

Universiteit Utrecht



Totalitarianism at the service of the German *folk*

Alfred Rosenberg and the necessity of a Nazi myth

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Chapter I

Introduction

The biggest flaw of those who document history is their inclination to only remember the deeds of those who were considered ‘great’. However, if one fails to question their privileged position in history, the true impact of those ‘great’ may never be fully grasped or worse, systematically misvalued. This thesis seeks to revalue certain established ideas about the nature of National Socialist ideology and will shine a light on the forgotten cornerstone of political thought that served as the staging point for Europe’s most traumatic experiences in modern history, the Second World War and the Holocaust. This requires an alternative approach to the analysis of National Socialist thought, one that looks beyond the presupposed certainties that most other studies have taken for granted when analyzing events related to Nazism.¹ To that effect, this thesis will be focused on analyzing the core ideas, values and perceptions that constitute the origin upon which political Nazism was developed and put into practice. Three books, collectively known as “*Der Mythos des XX. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der Feilisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe Unserer Zeit*”, written by Alfred Rosenberg, form the key document for this endeavor, because it contains the guiding theory that outlined and justified the need for the National Socialist movement.²

Despite the importance of this historical document for the research on how Nazism transformed German society, it has remained a severely understudied topic of research in comparison with related works from that same period. Particularly *Mein Kampf* written by Adolf Hitler, has gathered much scholarly attention prior, during and after the Second World War.³ The autobiographical character of *Mein Kampf* combined with Hitler’s unique place in history, have given this book a unique appeal to those who are interested in understanding what motivated his political program and as a result only view it as such. Yet, it would be wrong to solely personify Hitler with Nazism, because it would be incorrect to presume that the National Socialist ideological heritage originated from his person alone.

¹ S. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: 1933 – 1945* (2009) 15, 35.

R. Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford 2001).

² A. Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des XX. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der Feilisch-Geistigen Gestaltenfämpse Unserer Zeit* (Munich 1934), trans. V. Bird, under the title: *The Myth of the Twentieth Century: An evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age* (California 1982). Hereafter abbreviated *The Myth*. Page numbers will generally refer to the translated version.

³ A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich 1926).

I hope that my focus on Rosenberg's work in this thesis, will validate the intellectual and political importance of *The Myth*, and thereby contribute to the scholarly debate on Nazism by answering the question: how did Nazism transform from an extreme rightist political movement into an acceptable alternative to conventional politics? This transformation is inextricably linked to the changed attitude of society towards life, which was exemplified by the systematic killing of unwanted elements in society. Instead of emphasizing the study of public opinion, which is often inconclusive, my focus will be on the analysis of Rosenberg's construction of identity through myth and the subsequent proposals for legislative and social reforms that aimed to secure this identity.

This approach therefore represents a departure from more conventional studies that primarily focus on Adolf Hitler as the driving force behind the development of the National Socialist party and its success.⁴ Though Hitler's influence and role as the undisputed leader of the political movement is uncontested, it would be shortsighted to assign him full credit for conceiving the elaborate world vision that National Socialism represents, because Nazi politics merely represented but one dimension of a more elaborate understanding of world history. *The Myth* is an indispensable source for the study of the development of German Nazism for it contains the logic behind the movement's core principles. The link between race and honor, the assumed superiority of the Aryan race and the subsequent danger of mixing the blood of Aryans with races that were perceived as inferior, are but a few examples that were largely conceived and explained in Rosenberg's work. Some of these notions however, had taken on the quality of self-evident components within this particular strand of nationalism, for example that of race discrimination.⁵

However, these notions ascribe qualities to an ideology and a people that are not exclusively reserved to National Socialism and that do not necessarily reflect the preferences of the German people. Or in different terms: the suggestion that racism is an inherent quality of National Socialism and the idea that Nazism could only have occurred in Germany, implies that racism is an inherent character trait of being German.⁶ This thesis refutes the premise of

⁴ D. D. Hartmann, 'Anti-Semitism and the appeal of Nazism', *Political Psychology* Vol. 5, No. 4 (1984) 635 – 642.

R. Kosher, 'From Stammtisch to Party: Nazi Joiners and the Contradictions of Grass Roots Fascism in Weimar Germany', *Journal of Modern History* 59 (1987) 2.

S. Berman, 'Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic', *World Politics* Vol. 49, No. 3 (Cambridge 1997) 412 – 424.

⁵ T. F. X. Noble a.o., *Western Civilization Beyond Boundaries* (Boston 2008) 766 – 772.

⁶ P. Lacoue-Labarthe and J. L. Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', *Critical Inquiry* (Chicago 1990) 295. Trans: B. Holmes.

predestined racially necessitated nationalism in Germany based on the fact that the perceived core crisis that Rosenberg identified, was one of a threatened or absent German identity. This was neither a unique concern for emerging nations nor for transforming world powers, and as such not an inherently German issue. The manner in which that threatened identity was to be preserved, however, was unique. I will argue that the state took control over the wellbeing and preservation of its subjects by politicizing life in terms of classifying its value and conditioning the collective attitude towards it. In order to determine how this was done in *The Myth*, the conceptual framework of *biopolitics* will be used. This philosophic construct was originally developed by Michel Foucault to redefine the relationship between politics and life.⁷ Giorgio Agamben later used a similar approach to demonstrate the more sinister implications of politicized life by demonstrating its ability to justify genocides.⁸ Because this is such a complex endeavor, the main topic of research will be split into two sections.

Firstly, the intended goal and context of Rosenberg's work will be discussed as a whole. Once the essence of Rosenberg's myth has been explained, the analysis will zoom in on the connection between Rosenberg's myth and the wider appeal of Nazism by using the concept of *biopolitics*. Though several scholars, such as Agamben and Roberto Esposito, have turned to the concept of *biopolitics* to rationalize the excessive violence that was inflicted upon the Jews and other segments of society that were deemed inferior, I will focus on the social acceptance of the 'Nazi idea' that set the stage for these atrocities.⁹ This hopefully adds a new perspective on the manifestation of Nazism in Germany, because it offers a new scope within which the need for escalating Nazi policies can be discussed.

Certain concepts used to analyze the various facets of National Socialist thought are relatively new. Some might argue that the application of such modern conceptual frameworks to a historical event that preceded their formulation, should be criticized because it looks like framing history to fit the desired description of the object that is researched. Though these are legitimate concerns, this threat applies to any theory in any given field of research. Having acknowledged this criticism, this thesis does not argue from the perspective of placing a fixed mold of theoretic concepts over the area of study, but instead reverses its focus by looking

⁷ M. Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lectures at the Collège de France (1975- 1976)

⁸ G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford 1995).

⁹ G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford 1995).

M. Foucault, 'The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as Practice of Freedom' in: *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (New York 2000) 284-287.

R. Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolítica e Filosofía* (2004) Trans: T. Campbell under the title: *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minnesota 2008).

into how one particular idea transformed the mindset of a nation, which in turn might reveal a hidden rationale that remained previously unrecognized.

The primary sources used in this thesis consist of the authentic work by Alfred Rosenberg and secondary literature that was used to analyze his work. The reason for that is because *The Myth* constitutes the main body of inquiry into the core principles of National Socialism. The secondary literature serves to elucidate and contextualize the findings in this thesis and provide a theoretical framework that supports their outcome.

Chapter II

Reinventing political responsibilities

The man behind the idea

Alfred Rosenberg was hung until death at Nuremberg on the 16th of October, 1946, on the charges of conspiracy to wage war, crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity.¹⁰ Despite the fact that he had remained a prominent member of the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP) from its conception in 1919 until its downfall in 1945, very little is known about this man and what he had meant for Germany. A look into Rosenberg's life is therefore necessary to fully appreciate his significance for the development of modern political thought and state responsibility.

Rosenberg was born in Reval, Estonia, on the 12th of January, 1893.¹¹ He grew up in Tsarist Russia and witnessed the communist revolution firsthand in 1917 while studying architecture in Moscow. These events were amongst the first to shape his political opinions and attitude towards Bolsheviks and the 'Jews' that, to his understanding, led that movement. When he moved back to Germany soon thereafter, Rosenberg was confronted with the aftermath of the Great War. He has described this as an era of moral degradation, materialistic corruption and political betrayal.¹² These experiences seem to have motivated him to join the NSDAP in 1919, before Hitler joined. He quickly rose through the ranks to become the chief editor of the *Folkisch Observer* in 1921. It was his responsibility to convey the message of the NSDAP to outsiders. Throughout that process, Rosenberg gradually became the primary ideologue of the movement, formulating its core political program and attacking the current state of affairs. In the articles that he published, Rosenberg expressed his dismay and critique over the degradation of German society at the hands of corrupt alien forces that threatened to eliminate the internal structure of its being. He would echo these sentiments continuously in his later work:

(...) 1918 saw the victory of the powers of plutocracy and of the church of Rome. But even in the midst of the most terrible collapse, the old Nordic racial soul awakened to a heightened consciousness. It has

¹⁰ P. Peel, 'The Life and Death of Alfred Rosenberg', (Reseda, 1980) 1 – 5. https://archive.org/stream/LifeAndDeathOfAlfredRosenberg/LifeAndDeathOfAlfredRosenberg_djvu.txt. (May 8th 2015).

¹¹ Ibid., 17.

¹² A. Rosenberg, *The Myth* (California 1982) 117, 139, 188, 193, 416.

finally grasped the truth that the coexistence of different, and perforce mutually exclusive, highest values cannot also coexist with equal rights, as, to its present detriment, it once believed possible. It understands that what is racially and spiritually akin can be assimilated, but that which is alien must be unflinchingly excised, or if necessary destroyed.¹³

As such, Rosenberg's fanaticism was primarily expressed in the works he published. Though many contemporary scholars hold the belief that National Socialist ideology rests on a vast tradition of German intellectual anti-Semitism, the majority of Rosenberg's influences appear to have been of British and French origin.¹⁴ At the start of the 20th century, these countries were more openly anti-Semitic than Germany in terms of publically antagonizing their Jewish communities.¹⁵ In France tensions reached a boiling point during the Dreyfus affaire when a French-Jewish officer was falsely accused of being a spy for Germany. These were scenes not yet witnessed in Germany at the time. Especially count Arthur de Gobineau's work of *On the Inequality of the Human races* and Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Monumental Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* seem to have played an important role in Rosenberg's development of race theory.¹⁶ Aided by his interest in Classical history that helped support the claim of scientific truth, Rosenberg labored to formulate the definitive theory of history of the National Socialist movement that identified the source of the current state of national degradation of the German folk. Moreover, Rosenberg provided the path towards a permanent solution that could save Germany from its impending destruction if only the people were brave enough to face the consequences.

Rosenberg was, however, not alone in his attempt to formulate a definitive theory of history that confirmed the undisputed Aryan lineage of the German folk. Hitler, Hermann Göring and Joseph Goebbels also formulated their own versions of National Socialist thought. Though they shared certain core ideas regarding the Jewish question, the treaty of Versailles and the importance of preserving the Aryan race, Rosenberg distinguished himself by reconstructing a national history that was linked to the establishment of the present in a way that surpassed demagogue rhetoric. Moreover, he rejected Catholicism and heavily criticized certain aspects of Protestantism. This initially made his work unpopular amongst the general

¹³ Ibid., 81.

¹⁴ R. O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York 2004) 3 – 15, 64 – 68, 119 – 158.

L. H. M. Wessels and T. Bosch, *Nationalisme, naties en staten: Europa vanaf circa 1800 tot heden* (Nijmegen 2012) 497 – 525.

¹⁵ P. Peel, 'The Life and Death of Alfred Rosenberg', (Reseda, 1980) 10. https://archive.org/stream/LifeAndDeathOfAlfredRosenberg/LifeAndDeathOfAlfredRosenberg_djvu.txt. (May 8th 2015).

¹⁶ Ibid., 10 – 11.

public and among top Nazi officials including even Hitler himself. The cause for his unpopularity was partly due to the fact that most (top) Nazi's were still part of religious communities.¹⁷ Moreover, Hitler regarded these aspects of Rosenberg's thought as dangerous and harmful to the development and recruitment of popular support, especially in those regions where Catholicism was still strongly represented.

Despite the considerable criticism *The Myth* received, it proved to be an essential instrument to mobilize supporters and cultivate dedication. It provided a compelling narrative of the historic origin of the German people and assigned a supportive role to the National Socialists. Nevertheless, to understand how a fringe extremist party could become acceptable or even indispensable to a nation, a closer look has to be taken at the stylistic features in Rosenberg's work. This is essential to understand and appreciate the tone and sense of urgency with which he attempts to reach his readers. Secondly, the concept of myth will be introduced followed by its juxtaposition with 'ideology' to demonstrate the differences and shortcomings of the former when studying Nazism. Moreover, I will attempt to explain why Rosenberg's understanding of the concept of myth was racially oriented and particularly intolerant.

Stylistic features

History and the discourse that produces history is a positional process that depends on how one perceives one's social reality and position within society. History thus functions as a discourse of identity because the essence of 'being' is developed through attributing meaningful characteristics from the past and projecting them unto the present 'self'.¹⁸ Rosenberg attempts to re-establish that link between his version of the past and the German identity, which he perceives to be existentially threatened by the pollution of German blood as a result of racial perversion.¹⁹ This inescapable threat and the necessary steps that are to be taken in order to avert a complete racial catastrophe is what has determined the tone and style of the three books Rosenberg has written.

Each of the three books could be viewed as a representation of a different stage in the effort to reawaken the German soul by generating awareness at different levels that become

¹⁷ M. Gailus, 'A Strange Obsession with Nazi Christianity: A Critical Comment on Richard Steigmann-Gall's *The Holy Reich*', *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 42 (I) (London 2007) 35 – 46.

E. Piper, 'Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*', *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 42 (I) (London 2007) 47 – 57.

¹⁸ J. Friedman, 'Myth, History, and Political Identity', *Cultural Anthropology* (Lund 1985) 194.

¹⁹ A. Rosenberg, *The Myth* (California 1982) 35 – 36, 38, 43, 74, 77, 363, 418.

increasingly less abstract. The first book: *The Conflict of Values*, is dedicated to instilling in or reminding its audience of the Aryan values that Germanic peoples share with the past glories of other civilizations such as those from ancient Persia and Greece by tracing their accomplishments through history and linking them to contemporary German society.²⁰ Essentially projecting the character traits that enabled these peoples to succeed unto the present qualities of the Germanic man. As such, the themes discussed in the three chapters built towards the re-enactment of those accomplishments and buy into the projected greatness of a new nation. Or as this passage from chapter one, *Race and Race Soul* reads:

With the recognition that all that is creative in Europe has been the product of character, we have uncovered the essence of European religion, of Germanic science, and of Nordic art. To become fully conscious of this, to experience it with all the passion of an heroic heart, is to create the basis for every rebirth. It is the foundation of a new world view, of a new yet old idea of the state, of the Myth of a new comprehension of life, which alone will give us the strength to throw off the arrogant dominion of the subhumans, and to construct a culture in conformity with our own racial character, permeating all facets of existence.²¹

Besides describing the merits of this unique character, an undertone of racially motivated xenophobia is noticeable. This is not merely demonstrated by the vocabulary Rosenberg uses to describe the 'other'; it also manifests itself in the manner through which he links character to one's ability of comprehending superior values and ideas.

Once Rosenberg has finished his narrative on the necessity of awakening 'the racial soul', he proceeds to operationalize these themes by narrowing them down to specific societal spheres of influence. The second book: *Nature of Germanic Art* addresses the cultural and personal spheres of life, discussing the essence of personal will and racial aesthetics whereas the third book: *The Coming Reich* focuses on the public domain by discussing the role of state and the sexes, Nordic German law and the relationship between church and school.²² The essential conclusion that can be drawn from these observations is that each of these books focusses on the establishment and adhesion of a new identity by reframing the past. Hence it could be argued that the German past as presented in these works, very much resembles that

²⁰ Ibid., 36, 102, 192, 194.

²¹ Ibid., 79.

²² Ibid., 297.

of a mythical construction because it links the representation of the past to the establishment of a new future.²³

Moreover, the mold of a German identity that Rosenberg placed over the course of history is further supported by his style of argumentation. The books were written from a pseudo scientific perspective, presenting a string of affirmative arguments that supported the beliefs held by the author. No references are found that could either substantiate his claims or disprove them. Nor does Rosenberg offer any form of scientific reflection, objection or analysis of the arguments he submits as unconditional truths and undisputed certainties. *The Myth* thus embodies a closed-circle narrative of history, framing its past to serve the purpose of the actor and consequently to serve the intended impact on its audience. It aims to induce progressive conservatism amongst its readers that corresponded to the appeal of the National Socialist movement in that the narrative of *The Myth* tapped into the sentiments of historic nostalgia whilst simultaneously promoting radical societal changes. However, these stylistic features, tone and vocabulary do not yet explain the significance of myth. The next section will elaborate on myth in relation to ideology and identity as well as race.

The invention of the Nazi myth

The usual approach to studying political movements of any kind is to define and classify the ideas they represent in terms of an ideology. Hence, an ideology is perceived as representing the ideal, the motivation or the reason for political action and the fail-safe that justifies its practice. Nazism has also been uncritically labeled as a violent political ideology with an inherently violent philosophy. However, when one views Nazism as more than mere politics and in fact as an alternative, all-encompassing worldview, it becomes clear that *The Myth* and its message cannot be categorized as merely a political ideology. Therefore, I will take a closer look at the differences between classic ideology and Rosenberg's construction of the Nazi myth. In the process some shortcomings of ideology will be pointed out in relation to Rosenberg's use of myth and I will explain the racial bias of National Socialism that has been too easily attributed to the spirit of its age.

This requires a brief introduction into what will be considered as 'myth'. Plato was one of the first to classify speech into two categories with distinct qualities. *Logos* represented the use of rational and political discourse whereas *muthos* resembled dangerous, sacrilegious

²³ J. Friedman, 'Myth, History, and Political Identity', *Cultural Anthropology* (Lund 1985) 196 – 197.

fictions that distorted social and political discourse.²⁴ Though such tales and fictions appear harmless, Plato recognized their danger to society in that *muthos* could transform both the individual and collective identity by linking representations of the past to the establishment of the present. Myth could therefore be used as a means to self-define one's identity based on presumed qualities of the past. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe suggests that myth resembles a form of 'collective mimicking' that can shape or even create identities.²⁵ Much of the way contemporary Western Europe perceives its identity stems from this process. The idea that Greek antiquity is part of the development of European history, and as such has partial ownership of its accomplishments, is part of this modern myth. For the Greek identity as a cultural entity vanished during the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires, only to return in the 18th century.²⁶ Until that time neither Greeks nor Western Europeans identified with its heritage. Only when that heritage was rediscovered during the renaissance, did Greece come to symbolize the birthplace of all the values that Western European countries cherish today, such as democracy. In return, Greek nationalism derived its identity from the link that 'Europe' could only have evolved with the help and achievements of its ancestors.²⁷ In light of this understanding of myth, it could be argued that myth, more than ideology, harnessed the power and ability to transform or create new collective perceptions of identity, because unlike ideology, myth is responsible for the positional process within which identities are formed and ideas are conceived and believed. This form of 'collective mimicking' points to attempts made by Western European countries to emulate the highlights of classical art, architecture and even the justification and necessity for waging war.

The importance of myth to the formation of a national identity subsequently meant that to assert an autonomous identity, nations were driven into cultural competition in order to claim ownership over their perceived heritage. However, since classical Greece and the imperial Roman empire served as the two primary building blocks upon which European civilization rested, the availability of autonomous identities was limited.²⁸ Rosenberg felt that Germany had lost this struggle over autonomous national identities to France. Unlike Germany, Rosenberg argued, the French had been able to synthesize their national identity through the adoption of neo-classicism in both the spheres of government and social

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²⁵ P. Lacoue-Labarthe and J. L. Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', *Critical Inquiry* (Chicago 1990) 297 – 303. Trans: B. Holmes.

²⁶ J. Friedman, 'Myth, History, and Political Identity', *Cultural Anthropology* (Lund 1985) 206 – 207.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 206 – 207.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 205 – 207.

organization.²⁹ This left Germany bereft of the only legitimate source from which a national identity could be constructed, thereby shattering the hope of forming a similarly cohesive nation like France. Within this context of 'unsolidified Germanness', Rosenberg saw a responsibility to redefine an autonomous identity that had not yet been used by others and that was uniquely German.³⁰ However, this turned out to be problematic, because it forced Rosenberg to consider, what Walter Benjamin has called, the problem of the double bind.³¹ On the one hand Germany had to imitate the ancients because these were perceived to be the only legitimate sources from which it could derive an identity. On the other hand, Germany should not rely on this referential framework, because others such as the French had used it before. This forced Rosenberg to come up with a new myth from which the German identity could be constructed from the ground up. Now that the importance of myth for the construction of a national identity has been discussed, it is possible to challenge the classification of Nazism as merely an ideology.

First of all it is important to realize that the characterization of Nazism as an ideology that primarily incites violence, places restrictions on how it is analyzed, namely solely as a political phenomenon. This has to do with the unrecognized limitations that these conceptual terms carry within themselves that are counter-productive to the purpose and success of Nazism. Rosenberg appears to have been aware that the limitations of ideology and philosophy could not fix the perceived core problem that Germany faced, which was the absence of a national identity. Ideology, as defined by Hannah Arendt, serves a different purpose. It presents a self-fulfilling logic that explains history as one consistent process that works towards the explanation of both the past and present.³² However, it is important to keep in mind that ideology should be regarded as the incidental product of culture and tradition, which is locked by one's positional perspective of the past e.g. myth. This means that the past, present and future fall within the proposed logic of the ideology that offers an airtight explanation of events with undisputed certainty. Nevertheless, ideology cannot escape the paradigm of myth-forming that gives rise to the conception of the idea that transforms into an ideology. Myth in this instance represents an egg type from which ideology can be conceived. The point is that if from each egg type a different ideology were to emerge, each

²⁹ P. Lacoue-Labarthe and J. L. Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', *Critical Inquiry* (Chicago 1990) 299, 303. Trans: B. Holmes.

³⁰ A. Rosenberg, *The Myth* (California 1982) 4 – 16.

³¹ P. Lacoue-Labarthe and J. L. Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', 299.

³² H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York 1962) 469.

ideology would still have been the product of its respective egg e.g. myth. The title of *The Myth* suggests as much.

Moreover, when reviewing the wrongful use of ideology in relation to Nazism, its violent and discriminatory nature is most commonly attributed to either the leaders of the National Socialist movement or to the 'philosophy' they adhered to.³³ Yet this poses an irreconcilable contradiction because ideology, as has been defined here, rejects the core premise of any philosophy on the basis that ideology seeks to eliminate the insecurities that are inherent to philosophic thought and replaces them with certainty. Thus, to suggest that 'a violent philosophy' was part of Nazi ideology is to say that violence was one of several options open to Nazism, which conflicts with the certainty ideology seeks to embody.

Secondly, the sphere of persuasion of ideology is generally limited to the political arena. Its ideas might therefore resonate with specific individuals or groups, but this does not account for the emotional mass manifestations that were held during the Nazi reign. This is an important distinction because emotion and rationality are stimulated through different neurological processes.³⁴ Much like the difference between fear, which is generally perceived as an instinctive response aimed at survival, and hope, which requires a state of conscious awareness.³⁵ It is therefore fair to question whether an ideology is capable of tapping into the psyche of a large collective body and subsequently become aware of its limited range of appeal that contradicts the documented enthusiasm. This is not to suggest that Nazism was an irrational phenomenon. On the contrary, part of its appeal rested on the claim of universal knowledge through legitimate science. Rosenberg believed that ideology on its own could not fill the void of an absent identity, nor that it could be regarded as the primary vessel of persuasion of public opinion. Instead he saw it as a call to a higher power that united the nation by repositioning social reality to support a new identity that was put in place by using *The Myth*. Or at least that is what Rosenberg intended to do.

Rosenberg's reading of history and subsequent positioning of the German subject in relation to the nation was what led to what will be termed the 'Nazi myth'. In contrast to the conventional myths and their link to identity formation through the embrace of a certain narrative, Rosenberg believed that the adoption of identity was not a conscious choice of the individual but rather the result of an exclusionary process that only took place inside those

³³ H. Arendt, 470.

³⁴ D. Bar-Tal, 'Why does Fear Override Hope in Societies Engulfed by Intractable Conflict, as it does in the Israeli Society?', *Political Psychology* Vol. 22, No. 3 (Tel Aviv 2001) 602 – 605.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 602 – 605.

who experienced the awakening through dreaming one's 'primal dream'.³⁶ This approach solved Rosenberg's problem of the double bind because it explained why Germany had not yet become a synthesized nation like France, because Germany had not yet dreamed its primal dream. Therefore, the success or truth of the Nazi myth depended on the complete belief and adhesion to the dream by those who dreamed it, which meant that it was exclusive to the 'type' of one's racial soul.³⁷ As such, the Nazi myth was able to divide society into different categories because each type was confined to its own racial boundaries. Therefore, only those that belonged to a specific race could dream the primal dream that would reawaken them and compel them to fulfill the Nazi myth of establishing and protecting their nation from those races that did not belong to it. The perceived threat to this particular race was its extinction at the hands of racial chaos if races were permitted to mix unchecked. Or as Rosenberg wrote: "Race is the outward image of a definite soul" and the soul that is Germany.³⁸

According to Rosenberg's logic, blood was what determined the superiority of race and as such bound it to a geographical location that marked the origin that blood. 'Blut und Boden' thus represent the natural location and identity of the race. Linguistic demarcations of territory are therefore irrelevant because they form but an arbitrary border. The superiority of race was in turn determined by the 'Solar myth'.³⁹ Rosenberg, and with him the National Socialist movement, pronounced the Aryan race to be superior for it was the bearer of this myth. The 'solar myth' represented the celebration of light that separated 'forms' from the darkness. The ownership of 'form' granted the Aryan the ability to be creative and to create an independent identity that was superior to the identity of other races because they did not share ownership of this form. Jews for example, were believed to lack a form (identity) altogether, making them not only an inferior race, but a disqualified form of life that compensated its shortcomings by parasitically and materialistically abusing the Aryan race.⁴⁰

In conclusion, I hope to have shown that Rosenberg's work was not so much the product of irrational idealistic fantasies, but rather a response to the fear and problem of a nation. Namely, to secure the right of belonging through the establishment of a pure national identity and to react to what many perceived to be the biggest threat to the realization of that sense of security; the degradation of German blood through racial mixing which would jeopardize the national German soul. To that end, ideology proved insufficient and the

³⁶ A. Rosenberg, *The Myth* (California 1982) 16, 18, 25, 173, 297 – 301, 388.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 257 – 278, 291 – 297, 299 – 318.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 348.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 87, 179, 302.

creation of myth its last resort. Parades, Nazi symbolism and the enthusiasm with which people participated represented not just a conscious belief but the enactment of a social reality that was considered naturally determined. As a result, the emphasis on politicizing all facets of life became a primary responsibility of the Nazi state, shifting the focus of government from its traditional preoccupations towards protecting those lives worth living and separating those lives that were not only devoid of value to society, but posed an existential threat to the survival of the Aryan race. In the next chapter I will analyze how life was purposefully politicized using the concept of *biopolitics*, exposing the various methods through which not just behavior but life itself was regulated in order to safeguard the German identity and thereby the survival of the nation.

Chapter III

From a state of exception to civic duty

Securing the German identity

Now that Rosenberg had diagnosed the ills of German society and prescribed it the medicine of Nazi myth that would cure it, the next step was to convince the patient - i.e the German people - that the nation as they dreamed it, would not survive if they did not accept the treatment. What that treatment entailed is outlined in the third book of *The Myth: The Coming Reich*.⁴¹ It discusses seven areas of societal reform that include the relationship between the state and the sexes, Nordic German law and the relationship between church and school.⁴² This demonstrates that in order to successfully embed the Nazi identity into German society, it had to be perceived by the target audience as a legitimate response to an existential threat from which the people had to be protected.⁴³ More importantly, the audience had to believe that Nazism was the only response capable of dealing with such threats, thereby stimulating the self-motivated desire to conform to the new Nazi identity. This suggests that a political victory was not sufficient to accomplish the realization of the Nazi myth described by Rosenberg. In order for it to be accepted, the Nazi party had to branch out to spheres of interaction with its subjects that, up until that point, had remained outside the scope of conventional politics and thus beyond political ideology.

One way of doing that was by formulating new security threats that were presented as additional existential threats to its people and race. Much like the creation of an autonomous identity, the formulation of security threats also proved to be subject to the positional perception of the actor who formulated these threats. Both the identity of Nazism and the threats that it faced were therefore not the product of objective observations, but rather the outcome of cultivated values that legitimized the prioritization of certain ideas that aimed to bring about a new social reality. I will therefore argue that the primary objective of *The Myth* was to cultivate widespread acknowledgement that there was indeed a racial problem, which would subsequently serve as a legitimate justification for the proposed legal and social reforms that were gradually implemented. This also provided an alibi for increased

⁴¹ A. Rosenberg, *The Myth* (California 1982) 297.

⁴² Ibid., 317, 371, 395.

⁴³ B. Buzan, O. Wæver and J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London 1998) 29 – 31.

government surveillance and regulation of German citizens. After the NSDAP took over power in 1933, state authority was extended into the social spheres similar to what Rosenberg had described in *The Myth*. This meant that state control was extended beyond the traditional boundaries of state responsibilities, which had previously consisted of maintaining a state monopoly on violence.⁴⁴ Now however, the influence of the state was brought into the personal lives of its subjects under the pretext of safeguarding the wellbeing of its people. In order to support this argument, the concept of *biopolitics* will be introduced in this chapter after which it will be used in chapter four to analyze the main themes of the third book; *The Coming Reich*.

The essence of biopolitics

Michel Foucault was the first to develop the concept of *biopolitics* during the lectures he gave at the Collège de France in 1976.⁴⁵ Though his research was primarily focused on the governance of sexuality, the treatment of mental illnesses and the punishment of crime, it triggered the rethinking of how states exerted power over their subjects. These studies attempted to expose the artificial nature of constructed identities that separated and ranked specific segments of society based on arbitrary differences. Foucault argued that the explicit creation and identification of such differences were increasingly used by modern states as political tools to strengthen their grip on society.⁴⁶ *The Myth* serves as an exemplary case in point. It did not only redefine society in terms of racial superiority, it intensified differences to a point that it resulted in a social divide that antagonized the outsider as the enemy. Carl Schmitt, a contemporary of Rosenberg's and a confirmed supporter of the Nazi regime and influential political theorist, phrased it as follows: "(...) the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of friend-enemy groupings."⁴⁷ Yet, before arriving at the point of normalizing the state-induced alienation of specific groups in society, it is crucial to understand that *biopolitics* embodies a new mechanism through which power is exercised. To appreciate that point, it helps to contrast this new mechanism with the knowledge of how

⁴⁴ M. Weber, *Power, Authority and the State* (Cambridge 1978) 3 – 34.

⁴⁵ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* I (Paris 1976); *The Will to Knowledge* (Paris 1977); *The Use of Pleasure* II (Paris 1984); *The Care of the Self* III (Paris, 1984) & *Discipline and Punish* (Paris 1975).

⁴⁶ A.L. Stoler, 'Toward a Genealogy of Racisms: The 1976 Lectures at the Collège de France' In: *Race and the Education of Desire. Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Duke University Press 1995) 56 – 59.

⁴⁷ C. Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (1922) Trans: G. Schwab (Cambridge 1985) 37.

traditional forms of power were exercised before states started institutionalizing national identities as way to reinvent a new and superior nation.

Up until the 18th century, monarchs and their affiliated branches predominantly ruled Western Europe. The ability of these rulers to govern their territories rested upon their capacity to enforce the monopoly of internal state violence. That meant that they were responsible for the maintenance of internal peace and for protecting their subjects from external incursions. Hence, the power of most monarchs only went as far as their ability to physically control their subjects. In the event of a violation or breach of the law, the sovereign could exercise his or her right of physical control over the subject. The decision over life or death represented the ultimate consequence of this power.⁴⁸ Though it could be argued that such entitlements seem more severe than the penalties leveled against modern day offenders, it effectively demonstrates the limited capabilities of traditional rulers to influence, control, regulate or monitor the behavior of their subjects.

Revolutions radically altered the political landscape in Europe, starting with the French Revolution in 1789, prompting a new discourse regarding the responsibilities of the state for its subjects. Though it is impossible to accurately generalize this process for each country where similar political changes occurred, Foucault observed that in most cases these political changes were accompanied by a more invasive attitude of the state towards its subjects. The concept of *biopolitics* therefore signifies the departure from what he termed ‘primitive’ forms of power that were limited in their ability to control the governed and the transition to mechanisms of state power that aimed to exert control over its subjects by becoming an active part of their lives.⁴⁹ This was achieved by reassigning the wellbeing of subjects to the responsibility of the state, thus allowing the state to effectively monitor, control, regulate and discipline the behavior of its subjects. Effectively allowing the state to enter the private sphere of its subjects through, for example, welfare programs that stimulated dependency of the state. That essentially changed the *modus operandi* of state power from “make die, let live” to “make life, let die”.⁵⁰ Or in other words, the idea that life had become the institutional responsibility of the state, implying that society itself could be modeled or

⁴⁸ H. Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (1996) Trans: W. E. Yuill.

⁴⁹ A.L. Stoler, ‘Toward a Genealogy of Racisms: The 1976 Lectures at the Collège de France’ In: *Race and the Education of Desire. Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Duke University Press 1995) 64 – 65.

⁵⁰ M. Foucault, *Society Must be defended*, Lectures at the Collège de France 1975 – 1976 (2003) 239 – 264.

A. L. Stoler, ‘Toward a Genealogy of Racisms’ (2003) 83.

transformed according to the image of its aspirations. Nazism was no different in that regard for it actively strived to create a new lived reality, that of a superior race.

What was partly forgotten, partly neglected, is suddenly grasped as its task by millions: to experience a Myth and to create a type. From out of this type we must build our state and life.⁵¹

Though this viewpoint suggests that mankind has the ability to positively influence and adept to changing circumstances, the darker side of *biopolitics* has a more sinister attitude towards life.

That distinction starts with what is defined as life. In ancient Greece both Plato and Aristotle made the distinction between ‘natural life’ - defined as *zoē* - which represented the basic qualities of life - and *bios* - which represented politically qualified life.⁵² Or as Foucault summarized it: “man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence”.⁵³ This points to a separation between the two spheres of life. Natural life remained excluded from the sphere of politics and was confined to the private life that was only concerned with the reproduction of life. It had neither the privilege nor the capacity to engage in political affairs and was therefore ‘safely’ excluded from political interference. *Bios*, on the other hand, represented the responsibility over a larger quantity of life that transcended the mere subsistence of life. Politically qualified life thus carried the responsibility for life as a whole within the *polis* or comparable socio-political entities. The moment at which state power and politics turn into *biopolitics* is when natural life starts to be included into the sphere of politics. It is precisely this transition that Foucault identified as: “the threshold of the modern era” where “modern man” changes from an animal with political capacity into “an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question”.⁵⁴

As a result, sovereign powers increasingly viewed the health and wellbeing of their citizens as a concern of the state and its ability to survive. The transformed meaning of the word *bio* thus points to an increased desire by the state to create a transparent social reality that it can control. Hence, the influence of the state is extended beyond the control over the physical and biological domain of its subjects and drawn into the private sphere of being.⁵⁵

⁵¹ A. Rosenberg, *The Myth* (California 1982) 316.

⁵² G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford 1995) 9.

⁵³ M. Foucault, *La volonté de savoir*. In: *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (Paris 1976) Trans: R. Hurley (New York).

⁵⁴ G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford 1995) 10.

⁵⁵ S. Prozorov, ‘Living Ideas and Dead Bodies: The Biopolitics of Stalinism’, *Department of Political and Economic Studies* (Helsinki 2013) 210 – 211.

Biopolitics thus represents a subtle attempt of political techniques that enhances state capabilities to secure the lives of those it deems worth living and exclude those lives it considers devoid of value or a threat.⁵⁶ By separating what it wants to unify and unifying that what it wants to divide, a state of exception can be argued that justifies the implementation of death as the only way to preserve life.⁵⁷ The acceptance of this idea thus hinges on the self-motivated desire of the subject to conform to the values it believes will protect him or her from extinction. This self-motivated desire essentially equates to the acknowledgement of a racial problem as outlined by Rosenberg's chapter on Nordic law.

⁵⁶ G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford 1995) 48 – 51.

⁵⁷ M. L. Saidel, 'Biopolitics and its paradoxes: an approach to life and politics in R. Esposito', *Rivista di Filosofia* N. 15 (Bologna 2014) 111 – 119.

Chapter IV

Totalitarianism at the Service of the Will of the People

Honor, loyalty and control in Nordic law

The laws that regulated German society between 1918 and 1933 were neither good nor just. They did not provide justice in the name of the honor of the folk and only recognized “the preservation of justified interests” which made no distinction between “honorable or dishonorable interests”.⁵⁸ Rosenberg concluded, that the spirit of German law had been discarded and replaced with a “soulless justice” that no longer defended the honor of the German nation and punished those who tried to protect it.⁵⁹ In an attempt to address the existential threats that the then prevailing legal structure posed to the future survival of the race, the Reich had to cleanse its legal system and swipe it clean with an “iron broom”.⁶⁰

For this purpose Nordic law formed the ideological inspiration from which legislative reforms such as the Nuremberg Racial Laws or the Reich Citizenship Law could be justified and implemented.⁶¹ Nordic law did not constitute a concrete body of legislation, but merely the spirit that justified Nazi judicial reforms. Nevertheless, the effects this had on German society and the role of the state were significant. Firstly, the principles of Nordic law aimed to “restore the scale of values” and to protect the racial blood from degeneration as the following paragraph demonstrates:

No feelings of or for Jewish humanity must in the future be carried out because of our Nordic racial and hygienic views. (...) Persons who are afflicted with hereditary diseases must be refused permanent residence, or their capacity for reproduction must be restricted by medical intervention. (...) Marriages between Germans and Jews must be forbidden, (...) That the Jews lose their rights of citizenship and must be subject to a new law appropriate to them, is self-evident.⁶²

This idea that later translated into law in 1935, marked the turning point that transferred the responsibility of physical and racial wellbeing to the state. Not only did it make intermarriage between different races illegal, it also stripped specific groups within society from their

⁵⁸ A. Rosenberg, *The Myth* (California 1982) 372.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 372.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 389.

⁶¹ Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei, *Die Nürnberger Gesetze* (1935).

⁶² Ibid., 381 – 382.

citizenship and thus placed them outside the sphere of legal protection against abuse. Jews, handicapped people and people with hereditary diseases or a criminal past were marked as physically unfit to be part of society and therefore disqualified from participating in it. This marks the transformation in political decision-making that determines what is and what is not politically qualified life. Thus, despite legal exclusion, these newly labelled groups of 'natural life' remained politicized entities, devoid of the right of protection, over whom legal judgment could still be passed. This track of reasoning however, focuses exclusively on the discriminatory elements of Nordic law that symbolize the broader impact of *biopolitics* on the balance between state coercion and individual acceptance.

The best way to demonstrate this balance between force and voluntary compliance is by looking at the practice of 'denunciation' and surveillance taking place in the Third Reich. The Gestapo i.e. secret police was an important institution that was used to gather information and identify threats to the regime. From 1933 onwards, the Gestapo was additionally charged with locating and neutralizing politically harmful elements.⁶³ As such, the role of the Gestapo was to stabilize and secure the regime from internal threats through the infiltration of the private lives of its subjects i.e. the German people. This "faceless gaze" as Foucault described the state of round-the-clock surveillance, was thought to be an omnipresent invisible force, thereby influencing the behavior of the people that were within its invisible range.⁶⁴ It was precisely because of the feared unknown presence of Gestapo informants that the secret police gained a reputation of ruthless efficiency.⁶⁵ As a result, German society was slowly conditioned to display outward support and loyalty to the Nazi ideals, regardless of potential personal disagreements. Despite the popular perception of unrelenting watchfulness by the Gestapo, recent research has demonstrated that the key to its 'success' rested on civil participation rather than on its ability to keep tabs on each and everyone. Elisabeth Kohlhaas has estimated that the number of Gestapo officials ranged between 7000 and 7600 at its peak during the war.⁶⁶ Most of them were stationed in occupied territories during the war. This comparatively speaking very limited manpower for surveillance and monitoring of the

⁶³ R. Gellately, 'Denunciations in Twentieth-Century Germany: Aspects of Self-Policing in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic', *Journal of Modern History* Vol. 68 (Chicago 1996) 933.

⁶⁴ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Paris 1977) 195. Trans: A. Sheridan (New York 1979).

⁶⁵ J. R. Stackhouse, 'Gestapo Interrogations: Myth and Realities', in: C. Andrew and S. Tobia, *Interrogation in War and Conflict: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Analysis* (New York 2014) 75 – 78.

⁶⁶ E. Kohlhaas, 'Die Mitarbeiter der regionalen Staatspolizeistellen: Quantitative und qualitative Befunde zur Personalausstattung der Gestapo', in: G. Paul and K. M. Mallmann, *Die Gestapo Mythos und Realität* (Darmstadt 1995) 220 – 235.

German people, suggests that there had to be a different source of information that was more widely available than the information that could be gathered by the Gestapo's own operations.

Robert Gellately has performed a number of studies on the practice of denunciations during the period of the Third Reich. He focused primarily on the areas of Würzburg, Lower Franconia including Düsseldorf and the Rhine-Ruhr where the Nazi party was not very popular due to its negative stance on Catholicism.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Gellately concluded that 70% of the race-affiliated inquiries started by the Gestapo were the result of denunciations by non-affiliated members of the Nazi party. Moreover, additional research by Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann of the Saarland region present similar findings. More than 80% of 121 Special Court cases in Kiel started because of a denunciation as well as roughly 60% out of 633 cases by the Special Courts in Cologne and Krefeld.⁶⁸ These statistics demonstrate a remarkably high participatory involvement of ordinary Germans, thus supporting the idea that, though one did not have to support the Nazi party as a political body, Nazism itself had become the sole referential framework within which people identified their own interests. The appeal of Nazism did therefore not so much draw on belief or political conviction, rather on the acceptance as a new legitimate entity that bound these interests together in the sovereign state of Germany.

The perception of legitimacy is an important factor that can account for the high level of participation for it is inextricably linked to the widespread recognition that there was indeed a problem or threat that had to be dealt with. A number of eminent scholars such as Ian Kershaw, Raul Hilberg and Dieter Hartmann have argued that the Nazis never appealed to passionate hate when it came to promoting anti-Semitism.⁶⁹ Instead, efficiency and depersonalization of the Jew was preferred. Studies on the public response after the introduction of the Nuremberg Racial Laws demonstrate an absence of protest or public disapproval, whereas the pogroms that took place in major German cities in 1938 triggered public outrage. Though the latter event might have been in line with Nazi values and beliefs, such actions represented a breach of the law and were therefore considered illegal. The Nuremberg Racial Laws on the other hand constituted a legal measure that regulated the abuse and alienation of undesirable elements in society. Hartmann and Kershaw stop at

⁶⁷ R. Gellately, 'Denunciations in Twentieth-Century Germany', (Chicago 1996) 933 – 934.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 939.

⁶⁹ I. Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933 – 1945* (Oxford 1983) 275, 371.

R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago 1961).

D. D. Hartmann, 'Anti-Semitism and the Appeal of Nazism', *Political Psychology*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1984) 638.

concluding that there was a widespread disapproval of lawlessness, which supposedly points to a “less conscious level of sympathy with the ultimate goal of Nazism”.⁷⁰ The next section will attempt to move past that conclusion by looking at the interplay between Nazi sovereignty and its perceived legitimacy, because simply being in power is not sufficient to claim the right of legitimacy and therefore falls short as an explanation. Or as Juha Vuori argues: no social institution, not even a totalitarian regime, can survive without a minimum ability to exercise persuasion, coercion and legitimacy.⁷¹

Legitimizing credible threats

The presence of existential threats has been mentioned several times, but it has not yet been analyzed. Traditional security studies have defined ‘security’ as a means to mobilize the resources for survival.⁷² That which is worth preserving, but is threatened in its survival is referred to as the ‘referent object’.⁷³ Only when an issue or development is presented as an existential threat to the referent object, can we speak of a security issue. What this does, is legitimize extraordinary measures to be taken in order to deal with the security issue that would not be possible within the confines of normal politics. The transition from normal politics to this state of exception thus hinges on the formulation of a credible threat that is presented as an existential threat to the audience. Security is therefore a subjective construct that is defined by the actor who formulates the existential threat. This construct usually consists of two components: the first aims to convince the audience of having reached a point of no return that signals the need for immediate action, the second offers a ‘way-out strategy’.⁷⁴ Rosenberg presents his audience - i.e. the German people - with a clear choice:

Either we upbreed the old blood and thereby find renewed vitality and a heightened will to struggle, or the Teutonic European values of culture and ordered government will sink under the filthy human flood of Cosmopolis; (...) infiltrate like plague bacilli into South America, China, the Dutch East Indies and Africa, where ultimate bastardisation will overtake them.⁷⁵

⁷⁰Ibid., 638.

⁷¹ J. A. Vuori, ‘Illocutionary Logic and Strands of Securitization: Applying the Theory of Securitization to the Study of Non-Democratic Political Orders’, *European Journal of International Relations* Vol. 14. No. 1 (Turku 2008) 68.

⁷² B. Buzan, O. Wæver and J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London 1998) 20 – 23.

⁷³ Ibid., 24 – 25, 36.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 41 – 41.

⁷⁵ A. Rosenberg, *The Myth* (California 1982) 56.

Nordic law therefore serves as one of the guarding principles that would have to be used to protect the referent object, that of the race and thus also the German nation, from obliteration. The act of formulating a security issue, however, does not yet qualify it as an existential threat. That final step towards making the extraordinary the norm depended solely on the willingness of the audience to embrace the message. The aforementioned studies by Gellately, Kershaw and Hartmann have demonstrated precisely this willingness, or at least a sense of docile acceptance. It is because of the popular acknowledgement of a problem that the Nazi party was able to successfully claim the responsibilities of sovereignty that had previously belonged to the democratic Weimar Republic. The most important responsibility of the state was the 'right of definitive decision', which enabled the sovereign to identify interest, prioritize emergencies and take the subsequent necessary actions in order to eliminate the threats.⁷⁶ As such, it could be argued that control over state sovereignty included the ability to suspend 'normal' rules and procedures and replace them with extraordinary measures. In Rosenberg's work we thus find a program that outlines the need to institutionalize new laws, adequately responding to the perceived threats Germany faced. Because laws and politics represent parts of the same will, this meant that the supposed future existence of 'the German' was linked to Nazism which came to replace the conventional values of German sovereignty and replaced them with a completely new identity, that of its own myth.

This essentially granted the sovereign the authority to maximize 'the right of decision' by placing itself outside the legal structures of conventional politics, whilst maintaining control over what rules could or could not be suspended, amended or added.⁷⁷ Though access to political institutions did not immediately translate into total control over Germany's sovereignty, it did enable the NSDAP to advance legislation that normalized the politicization of certain spheres within society that previously required a state of exception. It was precisely through the institutionalization of the state of exception, that securitizing politics could be brought back to a new outlook of seemingly 'normalized politics', thus completing a unique securitization cycle that managed fear, belief and ultimately created a new form of civic duty that stemmed from this new political paradigm that may now be called: political Nazism.⁷⁸ Having discussed the impact of Nordic German law, the next section will focus on the relationship between the state, sexes, education and identity.

⁷⁶ M. C. Williams, 'Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics', *International Studies Quarterly* (Oxford 2003) 516 – 518.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 516 – 518.

⁷⁸ See figure 1.1. for illustration.

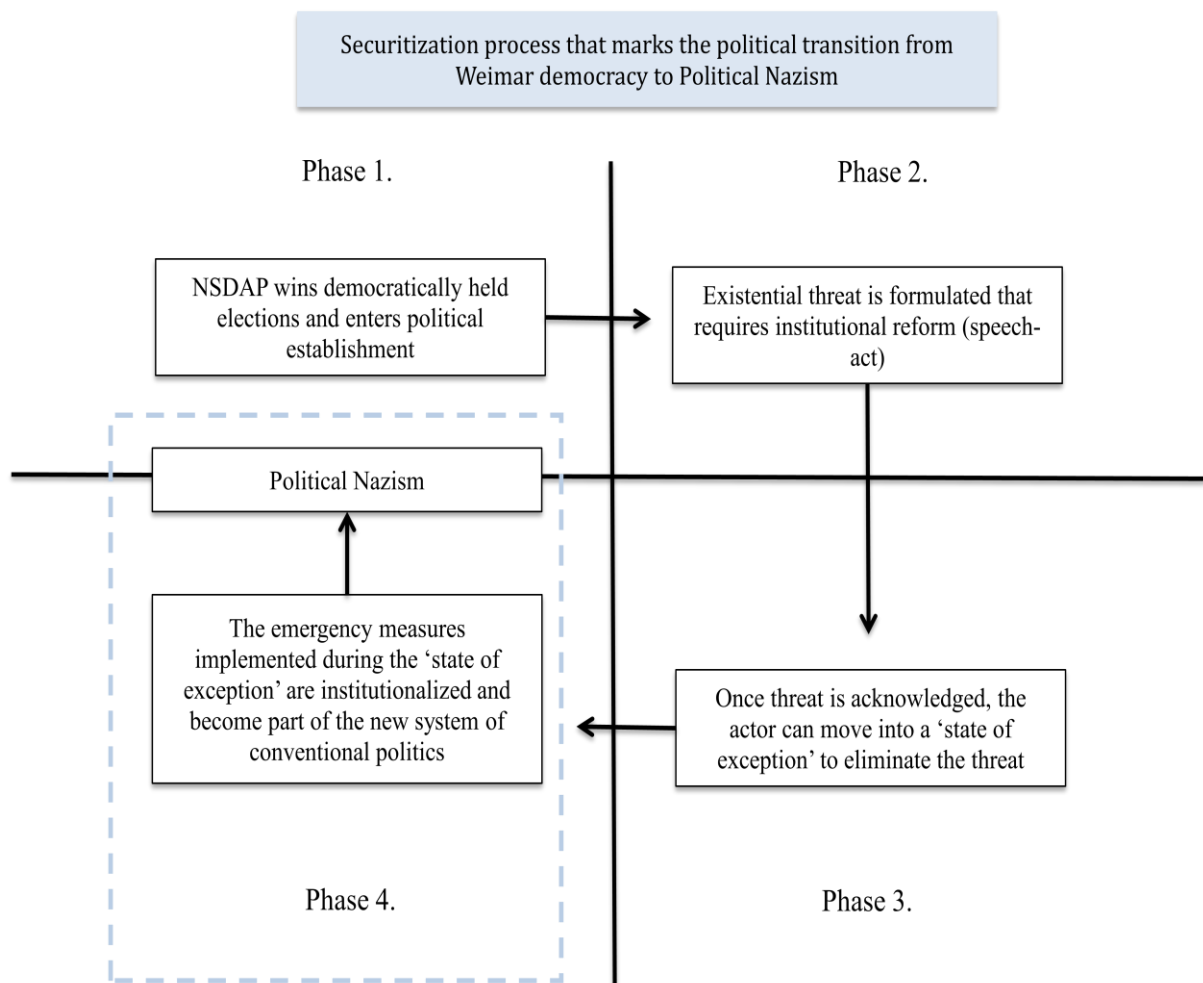


Fig. 1.1. visualizes the general political development that transformed the status and role of the NSDAP.

*Family is the Cell of the State*⁷⁹

Nordic law helped define the legal parameters of racial purity and ‘justified’ the expulsion of racially inferior elements from society. The scope of *The Myth* was however not limited to this group. Rosenberg prioritized the politicization of the sphere of Aryan life over that of the Jews and other ‘undesirables’ for the simple reason that Aryan participation was a basic requirement to the successful implementation of Nazi policies. Therefore, Rosenberg stressed the importance of the responsibility of the state for conditioning the ‘life styles’ of both men and women separately, so as to ensure that each would do his or her part to secure the German identity.⁸⁰ To that effect, man and woman were cast into specific roles that were supposedly naturally assigned to them according to Nazi mythology. According to this line of reasoning, Aryan men were responsible for the creation of all noteworthy culture. Hence the role of men was to create. Women were, however, not less important in the eyes of Rosenberg who stated that: “The value of women rests upon the equally important mission of blood preservation and racial propagation”.⁸¹ This essentially placed the responsibility for race reproduction in the hands of women. As such, Rosenberg recognized that the sphere of family life was not only crucial to the physical survival of the race, but also to the cultural achievements that depended on the maintenance of that identity.

We have seen that behind all religious, moral and artistic values, a racially conditioned people stand and that, through unhindered race mixing, all true values are ultimately destroyed, while the individualities of the people vanish in racial chaos, to vegetate away as an uncreative mass or become subservient, intellectually and materially subordinated, to a powerful new race will.⁸²

The views that Rosenberg formulated in *The Myth* placed women in Nazi Germany in an ambivalent position. On the one hand they were regarded as the preservers of the German nation. Yet on the other hand societal transformations, abroad and domestically, had taught Rosenberg that woman could also be the cause of its downfall if the state did not do something to curb women’s freedom and point to the moral responsibilities they had for the race.⁸³ For example, Rosenberg argued that ideologies, such as Marxism and liberalism, had

⁷⁹ A. Rosenberg, *The Myth* (California 1982) 297.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 321.

⁸¹ Ibid., 317.

⁸² Ibid., 317.

⁸³ Ibid., 335.

dislodged the natural family dynamic, causing men to concede to increased female emancipation in the workforce and coincidentally broader sexual liberties. If one were to sum up the effects of these changes according to Rosenberg, women in the workforce would cause male wages to decrease, lead to a longer period of bachelorhood and amount to more unmarried men and women which in turn would stimulate prostitution and racial debasement.⁸⁴

Translated into present day language, the Germanic Myth says: In the hand and in the nature of women lies the preservation of the race. A people can still pull itself up out of political servitude, but never again from racial pollution. If the women of a nation give birth to black or Jewish bastards, if the muddy tide of black art passes unhindered over Europe as today, if the Jewish brothel literature comes into the homes, if the Syrian of the Kurfürstendamm is also regarded as a folkisch comrade and marriageable man – then such conditions will ensure that Germany – and the whole of Europe – will be populated in its intellectual centers by bastards.⁸⁵

State interference in the familial sphere was therefore deemed necessary. Yet unlike the forceful removal of racial or political undesirables, coercion was not an option for the conditioning of Aryans. The concept of *biopolitics* once more becomes particularly useful, because it enables us to analyse both the bio-racial threat and the instruments used to transform the will of ‘self’ of the German people.

The chapters on the relationship between the state versus the sexes, church and education are crucial in this regard, because they seek to reaffirm the legitimacy of the authentic Nazi identity through social association. Youth associations, sports clubs, student associations, the German Freikorps, the SA, the SS and many other forms of social gathering served as platforms that demarcated the boundaries of individual expression.⁸⁶ Individual thought was therefore not necessarily controlled, but streamlined within the boundaries of acceptable opinion. Gradually, Nazism tapped into all manner of social interaction, creating a breeding ground that cultivated the ‘proper’ balance between the sexes, norms, values and beliefs. The role of Rosenberg and *The Myth* in this process should therefore be viewed as the preparatory clearing of a building site before the real construction commences. Rosenberg thereby conveyed a belief that society can indeed be reconstructed to resemble the image of a

⁸⁴ Ibid., 325.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 336.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 324.

people that stand for honor and duty. *The Myth* thus represented more than an ideology or conviction: it contained the narrative that aimed to reawaken the spirit of a people by appealing to the image of ‘the self’ i.e. pure German identity. The appeal of Nazism depended on the cutting of a double-edged sword. On the one hand it depended on the forceful implementation of its policies, laws and violent expulsion of socially undesirable elements, while simultaneously cultivating acceptance and support through sovereign legitimacy and emphasis on a unique identity.

Though the study of who and why people joined the Nazi party constitutes an ongoing debate amongst scholars, Rudy Koshar’s work on the importance of grass-roots organizations to the Nazi party revealed that joining the NSDAP did not so much as constitute a radical break with society, but was rather a part of social activity.⁸⁷ His observations, based on the study of the city of Marburg between 1923 and 1933 and between 1933 and 1935, appear to support the idea that one did not have to be a registered Nazi to participate in the Nazi myth.⁸⁸ Though *The Myth* itself should not be seen as the triggering event that culminated in a collective change of heart in favor of Nazism, it did provide the framework that enabled it.

⁸⁷ R. Koshar, ‘From Stammtisch to Party: Nazi Joiners and the Contradictions of Grass Roots Fascism in Weimar Germany’, *Journal of Modern History* 59 (1987) 6 – 14.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 20 – 24.

Chapter V

Concluding Remarks

Recording history is like watching the ripple effect after throwing a brick into a pond of still water. Historians describe the splash and ripples that follow the toss. The goal of this thesis however, has been to shift that focus onto the forces at work behind the toss that have remained hidden from scholarly view. Hence the individual who threw the brick and, more importantly, the size of that brick, if it was indeed a brick and not a bomb or a tiny pebble were central to this inquiry. Though I do not dispute the magnitude of the splash that Nazism generated, my thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the impact of *The Myth*, written by Alfred Rosenberg should not, and cannot be left out when discussing the core beliefs and tendencies of Nazism.

The chapter on the formation of the Nazi myth has, I hope, demonstrated that *The Myth* was written as the mold of a key within which solutions to Germany's social, political and economic problems could be forged. Rosenberg played an important role in conceptualizing the perceived threats that German society faced, backing it up with a definitive theory of German history that revealed its destiny. Rosenberg's understanding of racial theory, societal hierarchy and religious convictions can subsequently be seen as having been the primary source of inspiration for subsequent legal and social reforms that sought to protect the sacred Aryan identity. Moreover, the message conveyed in *The Myth* transcended that of the political manifestos of its day, including those of Hitler himself, because it appealed to the expression of a positive 'self' instead of that of the negative 'other'. It sought to reaffirm confidence in the state through the formulation of an authentic and superior identity that had to be protected by the state. As a result, Rosenberg already outlined a shift in government responsibilities prior to the Nazi takeover of power in 1933 with his first book: *The Conflict of Values*. The wellbeing and preservation of the race were prioritized through the formulation of existential threats that pointed out the necessity of reform to ensure national survival.

Though the concept of *biopolitics* had not yet been developed during Rosenberg's lifetime, the awareness of what was required to condition people so that they might voluntarily adopt the Nazi identity on their own, speaks from *The Myth* the way the books were structured. There are innumerable passages that stress the importance of type forming, disciplining, monitoring and regulating the most intimate spheres of personal life at the

service of the state. Particular attention was given to the significance of Nordic law, for its core principles can be seen to have had a large impact on the German legal system and on the attitude of the state towards the different sexes. It can therefore be concluded that *The Myth* had a defining impact on both the development of Nazism and German society. This was most visibly expressed in the changed attitude towards the life of its own type and consequently that of anyone who did not belong to that type. Moreover, there is room for the argument that *The Myth* indeed facilitated the transformation of Nazism as an extreme rightist movement to a collectively accepted political party, precisely because it enabled conventional politics to be replaced with a new referential framework with which the Germans could identify themselves.

It should be noted that in the context of broader scholarly debate on the topic of Nazism, much work remains to be done on the study of *The Myth*. It remains a vastly understudied topic. This thesis has merely pointed out its significance. Additional topics for research could for example focus on the role of aesthetics and art in Nazi symbolism. Lastly it should not go unmentioned that despite Rosenberg's efforts to stave off racial chaos through extraordinary intellectual and political reforms, the ultimate result was that of all-encompassing misery and chaos, something even he could not have predicted. It is ironic that the man who feared the loss of a unique German identity the most, would – through his work – preside over the activities that would scar its people with a past that haunts their national identity to this day.

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