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Duvenage, Pieter

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THE POLITICS OF MEMORY AND FORGETTING AFTER AUSCHWITZ AND APARTHEID

by Pieter Duvenage

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the politics of memory and forgetting after Auschwitz and apartheid. In the first two sections Habermas's critical contribution to the German *Historikerstreit* is discussed. Important in this regard is the moral dimension of our relation to the past. In the next two sections the emphasis shifts to South Africa and more specifically the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The article ends with a general discussion of the dilemma of historical "truth" and representation in contemporary societies.

KEYWORDS

History - Habermas - Historikerstreit - South Africa - Apartheid

ADDRESS AND AFFILIATION

Department of Philosophy
University of the North
Private Bag X1106
0727 Sovenga, South Africa

Phone: (+27) 015 268 3158
EMail: PD@Smartnet.co.za

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Aufgearbeitet wäre die Vergangenheit erst dann, wenn die Ursachen des Vergangenen beseitigt wären. Nur weil die Ursachen fortbestehen, ward sein Bann bis heute nicht gebrochen

- T W Adorno -

How do we relate to past injustices? And, what is the nature of this relation after Auschwitz and apartheid? Although it is an easy way out to 'forget' and 'close' the book on apartheid and to start anew with an unblemished, or at least, sanitised version of the past, the vital question for South Africa is how to deal with the politics of memory and forgetting in the context of a new and unconsolidated democracy.[1] The institutional answer to this question was the appointment of The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Although the explicit aim of the commission was to look for the 'truth' and to promote 'reconciliation', the issue of justice was a significant undercurrent of its workings.[2] But, how can the dangers of forgetting, on the one hand, and the manipulation of memory or the 'truth', on the other, be avoided? And, what are its implications for retroactive justice in this context? Although these are complex issues, one can safely predict that the manner in which South Africans, white and black, are going to deal with the grim and tragic past that carries the name of apartheid, will have a major impact on the burning issue of living - individually and collectively - in a multicultural and heterogeneous democracy.

It will be argued that the German Historians' Debate (*Historikerstreit*) is relevant, also for other contexts, because it deals reconstructively with the political and the moral dimensions of collective memory - the manner in which a present generation deals with a vanished past and its victims.[3] The debate is also valuable due to the manner in which it translates a mainly academic discussion on history to a political discourse over questions of national identity and the role of an evil past in the present (Baldwin, 1990: 27; Torpey, 1988: 5). Although the different sides to this debate share the assumption that the relation between present and past has a political content, it will be indicated (in section I) that there is a particularly strong disagreement on the specifically moral dimension of collective memory. It is especially Habermas's contribution in this debate that will receive further attention (section II), by focusing on his notions of moral debt to the past, the Benjaminian notion of *anamnestic solidarity*, and the imperative to leave conventional traditions behind. Against this theoretical background the focus will shift more concretely to memory and

forgetting after apartheid (section III) and the specific steps that were taken to deal with it by way of the South African TRC (IV). Finally some arguments will be offered to deal with memory as judgement and forgiveness and not as punishment and forgetting (section V).

I

In the 1950s 'managing the past' (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) appeared as both a moral and political challenge in Germany. Morally it was linked to the question of collective guilt - the special relationship between the present generation and its past victims. Traditionally, this relationship has been rhetorically described as a *debt*. Simultaneously, the idea of 'keeping alive the memory' of past victims implied that such a remembrance was to enter into the formation and development of a political culture in a conscious and reflective way. Consequently post-war Germany was obliged to fashion its distinctive identity from the collective memory of a shared moral catastrophe (Pensky, 1989: 352-353). In this process some painful questions were asked: "how could the nation of Goethe, Kant, and Schiller become the perpetrators of 'crimes against humanity'? Or simply: 'how was Auschwitz possible'? For one contempory commentator, Jürgen Habermas, the 'moral fibre' of the German nation is at stake in dealing with these questions, while another, Richard Wolin (1989: iii, xiii), argues that the development of a healthy, nonpathological national identity would seem to be contingent on the forthright acknowledgement of those aspects of the German tradition that facilitated the catastrophe of 1933-1945. Habermas's played a major role in the German *Historians' Debate* which took place in the 1980s. The debate was sparked off by a group of historians who wanted to interpret the moral and political implications of 'coming to terms with the past' (*Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*) in a conventional and traditional manner.

Michael Stürmer, for example, argues that historians must compensate for the potentially confusing array of value-choices that have arisen with the decline of religion and the rise of modern secularism. Germany's crisis of identity or consciousness in the 1980s is blamed on the pluralism and permissiveness of the cultural trends of the post-1960's with their destruction of authority, early specialization, lack of discipline, and neglect of certain subjects that are important for an

understanding of the modern world. Consequently an 'inner worldly meaning' (*Sinnstiftung*) is defended, which, after the decline of religion, only the nation and patriotism are able to provide (Stürmer, 1982: 12). The task of the historian is, thus, the renewal of national self-confidence by providing positive images of the past. This implies an interpretation of German history that draws a national historical balance. Moreover the obstruction in continuity caused by the National Socialist experience must somehow be overcome, and the national fantasies of the past avoided, without sacrificing national self-consciousness in the process (Craig, 1987: 17-18). Although Stürmer asserts that historians must 'constantly wander on the thin edge between *Sinnstiftung* and *Entmythologisierung* (demythologizing)' he also states that German identity 'can no longer be based on the nation state, but cannot exist without the nation'. In conclusion he argues that Germany needed the kind of history that promises identity - a refuge in changing times. 'In the long run no nation can live without a historical identity. If our German history was merely regarded as one single chain of crimes and failure, our nation could be shaken and its future could be at stake' (Stürmer 1990: 16; see also Stürmer 1987: 37).

In a more direct manner Andreas Hillgruber suggests that in scrutinising Germany's collapse in the East toward the end of World War II, one faces the choice of 'identifying' with one of three parties: Hitler, the victorious Red army, or the German army trying to defend the civilians from being overrun by Soviet Troops (Hillgruber, 1986: 24; Hillgruber, 1988). His preference is for the self-sacrificing efforts of the German army in the East, who were trying to save the population from the Red Army (Habermas, 1989: 216-217). Moreover, Hillgruber charges that the Western powers intentionally allowed the Soviet Union to take over the Eastern half of the Third *Reich* and transfer large chunks of territory to Poland so as to ensure a powerless Germany. The result, so the argument runs, is that his native country can no longer function as the strategic European 'middle' - the equilibrium between East and West. In the second part of his book, *Zweierlei Untergang*, lies the real bite - here the fate of the Jews in the Holocaust is juxtaposed with the fate of the German population on the Eastern front. This relativizing way of writing history is done without any further qualification.

The most controversial of the arguments in the *Historians' Debate* were those presented by

Ernst Nolte.[4] He claims, firstly, that Nazism must be interpreted as the ideological mirror-image of Bolshevism. Against this backdrop every concrete historical fact is judged against the background of a metapolitical 'European civil war' between National Socialism and Marxism. Chaim Weizmann's declaration in September 1939, that Jews in the whole world would fight on the side of England, is thus used to explain why the Jews landed on the wrong side in Hitler's ideological war against communism and justifying '... that Hitler was allowed to treat the German Jews as prisoners of war and ... to intern them' (Nolte, 1985: 27-28). Secondly, he argues that all of the atrocities committed by the Nazi's, with the exception of the 'technical process of the gassing', had been anticipated in the massacre of the Armenians by the Turks, the White Terror in Russia and the horrors of the Gulag. Auschwitz's atrocities were, thus, '... a distorted copy and not a first act or an original' (Nolte, 1985: 36). Thirdly, he asserts that it was Hitler's fear of the Soviet Union and his knowledge of the fiendishness of its methods that prompted his own brutalities. Nolte writes:

> A conspicuous shortcoming of the literature on National Socialism is that it doesn't know, or doesn't want to admit, to what extent everything that was later done by the Nazis, with the sole exception of the technical procedure of gassing, had already been described in an extensive literature dating from the early 1920s ... Could it be that the Nazis, that Hitler carried out an "Asiatic" deed only because they regarded themselves and those like them as potential or actual victims of an "Asiatic" deed? (Nolte, 1987: 45).

The need to defend a positive German identity (Stürmer), the juxtapositioning of the Jewish and German civilians (Hillgruber), as well as the relativization of the Nazi past (Nolte), can all be interpreted as attempts in the 1980s to loosen the primarily moral association that *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* played in Germany for many decades after the second world war. From these perspectives there is a discernible call to abandon an older, troubled consensus concerning the moral and political dimension of the relation between past and present in Germany. These historians feel that the notion of a 'debt' to the past is nothing more than the mass-psychological element of collective guilt, a legacy from the 1950s that a stable and responsible Federal Republic

could no longer afford to continue in the present. Once the moral claim of collective memory is discarded, the political content of collective memory can be reworked so that the potentially disruptive and alienating elements of the past can be 'put in perspective and rendered safe' (Pensky, 1989: 353. These views, though, were strongly contested by another group of German intellectuals. This side was represented by the social philosopher Jürgen Habermas and historians such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Jürgen Kocka, Eberhard Jäckel, Hans Mommsen, Wolfgang Mommsen and Detlev Paukert.

Habermas argues against a moral relativization of the past. He (1989: 43) accuses the revisionists of 'apologetic tendencies' in their writing about Nazism, seeing ' ... their role as, on the one hand, mobilizing pasts that can be accepted approvingly and, on the other hand, morally neutralizing other pasts that would provoke only criticism and rejection.' This argument constitutes a significant attempt to reintroduce and expand the idea of the moral content of collective memory. In this process he asks for a more hermeneutically sensitive account of the German army's defense of the Eastern front. Such a historical account ' ... at least offers the ... advantage of setting the selective perceptions of those parties directly involved into some relation with each other, assessing them contrastingly and supplementing these with the knowledge of those born afterwards' (Habermas, 1989: 217). Friedländer also remarks that Hillgruber's choice is astonishing, since ' ... the holding of the Eastern front allowed the extermination process to continue' (Torpey, 1988: 8). Such an adaptation of the heroic perspective of the 'brave fighting men' of the Eastern front is nothing else than an ideological reading of the past. It intends to demonstrate that the Germans have always been on the right side of the struggle against Bolshevism, and that the German soldiers, too, were victims of the war. The issue here is: can moments of the Holocaust be isolated, relativized, and juxtaposed as Hillgruber and Nolte attempt? Can atrocities be reduced to the status of merely one among many through the method of historical-philosophical continuity? The most effective criticism of Nolte's views came from Jäckel who indicates that Hitler's destruction of the Jews was indeed unique, 'I would like to argue ... that the National Socialist murder of the Jews [was] unique, because never before has any state with the authority of its responsible leader, decided and announced, to kill a specific group of people' (Jäckel, 1987: 118; translation by R.

Wolin). Similarly Peukert argues that what is historically new about the Nazi practice of genocide is the fact that it receives a theoretical foundation through a conception of 'positive' science - the idea of basing science on racial categories (Peukert, 1988: 24-28). The problem with Nolte's argument is that he weakens the most important aspect of National Socialism - its criminal tendencies in the form of a fatally obsessive anti-Semitism.

For Habermas the perspectives of Stürmer, Hillgruber, and Nolte in the *Historians' Debate* are eventually part of a neoconservative and rightwing backlash against the student and antinuclear movements that culminated in the mid-1980's. In a provocative move he also links the politics and historiography of neoconservatism with the philosophical and intellectual implications of postmodernism (Habermas, 1987). Habermas's alternative in the *Historians' Debate* can be reconstructed in the following manner: firstly, there is a moral dimension in our relation to the past. Secondly, this dimension consists of the 'sad duty' of attempting to establish, by a committed kind of remembrance, a kind of solidarity with those who perished. And finally, that this *anamnestic solidarity* between the present and the past forbids the unreflective and instrumental appropriation of bankrupt cultural traditions, and demands instead a self-reflective, critical, and committed reappraisal of German history in the present (Pensky 1989: 354). Habermas writes:

> ... there is the obligation incumbent upon us in Germany ... to keep alive, without distortion and not only in an intellectual form, the memory of the sufferings of those who were murdered by German hands. It is especially these dead who have a claim to the *weak anamnestic powers of solidarity* that later generations can continue to practice only in the medium of a remembrance that is repeatedly renewed, often desperate, and continually on one's mind. If we were to brush aside this Benjaminian legacy, our fellow Jewish citizens and the sons, daughters, and grandchildren of all those who were murdered would feel themselves unable to breathe in our country (Habermas 1989: 233, my emphasis).

Against this backdrop any attempt at historical relativization is confronted by the exceptionality and moral catastrophe signalled by the name of Auschwitz, making any naive reconstruction impossible.

II

Habermas's understanding of the moral dimension of the past, his use of anamnestic solidarity, and the argument for the critical appraisal of traditions in the present, need further exploration. The phenomenon of collective guilt and Jaspers's question on intersubjective accountability remains relevant for Habermas. Collective guilt does not simply go away with the passage of time. In this context neutrality only makes sense in terms of a morally 'clean break' between the past and present - which is impossible in Germany. Insofar as the immediately practical dimensions of the questions of collective guilt became less pressing with the establishment of a stable democracy, the terrible moral difficulties arising from collective guilt were only aggravated as entire forms of life, rather than individuals, became the repositories of guilt. On what grounds then does Habermas claim that collective guilt establishes a specifically moral relation with the appropriation of cultural traditions in the present? And: how can collective guilt act as a kind of barrier to the instrumental renewal of conventional forms of nationalistic collective identity? On the other hand: Will such a 'coming to terms with the past' not lead to instability in the politics of the present as some of the historians argue? If guilt invades the very fabric of an entire form of life, it may well appear irresponsible to question, perhaps even to discard, a form of life in its entirety - reintroducing the cultural malaise and political chaos that made Hitler's ascension to power possible (Pensky, 1989: 355-356).

Habermas's answer is that collective guilt cannot be addressed wholly in the language of political expediency once the moral content of this guilt is recognized. At this point in his argument collective guilt is connected with the Benjaminian concept of *anamnestic solidarity*. Thus, honestly confronted, collective guilt - understood as the lingering intersubjective accountability for past crimes - leads neither to repression, nor ideological neutralization, but rather to an experience of moral duty (*Verpflichtung*) with secondary political implications. Such a 'weak anamnestic force' of solidarity with the dead lies at the heart of a memory which forbids an unreflective and facile reappropriation of cultural traditions, and demands, in Habermas's language, an autonomous and critical encounter with ambivalent traditions. This implies the recognition that certain elements

within that culture are inadmissible on moral grounds. The problem of neoconservatism, as a cultural project, is its attempt to renovate outmoded and traditional sources of collective identity and social cohesion, by repressing or relativizing potentially disruptive elements of shared cultural traditions and historical experience. In this process Habermas argues against the artificial resuscitation of nationalist patriotism that is offered as a sort of compensation for damages (*Schadensabwicklung*), which is the price of economic modernity. Hence the need to critically explore the moral dimension of the transmission and reappropriation of cultural traditions (Pensky, 1989: 354, 356-357).

For Habermas the historian has a specific responsibility in this regard, thereby assisting in 'coming to terms with' a national past in which Auschwitz functions as fated metaphor. Historical scholarship should, therefore, not promote 'social integration of meaning' through *Sinnstiftung* (Stürmer) or a 'positive historical approach' (Hillgruber). The subordination of scientific criteria in history to an identity-securing function, risks falling behind the critical standards of liberal scholarship, resulting in the production of a neonationalist 'government history'. The very idea that a historian must in some way 'identify' with one or several of the protagonists of his or her narratives (Hillgruber) represents a regression to the historiography of German historicism in which the writing of history from a 'national' point of view was common (Wolin, 1989: xv-xvi).[6] Modern historiography signals for Habermas, '... the end of all images of history that are closed or ordained by government historians. The inevitable pluralism of readings, which is by no means unmonitored, but on the contrary rendered transparent, only reflects the structure of open societies' (Habermas, 1989: 226). The insistence on a *plurality* of historiographical interpretations, though, does not suggest a *levelling* of differences between historical events by unseemly comparisons. Consensus means, in this context, an acceptance by Germans of their responsibility for the traditions which led to Auschwitz, not a falsely constructed continuity or discontinuity.

Habermas's view of the historian's task has similarities with his view of politics and philosophy. Politically his concept of constitutional patriotism is an attempt to defend Germany's link to the West, not just as a strategic integration into the given constellation of economic and alliance politics, but to confirm the German commitment to the Enlightenment tradition of the West. In this sense a moral discourse demanded by the frail, often desperate force of anamnestic solidarity

would lead from a critical encounter with ambivalent traditions to an affirmation of the rational principles on which the constitution of the Federal Republic was founded. Thus, the work of mournful remembrance (*Trauerarbeit*) finds its most immediate political relevance in a debate concerning the rational self-understanding of Germany (Pensky, 1989: 357). Habermas writes:

> Unfortunately, in the cultural nation of the Germans, a connection to universalist constitutional principles that was anchored in convictions could be formed only after - and through - Auschwitz. Anyone who wants to dispel our shame about this fact with an empty phrase like 'obsession with guilt' ... anyone who wants to recall the Germans to a conventional form of their national identity, is destroying the only reliable basis for our tie to the West (Habermas, 1989: 227).

Attempts to revive neonationalist dogmas are thus countered by a constitutional patriotism and modern philosophical attitude. The maturity of the German political culture depends, in this process, on a commitment to the principles of the rule of law (Wolin, 1989: xix). This conception of rational constitutionalism is also connected to Habermas's understanding of the moral self.

By building on the development psychology of Piaget and Kohlberg and his own concept of universal pragmatics, Habermas describes postconventional identity as the capacity that an individual has acquired to measure his or her moral convictions in terms of general ethical maxims; in other words that beliefs concerning right and wrong are no longer decided by immediate and specific points of reference (e.g. the view of one's peer group or nation), but rather by an appeal to universal principles (Habermas, 1976: 24-26; and 1989: 249). The desire for a return to a conventional national identity is thus impossible, due to the precarious gains Germany has made as a democratic nation since its inception. There is no place anymore for a traditional differentiation between 'good' and 'bad' Germanies, where history must usurp the affirmative function of augmenting national consensus. To summarize: Habermas's position in the *Historians' Debate* is influenced by a set of underlying historical-theoretical claims. The experience of a morally commanded, fragile solidarity with past victims ought to lead into a public moral and rational

discourse, in which conventional forms of collective identity are abandoned, and replaced by elements of post-traditional identity, such as universal, noninstrumental, and communicative value orientations that can anchor and maintain itself in political, social, and legal institutions (Pensky, 1989: 358).

If Habermas sounds relatively optimistic about the possibility of 'coming to terms with the past', there is also another side to it. Acknowledging that the extermination of the Jews of Europe is an 'event at the limits' he writes that something happened at Auschwitz,

> ... that no one could previously have thought even possible. It touched a deep layer of solidarity among all who have a human face. Until then - in spite of all the quasi-natural brutalities of world history - we had simply taken the integrity of this deep layer for granted ... Auschwitz has altered the continuation of historical life contexts - and not only in Germany (Habermas, 1989: 251-252).

This remark seems to concede that there are limits to modern thinking, politics and historiography in dealing with Auschwitz. It also implies that the anamnestic solidarity with the suffering of past victims in the present is not a foregone conclusion. If the idea of moral debt is taken seriously, it is unintelligible how one can establish a moral - or any - relation with nonexistent people in the model of discourse ethics (Pensky, 1989: 353). This problem, as will be argued in the final section, is especially acute in the context of Habermas's formalization of critical theory and his understanding of history as a process of rational and evolutionary development. These issues raise important theoretical questions about Habermas's involvement in the *Historians' Debate*, but more importantly they also emphasize the need to critically explore his contribution for possible application in other contexts.

III

Can South Africa learn anything from Germany's past and more specifically Habermas's

interventions in it? Reacting to Adam Michnik's contextualizing attempts, Habermas commented:

> The *Historians' Debate* was a dispute for Germans, not for Poles. It would be a negative form of nationalism if we were to claim that the positions arrived at in the course of the *Historians' Debate* should form part of the political culture of every nation. Adam Michnik has drawn the correct conclusions from this debate for the Poles. But it is not up to me to point them out. We simply have to distinguish between what we say at home and what we regard as valid in any setting (Habermas, 1994: 26).

There are obvious differences between the histories and political systems of Germany and South Africa. It has been indicated that apartheid was not a systematic attempt at extermination of a single ethnic group by the state, but rather the result of paternalistic intergroup relations (Adam, 1992: 16).[6] After the war, except for a short period of military administration, the Germans remained in power. In South Africa the white minority lost political power. There has also been no *Historians' Debate* in which philosophers and historians made it their intellectual, moral, and public task to wrestle with an evil past in order to secure a just future in a democracy.[7] Despite these qualifications, though, the names of Auschwitz as well as apartheid have registered a moral catastrophe deep down in the psyche of the twentieth century (Liebenberg, 1992: 14). Like post-war Germans, South Africans, especially the whites, must ask uncomfortable questions about their past.

In an essay on apartheid, 'Racism's last word', Derrida uses 'last', firstly, as meaning the worst, the most racist of racism, and secondly ' ... last as one says also of the most recent, the last to date of the world's racisms, the oldest and the youngest' (Derrida, 1985: 291).[8] At a time when all racisms on the face of the earth were condemned, it was in the world's face that the National Party dared to campaign for apartheid - the separate development of each race. Derrida writes:

> APARTHEID: by itself the word occupies the terrain like a concentration camp. System of partition, barbed wire, crowds of mapped out solitudes ... At every point, like all racisms,

> it tends to pass segregation off as natural - and as the very law of origin ... Even though it offers the excuse of blood, color, birth ... racism always betrays the perversion of a man, the 'talking animal'. It institutes, declares, writes, inscribes, prescribes. A system of marks, it outlines space in order to assign forced residence or to close off borders. It does not discern, it discriminates (Derrida, 1985: 292).

The interesting aspect here is that Derrida places apartheid within the 'text' of Western logocentrism. Where Habermas wants to link Germany to the Western traditions of universality and constitutionalism, Derrida interprets apartheid, like Auschwitz, as a product of Western modernity. With the help of Foucault's insight into Western reason as one marked by *exclusions*, it is not difficult to see Auschwitz as well as apartheid in those terms. Only within the logic and economics of the 'western way of life' could these events have presented their grim faces. The theologico-political discourse and defense of apartheid, for example, were linked in a perverse way to the West. It happened under a regime whose formal structures were those of a Western democracy, in the British style, with 'universal' suffrage for whites, a relative freedom of the press and judiciary, and the guarantee of individual rights (Derrida, 1985: 295-297). Although the very South African uniqueness of this catastrophe can be recognized, it will be unsound to deny the historical roots of white South Africans and the specific 'European' way of life in Africa.

What, then, is the moral dimension of the past for present South Africans? What is the meaning of collective guilt, anamnestic solidarity, historical traditions, and retroactive justice in this context? Firstly, one can hold that apartheid was not just - as some have relativized - an abortive social experiment conceived with the best of intentions (Cochrane, 1991: 63).[9] If this point is taken, similar to Habermas's critique of historical relativization, the next step is more difficult. How do we deal with the moral obligation to the past? Antjie Krog, poet and journalist, answers this question with reference to the 26 000 Boer women and children who perished in British concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). In the place of historical relativization she ponders to what extent the veiling of the concentration camp atrocities did contribute to the type of character that devised the apartheid laws. What might have happened if the English

acknowledged the atrocities and asked for forgiveness? Could it have been the start of a history of human rights, respect for the other, and public accountability in South Africa? In the face of this absence the experiences of injustice never entered into a discourse of dealing with the other (Krog, 1994: 7). It rather became a mythical pathology allowing a specific 'threatened group' to use any means, moral or immoral, to secure survival against the other of apartheid. Consequently Krog argues that apartheid was successful in dividing South Africans to such an extent that all individuals and groups only have memories stemming from isolation, 'half-memories', which could easily turn into some dangerous present day identity. As Zalaquett remarked: memory is identity and identity which contains distorted memories could easily lead to new offenses (Krog, 1994: 8). Krog argues in favour of a space where memories can be shared and communicated at a very basic level.[10] Victims and their families must be allowed to tell the stories of their experiences in a way that respects each individual's language, words, accent, and rhythm. It must not be presented as mere statistical, objective, factual, and formal chronicles. It must reflect the particularity of those who suffered.

The psychological need for the sharing of stories and memories can be expressed with the concept of *mourning*. Although mourning normally operates in psychological terms as expressing a loss of a concrete other (loved-one), it can also mean, as Erikson and Adorno indicate, a loss of self-respect and empathy with those who suffered (Erikson, 1980: part 3; Adorno, 1977). As Freud (1957: 243-244) states, unless the labour of mourning has been successfully completed - that is, unless individuals have sincerely come to terms with the past - they exhibit a marked incapacity to live in the present. There are important differences between this perspective and Habermas's use of development psychology, postconventional identity and historical evolution. In social-psychological studies of the 1950's, Adorno (1977: 556-557) noted that many of the character traits displayed by a group of Germans, revealed highly neurotic attitudes: defense in the absence of attack; lack of affect in the face of serious matters; and a repression of what was known or half-known. The Mitscherlichs (1967: 9) write similarly about ' ... a determining connection between the political and social immobilism and provincialism prevailing in West Germany [of the 1960's] and the stubbornly maintained rejection of memories ... the blocking of any sense of involvement in the

events of the Nazi past ...' (translation by R. Wolin). Mourning is used here not as a form of repentance but, almost like the concept of anamnestic solidarity, as a theoretical construct of past suffering that may contribute to the healing of individual and collective identities. The danger is that neurotic symptom formations can be readily transmitted to the character-structures of future generations, which only intensifies the difficulty of confronting the historical trauma that wounded the collective ego. Thus the crimes of the past tend to fade into oblivion, unmourned, uncomprehended, and still present and alive as ghosts in the collective ego. The Mitscherlichs warn: 'World-redeeming dreams of ancient greatness arise in peoples in whom the sense of having been left behind by history evokes feelings of impotence and rage' (Mitscherlichs, 1967: 22, translation by R. Wolin). The important point here is: unless the historical reasons that have led to disaster have been examined - and it cannot be done exclusively in the language of rationality - one risks falling into the same historical cycle yet again.

If the need for the sharing of memories and the role of mourning is acknowledged, the question is how such a process should be institutionalized. Various options seem possible: the German example of the Nuerenberg-trials; formal legal processes; general or qualified amnesty; and moral tribunals (Liebenberg, 1996: 129-130; and Liebenberg 1997). As a result of the special nature of South Africa's negotiated settlement (1990-1994) the choice fell on a combination of the last two - and more specifically the latter. This choice must also be seen against the background of other recent examples where nations had to deal with past atrocities and human rights abuses. The Truth Commission of Argentina is usually emphasized as a good example of a collective search for truth and justice during a political transition. While it succeeded commendably during the 'truth phase' in unearthing and exposing the past, it fell short during the 'justice phase' in dealing with the perpetrators and in providing restitution for victims. In the case of Uruguay the result was more unsatisfactory, and the whole exercise had in many respects, only a minimally positive, if not frustrating, impact. The Chilean case, though, was more successful due to its bipartisan composition, limited terms of reference (mostly tied to the issue of 'disappearances'), limited duration (it had to report in nine months), state resources placed at its disposal, support of the newly elected civilian president, excellent data-gathering ability, and clear policy on restitution

(Liebenberg, 1996: 140-141, 143-144).

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was officially announced through The Promotion of the National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995. Members were appointed and the Commission worked between April 1996 and July 1998. It operated through three specialised committees - one dealing with the violations of human rights, one on amnesty, and another on reconciliation and reparation. In essence the work of the TRC involved the following: allowing the stories of the victims of gross human rights violations to be told; considering applications for amnesty from perpetrators of such violations; and making recommendations on reparation to the victims, as well as devising measures for ensuring that human rights abuses are not committed again (Liebenberg 1996: 133, 150). In this process the main objective of the TRC was to deal with the thorny issues of 'historical truth', on the one hand, and amnesty, reconciliation, and reparation, on the other. The aim was, thus, not to prosecute political leaders for crimes against humanity, but to secure a public recognition of the breaching of human rights in the past within the framework of an agreement on political amnesty. As in the case of Chile this implied a qualified concept of justice (Du Toit, 1994: 9). It is thus understandable that not everyone was fully satisfied with the Commission and its workings.[11] The critical question is: will the commsision, with all its shortcomings, be able to keep the memories of the victims alive as an integral part of South Africa's future public debate?

IV

In dealing with the politics of memory and forgetting after apartheid the TRC can be seen as a compromise in more ways than one. Firstly, the Commission was the result of a *political compromise*, being part and parcel of the negotiated settlement which marks South Africa's transition. The end of apartheid and white minority rule did not lead to the seizure of state power by the representatives of the majority. This political compromise at least avoided a full scale bloody revolution or civil war, and amounted to a process of national reconciliation. The TRC was intended to bring this process of political compromise to a conclusion, inter alia by granting amnesty to those

who had committed gross violations of human rights for political objectives in the context of the conflicts of the past. Secondly, the TRC served as a *moral compromise* evading justice in a narrow sense by concentrating on truth and reconciliation. The objective was *not* to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of those atrocities so that justice can be done (Du Toit, 1996: 8). This is similar to Krog's argument (1994: 8) that justice in the exclusive form of amnesty, trials and compensation will not suffice as 'truth'. The challenge was rather to enlarge the concept of truth by including the perceptions, stories, myths and experiences of individuals and groups. Violators of human rights were named, but without presenting them as devils. Past offenses were recognized in such a way that it is clear why they were wrong. In this sense a historical landmark could be situated between the past and the present, for the first time since the encounter between White and Black in South Africa.

Thirdly, the compromise must be seen against the background of an *international shift* in policies regarding human rights abuses in the past. Despite the initial message sent by the victors after the Second World War to perpetrators (at least those with high military ranking), 'reconciliation' seems now to be the main objective of the international community. As indicated both Argentina and Uruguay preferred to shift from trying and punishing to 'forgiving and forgetting'. These governments, with a great deal of international support, decided either to interrupt, or not to initiate, legal procedures against those responsible for atrocious crimes. This change of heart in favour of the policy of pardon, forgetting and amnesty also found resonance in academic circles (De Greiff, 1996: 94). Ackermann (1992), for example, argues that the project of 'corrective justice' - i.e. the attempt to punish former criminals - represents a major threat for constitutionalism. The problem with corrective justice is that it is past-oriented, individualistic and divisive; while constitutional justice is future-oriented, systematic and consolidatory. The argument is that in the early stages of democratic transition, when a new regime enjoys - or suffers - a special combination of high moral capital and low bureaucratic capacity, it will be unwise to divide the citizenry unnecessarily. Ackerman's solution is to forget the 'mirage of corrective justice', to concentrate on the future, and to burn the 'stinking carcasses' in official archives (De Greiff, 1996: 94, 96). The desire to punish those responsible for human rights abuses is, thus, counterbalanced

by the exigencies of the transition to democracy itself - as the Argentinean case indicated.

Fourthly, the TRC was a compromise due to the lack of *capacity* in young democracies. The systematic attempt to investigate and prosecute many hundreds or thousands of cases on an individual basis requires massive resources that will surely bog down the courts for many years to come. The inevitable option for new regimes under such circumstances, is selective prosecution. But even if this path is followed it is difficult to prosecute high officials due to a dearth of evidence, while the problem with prosecuting low-ranking officials is that there will always be legitimate differences about the reach of due obedience (De Greiff, 1996: 96). On the other hand, even if the quest for justice by prosecution is indeed to be such a priority there is still the question of what would actually be achieved. Some perpetrators would be convicted, but it is also likely that in many other cases prosecutions would not be feasible, while in some cases where prosecutions are instigated they might fail to achieve actual convictions. In a due trial victims or others must also be willing to be witnesses, to be cross-examined and to have their testimony questioned and critically scrutinised in all sorts of ways. Bringing the matter to trial may well turn into a second and public ordeal on top of the original personal trauma (Du Toit 1996: 11). Finally, one of the problems of retroactive justice is that the behaviour for which the new regime wants to punish members of the old regime was not classified, in many cases, a crime.

Of all these compromises the moral one is probably the most difficult to accept in the South African case. It seems that forgetting will take precedence over memory and that the respect for legal procedure and justice, that is so critical for new democratic regimes, will be disregarded. It is quite understandable that the victims and their families, for example the Mxenge-family in South Africa, would demand that the perpetrators of violence and human rights abuses be brought to justice. Others have also argued that if the political atrocities of the past are to be addressed, then nothing less than justice will do. Moreover the establishment of a culture of human rights in South Africa cannot allow known gross violations of human rights to go unpunished. Du Toit, though, correctly argues that the TRC does not categorically rule out the prospect of doing justice through prosecution and punishment. Unlike Chile and Uruguay, there is to be no general amnesty for the killers and torturers. Indemnities are to be granted on individual applications only, and only on the

basis of full disclosure. Those disobeying will remain open to prosecution. Secondly, in terms of the Commission amnesty will not be automatic and unqualified. The act specifies a set of criteria, e.g. the Norgaard principle, for acts with political objectives that may qualify for amnesty. Thirdly, it is not quite true that perpetrators who are indemnified will go entirely "unpunished". There is a sense in which the requirement of disclosure, and the public recording of the particular acts for which indemnities are to be granted, in themselves amount to a significant form of punishment (Du Toit 1996: 9-10).

The interesting aspect of the TRC, is that its qualified concept of justice must be read with its orientation towards the perspective and the plight of victims. Only the Amnesty Committee focused on perpetrators, while the other two committees provided victims and others with a forum in which they could tell their own stories and consider appropriate ways and forms of reparation. The intention here was to restore the human and civic dignity of victims by acknowledging the injustices that were done to them and accepting responsibility for their plight. The investigation and procedures of these committees were thus structured in a sympathetic way. In the absence of hostile cross-questioning of witnesses, for example, the investigative process contributed to a healing rather than a traumatic experience (Du Toit, 1996: 11). On the other hand the difficulties associated with the policy of trial and punishment do not lead hastily in the direction of pardon and forgetting. Morality itself implies a commitment to the past which gives grounds to object to such a policy. In an imperfect world the best option, as De Greiff indicates, is possibly judgement and forgiveness versus punishment and forgetting. Rather than simply maintaining that in an imperfect world there are moral commands we cannot fulfil, such a policy is both implementable - unlike trial and punishment - *and* morally unobjectionable - unlike pardon and forgetting. In this process the commitment to the past doesn't follow from a single principle, but from a reflection upon the nature of moral experience and deliberation (De Greiff, 1996: 94, 97). If this is what the aim of truth will involve, then it is not correct to see it as something less than justice, in the sense of prosecution and punishment. On the contrary, it rather involves a different value, one oriented more to restoring the dignity of the victims than seeking punishment for perpetrators (Du Toit, 1996: 12).

It should be clear that the TRC was established by the South African parliament in an

atmosphere yearning for understanding and not vengeance, a need for reparation and not retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* (humanness) and not victimisation. The TRC was also in many respects unique. It was not a Commission by presidential decree, but a 'uniquely democratic commission', being the result of a multi-party negotiated settlement that went through an extended process of parliamentary hearings and a similar process of public debate and scrutiny (Du Toit, 1996: 6). The process was also officially open to encourage public debate and input, by acknowledging a 'truth phase' (implying the unearthing or opening up of the truth) and a 'justice phase' (implying restitution to the aggrieved and the possibility of action against perpetrators of human rights). The end result of the TRC on the national psyche is not yet clear at this stage - it could be national reconciliation and 'healing', or frustration and dissatisfaction. South Africans, though, were confronted by a chilling exposé of what many knew was happening, others suspected, and yet others held could never have taken place (Liebenberg, 1996: 152-153, 155). One can therefore anticipate that the reflection on the past will not end with the the publication of the TRC's final report. In this sense writers, historians and institutions (such as universities and research institutions) have a special responsibility to start a heterogeneous debate on the past.[12] Such a critical dialogue will hopefully address, amongst others, the very important issue of 'historical consciousness' in a multicultural society and examine national memories for their accuracy and plausibility (Rüsen, 1991: 1). In short: the identity of the present and future South Africa will not escape a moral obligation to the past.

V

Given the very particular nature of the South African 'negotiated revolution' and the need for a TRC, the question is: what kind of a 'theoretical model' is needed to deal with the complexities of the past in contemporary societies undergoing transition from authoritarianism to a fragile form of democracy? What kind of concept of history, 'truth' and representation will suffice in such cases? Although Habermas provides us with a valuable contribution in the *Historians' Debate*, there are also some shortcomings in his understanding of history and rationality. Both Walter Benjamin and Jean-Francois Lyotard offer interesting alternatives in this regard. In his early work Benjamin contends

that the fragmentary nature of history must break with the continuity of the ideology of progress. By rejecting such a falsely harmonizing and totalizing theory the critic recovers fragments of experience - the messianic dreams of redemption and happiness, moments of transcendence and anticipation, experiences of truth - and by exhibiting their relevance to contemporary conditions, they are redeemed from their consignment to forgetting and given an explosive revolutionary force. Released from their temporal contexts, fragments of redeemed life, or the 'trash of history', emerge as disruptive elements constituting fragile moments of interruption of the medium of profane history. Thus 'redemptive criticism', while inherently conservative, nevertheless is conceived and developed in a revolutionary way, even if this dimension was expressed mainly in the theological language of apocalypse, rather than in 'conventional' political terms. Benjamin conceived aesthetic works to be the principal objects of this sort of historically-inspired redemptive criticism (Pensky, 1989: 360).

After his 'historical materialist turn' in the mid-1920s, Benjamin broke with the expressly esoteric style of his earlier work, but not with its substantial concerns. In this process the Romantic models of criticism were replaced by an exoteric, materialist conception of constructive methodology adapted from Surrealism and Marxism. Popular culture, rather than literature, became a vessel of the fragments of messianic time awaiting redemption from the historical span. This exoteric 'materialist historiography', being the secular version of the mystical criticism of his earlier aesthetic work, is aimed against the historicism of the ideology of progress, capitalism's disguise of the mythic repetition of consumption and production which implicitly sides with the victors. In Benjamin's work in the 1930s, especially the *Passagenwerk*, materialist historiography emphasises the *discontinuity* of historical processes and its unassimilated and unreconciled elements (Pensky 1989: 360-361). Horkheimer was the first to recognize the radical implications of such a thinking for a critical theory of society. The 'debt of the past' cannot be repaid, because societies, even utopian ones, owe their present happiness entirely to the struggle and suffering of its predecessors. Social theory could, therefore, no longer simultaneously present an utopian dimension of absolute justice *and* acknowledge, as it must, the irreparability of past injustice and suffering. The loss of such an utopian dimension contributed to a decay of any critical standard, on the one hand, while the reflection on the unfinished nature of suffering led from theory to theology, on the other. It was

this insight that took Benjamin (1968: 255-266) on the path back from theory to theology, crowned by his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'. The 'Theses' demand a sort of mystical partisanship with the oppressed past, fed not by hope for the future, but by rage at the injustices of history. In his reconstruction of the debate between Benjamin and Horkheimer, Lenhart coined the term 'anamnestic solidarity' to refer to this theologically frank, melancholic, and desperate vision of the remembrance of the past (*Nichtwiedergutzumachende* past) that appears in Benjamin's last writings (Pensky, 1989: 366).

The question is: what becomes of Habermas's use of anamnestic solidarity in his *formalization* of critical theory? The problem is that communication functions in his discourse ethics, just like Peirce's community of scientists and Mead's ideal communication community, as a formal ideal of action. This ideal translates itself normatively into the idea of absolute solidarity with other human beings (Pensky, 1989: 368; and Peukert, 1984: 205-206). This demand, though, is in principle very difficult to be fulfilled. We cannot establish solidarity with past victims of oppression - with those who have been unfairly and irrevocably denied their place in the collective conversation of the species as Horkheimer has pointed out. Habermas's position can also be criticized from the perspective of a postmodern reading of Auschwitz. His argument is accordingly portrayed as a historicist metanarrative about a *Sonderweg* of German history, which imposes on post-war Germans the duty of a slow working-through which would lead to a new identity tying them to the liberal and universalist tradition of the West. Such a view of German history fits within the conception of a progressive and evolutionary rationality which places the explicit ideology and crimes of Nazism as the absolute counterimage to the ideals of Western enlightenment. Such a historicist conception is interpreted as ' ... an image of an unavoidable presentation handed down by 'history' which braids past, present, and future in the here and now' (Cohen, 1992: 171). Even more sharply Cohen (1992: 174) contends that Habermas has created a 'cultural machine' which combines psychology with a progressive political agenda and restricts the role of intellectuals to preparations for enlightenment. Habermas's contributions to the Historians' Debate is thus the ' ... state building exclusion of those who would disavow enlightenment'. She also faults him for not seeing the exceptionality of the 'Final Solution' being moored in the non-exceptionality of capitalism

and consumption. She asks, like Benjamin: how can capitalism be critical in the face of the homogenization of signifiers, the excessive displacement of analysis in the media and the marginalization of unfamiliar cultural and social voices? (Cohen 1992: 180).[13]

As alternative Lyotard (1987) reads 'Auschwitz' as a *sign* demonstrating the impossibility of a single, integrated discourse about history and politics due to the heterogeneous and mutually exclusive voices of the perpetrators and their victims. The alternative would be fascism.[14] The indetermination of Auschwitz is expressed by using the image of an earthquake which is so powerful that it destroys all instruments of measurement. But the silence imposed on knowledge, by this moral catastrophe, does not impose the silence of forgetting: it imposes a *feeling*. Lyotard describes this feeling as a *sign*. 'The silence that surrounds the phrase "Auschwitz was the extermination camp" is not a state of mind, it is a sign that something remains to be phrased which is not, something which is not determined' (Lyotard 1987: 56-57). Historically Auschwitz can only be a sign and not a fact. This is due to the systematic destruction of all the 'factual' documents and testimonies that were supposed to link the different phrases in a stable understanding of reality. This 'reality' makes it necessary for the historian to break with the monopoly over history granted to the cognitive regimen of phrases. Consequently the historian must venture forth by lending his or her ear to what is not presentable under the rules of knowledge.

> Every reality entails this exigency insofar as it entails possible unknown senses. Auschwitz is the most real of realities in this respect. Its name marks the confines wherein historical knowledge sees its competence impugned. It does not follow that one falls into *non-sense*. The alternative is not: either the signification that learning (*science*) establishes, or absurdity, be it of the mystical kind (Lyotard, 1987: 57, first emphasis mine).

Lyotard challenges history to *listen* to events, objects, and texts pragmatically, instead of interpreting them according to a pre-existing script. Criticism can learn from art - by activating differences instead of synthesizing consequences. The gap between representation and the unpresentable, or the dynamics between the faculty that conceives and the faculty that 'presents',

is honoured. This reading is the result of Lyotard's reception of the Kantian sublime where the absolutely simple or the infinitely great is conceived, without being able to find an object or sense-presentation to make them rationally communicable. In Lyotard's post-Holocaust aesthetics the mental blockage characteristic of the Kantian sublime does not arise, as Harman perceptively remarks, from a sense of nature's absolute magnitude but from the modes of domination and terror at the Holocaust's core.

> It is when domination and terror become absolutes, that is, when they are *ideologized* and *totalized*, that we cannot discover in ourselves a possible scenario to explain what happened ... the mind rejects it, casts it out - or it casts out the mind (Harman, 1992: 322).

Although Lyotard agrees with Habermas that there is a moral obligation with the past, they differ on the manner in which this relation with the past should be theoretically grasped. Habermas's faith in communicative reason and reflective continuities with the past, is modified by an awareness of the limits of reason made acute by history itself - where reason has turned into amoral technology, bureaucracy and instrumentality. Lyotard argues that in the past, and the recent catastrophical past of Nazism, the price exacted for political stability and apparent consensus has been too high. The price was coercion and terror, and the result uniformity.

It must be pointed out though that Habermas realized the weakness of a formalized critical theory in dealing with the evils of the past. In an interview of 1977 he made it clear that anamnestic solidarity with past victims marks the limits of a discourse ethics grounded on the idea of absolute communication. In this process it offers a form of compensation for the irredeemability of the horrible content of human history which the theory of universal communicative action cannot touch. In a second step, though, he introduced the religious category of atonement and the concept of guilt (Pensky, 1989: 371-372, 373-374). Benjamin's mystical, apocalyptic partisanship with the oppressed past is thus transformed into the sad, desperate task of compassionate remembrance. Benjaminian rage, the will to smash history, turns into Habermasian atonement, the desire to ease the burden of guilt by learning how to mourn. This is Habermas's *Trauerarbeit* - his own 'sort of

damage compensation' (*Schadensabwicklung*). Besides the unbounded horror of contemplating what never can be made good again, there is the fragile hope that, in the heart of mourning, one might still somehow harness the power of remembrance, not just for the sake of compensation, but also for the sake of the enlightened understanding of the present situation social theory needs. Only then progress becomes a possibility. What do we do with these two readings? The first, acknowledging the limits of formal critical theory brings Habermas very near to the position of Lyotard, while the second step, with its appeal for an enlightened understanding, creates some kind of distance. Pensky's way to deal with this 'field of tension' is to indicate that Habermas evokes anamnestic solidarity to make intelligible an experience of duty which, while certainly not 'moral' in the narrower, literal sense used for the purposes of a theory of communicative action, is nevertheless not merely metaphorical either (Pensky, 1989: 376-377). This point is similar to Friedländer's remark that despite the limits of our traditional categories of conceptualization, representation, and language, the need for some kind of 'narration' remains (Friedländer, 1992: 5). Carroll writes,

> ... we do not have the systems of belief or knowledge, the rules, the historical certainty or the philosophical or political concepts necessary to derive or determine judgment [of Auschwitz and apartheid] ... this does not diminish the role of the critical faculty, but on the contrary makes it all the more crucial and necessary (Carroll, 1990: 11).

How should the 'reality' and 'truth' about Auschwitz and apartheid then be addressed critically? Firstly, we should remember that there is always a moral obligation to the past. We do not show respect towards who we are, our present identities, by forgetting the past. If the past becomes a locus of evasion or forgetting it also becomes an evasion of the complexities of the present and fear of the future. By escaping from the responsibility of the deeds of the past, the original sin of apartheid is evaded. Secondly, we must take Benjamin and Lyotard seriously in their non-determined and non-totalizing view of the past. This does not imply the naive acceptance of any tradition as a sufficient criterion of morality, but that there is more than one way to show our respect to the past. De Greiff writes: 'Although it may be true that the past is part of what we *are*, this does not,

on its own, answer the question about who we *ought to be*' (De Greiff, 1996: 101-103). A common deficiency in contemporary ethical theories, and this includes Habermas's discourse ethics, is that they begin too late. As Nussbaum (1986) and Sherman (1989) indicate they concentrate so much on the formulation of a decision procedure that they ignore an aspect of moral experience and moral perception that precedes decision. In stressing the importance of an *education of sensibility* they want to explain how, before the moment of decision, the agent has already perceived the situation in such a way that he or she understands that the circumstances call for a moral decision. The memory of who we are, what we have done to others, is thus a *precondition* of the exercise of moral judgement. In this sense remembering *precedes* moral principles. It helps us recollect the phenomena on which we will pass (principled) judgement.

But, what becomes of the obligation to the past and retroactive justice in the absence of a tradition or concept of moral universalism? How should the South African TRC be interpreted in this regard? These difficulties can be ameliorated by understanding punishment in terms that go beyond incarcerartion. In such cases the object of punishment is not the individual's freedom of movement (like a prison sentence), but of association. As De Greiff indicates, a new democratic regime might choose to punish violators of human rights by prohibiting their renewed association for any purpose (De Greiff, 1996: 104.) Secondly, the TRC challenges the conventional understanding of trial. Trials in courts of law have individuals as targets and are adversarial by nature. The TRC, in contrast, provides a space for the telling of heterogeneous stories by the victims. There are no guarantees that these stories will represent the truth and that reconciliation will follow automatically. Neither personal nor collective memory can undo a monstrous past. These difficulties, though, do not imply that our obligation to the past justifies a policy of pardon and forgetting. A possible way to describe this predicament is to argue in favour of a policy of judgement and forgiving against a policy of punishment and forgetting.

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ENDNOTES

1. This paper is the result of on ongoing research project on memory. For earlier versions, see Duvenage (1993, 1994 and 1995). I would like to thank Jörn Rüsen who invited me to participate in a research project on "Historische Sinnbildung" at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research (University of Bielefeld) during the fall of 1994. Bert Olivier, Johann Rossouw, Petrus de Kock, Marinus Schoeman, and Dirk Louw provided me with valuable commentary on various drafts of this article.

2. The South African TRC was instituted in April 1996 and completed its work in July 1998. At the time that this paper was prepared for publication the final report (5 volumes and 35 000 pages) was not yet published.

3. The debate received full-scale treatment during 1986-1987 in newspapers and journals in Germany. The major contributions were compiled by Piper (1987). See also Craig (1987), Wehler (1988), Baldwin (1990), Rüsen (1993: 225), and the special issue of *New German Critique 44* (1988).

4. Nolte, a former student of Heidegger, is known for his book *Three Faces of Facism* and his generalizations of specific historical phenomena. Some of his startling comparisons in the book, *Germany and the Cold War*, are according to Craig (1987: 16): "... that the United States was after all putting into practice in Vietnam its essentially crueler version of Auschwitz ... Roosevelt would have viewed an anti-Communist and anti-Semitic movement in the USA at least with sympathy if the Communist Party had played a role in American politics comparable to that of the KPD in Germany ... the destruction of the European Jews [is] 'nothing else' than a modern attempt to 'solve problems connected with industrialization by means of disposing of large numbers of human beings.'"

5. Craig, 'The war of the German historians', p. 16, argues that Hillgruber is unfairly treated by his critics (including Habermas). "Hillgruber ... allowed the publisher ... with a provocative statement on the book jacket claiming that his 'work contradicts the generally accepted opinion that the destruction of the German Reich was an answer to the misdeeds of the National Socialist regime ... A closer reading of the book would have shown that, in fact, Hillgruber never talks about the 'end' of the Jews at all but always about their 'murder and destruction'." For the view that German historicism is *de facto* writing from the standpoint of the victors rather than that of the downtrodden, see W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), p.258: "The nature of this sadness stands out more clearly if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize. The answer is inevitable: with the victor. And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them ... There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another."

6. M. Mamdani, 'Reconciliation without Justice', *Southern African Review of Books 46, 1996*, p.3., argues that the Holocaust is an inappropriate and misleading political metaphor for South Africa: " ... it abstracts from the real problem: whites and blacks in South Africa are not akin to German and Jews, for Germans and Jews did not have to build a common society in the aftermath of the Holocaust. There was Israel. South African whites and blacks, however, do have to live together in the aftermath of apartheid. Here, as in Rwanda, yesterday's perpetrators and victims - today's survivors - have to confront the problem of how to live together.

7. In reviewing my article (Duvenage 1994), Tom Lodge made the following points: 1) that South Africa has had a similar debate than the *Historikerstreit*. 2) That Hitler's defeat " ... was ... followed by nearly five years of foreign military occupation ..." 3) Certain language errors. See T. Lodge, "Review of A. Minnaar e.a., *The Hidden Hand*," *Politikon 21* (1) 1994,

pp. 77-78; and the responses of Meulenberg-Buskens and Duvenage in *Politikon 22* (1) 1995, p.102 and *Politikon 22* (2), p. 99. Leaving the language issues aside, the following response is relevant. 1) The South African liberal/revisionist debate of historians can not be compared with the German Historians' Debate, because it was mainly an academic debate with little impact in the public sphere. 2) Lodge is correct about the "foreign military occupation" in Germany, but historically the intention was very clear to allow German selfgovernment as soon as possible. On the whole Lodge's review is a good example of the state of criticism in South Africa today.

8. See also his debate with McClintock and Nixon, *Critical Inquiry 13*, (1986), pp. 140-170.

9. Cochrane refers to an argument of the South African playwright, Athol Fugard, against a former White cabinet minister, that there is a legacy to deal with: "Lives have been wasted, lives have been deeply hurt, lives have been mutilated, lives have been lost. No, we can't just sweep all of that away as if it doesn't matter."

10. Similarly Cochrane, 'Nation building: a socio-theological view', p. 63, writes: "There is no hope where the memory of suffering is silenced, leaving traces of suppressed dialogue." This remark is similar to Kundera's famous quote: "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting," and Brodsky's essays and poems recruiting " ... memory as a challenge to the rigidity and forward-marching of the totalitarian state," See J. Wood, "Review of Joseph Brodsky's *Watermark*," *The Guardian Weekly*, July 3-9 1992, p.28.

11. Du Toit indicates that the "balancing act" excluded the possibility of Nüremberg-type trials. The thorny issue of justice involved leads him (1994: 15) to the following remark made by Huntington: "Recognize that on the issue of 'prosecute or punish vs forgive and forget' each alternative presents grave problems, and that the least unsatisfactory course may well be: do not prosecute, do not punish, do not forgive (sic!), and, above all, do not forget." On transitional justice, see N. Kritz (ed.), *Transitional Justice: How Emerging Democracies reckon with former Regimes*, 3 Volumes, (Washington: US Institute of Peace Press).

12. Apart from the contributions of Liebenberg, Du Toit and Krog, see A. Minnaar e.a. (1994), A. Boraine and J. Levy (1995); K. Asmal e.a. (1996); Mamdani (1996); A. Norval (1997); and A. Krog (1998).

13. Cohen (1992: 180) describes the conflict between Lyotard and Habermas as a conflict, "... between a historicization of the "Final Solution" *for the present* and what can be said now to resist such historicization. What is called into question is the ability of any representational system to erect ... a falsely objectified tradition that blocks the articulation of a heterogenous past *and* present." For a similar critique of Habermas' concept of history see Pecora (1992), Biagiola (1992).

14. In this sense Lyotard's remarks display similarities with Hayden White's understanding of history: "One must face the fact that when it comes to apprehending the historical record, there are no grounds to be found in the historical record itself for preferring one way of construing its meaning over another." H. White, *The Content and Form: Narrative discourse and historical representation*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987), p.74. La Capra searches in a similar vein as Lyotard and White for new categories of historical analysis after the "Final solution." See D. La Capra, "Representing the Holocaust: reflections on the Historians' Debate," in S. Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, pp. 108-127. For excellent contributions on Lyotard see A. Benjamin (ed.), *Judging Lyotard*, (London: Routledge, 1992).