 percent of German Jewry, including foreign Jews, lived in cities of 100,000 or more. The comparable figure for the general population was 30 percent. The urban setting in which an urbane, cosmopolitan culture could thrive was thus highly visible. Peter Gay, who examined that spirit in the Berlin of the Weimar Republic, characterized it as alienated from soul and tradition, "rootless, restless," disrespectful of authority, and distant from the völkish ideals. It was against this culture that the Nazi ideologue Hans Rosenberg and others would rail. What the Nazis despised was what they saw as a contrived, artificial, non-German culture developed by a minority group whom they considered merely guests in Germany.

There is a danger in overestimating the impact of a small number of Jewish thinkers, writers, and artists who became trend setters. Undoubtedly, most Jews who moved to cities continued to live parochial, circumscribed and fairly anonymous lives. Yet one can note in their hunger for secular education, for example, a portent of potential intergroup conflict. For the period of 1859-1860, when Jews were about 1 percent of the population of Prussia, they composed 6.3 percent of all secondary students. By 1906 a remarkable 58.9 percent of the potential Jewish secondary-school population were receiving such an education, compared to 7.9 percent of the general population. By 1921 the comparable figures had risen to 60.5 percent and 9.7 percent, respectively. The figures for university education are even more remarkable. Despite restrictions in Jewish enrollment, they again emerge as enthusiastic consumers of secular education, especially in the fields of law, medicine, philosophy, and the arts. In these faculties Jewish enrollment was five times as high as that of the general population. Moreover, despite strong opposition to having Jews hold teaching posts in the university, 9.4 percent of university positions, primarily in the lower ranks, were held by Jews in 1874. By the year 1890, the figure had risen to 12 percent, and by 1920, to 14 percent. Jews made up approximately 1 percent of the German population during this entire period. By 1881, Berlin's Jews were already 7.9 percent of the city's lawyers, 11.7 percent of its doctors, and 8.6 percent of its journalists. The figures would rise to even more astounding proportions in decades to come. Table 2.1 summarizes the general outline of the Jewish socio-economic position in Germany.
Table 2.1
SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL POSITION IN 1933

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Position of Full-time Employed</th>
<th>All full-time employed in Germany (in percentages)</th>
<th>Full-time employed Jews (in percentages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed members of the family</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil servants and soldiers</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar employees</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers (incl. cottage laborers)</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic help</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There clearly is, then, sufficient evidence to suggest that split-labor market antagonisms and/or middleman minority antagonisms may be a factor in explaining the ferocity of Nazi anti-Semitism. This is a fruitful avenue for further investigation.

In a related but somewhat distinct area, it might be useful, as Martin Jay, Anson Rabinbach, Paul Piccone, and Russell Berman, in their various ways argue, to reexamine the implications of the Frankfurt School interpretations of anti-Semitism, particularly the relevant sections in Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment. The overarching theory they presented was grounded in an analysis that stressed the ambiguous implications of the age-old domination of nature in Western culture and the resulting idealization of instrumental reason. The administered society, epitomized by the Nazi techno-bureaucratic state in its gradual erosion of all lingering individuality and autonomous structures of civil society, generated severe internal crises that were met with even greater repression.
Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis is clearly indebted to the insights of Karl Marx. "Bourgeois anti-Semitism," they wrote, "has a specific economic reason: the concealment of domination in production," or what Cary McCullough has called in another context, "a mask for privilege." Like Franz Neumann, who was particularly critical of state capitalism in Behemoth, they recognized the function of the Jews as scapegoats for anti-capitalist sentiments. "They were the representatives—in harmony with their particular religion—of municipal, bourgeois and finally, industrial conditions." If this analysis is correct, then the sociological insights mentioned above concerning split-labor market antagonisms and middleman-minority group antagonisms would be even more germane.

Beyond this more traditional Marxist approach with its echoes of Marx's essay, "On the Jewish Question," and of Ferdinand August Bebel's celebrated remark that anti-Semitism is "the socialism of fools," Horkheimer and Adorno provided an analysis of the postbourgeois anti-Semitism that spoke directly to the problem of fascism. They argued that fascism represented a more brutal form of repression than classical liberal capitalism with its reliance on the mediation of the marketplace. When there is no longer any need for economic domination, as was the case in the world of Auschwitz, "the Jews are marked out as the absolute object of domination pure and simple." Fascism is an order of unlimited force led by people who "long for total possession and unlimited power, at any price." In fact, it is only in total power, in the ability to control life and death, that fascists can reach the orgasmic peak of domination. These yearnings are displaced by claiming that it is the Jews who actually strive for total control.

The long-range tendency towards this type of domination, which went through a classical capitalist stage before reaching its conclusions in fascism, had to be understood in more fundamental, more structural terms than the scapegoat theory, or the religious prejudice theory, or the ideological theory, or even the racist theory would allow. For "anti-Semitism is a deeply imprinted schema, a ritual of civilization." It is thus to the fundamental dialectic of civilization (or Enlightenment, as they called it) that Horkheimer and Adorno turned for their structural analysis, and it is here that their insights may prove most suggestive for our purposes.

The essence of that explanation was equating "civilization" with the domination of nature, a domination whose implications were only then becoming fully manifest. (Their essay was written at least a year before the magnitude of the Nazi genocide was fully known.) The implicit link between totality and domination is the central theme of the work. "Those who spasmodically dominate nature," they wrote, "see in a tormented nature a provocative image of powerless happiness. The thought of happiness without power is unbearable because it would then be
true happiness." The Jews are singled out for special attack and treatment because they are confused with nature itself, and thus seen as having "happiness without power, wages without work, a home without frontiers, religion without myth." Society, like nature, abhors a vacuum, Hannah Arendt has reminded us. Horkheimer and Adorno thus believe that the projection of power and otherness onto the Jew is not mere appearance, but historically connected to the perceptual system of civilization. In this sense, the "object" is not simply interchangeable (a point which contradicts the usual Marxist claim to the contrary), but is crucial for the development of the logic of anti-Semitic domination.

Throughout this work, Horkheimer and Adorno play with the tension between nationalist anti-Semitism in which the Jew represents a projection outward of the desire for total domination reflected in the image of the Jew as an international manipulator of culture and civilization, the kind of image Henry Ford would exploit in the United States, and bourgeois anti-Semitism, which identified the Jew as an abstraction to be absorbed into society until all traces of his negative essence disappear, the T. S. Eliot or Henry Adams versions of anti-Semitism. Again we have the ancient canard—the Jew as simultaneous symbol of the triumph of Enlightenment (as modernity, urbanity, intellectualism, civilization) and its absolute opposite (as the powerful conspiratorial other). In the bourgeois sense, anti-Semitism is the rage directed against the nonidentical, the "eternal stranger" of Leo Pinsker, that characterizes the totalistic dominating impulse of Western civilization. Some Jews, in their refusal to be assimilated, thus represent an obstacle to the total integration of the "administered world" or "one-dimensional society" as Herbert Marcuse was to call it. Nationalism, on the other hand, constitutes the image of the Jew as the nonorganic Other, the focus of repressed desires for violence and control. The Jew in this context is both the outsider and the insider whose essential character is ambiguous, hence dangerous and to be feared. Thus, for both the Enlightenment and its opponents, the Jew is a paradox. Consequently, two very distinct ideological images of the Jew appeared in Western anti-Semitism, each focusing on two very real social groups: the ghetto Eastern European Jews, who are fundamentally unassimilable (an image also held by German Jews, as Steven Aschheim ably demonstrates); and the assimilated Jew (Disraeli, Rothschild, Rathenau), who represent power, infiltration, and control. Once again, we should investigate the role that real market-labor conditions had on intensifying these images.

The anti-Semitic ideology projects the Jew as the collective other, representing power (capitalism, Marxism, liberalism, Zionism) or putrefaction (miscegenation, filth, pronography, sexuality). This tendency may suggest that anti-Semitism has deeper roots than the other forms of racial prejudice that were prevalent in European society, as Pois intimates. Given the
historical roots of anti-Semitism in Christianity and the specific historical role of the Jews as a pariah class in Western culture as articulated by Hannah Arendt, plus their role as a competing economic class, anti-Semitism may have a history distinct from national chauvinism or racial hatred.

This anti-Semitic tendency reached deeply into the fiber of National Socialism. National Socialism represents an equally fantastic joining of two irreconcilables. Nationalism pretended to unite all classes; socialism is based on the class struggle. Nationalism tended towards imperialist expansionism, while socialism claimed to be universalistic. Nationalism deeply respected existing power relations; socialism sought to overthrow them. National Socialism pretended to be a mass movement characterized by reformist aspirations and struggles against a class society on behalf of the workers. Its inherent illogic is such, however, that it was held together as an outlook and movement by fostering aggressive national expansion as the basis for creating the material for a völkisch socialism that claims to provide economic benefits for the workers and the poor while in reality it deeply respects existing economic structures; and by a virulent anti-Semitism as the main defining element of the Germanic fantasy-community that leaves class boundaries untouched.

The Nazi drive for community was the assertion, even if made aggressively and brutally, of an abiding need for human connectedness greater than that provided by the depersonalized world of corporate capitalism. In Dialectic of Enlightenment Horkheimer and Adorno emphasized that self-denial and renunciations were inherent in the Western program of the domination of nature. Fascism and, indeed, anti-Semitism are seen as one pole of the dialectic of Western civilization itself: as domination progressed, so did the mad revolt of brutalized nature, culminating in the anti-Semitism of twentieth-century totalitarianism. If Auschwitz expressed the barbarism chosen by those unwilling or unable to join the modern world, Auschwitz also represented the explosion of the repressed side of our long journey away from barbarism and toward civilization.

These brief remarks should be sufficient to demonstrate that the general historical materialist tradition may be helpful in understanding the complicated and problematical phenomena of anti-Semitism in the Weimar and early Nazi periods. But it should also be evident that the specific logic of anti-Semitism also contributes to our understanding of the unique character of the Holocaust, which cannot be explained satisfactorily by discussions of the ideological function of anti-Semitism; by the logic of fascist domination per se; by the role of religious prejudice; by the desire to eliminate surplus populations; by the desire to eliminate an economically competing group. As bureaucratically organized, technological, mass death for the
sole purpose of destroying a "defined" racially inferior group that paradoxically was also seen as intent on domination, the Holocaust may be consistent only with the view that the Jew is a powerful, corrupting Other. Although a historical materialist approach, which emphasizes structural considerations in the socioeconomic realms of society, is intriguing and should be explored as well as an explanation for the Holocaust, there still are serious questions that need to be posed: Why extermination and not servitude? Why the secrecy surrounding the apparatus of destruction? Why the bizarre identification and preoccupation with the victim? Did the Nazis need the Jews to be fully themselves? Were the Nazis afraid of being free in Jean Paul Sartre's sense? Did the Jews have to be destroyed because they became the metaphoric equivalent of that stubborn remnant of society preserving negation and the nonidentical; that portion of society that refused to be one-dimensionalized? Here again, Horkheimer and Adorno introduce a complicated discussion of the role of mimetic behavior in civilization and its distortion in Nazism's mimicry of its Jewish victims. "Anti-Semitism is based on false projection," they wrote. "Mimesis imitates the environment but 'false projection' makes the environment like itself." This type of false projection politicized paranoia. To many who fell victim to its appeal, fascism may have provided a mass delusional system that was mistaken for reality. How this reality turned into a nightmare is a question of even greater perplexity.

It is becoming increasingly obvious, as Kren and Rappoport have ably argued, that the Holocaust is a watershed event, one of those which changes or should change our notions of reality, language, meaning, our basic epistemological categories. No assessment of twentieth-century civilization can ignore the fact that science and technology, celebrated as the guarantors of progress, then climaxed in the factories of death and that the unlimited, value-free use of knowledge and science had paved the way for the mass murder of a faceless, mindless bureaucracy. The Holocaust was an advance warning of the demonic potential in modern culture. For Germany was one of the most advanced Western countries— at the center of the academic, cultural, scientific, and technological enterprise. Auschwitz may be what happens when you divorce morality from politics; when you exploit knowledge for nonethical, nonhumanitarian goals, when you allow technology and bureaucracy to run amuck.

It is no accident that the term Final Solution was finally chosen to indicate a program of mass murder. It is an operational rather than an ideological term. The Jews were the problem and Auschwitz was the solution.

It is not enough to say that those who committed these horrible crimes or who condoned them through active indifference were, in some fashion, outside their own culture and civilization. The
facts won't allow such an evasion. We must, therefore, formulate as precisely as we can, and press home a much more disturbing question: Were there powerful elements inside humanism, within civilization, within the political, economic, and social structure, that not only failed to impede barbarism but helped produce it? Is the notion of "civilization" itself flawed or tragically implicated, as Horkheimer and Adorno suggest, in the coming of the Holocaust? Did the separation of thought and praxis, in some way incapacitate people's more immediate political reflexes? Was the Holocaust the result of the inevitable crisis in capitalism predicted by Marx? Is it conceivable that civilization represses Eros, thus strengthening Thanatos, the destructive energy? According to Freud, the more intense the repression of primary erotic drives in a society, the greater a mobilization of surplus aggressiveness against the repression. Again, according to Freud, repression is bound to increase with the progress of civilization, and at the same time, aggressive energy is going to be released.

George Steiner, who has written unusually well about the proximity of political barbarism to Western traditions of learning, draws attention to the fact that mass murder had little trouble flourishing side by side with activities previously regarded as guarantees of human conduct; namely, fine literature, music, and the arts. He wonders what the connections are between the mental-psychological habits of high literacy and the temptations of the inhuman. While we are not in a position to answer Steiner's question, its challenge remains constant--Nazi poster and magazine art provide popular illustrations of the ways in which the disciplines of learning, religion, and artistic effort could be put to the service of brutal power. Meyer has shown how music was used for similar purposes. Philosopher and existentialist Martin Heidegger's inaugural address as rector of Freiburg University, aligning the labors of the scholar with those of the soldier, is a muted and more refined example of this complicity. Professor Heidegger's denial of scholarship funds to Jewish students at the university and, contrastingly, the preference he gave to those who fought in the SA or SS are more active and unsettling examples of the same thing. Yet Heidegger was hardly alone. Thousands of such actions can be cited, directly implicating intellectuals, students, artists, scientists, jurists, and churchmen in the day-to-day programs of the Nazi movement. Corruption ran deeply through German culture. Thus we misunderstand modern political power if we focus too heavily on the high-ranking individual. Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich, Eichmann—their roles were necessary, but none was sufficient to produce Auschwitz. We must look for the answer in more structural considerations, not in individuals.

The passage of time, as Kren and Rappoport note, has made it increasingly evident that a heretofore unbreachable moral and political barrier in the history of Western civilization was successfully overcome by the Nazis in World War II, and that
henceforth the systematic, bureaucratically administered extermination of millions of citizens or subject peoples will forever be one of the capacities and temptations of government. A barrier has been overcome in what for millennia had been regarded as the permissible limits of political action. The Nazi Holocaust may just be the logical conclusion of the political institution we call "state," a conclusion that even the most critical anarchist could not have foreseen. It may be the logical conclusion of a rampant capitalism that turns everything and everyone into commodities, some to be processed, exploited, sold, and even disposed of once every drop of profit has been squeezed out of their beings, disposed of on the dump heap of history to be burned, literally like refuse, their by-products used for fertilizer and soap.

The Holocaust was an expression of some of the most significant political, moral, religious, and demographic tendencies of Western civilization in the twentieth century. There were, however, unique elements in the Holocaust. It was the first attempt by a modern, legally constituted government to pursue a policy of bureaucratically organized genocide both within and beyond its own frontiers. As such, it must be distinguished from the use of violence by a state against another state or even against its own people for the purpose of securing compliance with its policies. It is fundamentally different from American nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for example. The American assaults, although unbelievably deadly, ceased as soon as the Japanese surrendered, and never had total annihilation as an objective. German mass violence against Jews, gypsies, and other racially defined "inferior" groups, was intensified after the victims had surrendered. Never before have people been so expendable.

The Nazi elite, as Richard Rubenstein has argued in The Cunning of History, acted upon the assumption that the Jews and gypsies were a surplus people, a surplus commodity, not needed for slave labor since there were potentially tens of millions of Eastern Europeans available for labor exploitation, a surplus people whom nobody wanted and whom they could dispose of as they pleased. Given the moral universe of the twentieth century, the most rational and least costly solution of the problem of disposing of a surplus population, may, tragically, be extermination. It is understood that people can act rationally and be absolutely immoral. Again, given a certain utilitarian and instrumentalist mind set committed to efficiency, practicality, order, control, and predictability, extermination may be the problem-solving strategy least likely to have unanticipated repercussions for its planners, assuming, of course, you win the war. This was certainly true during World War II, when the world, by and large, did little to convince the Nazis that it was seriously opposed to the Nazi policies. Joseph Goebbels, minister of propaganda, who read world public opinion carefully, noted in his diary that free-world inaction is proof
that the Germans were in fact doing the world's dirty work for it. Heinrich Himmler frequently reminded his commanders that the world would someday be thankful for what Germany had the iron will to achieve. So from a purely bureaucratic perspective, the extermination of Jews, gypsies, and other racially defined inferior groups made eminent sense. Extermination was the logical conclusion of racism.

Yet, will was insufficient; beyond the desire there had to be the capacity. Usually when we focus upon the possibility of mass death in the twentieth century, we focus upon technological advances in weaponry. Far too little attention has been given to the advances in social organization that allowed for the effective use of the new weapons. In order to understand how the moral barrier was crossed that made massacre in the millions possible, it is necessary to consider the importance of bureaucracy in modern political and social organizations. The German sociologist Max Weber was especially cognizant of its significance. In fact, Weber's analysis of bureaucracy is one of the central points in his general sociology. His key concept of rationalization as a distinctive feature of modern society, especially as linked to his notion of a demystification of the world, finds one of its concrete manifestations in bureaucracy and bureaucratization. Rationalization and demystification are in turn linked to Weber's emphasis on power in all social relationships. Writing in 1916 long before the Nazi party came to power, Weber observed:

When fully developed, bureaucracy stands under the principle of without scorn and bias. Its specific nature which is welcomed by capitalism develops the more perfectly the more bureaucracy is dehumanized, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation. This is the specific nature of bureaucracy and it is appraised as its special virtue.14

Weber, of course, could not predict that the police and civil service bureaucracies could be used as a death machine to eliminate millions who had been defined as superfluous. Even Weber seems to have stopped short of foreseeing state-sponsored massacres as one of the dehumanizing capacities of bureaucracy. In the Nazi state, or more specifically, in the SS offices in Berlin, an inconspicuous series of offices in an even more inconspicuous building, this occurred. Bureaucrats like Adolph Eichmann manipulated numbers on paper, shuffled these papers to other bureaucrats, and a few hundred miles away tens of thousands of people were condemned to brutal death. They never had to and often never did see the results of their paper-shuffling genocide. Bureaucratic mass murder reached its fullest development when gas chambers with a capacity for killing two thousand people at a time were installed at Auschwitz. As Hannah Arendt has
observed, the very size of the chambers emphasized the complete
depersonalization of the killing process.

So there seems to be a connection between bureaucracy and mass
death. In the case of Jews and gypsies, they were defined as
inferior and "legally" deprived of their citizenship. People
without political rights are superfluous people. They have
lost all rights to life and human dignity. The Nazis, as
Arendt has indicated, understood that people have no rights
unless they are guaranteed by a state with the power to defend
such rights. They were perfectly consistent in demanding that
the deportees be made stateless before exterminating them. Once
the Germans had collected the stateless, rightless, politically
superfluous people, they exercised a domination over them more
total than was ever before exercised by one people over another.
In the past, political or social domination was limited by the
ruler's or the slaveholder's need to permit at least a minimal
level of subsistence because of the economic value of the subject
peoples. Now, the SS felt they had a potential supply of
millions of superfluous people. Those they did not immediately
exterminate, they worked under the most brutal conditions,
usually for about four months, and then they were annihilated.
So the Nazis could create a society of total domination because
they had a bureaucratic administration capable of governing
with utter indifference to the human needs of the inmates and a
supply of inmates capable of continuous replenishment, an
invaluable natural resource.

The Final Solution utilized the industrial processes and the
managerial techniques that enabled European civilization
to prosper. Those mountains of shoes, human hair, eyeglasses,
and suitcases that have been imprinted on our mind's eye, were
by-products of a modern manufacturing process. They were
destined to be reintegrated into the consumer economy. In
keeping with the most advanced management techniques, an accurate
record of production was maintained, so many units (lives)
processed per day and week; and constant improvement of
efficiency was encouraged. Rudolf Hoess, the camp commandant of
Auschwitz, recalled his achievement in this area: "The Camp
Commandant at Treblinka told me that he had liquidated 80,000
in the course of one-half year, he used monoxide gas and I did
not think his methods were very efficient. So when I set up
the extermination building at Auschwitz, I used Cyclon B
[sic]. Another improvement we made over Treblinka was that
we built our gas chambers to accommodate 2,000 people at one
time, whereas at Treblinka their ten gas chambers only
accommodated 200 people each."15 For Hoess the concentration
camp was a mundane extension of normal operational procedures.

No sector of German society was immune, certainly not the
corporate community. I.G. Farben, Germany's massive chemical
combine, was the most important German corporate user of slave
labor at Auschwitz. The corporation's activities at Auschwitz
are an important part of the story of the camp as a society of total domination. It invested 700 million Reichsmarks in its Buna synthetic rubber plant at Auschwitz. About 35,000 slaves were used, and at least 25,000 such workers died there. The diet fed to I. G. Farben inmates, which included the infamous "Buna soup," resulted in an average weight loss for each individual of about six to eight and one half pounds a week. At the end of one month, the change in the prisoner's appearance was marked; at the end of four months, they were either dead or so unfit for work that they were released to the gas chambers at Birkenau. The more unfortunate (if this can be imagined) inmates served as human guinea pigs for medical experiments conducted by the Bayer division of I. G. Farben. Similar examples could be drawn from among the greatest German industrial concerns who also used concentration camp inmates—Krupp, AEG, Telefunken, Siemens, BMW, and Rheinmetall, to name only the most important. These companies made tremendous profits, paying dividends to thousands of investors. I.G. Farben made particularly handsome profits from its subsidiary, Degesch, which manufactured Zyklon-B, the gas used in the gas chambers. It was a highly profitable business, which paid 100 to 200 percent dividends in 1942, 1943, and 1944.16

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels have observed that the triumph of the capitalist class who owned the means of production had "left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous cash payment."17 Marx and Engels were pointing to the same kind of "dehumanized" rationalization as had Weber.18 According to Marx, the bourgeoisie had reduced industrial labor to a commodity, like every other article of commerce. As soon as profit and productivity became the sole criteria by which a business enterprise was to be measured, it was in the factory owner's interest to work his employees as long as he could and pay them as little as he could get away with.19 Marx saw how these abuses operated in mid-nineteenth century England. However, for exploitation to be truly systematic, there needs to be a large pool of unorganized people who have no choice but to work or die—or more accurately put, to work and die. The industrial and corporate use of slave labor in the concentration camps and ghettos took this structural propensity of capitalism to its final conclusion. Human life was cheap, exploitable, and expendable.

This may be what happens when corporate profits and bureaucratic efficiency are the only values left. Mass murder was both a highly complex and successful business venture. The men who carried out the business part of the enterprise were not uniformed thugs or criminals. They were highly competent, respectable, corporate executives who were only doing what they had been trained to do—run large corporations profitably. As long as their institutions functioned efficiently, they apparently had few qualms concerning the uses to which they were put.
It is also interesting to note what became of the directors of these companies. Most of them served very nominal jail terms, usually from one to four years. John McCloy, the U.S. high commissioner, wanted to begin a new relationship with Germany, and so in 1951, through a general act of clemency, he released all the German industrialists then incarcerated. They resumed their corporate elitist positions. These men showed no remorse, defending their decisions as necessary in time of war. One industrialist, Friedrich Flick, who annually contributed 100,000 Reichsmarks to the SS, who personally listened to reports from the Einsatzgruppen, whose firms used Jewish slave labor, had glibly declared at Nuremberg: "Nobody of the large circle of persons who know my fellow defendants and myself will be willing to believe that we committed crimes against humanity, and nothing will convince us that we are war criminals." Flick never paid a penny in compensation to his victims, and when he died in 1972 at the age of 89, he left almost one billion dollars to his son.

Why were people who were responsible for the death of thousands and implicated in the death of millions essentially let free while SS guards received stiff sentences? A society whose prosperity depends upon economic virtuosus capable of applying calculating rationality to large-scale corporate enterprise can ill-afford the loss of highly trained managers. It seems that it just may be possible to argue that the horrors committed by the Nazis in their society of total domination, such as medical experiments and corporate utilization of death-camp slave labor, merely carried to an extreme operational attitudes and procedures that dominate the workings of bureaucracy and modern capitalist corporate enterprise.

The administered society, in constantly eroding all lingering individuality and autonomous structures of civil society, generated internal crises whose successful management required the radical reversal of its main strategy. Jürgen Habermas describes these as the economic, rationality, motivational, and legitimation crises. It seems that successful administration requires at least a minimal lingering negativity to regulate its rationalizing agencies. However, when the controller totally determines the controlled, as was the case in the Nazi period, the necessary dialectical tension between the two which operates before total control as a mediating factor and which imparts to both parties a will which could be asserted tends to disappear, and conflict that would otherwise be resolved within a structure is transformed into the annihilation of one party. At that point, the point of the Holocaust, logical systems change, predictable standards of behavior are breached, meaning and values and knowledge itself are challenged, and the system collapses into absolute negativity, into l'univers concentrationnaire, whose only morality is that everything is possible. The Holocaust was an attempt to own life by controlling the process of death. It was hell literally brought on earth as the human world of all the peoples of Europe was literally
turned upside down in the Nazi social organization and became the "kingdom of death." Death now ruled as the symbol of ultimate power. The artist Naphtali Bezem very appropriately portrayed this inverted Nazi world in the Yad Vashem Memorial in Israel with the figure of a woman holding two flaming candlesticks upside down with the flames burning her breasts. Precisely because of this absurdity, the meaning of the Holocaust is impenetrable. Language is inadequate to express the inexpressible. "The Holocaust is so agonizing," writes Steven Schwarzchild, "precisely because it is the ultimate paradox. It imposes silence even while it demands speech." But the moral imperative demands an encounter. For to be human, to exercise one's humanity, is to pose questions and suggest meaning, even in the face of the absurd, of nothingness. It is to this quest, the quest to understand, that this volume is dedicated.

In summary, we believe that these essays suggest the connection between the structural problems and contradictions of Weimar society and their relationship to the rise of fascism; the ineffectual opposition of anti-fascist segments of the population in the face of this crisis, an ineffectuality which in itself has structural dimensions; and the way in which cultural symbols, notions, and ideas also reflect structural tensions. We believe, then, that the essays contained in this collection and our reflections upon them, indicate that there is a connection between socioeconomic tensions, processes of objectification, and the level of anti-Semitism that may have contributed to the Holocaust or made it possible. These essays are, of course, not meant to provide a comprehensive history of Weimar Germany. However, given the limitation of space, it is hoped this book will offer a fresh perspective on key problems in the social and economic history of the Weimar Republic. As a developed capitalist society that proved structurally unstable—socially, economically, and politically—and as a political culture which offered fertile ground for the growth of National Socialism, Weimar Germany continues to demand our attention. And the conclusions to be drawn from its history should offer some insights into and warnings about the society in which we live.
NOTES


5 Ibid., p. 175.

6 Ibid., p. 168.

7 Ibid., p. 169.

8 Ibid., p. 171.

9 Ibid., p. 172.
Towards the Holocaust

10 Ibid.
13 Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, p. 187.