WORDS THAT KILL: REFLECTIONS ON THE RHETORIC OF GENOCIDE

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The thesis comprises two essays which explore the impact of the "linguistic turn" upon the analysis of ideological elements in historical texts. The first essay analyzes such features with reference to a method based upon a critical conception of ideology, that is, one having as its object the use of language for the production and maintenance of asymmetrical relations of power. The method derives from the work of two scholars, the historian Hayden White and the Critical Discourse analyst Norman Fairclough. A theory of ideology critique is advocated which differs from the traditional Marxist conception of ideology as the distortion of an empirical truth. In opposition to the traditional view, a linguistic theory is proposed that treats ideology as a process of meaning production mediated by language, through which the discourse serving the interests of a particular group or class is portrayed as both natural and common-sensical. To render more concrete this theory of ideology critique, the theory is applied to an actual text from the Third Reich, a memorandum composed by Adolf Hitler's personal physician, Dr. Theo Morell. The essay demonstrates how the very articulation of the Morell text both creates and sustains vicious patterns of domination, and how the text may have interacted with its socio-historical context to produce the Holocaust.
In the second essay, the significance of context in the interpretation of historical texts is further examined, but chiefly as a constraint on the process of such interpretation. The second essay emphasizes the limitations of a purely semiotic approach to texts when applied to historical documents. The theory of textual constraints developed in the second essay consists of two parts. The first, textual coherence, is drawn from the work of the linguists Umberto Eco and M.A.K. Halliday, and emphasizes the need for every reader to respect the "intention" of the text prior to interpretation. The second part, the intertextual context, shares with Norman Fairclough an emphasis on locating a text within a historical chain of earlier and contemporaneous texts. This two-pronged theory of constraints on "unlimited semiosis" self-consciously opposes the efforts of Revisionist historians to deny the reality of the Holocaust on the basis of postmodern ideas of textual indeterminacy. At the same time, the theory defended in the second essay strives to avoid canonical interpretations by opening a historical text to multiple readings, so long as such readings respect that text's "intention."
For Patty
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In Absalom, Absalom! William Faulkner describes his tortured protagonist, Quentin Compson, as a "barracks house full of ghosts." The metaphor is an apt one for any prolonged project of scholarship like this one, which bears within it voices and influences too numerous to mention.

These essays grew out of a six-week stint in Berkeley, California during the summer of 1995, when I encountered critical linguistics for the first time under a scholarship provided by the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD). I am grateful to Dr. Claire Kramsch for introducing me to the work of Norman Fairclough. Without this felicitous introduction, the present essays could never have been written. I would also like to express a debt of gratitude to David Knight and his enthusiastic assistance in helping translate Dr. Morell's memorandum. David's translation of the memo is superb and far superior to my own.

I wish to thank my adviser, Dr. Alan Beyerchen, for tireless and accessible counseling throughout the preparation, writing, and editing of these essays. It was Dr. Beyerchen who drew my attention to Umberto Eco's conception of textual coherence as a constraint on interpretation. I am also grateful to the members of Dr. Beyerchen's German 801A seminar (Fall '95-Winter '96) for their conscientious and instructive readings of the
first essay (Chapter 1). Many of their suggestions have been incorporated into the essay, making of it, needless to say, an infinitely better product.

I would like to express special acknowledgment of the late Dr. Marilyn Waldman, mentor, colleague, and valued friend. Marilyn first awakened my interest in linguistic approaches to historical documents, especially the roles of metaphor and metonymy in discourse. She also provided me with an example of courage and dignity in the face of terminal illness that I will never forget. She is greatly missed.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife Patty for her support during this year-long project. As always, she was a stalwart second reader of all the drafts, furnishing insightful comments and suggestions that have improved both essays. She also supplied essential moral and logistical support, including midnight mugs of hot chocolate as I toiled away in front of the PC and occasional abductions to the local movie theater. She has made the (sometimes) dark night of the soul involved in a project of this nature a good deal brighter.
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INTRODUCTION

In Western intellectual history, the concept of ideology has been widely identified with illusion. Marx and Engels were among the first to portray ideology as a distortion of an objective truth existing in history. In *The German Ideology*, they likened the ideology of Young Hegelians like Ludwig Feuerbach and Max Stirner to a *camera obscura*, a dark chamber with a single pinhole in one wall through which sunlight was conducted. When the light fell upon the opposite wall, it reproduced an inverted image of the exterior world—much as ideology conveyed an impression of the world upside-down. Marx and Engels consistently linked ideology with "the imagination," "theoretical bubble-blowing," "abstractions," and a misperception of "actual existing conditions." Through a proper de-mystification of the social conditions of production, the student of ideology could ascend to a pure apprehension of "the real ground of history," "the real process of production," things "as they really are and happened," "real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live."¹ In this way, Marx and Engels engendered a tradition of regarding ideology as a distorted image of what is real.

In the last several decades, critics of ideology have sought to reconceive it in terms other than those of Marxist realism. In the wake of Wittgenstein and Austin's revolutionary theories of the social and active dimensions of language, a new generation of scholars has turned increasingly to linguistic analysis to enhance its understanding of ideology. Underlying these scholars' reflections is a common recognition that ideas are not essences proceeding magisterially through history, but utterances inscribed in particular social environments. "To study ideology," the linguist John B. Thompson has written, "is...to study language in the social world."\(^2\) Such study embraces not only the casual, everyday use of language, but also traces how "the multifarious uses of language intersect with power, nourishing it, sustaining it, enacting it."\(^3\) Ultimately, these linguistic approaches to ideology envision language as more than a tool for communication or amusement; it is "a social-historical phenomenon which is embroiled in human conflict."\(^4\)

Two fundamentally different conceptions of ideology have coalesced around these insights. The first is the "neutral conception of ideology," which views ideology as synonymous with systems of thought or belief characteristic of all political activity, whether or not such activity is intended to sustain or to alter the status quo.\(^5\) An example of this approach can be found in the linguist Roger Fowler, according to whom the "common sense"

\(\text{\footnotesize\(^2\)John B. Thompson, Studies in the Theory of Ideology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 2.}\)

\(\text{\footnotesize\(^3\)Ibid.}\)

\(\text{\footnotesize\(^4\)Ibid.}\)

\(\text{\footnotesize\(^5\)Ibid., 4.}\)
assumptions and values of a community are constitutive of its ideology. For Fowler, "in a sense all [such] theories are 'distortions,' since they are interpretations or representations rather than reflections." The second is the "critical conception of ideology," which links ideology to the process whereby asymmetries of power are produced and domination perpetuated. This approach to ideology examines the role language plays in creating and sustaining relationships of domination, and thus retains the pejorative overtone the word has had throughout much of its history. At the same time, it facilitates a critical stance toward ideology without necessitating that the critic be in possession of the "real" truth as disclosed by an objectivist or positivist method.

The two essays in this thesis are meditations on the impact of the "linguistic turn" upon the analysis of ideological elements of historical texts. In Chapter 1, I defend a method of analyzing ideological features of historical texts based upon a critical conception of ideology, i.e. one having as its object the use of language for the production and maintenance of asymmetrical relations of power. My model is drawn from the work of two scholars, the historian Hayden White and the Critical Discourse analyst Norman Fairclough. I argue for a theory of ideology critique that differs from the traditional Marxist conception of ideology as the distortion of an objective, scientifically verifiable reality. In opposition to the traditional view, I propose a linguistic theory that treats ideology as a process of meaning production mediated by language, through which the discourse serving the interests--and promoting the hegemony--of a particular group or class is portrayed as both natural and

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7 Ibid.
common-sensical. To concretize this highly abstract theory of ideology critique, I apply it to an actual historical text from the Third Reich, a top-secret memorandum composed by Hitler's personal physician, Dr. Theo Morell. My analysis will seek to show how the very articulation of Morell's text creates and sustains vicious patterns of domination, and how this text may have interacted with its socio-historical context to produce the Holocaust.

In Chapter 2, I explore further the significance of context in the interpretation of historical texts, but chiefly as a constraint on the process of such interpretation. If Chapter 1 celebrates the semiotic approach to texts, Chapter 2 issues a caveat about its limitations when applied to historical documents. My theory of semiotic constraints consists of two distinct strands: the first, textual coherence, derives from the linguists Umberto Eco and M.A.K. Halliday, and emphasizes the need for every reader to respect the "intention" of the text prior to interpretation; the second strand, the intertextual context, is based in part on the work of Norman Fairclough, and insists on the controversial practice of locating a text within a historical chain of earlier and contemporaneous texts. This two-pronged theory of constraints on "unlimited semiosis" seeks to counter those who would rewrite Holocaust history in the ink of textual indeterminacy; at the same time, it strives to avoid the sclerosis of historical interpretation into an official canon or univocal version by opening a text to multiple readings--so long as they respect that text's "intention."

As I read these essays today, I am struck by the precarious tight rope they walk between the exciting prospects of postmodernism and its frightening potentiality, between its glories and its horrors. It is my hope that the tensions between Chapters 1 and 2 are creative ones, and that they will be received as invitations to a different way of thinking.
about a subject of inestimable importance in world history. These essays insist on the power of language to shape the ideas of men and women and thereby impel them to action, including criminal action. In the years between 1933 and 1945, language was used by a dominant power structure to define certain groups as inferior and to mobilize the remorseless machinery of government for their destruction. My study is an exploration of how language contributed to this destruction--how the language of Nazi policymakers became words that killed.
CHAPTER 1

THE RHETORIC OF GENOCIDE: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

Scarcely a discipline in late 20th-century humanistic studies has been immune to "the linguistic turn" in modern philosophical, linguistic, and literary thought. The effects of this preoccupation with language, with the endless free play of the signifier and the signified\(^1\) and the skeptical vision of language's relation to the world of objects, have been felt even in fields not immediately concerned with linguistic matters. One such field is ideology critique as a subset of intellectual history.\(^2\) Traditional ideology critique since Marx has tended to view ideology as distorting, falsifying, and mendacious, an artifice which serves the interests of a specific group or class. As Hayden White has noted, such a view of ideology

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\(^2\) Following Hayden White, I treat ideology critique as part of intellectual history because I consider it a central problem of intellectual history. Intellectual history has to do not merely with the study of meaning (as in traditional history of ideas of the A.O. Lovejoy variety), but with meaning production, i.e. with how meaning is produced, distributed, and consumed (or interpreted) in a historical period. Inasmuch as power relations within a culture exert a magnetic influence on how meaning is created and presented for consumption, the operations of power as they bear upon the process of meaning production are always a paramount concern of the intellectual historian. See Hayden White, "The Context in the Text: Method and Ideology in Intellectual History," *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1987), 189-190.
presupposes a theory of language and representation. It assumes that the ideological distortions of a text can be measured against that text's original historical context. The context is presumed to be accessible to the student of ideology as a base-line of comparison. If the context is to be an acceptable standard of measure, however, it must also be stable, objective, and concrete. Yet this historical context vaunted as a control in ideology critique is itself textual in character. In other words, our understanding of context is derived from texts as potentially distorted and mendacious as the texts they are supposed to measure. If no historical text is entirely pure or disinterested, as post-modernists like Hayden White have argued, then the quest for a means of calibrating the ideological features in a text is doomed to failure.

The theory of language which informs traditional Marxist ideology critique is one of four ways of conceiving the relation between language and the world. On the Marxist view, language is a manifestation of more basic structural forces (relations of production) which are to language as a cause to its effect. A second conception, found in the work of Hegel and underpinning 19th-century Geistesgeschichte, regards language as symbolizing the world in the manner of an analogue, so that analysis of cultural texts yields a view of the essential

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3 Ibid., 190-191.

4 I am indebted to White's adumbration of the four views of the relation between text and context, language and the world. Ibid., 189-90.
contextual whole (insofar as language, above all cultural artifacts, contains that culture's essential spirit, or Zeitgeist). A third, philological view of the relation between language and the world, found in the works of early 20th-century scholars like Auerbach, Spitzer, Cassirer, and Lovejoy, holds that language represents a world through its grammar, syntax, and word choice, all of which model iconically the culture that produced them. For adherents of this view, language faithfully represents context.

Whether stressing causality (the Marxist view), analogy (the Hegelian view), or iconicity (the philological view), each of these theories assumes that language somehow represents a world extrinsic to it in a fairly natural way. It is precisely this assumption, however, that Hayden White, inspired by a post-modern theory of textual interpretation, has eloquently—and persuasively—called into question. White's post-modern theory of texts is a fourth conception of the relation between language and the world, taking as its cornerstone Saussure's theory of the linguistic sign (as developed by Althusser, Benveniste, and Habermas). According to White's theory, the signifier has no necessary relation to its signified. Rather, language embraces two kinds of sign systems: one where the sign system refers to something other than language, to an object of reference outside itself which is non-linguistic; the other, a sign system having as its referent(s) another sign system. White's point is essential if we are to understand how ideology is produced in the very articulation of a text's formal attributes. It shifts our focus from ideology as contained in a text (and measured by some objective standard outside the text), to the process of ideology production unfolded in the text. White invites us to see ideology less as a distortion of the "truth" than as a process whereby the discourse specific to a group, institution, or class is portrayed as
natural or common-sensical, and therefore immune to challenge. He endorses Paolo Valesio's characterization of a text's ideological aspects as "those 'metalinguistic' gestures by which it substitutes another sign system for the putatively extralinguistic referent about which it pretends to speak or of which it pretends to be a straight-forward, objective, or value-free description."

White's reconceptualization of ideology critique suggests an alternative to the traditional effort to prove ideological bias with reference to a pure, non-ideological text. White focuses not on the text as a finished product, examination of the contents of which discloses the text's ideological bias. Instead, his semiological approach views ideology as a process--a process in which ideology is produced "by the establishment of a mental set towards the world in which certain sign systems are privileged as necessary, even natural ways of recognizing 'meaning' in things...." For White, then, ideology is the process whereby a sign system pretends to talk about a referent in a neutral and common-sensical manner, when in fact it is talking about a discourse peculiar to--and serving the interests of--some group, class, faction, or institution. This ideological leger-de-main he calls "code-shifting," the process whereby ideology is created. White's theory of ideology production invites us to consider a hermeneutic based on analysis not of the content of a text, but of its

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6 Ibid.
formal properties (its grammatical, lexical, and structural elaboration) as the locus of ideology generation.\textsuperscript{7}

By his own admission, White's semiological theory of textual analysis is "highly abstract," and efforts to make it more concrete would require "detailed reference to the work of Jakobson, Benveniste, Eco, Barthes, ...as well as to that of Levi-Strauss, Althusser, Lacan, the neorhetoricians and theorists of discourse analysis..."\textsuperscript{8} (emphasis added) In this essay, I would like to explore one of the directions White has suggested semiological criticism could pursue in order to be made more concrete: namely, through the techniques of discourse analysis. The hermeneutic I have in mind is taken directly from the linguist Norman Fairclough and his work in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA can be employed as a methodological fulfillment of White's gestures toward bringing a semiological theory of textual analysis down to earth.

What is CDA? Like White's semiological theory, it is predicated on the Saussurean theory of language as a sign system, and thus, like White's theory, presupposes a view of language informed by post-modern linguistic analysis. Also like White, Fairclough's CDA focuses not so much on the contents of a text as on how ideology is produced in it through

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 193. According to White, the question for post-modern intellectual historians exploring ideology production is how text producers "establish, through the articulation of their texts, the plausibility of their discourse by referring the 'meaning' of these, not to other 'facts' or 'events,' but rather to a complex sign system which is treated as 'natural' rather than as a code specific to the praxis of a given social group, stratum, or class." White further notes that such code-switching creates not only the ideological aspects of a text, but a specific subjectivity which the reader is assumed to entertain as realistic.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
a process of code-switching, whereby a point of view peculiar to a group (and sustaining that group's disproportionate share of power), is proffered to an ideal reader as an objective depiction of the world "as it really is." Through this process, one distinct code is privileged as a necessary and natural way of understanding the world. By shifting the emphasis from context as an accurate gauge of ideological bias, and stressing instead the process of meaning-production accomplished in a text's articulation, the CDA hermeneutic avoids the infinite regress of traditional ideology critique. At the same time, it achieves a level of self-conscious theoretical sophistication that can supplement the findings of more conventional interpretive methods.

My aim in this essay is not to present a comprehensive description of Fairclough's critical method, but to apply the first stage of CDA and its approach to ideology critique. One of CDA's primary objects is investigating how ideology is inscribed in the features of discourse. Assumed by the text producer to be natural and common-sensical, these ideological commitments are (with time and after ideological struggle) taken for granted as the way the world "really is." By means of a series of discursive "textual cues," or semantic/grammatical moves, the text producer conjures a special subjectivity which readers (ideal readers, in this case) are positioned to accept as their own view of the world. The special subjectivity thereby created is not necessarily unitary; it may consist of a series of subject positions, all of which situate the reader as one who can accept the text producer's ideological stance as objectively true.⁹ Fairclough argues (a-la Louis Althusser) that

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"constituting subjects is what ideology is all about - all ideology is in one way or another to do with positioning subjects."\textsuperscript{10} Fairclough's interest in how texts engender a special subjectivity coincides with White, whose semiological approach views "the formal properties" of a text "as a dynamic process of overt and covert code shifting by which a specific subjectivity is called up and established in the reader, who is supposed to entertain this representation of the world as a realistic one in virtue of its congeniality to the imaginary relationship the subject bears to his own social and cultural situation."\textsuperscript{11} Fairclough's critical discourse method, however, is not simply an amplification of hints found in White; instead, he offers the intellectual historian both a fuller conception of ideology production than White \textit{and} a concrete theory of ideology analysis far more expansive than White's minimalist statement of his theory.

As we have seen, White regards ideology as a process of meaning production and reproduction, established by the use of "metalinguistic" gestures which substitute a sign system for the alleged extralinguistic referent about which a text pretends to speak (or which it claims to describe in a straight-forward, value-neutral manner).\textsuperscript{12} The key to ideology production for White, then, is the process of naturalizing discourse. White's conception is thus far coextensive with Fairclough's definition of ideology; but where White ventures no farther, Fairclough incorporates other elements into his definition which are absent from

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{11} White, 193.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 192.
White's account. For Fairclough, ideology is not just a process of code-switching, of taking for granted as matters of common sense highly ideological beliefs; it is also "common sense in the service of sustaining unequal relations of power."\textsuperscript{13} By naturalizing the meanings of words in a text, ideology constrains the contents of discourse and long-term knowledge and beliefs, thereby imposing limits on the reader's capacity to imagine worlds outside those portrayed as necessary in the text. The result is not only a closure of the plenitude of possible meanings language may have, nor just the creation of a deceptive appearance of transparency. Ideological common-sense also perpetuates unequal power relations.

CDA examines the formal properties of a text to see how ideology is produced in the very act of articulating the text. If, however, CDA is truly to commend itself to intellectual historians as a worthwhile technique that offers new vantage points on ideology within historical texts, it must be put to the test with an actual instance of historical discourse. The text I have selected for this experiment is a seemingly obscure one that nonetheless played an essential role in one of the 20th-century's most infamous crimes--the systematic murder of the mentally ill at the hands of the Nazis. The author was Hitler's physician, Dr. Theo Morell. Before we analyze this extraordinary document, a few words on Dr. Morell and the text's historical context are in order.

Morell was first introduced to Hitler in the spring of 1936 through Hitler's personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffman. Morell was flown from his home in Berlin to Munich to treat Hoffman, who suffered from gonorrhea. Morell effected a complete cure. Apparently

\textsuperscript{13} Fairclough, 84.
impressed with Morell's medical prowess, Hitler invited him during Christmas of 1936 to be his personal physician (Leibarzt). The job would entail treating the Fuehrer for two physical ailments that had till then resisted a cure: gastrointestinal problems and a severe attack of eczema. Morell examined Hitler and promised a cure in less than a year. Morell's success in making good his word (Hitler was, as he himself attested, fully cured within nine months of the promise) secured his place in Hitler's esteem. He would serve as the Fuehrer's doctor almost until Hitler's suicide.\footnote{Dr. Theo Morell, \textit{Adolf Hitler: The Medical Diaries}, ed. David Irving (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1983), 21-23, 31-32.}

After the war Dr. Morell was arrested by the U.S. army in the hospital at Reichenhall, where he was bedridden with a failing heart. Imprisoned in a narrow cell, he was later transferred to the Dachau prison hospital. In November 1946 the Doctor's Trial began at Nuremberg, at which twenty-three Nazi physicians were prosecuted for crimes against humanity. Morell was not among them; he was never implicated in either the euthanasia program or in the medical experiments performed on concentration camp inmates. Free of criminal liability for the regime's enormities, Morell was discharged from Dachau in June 1947. He ended his checkered life in an Alpenhof district hospital, where he died on May 26, 1948.\footnote{Ibid., 284-285.}

Although never indicted for involvement in the Nazis' murderous campaign against the mentally ill, Morell did in fact contribute to it. As early as 1935, Hitler had informed Gerhard Wagner, the Reich physicians leader, of his intention to implement euthanasia once
war had started.16 Hitler's effort to redeem his promise to Wagner began in 1938, when the family of a severely handicapped child petitioned Werner Catel, then director of the Leipzig University Children's Clinic, to admit the infant. Although the precise nature of the child's deformity remains unclear, evidence indicates that it lacked a leg and part of an arm, may have been blind, was diagnosed as an "idiot," and suffered from convulsions. The child was duly admitted to the clinic, where, according to Catel, the father asked that the child be killed, an entreaty Catel refused on the ground that such action was illegal. The child's family then appealed directly to Hitler through his personal chancellery (Kanzlei des Fuehrers, or KdF). Philipp Bouhler, the KdF chief, submitted the appeal to Hitler, who instructed Karl Brandt, his escorting physician (Begleittarzt), to examine the handicapped child and, after consulting with the Leipzig physicians, to kill the infant if his examination conformed with the conditions set forth in the appeal. Brandt followed Hitler's orders, confirmed the diagnosis, and ordered the child's death.17

This officially sanctioned murder was the inaugural event of Nazi infanticide. Hitler entrusted to Brandt and Bouhler the task of developing a euthanasia campaign targeting mentally and physically handicapped children. As his escorting doctor, Brandt was directly subject to Hitler; as the head of the KdF, Bouhler, too, owed immediate allegiance to his Fuehrer. By deputing officials closely bound to him with planning and executing genocide,

16 GSTA Frankfurt, Anklage Werner Heyde, Gerhard Bohne and Hans Hefelmann, Ks 2/63 (GSTA), Js 17/59 (GSTA), 22 May 1962, p. 40; U.S. Military Tribunal, Transcript of the Proceedings in Case 1, p. 2482 (testimony of Karl Brandt).

Hitler could assure himself of the program’s secrecy. Dispensing with other governmental offices (such as the Reich Ministerium des Innerns, or RMdl) also saved Hitler the distasteful chore of issuing official orders to conduct the killing.\footnote{Ibid., 40.}

From its origins, the program was to be top secret (geheime Reichssache), and the role of the KdF, while central, was to be camouflaged. Accordingly, Brandt and Bouhler founded a front organization to cloak the KdF’s direction of children’s euthanasia. They called this front organization the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Hereditary Ailments (Reichausschuss zur wissenschaftlichen Erfassung von erb- und anlagebedingten schweren Leiden).\footnote{Ibid., 44. Curiously, among the literature on Nazi euthanasia that I have reviewed (including the works of Michael Burleigh, Robert Proctor, and Goetz Aly), only Henry Friedlander mentions the purely fictitious existence of the Reich Committee, which served as a stalking horse for the KdF.}

The knot of physicians and bureaucrats around Bouhler and Brandt\footnote{This group included Victor Brack, Hans Hefelmann, Herbert Linden, Catel, Hans Heinze, Hellmuth Unger, and Ernst Wentzler} laid the foundation for the killing of handicapped children in the spring of 1939. The use of registration forms (Meldebogen) would provide the basis for selection of prospective victims, whose cases would be referred to a panel of experts (Gutachter) for evaluation. The experts were three dedicated advocates of euthanasia: Werner Catel, Hans Heinze, and Ernst Wentzler, all of whom had served on the planning committee.\footnote{Ibid., 44-46.}
It is amid the hothouse atmosphere of debate within the KdF that Dr. Morell's memorandum should be located. One of the issues under discussion was whether to codify the euthanasia program through a public law or to implement it by means of a secret decree. As Hitler's personal physician, Morell weighed into this debate in the summer of 1939. The immediate purpose of his memorandum was to address this question of legalization versus secret order. Morell gathered together everything he could find that had been written on the subject of euthanasia since the 19th century, much of it cross-fed to him by the so-called Reich Committee. In all likelihood, both the assembled material and the memorandum based on it came before Hitler sometime in August of 1939.22

While the historical impact of Morell's document is difficult to gauge, the sequence of events supervening on its appearance suggests it played an influential role in Nazi euthanasia policy. On August 18, 1939, approximately one month after Morell's memo, the RMdI circulated an order, the "Requirement to Report Deformed etc. Newborn" (Meldepflicht fuer missgestaltete usw. Neugeborene), which was marked "strictly confidential" and remained unpublished in the official ministry gazette. The order required midwives and physicians to report all cases of idiocy and Down's syndrome; microcephaly; hydrocephaly; physical deformities, including missing limbs or retarded spinal/cranial development; and spastic paralysis. In both language and method, as Michael Burleigh has

written, the decree echoes the Morell memorandum. The information from the doctors and midwives was submitted to the local public health officer, who transmitted it to the Reich Committee at its Berlin postbox. From there, the reported cases were evaluated by the KdF's three expert referees (Catel, Heinze, and Wentzler), who decided which cases would be chosen for extermination. This first phase in Nazi genocide of the mentally handicapped claimed the lives of 6,000 children.

The Reich Ministry of the Interior, which had issued the registration order, was no stranger to shaping eugenic policy. Since March of 1933, when Hermann Goering had transferred a draft sterilization law to the RMdI for the purpose of adding compulsory clauses to it, the RMdI had been intimately involved in carrying out Hitler's utopian dream of a racially pure, genetically healthy population. Arthur Guett, who served from 1933 to 1939 as director of the RMdI's Department for People's Health, was a crucial link between the Reich Ministry and the KdF's euthanasia planning staff. Guett had delivered a lecture to the Congress of German Medical Officials in September 1932 advocating the reorganization of public health in accordance with the science of heredity, racial hygiene, and population policy. According to Guett, the state must impede emigration of valuable German stock while encouraging the emigration of racially inferior types like the Jews. He argued that all of social life must be subordinated to racial hygienic imperatives if the racial

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23 Burleigh, 99; see also H. Friedlander, 45.

24 Burleigh, 100; Friedlander, 45.
quality of the German population were to be improved and its numbers expanded.\textsuperscript{25} It was Guett who developed the government's sterilization law, published on July 26, 1933 (but coming into effect on January 1, 1934). A subsequent law, "A Law Against Compulsive Criminality" (\textit{Gesetz gegen gefaehrliche Gewohnheitsverbrecher}), was promulgated in November 1933, empowering the authorities to use preventive detention (incarceration before commission of a crime) and to castrate recidivist lawbreakers. Guett praised this law for revealing the obsolescence of liberal/Christian prescriptions for disease and criminality, and envisioned a future purged of crime and illness by medical intervention.\textsuperscript{26}

Guett's activities in the RMdI involved it in policy planning that would lead to its participation in the Nazi mass murder of the mentally ill between 1939 and 1945. He coordinated the Hereditary Biology Department of the Reich Health Office and the Health Department of the RMdI, insisting, in this role, on standardization of medical examinations and records with the aim of evaluating families for genetic health.\textsuperscript{27} In the discussions between February and May 1939 among members of the KdF (Bouhler, Brack, Hefelmann) and other euthanasia proponents (e.g. the ophthalmologist Hellmuth, the pediatricians Ernst Wentzler and Werner Catel) concerning the medical killing of handicapped children, Herbert

\textsuperscript{25} In his emphasis on centralizing health administration in the hands of an omnipotent state with broad powers to segregate and sterilize members of the population deemed unfit (including the power to decree abortions), Guett appears to have shared Morell's statist bias. See Paul Weindling, \textit{Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism 1870-1945} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 524.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 525.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 528.
Linden of the RMdI was present. This group of policymakers initiated children's euthanasia by issuing the order requiring registration of mentally or physically impaired newborns on August 18, 1939. The order was issued in the name of the RMdI.

At the time Theo Morell composed his memorandum for Hitler, the children's euthanasia program was still nascent, and the most pressing question was whether to keep it secret or promulgate it through public law. Yet Morell was concerned in his memorandum to justify not only a furtive program of infanticide, but to expand the scope of killing to include handicapped adults. According to Goetz Aly, it was Morell who, for the first time, proposed an official expansion of the euthanasia action to include mentally ill adults—a proposal that culminated in October 1939 with the notorious Hitler Decree (backdated to September 1, 1939), authorizing Bouhler and Brandt to extend involuntary euthanasia to adults.

Clearly, the Morell text is a significant historical document which must be reckoned among the forces that paved the way to Nazi mass murder. There is little question that Morell's memorandum to Hitler is ideological, whether assessed under the traditional theory of ideology as distortive false consciousness or under White's semiological theory of code-switching. Other interesting questions are how Morell produces ideology, and what

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28 Linden would eventually be delegated from the RMdI as administrator of the "Reich Association of Hospitals" (Die Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft Heil- und Pflegeanstalten), a front organization designed to camouflage the central role of Hitler and the KdF in the euthanasia program. Ibid., 549.

29 Ibid., 543.

30 Aly, 111.
linguistic evidence we find within the text of that ideology. Fairclough's critical analytical method provides a valuable means of exploring these questions—a means largely absent from more conventional approaches to historical textual interpretation.

The work of two scholars who have examined the Morell text, Michael Burleigh and Goetz Aly, are illustrative of the more traditional approach. After setting the Morell text in its historical context, Michael Burleigh enumerates the primary themes, arguments, concepts and values in the memo. He identifies the central question the text addresses (i.e. whether the proposed euthanasia program should be promulgated as a public law or carried out under a secret administrative order), and discusses Morell's proposal to invest legal guardians and official doctors with the power to initiate proceedings, as well as the role of asylum doctors as expert referees (Gutachter). Burleigh then examines the philosophical content of the document, which he derisively calls "a typically Hitlerian admixture of banality, inhumanity, and bizarre 'historical' or 'natural' facts" (repudiation of individual rights as creations of the French Revolution, the ascendancy of communal values over bourgeois individualism, etc.). Burleigh inventories the text's primary arguments, themes, and concepts: Morell's indictment of the "counterselective" results of modern welfare; his use of the 1920 Meltzer survey in order to support his argument that the action be kept secret; and his assertion that the proposed measure would restore the "purifying" effects of the Medieval penal law and epidemic disease, which, in days of old, had the salutary effect of curbing the number of criminals and the mentally ill. Burleigh concludes his discussion of the Morell text with a

31 Burleigh, 98-99.
direct quotation from its final paragraph, in which Morell justifies euthanasia on economistic grounds (the destruction of 5,000 "idiots" per year would ultimately result in a capital reserve of 200 million RMś). 32 Burleigh insightfully takes measure of the memo as one of the earliest documents in the Third Reich "to address the grim practicalities of killing the mentally and physically handicapped." 33 He argues for a link between the Morell text and the Reich Ministry's Decree of August 18, 1939, requiring the registration of handicapped newborns.

Because he is more immediately concerned with the Morell text than Burleigh, for whom the text is only a small part of a much larger narrative, the German journalist and scholar of Nazi genocide, Goetz Aly, presents a richer portrait of the historical context in which the text was imbedded. With Aly we find extended discussion of the debates raging in the KdF and the Ministry of Justice Commission (Strafrechtskommission), which form a backdrop for the Morell text. These debates revolved around the issue of expanding the euthanasia program to include mentally handicapped adults. Aly contends that the Morell text influenced the debates within both the KdF and the Justice Commission, culminating in the August 18 Decree of the RMdl in the case of the former, and in a draft outline calling for the legalization of voluntary and involuntary euthanasia, in the case of the latter. 34

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 99.
34 Aly, 108-110.
Like Burleigh, Aly also recounts the dominant themes and arguments of the Morell text. He describes Morell's style of argumentation as a "coarse" synthesis of "the most important legitimizing arguments in an almost 50-year dispute among German social hygienists, monists, and social Darwinists," above all the "barbaric" reference to the selective effects of mass epidemics and Medieval penal law, which Morell conflates due to their common "purifying" effects on the "body of the people." Aly notes the "fundamental" correspondence of Morell's mode of argument with Hitler's world view, and speculates that the text may have induced Hitler to accelerate the pace of the euthanasia program.

In Burleigh and Aly we encounter two astute minds who have considered the Morell text at some length. Their traditional methodology situates the text in its historical context, and their analysis of that context sheds important light on the role of the Morell text in Nazi mass murder. Their accounts of the ideological trappings of the text are accurate and insightful. Yet their description of Morell's style lacks a convincing account of how ideology is conjured within the text itself. Burleigh and Aly focus on the content of the text as representing important facets of both Morell's perspective and of Nazi political culture, not on how a series of rhetorical, lexical, and grammatical moves serves to encode ideology in the very form of the text. An exclusive focus on the contents of the text in derogation of the text's formal attributes conceals from us the mechanism by which ideology is created. Ultimately, such a focus, unless supplemented with other techniques of analysis that do justice to the process of ideology production, obscures our understanding of how Morell

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35 Aly 110-111.
could persuade his party confreres to unleash one of the most devastating mass slaughters in recorded history. Burleigh and Aly have described the context surrounding—and the effects of—the mentality which classified the human race into those worthy and those unworthy of life. What their scholarship has not clarified is how the rhetoric of genocide operated to set in motion this tragic chain of events.

Insofar as Fairclough's CDA permits us to examine the formal properties of a text to see how ideology is produced in the very act of articulating the text, it offers the intellectual historian a new way to approach this important question. As noted earlier, my concern in this essay is not with an exhaustive application of CDA to the Morell memorandum. To demonstrate the value of CDA to historical textual interpretation, it is needful only to consider the Morell text in light of the first stage of CDA (Description of a Text). This stage concentrates on the formal features of the text (vocabulary, grammar, textual structures) as evidence of (1) the way in which the text producer's experience of the natural or social world is represented (i.e. the text producer's beliefs about the nature of reality); (2) the social relationships enacted in the text's discourse; and (3) the text producer's evaluation of the subject positions people within a society can occupy.36

36 Fairclough refers to these three ways in which the formal features of a text can produce ideological meaning as, respectively, experiential value, relational value, and expressive value. A formal feature of a text with experiential value is "a trace of and a cue to the way in which the text producer's experience of the natural or social world is represented." Relational value, on the other hand, "is a trace of and a cue to the social relationships which are enacted via the text in the discourse." Expressive value, finally, "is to do with subjects and social identities, though only one dimension of the latter concepts is to do with subjective values." Fairclough notes that any formal feature may have two or three of these values at the same time, as our analysis of the Morell text reveals. Ibid., 112.
The first level of the descriptive stage of CDA is concerned with how Morell's experience of the natural or social world is represented. What beliefs are created in the Morell text? To answer this question, we must consider the text from two different angles, lexically and grammatically.

When we examine the actual words of the text (i.e. its lexis), a further subdivision into categories of analysis is helpful. Morell's language can be classified into the following lexical units: (a) words appropriated prominently by right wing discourse; (b) collocations; (c) overlexicalization; (d) synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy.\textsuperscript{37}

(a) \textit{Words appropriated prominently by right wing discourse}\textsuperscript{38}

Morell's word choice as documented below places his text squarely within right-wing ideological discourse. Without knowing Morell's identity, or even the time and place of the memo's composition, an educated reader could identify it as a radical right (if not National Socialist) text. The subcategory "words of sufferance"\textsuperscript{39} pertains to words expressing a highly regimented, statist attitude toward human beings within a society, who

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 112-116. In this analysis of the Morell text, I am obviously not hewing precisely or slavishly to every category of Fairclough's analytical method. I have selected those parts which I felt were most applicable to the text's production of ideology, omitting others which were either irrelevant to the Morell text (e.g. techniques designed for analyzing instances of dialogue) or beyond the scope of this essay (e.g. schemata, frames, scripts).

\textsuperscript{38} This category is loosely based on Fairclough's observation that texts often use vocabulary belonging to "right" or "left" ideological frameworks; "the occurrence of either one will tend to ideologically 'place' a text." Ibid., 113.

\textsuperscript{39} Like the other subcategories that follow, this is my own neologism, appearing nowhere in Fairclough.
are enjoined to perform or abstain from a course of action as determined by the will of the regime (that is, the regime "suffers" the people under its control to do something, or expressly commands them not to do something; in either case, the terms are controlled by the regime). Morell's language is replete with injunction and command: those who can apply to have a certain person considered for medicalized killing are "authorized to make application" (Antragsberechtigt), whereas those who register the "lives unworthy of life" (lebensunwertes Leben) are under "a duty to register" (Anmeldungsverpflichtung).

The subcategory "National Socialist argot" refers to words commonly found in the discourse of the Nazi regime. I have listed a few prime examples from the Morell text. Taken as a whole, they convey some of the central notions of National Socialist social policy, which was coterminal with Nazi racial policy. Morell communicates his pro-Nazi convictions in numerous references to "nature" and "health." It is the function of the state, under this view, to defend the racial integrity of the German people (understood as biological/racial health or fitness) against the swarms of racial undesirables (and other biological inferiors, like the mentally ill) who threaten the Volk with degeneration. Toward this end of racial gate-keeping, the state is fully justified in using both positive (encouraging reproduction by Aryans) and negative (preventing reproduction by non-Aryans and those subhumans "unworthy of life") eugenic measures. The proposed euthanasia program is an instance of radical negative eugenics carried to a degree ne plus ultra.40

40 The end of the Nazis' bizarre experiment in social engineering was, as Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wipperman relate, the "realisation of a particularly barbarous utopia," a utopia that would replace the existing social order based upon class with one based upon race. Race would become the "primary organizing principle" of the new
Words of sufferance: authorized to make application (Antragsberechtigt); allowed (zubilligen); duty to report (Anmeldungsverpflichtung)\footnote{All citations are taken from the original German version of Morell's memorandum, reprinted in Aly, 123-128.}

Words belonging to stock National Socialist argot: healthy measure (heilsame Massnahme); people's health (Volksgesundheit); community (Gemeinschaft); the animal world (Tierwelt); the laws of nature (Naturgesetzen); healthy feeling of the people (gesundes Volksempfinden); decay (verfallen); from our hereditary-biological experience (aus unserer erbbiologischen Erfahrung); nature (die Natur); those worthy of life (Lebenswerten); life unworthy of life (lebensunwertes Leben); unworthy of life (lebensunwert); inferior (minderwertig); inferiors (Minderwertigen); healthy annihilation (heilsame Vernichtung); periods of purification (Reinigungsperioden); the strength of our people (die Kraft unseres Volkes)

Words typically found in politically conservative discourse: threaten (droht); "progress" of modern times ("Fortschritt" der Neuzeit); maintaining security (Sicherungsverwahrung)

The Nazi cosmology conveyed in the Morell text hinges on a biological Manichaeism which divides the world into racial superiors (the Aryans) and racial/biological inferiors (the so-called Minderwertigen, by which Morell means the mentally handicapped and criminals; the regime will include Jews and Gypsies [Gemeinschaftsfremd] within this definition as
policies of expulsion and disemancipation give way to genocide). Between 1939 and 1945, those categorized as "inferiors" were earmarked by the Nazis for extermination. Morell's vocabulary resonates with the language of other Nazi documents of this period: he refers to the "laws of Nature" which a soft bourgeois culture (he calls them satte Spiesser, or "sated philistines") has suspended through molly-coddling social welfare laws. All of this is, for Morell, singular in its unnaturalness, in its failure to conform to the laws of nature (Naturgesetzen), such as those governing the animal kingdom. Nature is Morell's God, as it was for his Fuehrer, who referred to it as "that cruel Queen of all wisdom,"42 as it was for the villainous Edmund in King Lear.43 It is nature itself which has decreed that the mentally ill are "unworthy of life" (lebensunwert); by acting to eliminate such ballast, the Nazis were performing a "healthy annihilation" (heilsame Vernichtung)—one that would redound to the advantage of "the people's health" (Volksgesundheit), and therefore enlarge "the people's strength" (die Kraft unseres Volkes).44


43 Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. King Lear, I, ii

44 It cannot be too often repeated that the real motive for the mass-murder of the mentally ill was the establishment of a new social order: by purifying German society of "life unworthy of life" (lebenunwertes Leben), the Nazis sought to prepare for the lordly rule of a racial community dominated by the master race. As Henry Friedlander notes, "heredity determined the selection of the victims." Accordingly, Friedlander defines Nazi genocide as "the mass murder of human beings because they belonged to a biologically defined group." H. Friedlander, XIII. Morell inscribes this idea of natural biological inferiority in his word choice.
Finally, Morell uses words typically found in politically conservative discourse. In such a discursive universe, "threats" abound from all directions; vigorous state action on behalf of "state security" (*Sicherungsverwahrung*) alone can fend against them. Morell scare-quotes the word "progress" in the phrase "'progress' of modern times"; like so many of his conferees in the Party, Morell is a cultural pessimist entirely distrustful of modern times, with its human rights, its inordinate esteem for the "subject," its self-satisfied materialism, and, most importantly, its unnatural solicitude for idiots (*unsere Idiotenpflege*) jarringly out of harmony with the laws of nature.\(^45\)

\(b\) Collocations

Sets of words usually appear close together in texts because they relate to a common idea: e.g. "ice," "snow," "freeze," "white," "frost," "blizzard." This proximity, or collocation, of lexical sets occurs because texts (stream of consciousness techniques aside) are cohesive, tending to remain on the same topic. As the linguist Roger Fowler observes, collocation in texts is natural and frequently taken for granted; where experts may read an article in their field without finding the lexis (vocabulary) at all remarkable, layman may find the same

article formidably "defamiliarizing." The following are some examples of collocation from the Morell text.

Human rights (Menschenrecht)/French Revolution
(franzoesischen Revolution)

Human rights/Property (Eigentum)

Criminality (Verbrechertum)/Mental illness (Geisteskrankheit)

Valuation of the criminal element (Bewertung des Verbrechertums)/valuation of the mentally ill (Bewertung des Geisteskranken)/inferior (minderwertig)

Creature (Wesen)/inferiors

healthful (heilsam)/extermination (Vernichtung)

annual costs (Jahreskosten)/idiots (Idioten)

A measure of just how ideological the Morell text is is offered by our own sense of defamiliarization when we encounter it. Morell assumes the collocations above are a part of everyday common-sense; they hardly need to be argued for or even extensively commented on, any more than Morell feels the need to inform his reader that he is breathing air as he writes. These same collocations strike most readers today as incredible, as well as

46 Roger Fowler, Linguistic Criticism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 64-66. For Fowler, one of the chief aims and effects of literature is to "defamiliarize" the world for the reader, by collocating ideas the reader is unaccustomed to think of in apposition. "The defamiliarizing effects of lexical collocation in literary texts result from the fact that the context is not given in advance and so the reader has to construct a context which makes sense of the lexical patterns." Ibid., 66. Interestingly, a modern reader of the Morell text experiences a similar sensation of defamiliarization: to enter Morell's thought world is to venture beyond the looking glass into a linguistic dimension of exotic pairings and frightening possibilities. All of this, of course, Morell assumes his reader will accept as objectively and intuitively true, and not merely as the mythological creed of a specific group.
inhumane. Yet they were articles of faith for Morell, Hitler, and the other architects of Nazi euthanasia; belief in their truth inspired a killing program that would claim 270,000 innocent lives (and, if we accept Henry Friedlander's argument, the six million lives of the Jewish Holocaust, facilitated in large measure by euthanasia of the mentally ill). In the Morell text, these collocations exert a powerful influence on how Morell structures his ideas.

By collocating the terms he wishes to deprecate (human rights, the mentally handicapped) with pejorative concepts in the beliefs his reader brings to the text (the French Revolution, criminals, inferiors, burdensome costs of maintenance—remember that Morell is writing for the inner circle of the Nazi elite), Morell creates an identity through contiguity of the collocates. He assumes his reader will have a negative response to the French Revolution (the source of human rights as an impediment to state-sponsored mass-murder), or to crushing expenditures for health care for individuals who will never be productive members of society. By establishing a prejudicial relationship of contiguity between the two terms, Morell disparages his real target, the mentally ill, whom the ideal reader can identify with criminality, inferiority, creatures, and annual costs borne by the taxpayer.

On the other hand, Morell uses collocation to portray euthanasia, his privileged term, in the best possible light. "Extermination," usually a harsh word, is softened (and even made desirable) by collocating it with the adjective "healthful."
(c) Overlexicalization

Overlexicalization, or overwording, may reveal a preoccupation with some aspect of reality; this, in turn, may indicate a focus of ideological struggle. Through such struggle, a dominant discourse or linguistically expressed value system emerges triumphant; with time and usage, this discourse takes on the appearance of common-sense (that is, it becomes naturalized).

Words of Health:  - people's health
    - hereditary health
    - healthful measure
    - the strength of our people
    - something healthy
    - healthy extermination

Words denoting the mentally ill:
    - creature (four variations in German: *Wesen, Einzelwesen*,
      *Geschoepfe, Erzeugung*)
    - idiots
    - mentally ill
    - life unworthy of life
    - imbeciles

Words of value/valuation:
    - place value
    - moral worth of criminals...moral
      worth of the mentally ill
    - the value of the measure
    - especially to be valued

The examples of overwording above fall within the ideological orbit of the text: the absolute value of physical and mental health and an ontological/hierarchical conception of

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47 Fairclough, 115. Overwording is "an unusually high degree of wording, often involving many words which are near synonyms." Fowler defines it as "the availability, or use, of a profusion of terms for an object or concept." Fowler, 154.
nature, resulting in the devaluation of the mentally ill (referred to not as human beings but as "creatures").

\[(d)\] Main Meaning Relations

Synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy are the primary relations in texts which contribute to the formation of meaning.$^{48}$ In the preceding citations, Morell seeks to devalue his polemical targets by identifying them with negative conceptions in his readers' minds$^{49}$ (rhetorically achieved through synonymy and hyponymy), or by contrasting them with positive conceptions in his readers' minds (rhetorically achieved through antonymy). Morell employs the same strategy to portray as desirable those things he wants to privilege--chiefly, involuntary euthanasia of the mentally ill.

Synonymy:
- political and spiritual inactivity/ fear of expansion
- mass epidemics/Medieval criminal law
- our modern measure/old laws
- criminality/mental illness
- the mentally ill/inferior

Hyponymy:
- "Human rights" imbedded in "French Revolution"

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$^{48}$ Fairclough writes: "Synonymy is the case where words have the same meaning. It is difficult to find many instances of absolute synonyms, so in reality one is looking for relations of near synonymy between words. A rough test for synonymy is whether words are mutually substitutable with little effect on meaning. Hyponymy is the case where the meaning of one word is, so to speak, included within the meaning of another word....Antonymy is meaning incompatibility--the meaning of one word is incompatible with the meaning of another...." Ibid., 116.

$^{49}$ Fairclough uses the term "Members Resources" to denote these "values, beliefs, assumptions" which readers "have in their heads and draw upon when they produce or interpret texts...." Ibid., 24.
"mental illness" imbedded in "criminality," and both of these imbedded in "inferiors"
-the concept of killing the mentally ill is imbedded in "freed food stuffs and lower imports"

Antonymy:
-sated philistines/insatiable euthanasiasts
-harmony with the laws of nature/our care for idiots
-idiot/work of God
-our criminal law, on account of its mildness/medieval criminal law with sanction
-savings/care for idiots

The mentally ill emerge from these main meaning relations as dehumanized criminals
(Morell erases the boundary between criminality and mental illness). Both criminals and the
mentally ill are biological inferiors, whose destruction through a medical procedure will
enhance the health of the German people, as well as save precious money and reduce the
nation's need for imports. Critics of Morell's proposed genocide are either Francophiles,
muddle-headed philistines placing their own commercial interests ahead of the community,
or hesitant moralists whose fears will lead to political and spiritual paralysis.

By contrast, Morell’s "euthanasiasts" (in another discursive world, they might be
called "mass murderers") "hunger" to do everything they can to promote the strength of the
people. Unlike the "sated" bourgeoisie, these Nazi heroes act in accordance with the laws
of nature as they recapture the glory of German icons like Emperor Charles V (whose
criminal laws, together with mass epidemics, had a "purifying" effect on the population by
exterminating large numbers of the mentally handicapped).

Thus far, we have looked at the vocabulary of the Morell text to see how it calls into
being a distinctive vision of the world (a vision I will suggest is ideological). Before we
address the same issue with regard to the text's grammatical features, a few words on Morell's use of metaphor are in order.

The dominant metaphors in the text relate to three separate fields: health, nature, and business. In our discussions of right-wing discourse, collocations, etc. we discovered the high incidence of figurative language use relating to health: many of the terms Morell privileges are modified by the adjective "healthy" or "healthful" (gesund or heilsam, respectively). For a contemporary reader, such a rhetorical move is defamiliarizing; the application of a word usually associated with organic or mental soundness to nouns or noun phrases like "people's sensibility," "extermination," or "[government] measure" strike us as incongruous. Yet for Morell the metaphor expresses a metaphysical, even cosmic truth, a truth serving as the axis of a belief in a future racial utopia, from which all "degenerate" and "unhealthy" influences have been purged.

Similarly, the metaphor of nature establishes an identity between the core of National Socialism (its belief in the innate biological inferiority of certain races and groups) and the "laws of nature."50 Within this set of tropes we find references to the "animal kingdom," which, red in tooth and claw, should serve as a model of social organization (wherein the strong thrive and the weak go to the wall). Morell calls the criminal law and epidemics of

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50 Identifying the regime's ideology with natural laws was a commonplace in National Socialist discourse, beginning with Hitler himself. Consider this extract from Mein Kampf: "[The] voolkisch world view...by no means believes in an equality of the races, but along with their difference it recognizes their higher or lesser value and feels itself obligated, through this knowledge, to promote the victory of the better and the stronger, and demand the subordination of the inferior and weaker in accordance with the eternal will that dominates the universe." (emphasis added) Quoted in Burleigh, 38.
the Middle Ages "remedies" for the diseases of criminality and mental illness; they functioned to "purify" the German people of its dross. (The age of mass epidemics, in fact, is given an arresting metaphor, "periods of cleansing" (Reinigungsperioden).)

Finally, the metaphor of business figures prominently in the text. It appears in Morell's exhortation to his reader that "it [the long-term societal need for euthanasia] is best compared to the provisions of the businessman for the success of his undertaking." The implications of this metaphor are chilling, for the cost-conscious businessman not only tends to the future good of his business, but also eliminates wasteful elements from it. The point is clear enough: like an entrepreneur, we must invest in our people's future by destroying useless and costly obstacles to its welfare, i.e. the mentally handicapped. With this sinister metaphor, Morell has positioned the reader to accept his final argument in the memo, where he indicates the money that can be saved annually if just 5,000 "idiots" per year are annihilated.

Lexis (vocabulary) is not the only feature of texts which produces ideology. Analysis of a text's grammatical structures may also yield valuable information about the kind of meaning the text creates. Under the rubric of "grammatical features" I would like to consider the Morell text's transitivity structure (i.e. how it constructs agency); its relational modalities (i.e. deployment of modal auxiliary verbs), including the use of modality adverbs; and the incidence of pronouns in the text.

Transitivity structure has to do with agency, with the standard journalistic questions of who does what to whom/what, where, when why, and how. In this context, the opening paragraph of the memo, containing a draft of the proposed law on euthanasia, is illustrative
of how Morell constructs a social identity for the mentally ill which both justifies his
homocidal designs and obfuscates the nature of the action he supports. 51

Consider, for example, the two relative clauses, "whose deformed appearance [i.e.
mentally ill persons] would arouse horror in public, and whose mental relationship stands
on the lowest animal level...." The real victim here is the mentally handicapped individual;
yet Morell invests the mentally handicapped with agency by placing them in the nominative
case (they "arouse horror" and "stand"). Morell thereby transforms a powerless victim of
violence into an aggressor which horrifies the public. The fact that the mentally ill "stand"
(an active verb) on the lowest level suggests they are somehow responsible for their debased
condition.

These two relative clauses, while in the active voice, are imbedded in a larger sentence
whose structure is passive ("life...can be shortened...through medical operation"). This is an
agentic passive construction, as distinguished from an agentless passive. The agent here is
"medical operation." Although the sentence has an agent, the wording of it nonetheless
obscures causality and agency. How is this done? First, through Morell's word choice:
Morell uses the word "shortened" (verkürzt werden) rather than "destroyed" or "killed," a
deliberate opting for bureaucratic doublespeak which sanitizes the reality of the proposal.

51 This paragraph reads: "The life of mentally ill persons, who from birth or at least since
the -- year of life are so severely deformed physically or mentally that their lives can be
preserved only through constant care, whose deformed appearance would arouse horror in
public, and whose mental relationship to their human environment stands on the lowest
animal level, can be shortened in accordance with the measure of the law concerning the
destruction of life worthy of life through medical operation." (translated by the author)
Aly, 123.
The reality is nothing less than premeditated mass murder committed by the state, not by a disembodied medical procedure. Second, the agent here is in fact a "nominalization," that is, the conversion of a complex process into a noun, or a multi-word compound noun. The gruesome process Morell contemplates (the crystallization of his dark vision in the ensuing years will exceed Kafka's worst nightmares) is reduced to an impersonal technical procedure (\textit{aertzlichen Eingriff}). Nominalizations blur attributions of causality and responsibility; the "medical operation" takes on a fetishized life of its own independent of human agency.

Why is transitivity structure significant? According to Fairclough, "choices to highlight or background agency may be consistent, automatic, and common-sensical, and therefore ideological...."\textsuperscript{52} Morell chooses to background the state's lethal interventionism and instead foreground the mentally ill as aggressors who offend the public with their feral, subhuman aspect. Murdering them is simply "shortening" their lives, and this in turn is done not by any identifiable person or group, but by a medical procedure. R. Hasan's characterization of transitivity structure captures its rhetorical power: "Patterns of transitivity and mood 'draw' pictures of human relations."\textsuperscript{53} The human relations drawn by the euthanasia artist resemble Goya's chiaroscuro of Saturn devouring his children: alterity (as defined by the state) is unworthy of life and must be eliminated by a government eager to act but unwilling, at least publically, to accept responsibility for the consequences. Hierarchy of human value is the ideological picture drawn in and by the text.

\textsuperscript{52} Fairclough, 122.

This picture is rounded out with Morell's use of modal auxiliary verbs, adverbs, and first person pronouns. Modal auxiliary verbs (e.g. may, might, should, must, ought, can, can't) function in different ways. They may withhold permission from the addressees of the communication, or impose obligations on them. They may also arbitrarily delimit the range of possibilities available to our imagination in forging solutions to concrete problems. Modal verbs thus contain implicit claims to authority, as well as implicit power relations between participants in discourse.

Modal verbs recur throughout the Morell text. The following sentence is an example: "One is not permitted to think that one cannot carry out a salutary measure without the approval of a sovereign people." In this awkward sentence, we find a quintessential instance of naturalized discourse operating ideologically: Morell excludes from consideration ("one is not permitted to think") the alternative to the doctrine of secret state action—that alternative being state action in accord with the wishes of its citizens. Because "many measures of foreign policy and military affairs" are clandestine, we are "not permitted" to think that the knowledge and consent of the people are necessary to carry out involuntary euthanasia. Secret state action, then, is the privileged term here, the natural alternative which excludes its opposite, enjoining the addressee to accept its view of the problem as authoritative.

Modality adverbs may also portray a highly ideological belief as common-sensical and therefore beyond dispute. Consider these two examples from the text:

Certainly there were in earlier times fewer idiots than today....
The old wives tales of people held in lunatic asylums against their will correspond of course to romantic fantasies....

(emphasis added)
Modal adverbs (like modal verbs) express the extent of an author's belief in the truth of his proposition, as well as the degree to which he expects his audience to accept those propositions as true. In the above sentences, Morell has no doubt that "idiots" were scarcer in the old days (due to a harsher criminal law and epidemics), nor that "romantic fantasies" are to blame for the "old wives tales" of nonconsensual detention in asylums. Morell makes a forcible authority claim in these sentences: the adverbs "certainly" and "of course" give the reader no choice but to accept Morell's interpretation as the natural and true one.

The use of the pronouns "we" and "you" in the text contribute to Morell's authority claims and to his strongarming the reader to endorse his ideological viewpoint. The implicit authority claim in these pronouns is that he has authority to speak on behalf of others, including the reader. Three excerpts from the text are germane:

We...are insatiable when it concerns the increase of our people's strength....
...the hand-in-hand procession [Einhergehen, literally "going along"] of criminals and mental illness so well known to us....
From our hereditary-biological experience we can therefore conclude....

In the first sentence, Morell presupposes his reader will identify with the group of policy makers committed "insatiably" to the "people's strength"; in the second, the reader is assumed to share the conceptually addled view that criminals and the mentally ill go hand-in-hand; in the third, anything proceeding from "our hereditary-biological experience" must be true, and thus the reader is enjoined to accept the highly ideological statement introduced by

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54 Roger Fowler defines modality as "the grammar of explicit comment, the means by which people express their degree of commitment to the truth of the propositions they utter, and their views on the desirability or otherwise of the states of affairs referred to." Ibid., 131.
this clause. In each case, Morell makes a peremptory assumption to which the reader must assent.

These examples from the first stage of Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse approach as applied to the Morell text demonstrate how CDA can enrich the intellectual historian’s ensemble of interpretive tools. Unlike traditional ideology critique, the method developed in these pages does not aspire to tear the mask of ideology from the face of a text by comparing its truth claims with a stable, value-neutral context and noting the degree of divergence between them. Following Hayden White, the critical analytical approach explores the process of code-switching, by means of which Dr. Morell substituted a sign system peculiar to National Socialism for the referent (the laws of nature, Truth with a capital "T") he pretended to discuss in a straightforward manner. Fairclough’s critical approach provided the armature for a sculpture molded from White’s clay. Fairclough’s work, however, supplied not only the practical dimensions lacking in White, but expanded the definition of ideology to include its deployment in the service of power. The resulting sculpture is one less abstract than White’s, yet, perhaps, more suited to the pragmatic concerns of historians and non-historians alike, who seek to understand the bewitching effects of language, past and present, used to sustain power inequalities that favor the interests of a privileged group.

Our analysis of code-switching in the Morell text unveils the rhetorical power of Nazi genocide in a way traditional historical methods (such as those of Burleigh and Aly) are not intended to supply. My use of the word “power” in the previous sentence may seem odd, since most contemporary readers will find the Morell text baroque, alien, and unpersuasive.
Yet we must not allow our repugnance to impair our appreciation for how rhetorically powerful this text was to Nazi policy makers fifty-seven years ago. A bizarre screed in modern Western democracy, the Morell text was perfectly at home in the inner circles of the Nazi elite in 1939. Then, as now, policy was shaped by the interchange of ideas among policy makers—by the degree to which they could persuade one another (and especially Hitler) that their ideas were correct. As the art of persuasion, rhetoric was the means of influencing the course of debate. Dr. Morell's rhetorical moves may not only have persuaded Hitler to accelerate the pace and enlarge the scope of euthanasia, nor the Reich Ministry to publish the decree requiring registration of all handicapped newborns, nor the Justice Commission to develop its draft law decriminalizing euthanasia and blurring the distinction between voluntary and involuntary medicalized killing. The Morell text may also have contributed to the fateful expansion of the killing program to other forms of "life unworthy of life," the Jews and Gypsies of Europe.

The web of history is snuggly woven, the strands of cause and effect inextricably tangled. The specific impact of the Morell text on Nazi mass death will never be known for certain. This notwithstanding, a semiological theory of interpretation can enhance our understanding of how educated minds in an advanced civilization could be persuaded to become mass murderers, influenced by the rhetoric of genocide.
CHAPTER 2

BETWEEN THE FLOOR AND THE SKY: CONSTRAINTS ON SEMIOSIS

In a pair of trials occurring in 1985 and 1988 in Toronto, Canada, neo-Nazi publisher Ernst Zundel was charged with inciting racial hatred by publishing, with knowledge of its falsehood, a certain pamphlet denying the Holocaust. Serving as an expert witness for the defense in "text criticism" at both trials was Robert Faurisson, a former professor of literature at the University of Lyons. Testifying on behalf of Zundel, Faurisson cited post-structuralist literary theories in support of the argument that appeals to historical context could not prove the precise meaning of terms like "resettlement" and "special treatment" appearing in Nazi documents. Faurisson contended that a literal construction of these terms, such as that found in the defendant's pamphlet, was equally valid with interpreting them as euphemistic code words for mass murder. Keying on his witness' literalism, Zundel's attorney, Douglas Christie, tried to persuade the jury that writings on the Holocaust, like all historical writing, contained no objective truths in virtue of which one interpretation could be privileged over another. On this basis, Christie argued that an interpretation like his client's, denying the historical reality of the Holocaust, was no less valid than interpretations favoring its existence.1

1 This anecdote is briefly discussed in Christopher Browning, "German Memory, Judicial Interrogation, Historical Reconstruction," in Probing the Limits of Representation, ed. 43
The arguments of Faurisson and Christie reveal a disconcerting potential within post-modern theories of textual indeterminacy—viz. that of "unlimited semiosis." In the Zundel trial, Faurisson and Christie referred to post-modern theories holding that every text, oral or written, "floats" within a zone of inexhaustible meanings once it leaves its utterer and departs from the context of its utterance. Shorn of authorial intention or contextual anchoring, the free-floating text does not authorize a single, univocal interpretation. Every interpretation, on this view, is fair game, neither superior nor inferior to another. This super-fecundity of the text in generating an infinite range of equally valid interpretations entitles readers to interpret the text as they wish.

The term "unlimited semiosis" is taken from the work of the co-founder of modern semiotics, C.S. Peirce, whose early reflections on sign-systems suggest the potentially "unlimited" interpretive possibilities of language which post-structuralists like Jacques Derrida have developed into a principle of infinite deferral. Consider the following extract:

The meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation. In fact it is nothing but the representation itself conceived as stripped of irrelevant clothing. But this clothing never can be completely stripped off: it is only changed for something more diaphanous. So there is an infinite regression here. Finally the interpretant is nothing but another representation to


2 "Semiosis" means the process of signifying—the process whereby signs produce meanings in the minds of the addressee of a particular instance of discourse.
which the torch is handed along; and as a representation, it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series. ³

Peirce's conception of deferral of meaning along an endless chain of signifiers prefigures the Derridean theory of textual indeterminacy. For Derrida, every text is devoid of its author and its context of production, and therefore of its referent. The effect of this position is to impeach the very idea of a final arbiter of a text's meaning, to free texts from a single univocal interpretation and open them to the "free play" of language, of signifier and signified. Like Peirce in the quotation above, Derrida posits an "infinite regression" in which a transcendental signifier is wholly absent and the referent of discourse infinitely delayed as the reader of a text is passed from one signifier to another along a chain without end. This chain is a closed system, admitting no referent outside itself to which the drifting sign can be moored.⁴

Clearly, in the "unlimited semiosis" of Derrida the reader's response to a text is preeminent. As Umberto Eco has written, "the basic assumption underlying each of these theories [i.e. hermeneutics, the aesthetics of reception, reader-response criticism, semiotic theories of interpretive cooperation, and deconstruction] is that the functioning of a text can be explained by taking into account not only its generative process but also...the role


⁴ See Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 69. According to Derrida, the referent of the text can never be located extratextually: "[Reading] cannot legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it, toward a referent (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psychobiographical, etc.) or toward a signified object outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place, outside language....There is nothing outside the text."
performed by the addressee and the way in which the text foresees and directs this kind of interpretive cooperation." For more radical reception theorists like Stanley Fish, readers' interpretive encounter with a text is not constrained by the text at all; readers are not bound by the objective meaning of the text, but interpret it in light of how it affects them. The horizon of that interpretation is the reader's own experience as distinct from any compelling structure within the text. The primacy of reader reception is also reflected in the "strong pragmatism" described by Richard Rorty, according to which "the critic asks neither the author nor the text about their [sic] intentions but simply beats the text into a shape which will serve his own purpose. He makes the text refer to whatever is relevant to that purpose."7

While earlier theorists of unlimited semiosis restricted their views to literary and artistic texts, in recent years their open-ended textual approach has been extended to every kind of text, including historical texts.8 In historical analysis, however, the theory of textual


6 See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 84-86. Eagleton points out that Fish avoids the anarchic multiplicity of interpretations his theory invites by appealing "to certain `interpretative strategies' which readers have in common, and which will govern their personal responses." Since most readers are educated in academic institutions, the range of their individual responses to a text will not be "too wildly divergent from each other to forestall all reasoned debate." Yet Eagleton hastens to add that Fish flatly rejects the notion that meaning is immanent in the language of a text--a view Fish dismisses as an "objectivist illusion." Ibid., 86.

7 Quoted in Eco, 56. For Eco, Rorty's pragmatism amounts to "the refusal to think of truth as correspondence to reality--and reality being...both the external referent of the text and the intention of its author...." Ibid.

8 Eco, 45. Eco writes: "...in the last decades such a[n open-ended] nature has been theoretically rooted into the very nature of any kind of text. In other words, before such a
indeterminacy raises the kind of wrenching problems exemplified by the arguments of Faurisson. It is one thing to celebrate the plenitude of interpretations which readings of Ulysses or Finnegans Wake can yield; it is quite another to open Holocaust scholarship to infinite semiotic drift. If we do so, is not every interpretation of the historical record---including those which deny or minimize the Holocaust---equally valid? Can historical evidence be adduced to support one version of the past over another, or will all such evidence merely "slide" elusively under its signifier, condemning efforts to establish a single canonical interpretation to futility? In short, must we conclude with Zundel's attorney that "all history is mere opinion, and there is no such thing as even a bare minimum of uncontroversible fact?"9 On the other hand, if we assert that the text contains a residue which delimits the range of interpretation, how can we avoid the potential excesses of a domineering objectivism?10

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change of paradigm, artistic texts were seen as the only cases in which a semiotic system, be it verbal or other, magnified the role of the addressee---the basic and normal function of any semiotic system being instead that of allowing an ideal condition of univocality, independent of the idiosyncrasies of the receptor. With the new paradigm semiotic theories have insisted on the fact that...the dialectics between sender, addressee and context is at the very core of semiosis."

9 Quoted in Browning, 31.

10 For a discussion of objectivism in the context of figurative language, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 185-222. Briefly, objectivism holds that: (1) the world consists of objects; (2) we acquire knowledge of the world by experiencing these objects and gaining familiarity with their properties and interrelationships; (3) we comprehend these objects through concepts and categories; (4) words have fixed meanings; (5) language conforms to objective reality when it is clearly and precisely defined; (6) metaphorical language obscures objective reality, and thus should be avoided.
Obviously, these questions are at the center of the cultural studies debate in the humanities. Nothing we could say here would resolve the debate once and for all to the satisfaction of all the parties involved. Yet there are approaches to historical textual analysis which suggest strategies to thread a course between the "anything goes" indeterminacy of Faurisson and a potentially tyrannical objectivism. In this chapter, I will explore a theory of contextual constraints that offers a middle way between these twin perils in historical interpretation.

Umberto Eco's understanding of unlimited semiosis is an instructive point of embarkation for our discussion. Despite Eco's belief in the Peircean theory of unlimited semiosis, he is paradoxically committed to the view that semiosis is always subject to constraint.

...the notion of unlimited semiosis does not lead to the conclusion that interpretation has no criteria. To say that interpretation (as the basic feature of semiosis) is potentially unlimited does not mean that interpretation has no object and that it "riverruns" for the mere sake of itself. To say that a text potentially has no end does not mean that every act of interpretation can have a happy ending.\footnote{Eco, 6.}

The source of constraint is the text itself, the "rights" of which must be "respected" by the reader. Eco's curious idea of a text's rights is rooted in his definition of a text as "a place where the irreducible polysemy of symbols is in fact reduced because in a text symbols are anchored to their context." Once signs are woven into a text, their context imposes new constraints on the "exaggerated fecundity" they enjoyed before incorporation into a text. The
word "rose," standing apart from a particular context, can mean virtually anything: a flower, love, Jesus Christ. Once the word becomes part of a linguistic utterance, however, its interpretation is constrained by its context: in a Shakespearean sonnet, it means love, in the New Testament, Jesus Christ, in a horticultural textbook, a flower. Eco expresses this distinction between decontextualized, infinitely interpretable symbols and constrained, textually-imbedded symbols by distinguishing between paradigmatic and syntagmatic sets. Paradigmatic sets correspond to decontextualized symbols (like "rose" in the above example), whereas syntagmatic sets correspond to symbols reduced to a text. The former are "open to infinite meanings;" the latter are "open to the indefinite, but by no means infinite, interpretations allowed by the context." 

If the text itself is a source of constraint on interpretation, what is it about the text that specifically limits semiosis? What is it that every reader must "respect" before interpreting a text, and what does this constraint tell us about possible and impossible interpretations? Before we address these questions, we must be clear that Eco rejects the positivistic search for an ultimate rule of recognition that would enable us to identify a single "best"

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12 Ibid., 21. In structuralist terminology, a paradigm is a set of linguistic units that are mutually substitutable for each other within a language sequence. "A paradigm in this sense may be constituted by all words sharing the same grammatical function, since the substitution of one for another does not disturb the syntax of a sentence." Chris Baldick, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 159. The typical example given of a paradigmatic set is the famous "The cat sat on the mat," where the word "cat" can be substituted for a potentially infinite list of nouns (rat, dog, squirrel) without altering the fundamental syntactical structure of the sentence. A syntagm is any combination of words or phonemes ordered in a significant sequence (a sentence is a syntagm of words), that is, in a recognizable combination. Ibid., 221-22.
interpretation. Rather, he argues for a rule that allows us to determine patently unacceptable interpretations of texts. This rule for Eco is the internal coherence of a text. Eco explains:

> In the process of unlimited semiosis it is certainly possible to go from any one node to every other node, but passages are controlled by rules of connection that our cultural history has in some way legitimated...a text is an organism, a system of internal relationships that actualizes certain possible connections and narcotizes others. Before a text is produced, it is possible to make that text say many things--in certain cases a potentially infinite number of things--but it is impossible--or at least critically illegitimate--to make it say what it does not say. Texts frequently say more than their authors intended to say, but less than what many incontinent readers would like them to say.13

Eco argues that the acceptability of an interpretation can be evaluated only with reference to the text considered as "a coherent whole." He states the test succinctly: "any interpretation given of a certain portion of a text can be accepted if it is confirmed, and must be rejected if it is challenged, by another portion of the same text." The internal coherence of a text is a check on "the otherwise uncontrollable drift of the reader."14 In this way, Eco skirts the

13 Eco, 148.

14 Ibid., 149. Eco's reflections on textual constraints parallel those of the reception aesthetist Wolfgang Iser. According to Iser, the act of reading presupposes familiarity with the techniques and conventions a text draws on, i.e. the codes or rules by means of which a text produces meaning. To understand a "No smoking" sign in an airplane, it is necessary that I do more than read the words consecutively; I must also draw upon my background knowledge that public authorities have placed the sign there, that it refers to cigarettes and not to fish, that the sign is directed to me as a passenger, that certain penalties exist for noncompliance, and that the smoking ban is in effect for as long as the sign is illuminated (and not for the rest of my life). None of these additional details is actually contained on the "No smoking" sign, yet the context in which the text appears and the social conventions governing this genre of text provide guideposts for a reasonable interpretation of it. While Iser would likely agree with Eco that readers are free to interpret a text, they must always do so subject to the constraint of the text's internal consistency. See Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic*
problematic search for the author's intention. Readers must instead respect the "intention of the text" (intentio operis) before they can exercise their interpretive freedom.

What does Eco mean by "internal coherence?" Discourse analysis can be a valuable auxiliary in helping us unpack this concept in more concrete terms. Eco's "internal coherence" as a brake on semiosis closely approximates the notion of textual cohesion as developed by the discourse analysts M.A.K. Halliday and R. Hasan. Cohesive connections within a text are established "where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it." Halliday and Hasan focus on four specific features of textual cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and lexical relationships. Each of these features directs the reader/addressee to seek an interpretation elsewhere (i.e. none is self-referential, but refers the reader to another location for its meaning).

The category of reference comprises two primary types, exophoric and endophoric. Where a text's reference lies outside the text (in the context of utterance), the reference is exophoric. An example is the imperative, "Look at that," where "that" refers to the rising sun in the sky above us. Halliday and Hasan deny that the exophoric variety of reference plays any role in textual cohesion. Where the interpretation lies within the text, however, the relationship between the signifiers is endophoric, which does form cohesive connections


within the text.\textsuperscript{16} Endophoric reference consists of two fundamental subtypes, \textit{anaphoric} and \textit{cataphoric}. An example of anaphoric reference is the text, "Look at the sun. It's going down quickly," in which "it" refers back to "the sun." The sentence "It's going down quickly, the sun" illustrates cataphoric reference, where "it" refers forward to "the sun."\textsuperscript{17}

The second feature of textual cohesion consists of substituting one item with another, such as a noun with a pronoun (in the example "John has a \textit{birthday} next month. Jane has \textit{one} too"). A third feature is ellipsis; an example is "John has a \textit{birthday} next month. Elizabeth has too." Substitution and ellipsis "force the reader back into the text to look for a previous expression to substitute, in the case of substitution, or to provide, in the case of ellipsis."\textsuperscript{18} Textual cohesion may also be created by lexical cohesion. Examples are reiteration ("I turned to the \textit{ascent} of the peak; the \textit{climb} was perfectly easy"); hyponymy (\textit{The Great Gatsby} is a hyponym, a member, of the category termed "novel"); collocation (lexical items generally found together: house/door, movie/script, boy/girl); and comparison ("My \textit{thumb} is stronger than that \textit{hammer}").\textsuperscript{19}

In our discussion of the Morell text in chapter 1, we examined some rhetorical devices (e.g. synonymy and hyponymy) which also functioned as ties that bound the constituent parts of the text together. By looking at how the document is knitted together as

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 18.


\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 194. This is not an exhaustive list of cohesive devices, but a sampling of some of the primary ones.
an integral whole through other cohesive features (such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and lexical cohesion), we can better understand what Eco may mean by the "internal coherence" of a text as a constraint on interpretation.

Reference

A complete list of the cataphoric and anaphoric references in the Morell text would be unduly tedious and unprofitable. A few choice examples will suffice. (Referential terms are italicized.)

Anaphoric:

(1) The lives of mentally ill persons, who since the x year..., or who are so misshapen that they would cause revulsion...

(2) Many a measure of foreign policy and of national defense are dependent upon only a small circle of people knowing about it.

(3) Many who believed they were able to participate in this discussion confused their own economic positions...with that of society. Things are going too well for them....

(4) The lives of these creatures are no viable work of God. They live only through the intervention of their fellow men....

(5) Here...one notes that this more prevalent use of the death penalty is not so immoral as it appeared to a later generation....

Cataphoric:

(1) No allowance is to be made in the case of extermination for those with the right to petition according to Sec. 2....

The instances of endophoric reference cited above constrain our reading of the Morell text; we must accept, on pain of failure to "respect" the intention of the text (intentio operis), that the pronouns it and they mean mentally ill persons in example (1); that the pronoun it refers back to many a measure of foreign policy and national defense in example (2); that
them refers back to Many who believed they were able to participate in this discussion in (3); that they refers back to these things in (4), and so on. Under a pure theory of unlimited semiosis, readers would be justified in interpreting these pronouns however they wanted. The pronouns who and they in (1) could then drift inexorably from their anaphoric anchoring point and be interpreted as signifying the German General Staff, the Allies, the Jews, or anything else in the paradigmatic set. If no constraints on semiosis exist, then each of these interpretations is just as acceptable as mentally ill persons. In fact, none of these interpretations can be privileged over others so long as the pronouns who and they are not reduced to textual form. Once they become part of a text, however, their meaning is constrained by the principles of textual cohesion, which, following Eco's metaphor, transform the text into an "organism" consisting of certain internal relationships (such as endophoric reference). These relationships present us with standards of admissibility in weighing interpretations of the text.

It may be objected that such a view tends toward authorized readings of historical texts--toward enthroning a single hegemonic interpretation at the expense of all others. The danger is real, and it should inspire us to vigilance in guarding against premature closure of language that invites open readings. The constraint of a text's internal coherence does not preclude freedom of interpretation; it merely places such freedom within a context, one that, like all contexts, imposes some constraints on semiotic possibility. We must submit to the rules of the game, constructed by a cultural and linguistic tradition that we are born into, in order to find within and around those rules the free space for our creative efforts. In the case of the Morell text, semiosis breaks through the tangled skein of bureaucratese to open certain
portions of the text to multiple interpretation. One such example is Morell's use of the noun phrase "life unworthy of life" (*lebensunwertes Leben*). On one hand, it is clear that this curious phrase refers to the mentally ill. On the other hand, it is far from clear who precisely qualifies as "mentally ill," or for that matter whether other targets of Nazi genocide (criminals, Jews, Poles, Slavs, homosexuals, soldiers suffering from shell shock, etc.) fall into this category. While some of these groups of victims do not appear within the Morell text, all became objects of the regime's genocidal program in social engineering, as study of the historical context readily proves. In any event, "life unworthy of life" is a part of the text less constrained, and therefore more indeterminate and subject to drift, than other portions (such as those referring to Meltzer's survey or the critic of euthanasia, Ebermeyer).

**Substitution**

(1) I believe *it* is indeed justified to handle *it* in this way....(pronominal replacement of "euthanasia policy" by "it")

(2) The lives of *these creatures* are no viable work of God. (Substitution of the noun phrase "mentally ill persons" by "these creatures")

**Ellipsis**

(1) The question of how to carry out [*this policy*] can be formulated as follows....(elliptical reference to the policy of killing the mentally ill)

(2) Compare [*our current policy toward the mentally ill*] with our current laws...(elliptical reference to the liberal mental health system the Nazis inherited)

**Lexical Cohesion**

(1) Should the measure have as its basis a publically declared law or should the measure be carried out by means of a secrete government order. (Reiteration of "the measure.")

(2) Human rights...were a reaction to the previous lack of rights of the individual....The idea has something.... (Reiteration of "human rights," restated as "the idea.")

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Like anaphoric and cataphoric reference, readers approaching the Morell text must accept as a constraint on their interpretation the text's other cohesive features. The pronoun "it" in example (1) of the Substitution category above can only refer to "euthanasia policy," and not to the lending practices of the Reichsbank; the reference in example (1) of the Ellipsis category can only be to the liberal policy toward the mentally ill the Nazis inherited (as the co-text surrounding it proves), and not to Weimar novels; "the idea" in example (2) of Lexical Cohesion above must refer to "human rights" in the previous sentence, not to the theory of relativity. Before readers can launch themselves into innovative readings of this text, they must reckon with these textual constraints on their freedom. These constraints may not be of the same order of natural phenomena as the laws of gravity (which, I would assume, even the most ardent advocates of unlimited semiosis would acknowledge as a limitation on human freedom of movement); yet, so long as we inhabit a linguistic culture that legitimates a prescribed mode of using and understanding language, we are obliged to respect the integrity of the parts of the text which make of it a coherent whole as though these rules of connection and coherence were a natural constraint.

Thus far, we have focused on those endophoric aspects which form the "intention of the text" a reader should respect prior to interpretation. Disregarding such an "intention" is done at the risk of producing an unacceptable reading of it (or, to use Eco's expression, an interpretation without "a happy ending"). A second constraint facing the reader is one unrelated to textual coherence or endophoric reference, but one that must nonetheless be respected before interpretation can unfold. This second constraint is the intertextual context in which the text is imbedded. Norman Fairclough has written that the concept of
interertextual context "requires us to view discourses and texts from a historical perspective, in contrast with the more usual position in language studies which would regard a text as analysable without reference to other texts, in abstraction from its historical context."\(^\text{20}\) The notion of intertextual context emphasizes the historicity of every discourse and the texts occurring within them. Each text belongs to a historical series of texts which precede and shape it; by studying the intertextual context, we can arrive at an interpretation of what historical series the text in question belongs to, as well as the sort of presuppositions the text producer shares with the audience. While specific questions relating to the intertextual context may often lend themselves to multiple interpretations, the text's historical grounding in the intertextual context itself should be respected as part of the "intention of the text."

The Morell memorandum is studded with references to antecedent texts which Morell assumes his reader already knows. These texts form the intertextual context that frames the memorandum. I would like to focus on three such references in the Morell text: (1) Binding and Hoche's \textit{The Permission to Destroy Life Unworthy of Life (Die Freigabe der Vernichtung des lebensunwerten Lebens)}; (2) the 1923 survey conducted by Ewald Meltzer; and (3) opponents' arguments against the Binding-Hoche proposal.

\textit{Binding and Hoche on "Life Unworthy of Life"}

The dreadful privations the German people suffered during the First World War partially account for the post-war interest in destroying the mentally handicapped. After the British blockade of German ports, supplies of food and medicine were stringently rationed throughout Germany; the mentally ill were assigned the lowest priority to receive these

supplies. Consequently almost fifty percent of institutionalized mental patients died of starvation or disease. In the aftermath of the war, racial hygienists like Gustav Boeters cited Germany's experience as evidence that society could no longer afford to maintain the lives of "defectives." Amid the despair of a dejected culture on the verge of collapse, a book was published that would later serve as blueprint and philosophical rationale for Nazi massmurder.

The book was *The Permission to Destroy Life Unworthy of Life*, coauthored by Alfred Hoche and Rudolf Binding. Hoche was a professor of medicine, Binding a professor of law. They argued that the state should be legally empowered to kill "incurably feebleminded" individuals involuntarily. The authors' statist bias reflected Binding's positivistic conception of law, which elevated the rights of the state and society over morality and the individual. The book--much like the Morell text--had an overtly polemical tone, which used lurid comparisons and crude emotional appeals to argue for the state-sponsored annihilation of those deemed "unworthy" of life. Anticipating Morell's economistic arguments, Binding urged that these lives unworthy of life, themselves devoid of any value and a burden on both

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22 Binding conjured horrifying scenarios of battlefields strewn with dead young soldiers and limbs torn asunder by landmines, which he then compared with the prodigal care given "idiots" in mental institutions. Binding described such "idiots" as "not merely worthless, but actually existences of negative value." He put the rhetorical question to his reader: "Is there human life which has so far forfeited the character of something entitled to enjoy the protection of the law, that its prolongation represents a perpetual loss of value, both for its bearer and for society as a whole?" Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung Lebensunwerten Lebens. Ihr Mass und ihre Form* (Leipzig 1920).
relatives and society, required constant attention from health care providers, while devouring critical human resources. Hoche corroborated Binding's analysis with an economistic argument of his own, lamenting that "national resources" that could be invested in productive enterprises were instead dissipated in "nonproductive" maintenance of these "empty human shells [leeren Menschenhuelsen]."

Binding stated the gist of the argument, while Hoche annotated Binding's position with comments germane to the concerns of physicians. Hoche declared that doctors must enjoy immunity to civil or criminal liability for their work in euthanasia. He went on to buttress the Binding thesis with additional arguments, e.g. "euthanizing" unworthy life would enrich opportunities for research (especially brain research).

In the final section of the book, Binding addressed procedural matters in implementing the proposed euthanasia of the mentally ill. Although the patient, the doctor, or the next of kin would be authorized to apply for euthanasia, the state alone would be empowered to order the killing. Toward this end, Binding provided for the appointment of an "authorization committee" staffed with a lawyer and two doctors, who would examine each petition and formulate an "objective expert evaluation." This committee would be bound by a number of requirements: its decision had to be supported by the latest scientific knowledge, the instrumentality of death had to be "absolutely painless," and the legal right to kill was vested only in an expert (Sachverstaendiger). The possibility of error

23 Hoche commented: "It is a distressing idea that entire generations of nurses shall vegetate next to such empty human shells, many of whom will live to be seventy years or even older." Ibid., 54-55.

24 H. Friedlander, 16.
(Irrtumsrisiko) was virtually excluded in the case of "idiots," Binding asserted; and, while mistaken diagnoses could theoretically occur in cases unrelated to Schwachsinn\(^25\) (congenital feeblemindedness), Binding affirmed that "humanity loses due to error so many members, that one more or less really does not make a difference."\(^{26}\)

The impact of the Binding-Hoche text on the later theoreticians of Nazi genocide cannot be overstated. As Henry Friedlander has observed, "the Nazi killers would adopt many of its arguments and later use them as justification" for their systematic murder of the mentally ill.\(^{27}\) Echoing these words, historian Sheila Weiss comments that the German racial hygienists came in time to accept the Binding-Hoche thesis as "the logical outgrowth of the cost-benefit analysis at the heart of race hygiene."\(^{28}\) One measure of the degree to which their arguments had permeated the Nazi higher leadership is the Morell text. Morell mentions Binding by name only twice in the text, in an obscure and fleeting dismissal of a critic named Ebermayer, who had cited the word Freigabe (Permission) in the title of Binding and

\(^{25}\) The German Schwachsinn corresponds to the American "moron." The most extreme form of Schwachsinn is Debilitaet (derived from the French debile); the lesser forms are Imbezillitaet and Idiotie, which correspond to American "imbecility" and "idiocy." See Guett, Ruedin, and Ruttke, Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses (2d rev.ed.), 119.

\(^{26}\) Binding and Hoche, 35-40. Mistaken diagnoses could not be ruled out, Binding held, in cases involving the terminally ill or mortally wounded and those suffering from irreversible coma, what we today would call "higher brain death."

\(^{27}\) Friedlander, 16.

Hoche's book as evidence of the slippery slope the government was embarking on.\textsuperscript{29} Notwithstanding the brevity of these references, Morell's language is shot through with arguments and locutions clearly derived from Binding and Hoche. He telegraphs his allegiance to their ideas in the opening paragraph of the memorandum, where he uses the well-known phrase \textit{die Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens} (the destruction of life unworthy of life) as part of his proposed law legalizing euthanasia of the mentally handicapped.

The influence does not stop here. In tone and spirit, the Morell text is deeply beholden to Binding and Hoche. Like Binding, Morell subordinates the rights of the individual and the claims of morality to the state and its interests.\textsuperscript{30} Morell invokes economistic arguments to justify killing the mentally handicapped, much as Binding and Hoche do.\textsuperscript{31} Reminiscent of Binding/Hoche, too, is Morell's discussion of who should be given legal standing to initiate a request for euthanasia. Citing sec. 2 of the Law Concerning Genetically Ill Progeny as precedent (\textit{Erbkrankennachwuchsgesetz}, stipulating who could petition the state for sterilization of congenital "defectives"), Morell suggests, like Binding and Hoche before him, that the mentally ill themselves, their representative, medical

\textsuperscript{29} Aly, 125-126. The text reads: "Ebermayer clings in a way to the word "permission," which is only the title of the Bindingian book, but, however, does not correspond to its content. Then in the case of idiots it does not concern permission, but rather an action of the state. It may even be that B. chooses an unusual path so that the execution is left to private means." (translation by David Knight and the author)

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 125. Morell writes: "Human rights, as they developed out of the intellectual currents of the French Revolution, were a reaction to the previous lack of rights of the individual (Subject, sujet). The idea has something right about it, as a principle it is wrong. There is as little subjective right of this sort regarding an unlimited private sphere as there is regarding property."

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 128.
personnel, and perhaps relatives of affected individuals might all be authorized to initiate the petition for euthanasia.\textsuperscript{32} Morell foresees a process of expert evaluation of these petitions, consisting at a minimum of physicians (a point suggestive of Binding/Hoche's investigative panel of experts).\textsuperscript{33} As in \textit{Die Freigabe}, Morell intimates that autopsies will be performed on the brains of those destroyed through the proposed program.\textsuperscript{34} He emphasizes the need for "painless" instrumentalities of killing unworthy life just as Binding did.\textsuperscript{35} Finally, like Binding/Hoche, Morell argues that the design of his contemplated measure excludes the risk of serious error, since only demonstrably inferior types will be targeted in the first place.\textsuperscript{36}

The backhanded manner in which Morell refers to these subjects without elaboration indicates that his intended readership was already steeped in the literature of involuntary killing of biological "inferiors."\textsuperscript{37} Morell feels no need to explain the arguments of Binding and Hoche; he presupposes his readers will bring this knowledge with them to the text. This

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 124.
\item\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 128.
\item\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 125; H. Friedlander, 327, n. 6.
\item\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 127.
\item\textsuperscript{37} Morell's casual reference to Binding (given above, note 29) does not explain who Binding is, nor recount Binding's position on annihilating the mentally infirm. Note that Morell does not even refer to Binding by his proper name: in the two instances in which Binding is mentioned, his name is used as an adjective in one (\textit{Ueberschrift des Binding'schen Buches}, or "title of the Bindingian book"); in the other, he is referred to cryptically as "B."
\end{itemize}
fact alone bears powerful witness to the extent to which radical genocidal theories had permeated the Nazi elite by 1939.

*The Meltzer Survey of 1920*

Ewald Meltzer, the director of the Katharinenhof asylum at Grosshennersdorf in Saxony, reacted to the publication of Binding and Hoche's book by conducting a survey in 1920 among the parents of the asylum's patients. He asked the parents of 162 handicapped children whether they would consent to have their child put to death, and if so, under what conditions. Of the parents surveyed, 119 (73%) responded affirmatively to the question, with qualifications; 43 (27%) rejected the idea. The positive respondents were motivated by a desire to escape the burdens of a mentally handicapped child; many wished the authorities would not inform them of the true cause of their child's death. The Nazis would adhere to the practice of reciting bogus causes of death to the parents of murdered patients twenty years later.\(^{38}\)

The Morell text contains two references to Meltzer's survey. In the first, Morell cites "Meltzer's statistics" in support of establishing the euthanasia program through secret administrative order rather than a public law. The willingness of parents not only to consent to their children's murder but to be voluntarily "deceived" about the real cause of death was one reason, Morell argued, to keep the program secret.\(^{39}\) Morell refers to Meltzer a second time later in the text, in a contemptuous dismissal of critics: "The statistic of Meltzer's is more damning still than he himself admits. Most naysayers have nothing against the killing

\(^{38}\) Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 23.

\(^{39}\) Aly, 123-24.
itself, they just don't want their consciences burdened.!!! As in the Binding/Hoche text, Morell presupposes his audience is familiar with the results of Meltzer's 1920 survey; he can therefore bolster his arguments by referring to the survey with no background explanation of its significance.\footnote{Ibid., 126.}

\textit{Opponents' arguments against euthanasia}

Much of the Morell text is sharply polemical in its attempt to rebut the arguments of euthanasia critics. References in a text to political opponents can be made either directly or allusively; Morell generally relies on direct confrontations with his opponents, primarily the unnamed advocates of human rights and the euthanasia critic Ebermayer. Morell first takes up the criticisms of human rights adherents, who object to state-sponsored, involuntary euthanasia as an unwarranted violation of individual rights. Morell blithely dismisses this objection on the ground that it mistakenly ascribes an absolute character to individual rights, when such rights are in fact inferior to the needs of society (specifically, society's need to rid itself of inferior elements).\footnote{Ibid., 125.} Morell then devotes special attention to the criticisms of Ebermayer, including the oft-repeated charge that, once the threshold of involuntary euthanasia was crossed, the operation could well spin out of control.\footnote{Ibid, 127. Ebermayer's fears were shared by a fair number of euthanasia critics throughout the 1920's and 30's in Germany. Ironically, one of the earlier critics to sound} Morell scoffs at these
concerns, replying that "there is no reason...why logic should not find a limit for practical measures that is workable for our moral sensitivities." Morell clearly reposes his faith in the scientific precision of the proposed action, in its unerring accuracy and failsafe design. (The contemporary reader familiar with Franz Kafka is reminded of the officer's perverse celebration of his grisly writing machine in "In the Penal Colony.")

The "value" of the proposed euthanasia program far outweighs the slim risk of error in Morell's mind: like Binding, he contends that only biological inferiors will be affected. Their annihilation, even in the event of a technical diagnostic error, will still be salutary for the population at large.

The thesis I am urging takes issue with current literary theories that treat texts in abstraction from their historical contexts. I have dwelled on three examples of the intertextual context to demonstrate how tightly a text like Morell's is sewn into the fabric of

the alarm was Ewald Meltzer, who expressed deep-seated misgivings about the "inflationary and totalitarian potentialities" in the works of euthanasia enthusiasts like Binding/Hoche, Robert Gaupp, and Ernst Mann. See Burleigh, Death and Deliverance, 21.

44 Franz Kafka, The Complete Stories, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 140-167. Other scholars have noted the eerie similarities between Kafka's dystopias and the racial policies of National Socialism. Ernst Pawel writes: "[The zeal of German collectors of Kafka's letters], however creditable and sincere, can also be interpreted as an act of Wiedergutmachung--of making up for, among other things, the wanton destruction of Kafka manuscripts by the Gestapo in 1933 and the incineration of his three sisters and their families by an older generation who, without having read a word of his, proudly adopted Kafka's worst nightmares as their own fondest dreams and made them come true." Ernst Pawel, The Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka (New York: The Noonday Press, 1984), 268.

45 Aly, 128. Morell uses the locution erheblich Minderwertigen, or "chiefly inferior," to describe the group to which each victim of euthanasia will belong, whether or not they have been "unjustly subjected to the death penalty."
a highly particularized historical pedigree, one that imposes constraints on our efforts to interpret the text. For scholars like M.A.K. Halliday\textsuperscript{46} and Hayden White,\textsuperscript{47} a text is not studied for its external references, but with regard to its internal features. Halliday and White reject the notion that language transparently represents a bygone world exterior to the text. Their concern is with the degree to which the historical context supplies resources to authors, who use them in the act of producing meanings through the formal elaboration of their texts. For Halliday and White, the context does not exist outside the text as an extratextual referent; it is instead imbedded within the text itself, in the way the text employs contextual resources to create a distinctive vision of the world.

Halliday and White have captured only a partial truth. The world a text claims implicitly to re-present to the reader is gone, dissolved in the restless kaleidoscope of historical change. The original context of utterance, the text producer, and the intended audience have all been voided. In this respect, Halliday and White highlight an important truth about the relation between text and context--namely, that the text does not give the reader access to a historical period as it actually was. Their emphasis on the context's instantiation in the formal features of the text, however, obscures another truth of equal importance. While the text does contain resources taken from the context of utterance by the text producer, the producer's intertextual references (as we saw with the Morell text) can be profoundly \textit{underdetermined}. This means that what we read in a text may be only a


\textsuperscript{47} Hayden White, \textit{The Content of the Form} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1987).
miniscule part of a much larger sphere of influence affecting its articulation, the tip of a vast iceberg reaching deep into the intertextual context from and into which the text was born. This point was vividly demonstrated in Morell's laconic references to Binding/Hoche, Meltzer, and the euthanasia critics. Morell assumed his readers would be conversant with these antecedent texts, and he therefore cited them briefly in support of his own arguments. The intertextual context itself, however, is not at all clear from the Morell text standing on its own. In order to "respect" the intention of the text fully, the reader must go beyond the text in question to examine its historical context--a context consisting of texts broadly defined. Such texts may be conventional written records (diaries, government records, church records, transcripts of trials, etc.), or they may be film, music, art, museums, literary works, architectural designs, or other forms of material culture. The dogmatic insistence that a text is fully self-contained, comprehending within itself its own meaning and intertextual context, not only devalues a crucial hermeneutic available to us in our attempts to decipher a text; it also opens historical texts to the varieties of interpretive pandemonium and nihilism which characterize the arguments of Robert Faurisson and Douglas Christie.

In this essay, I have discussed two constraints on historical interpretation, textual coherence and the intertextual context, whose viscosity checks the freely flowing waters of unlimited semiosis. Following Umberto Eco's concept of respecting the intention of a text (intentio operis) as distinct from the intention of its author, I suggested these constraints

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enable us to construct a floor of minimal acceptability in historical interpretation, such that interpretations falling below our floor are invalid or less valid as compared with those above it. The principles of textual coherence obligate us to accept the referentiality of a text’s language to certain portions within the same text. The intertextual context constrains us to construe a document as part of a historical series to which it is responding. This interconnectedness of historical texts is lost sight of when we focus exclusively on the text divorced from context. A pure semiosis causes the text to close in on itself, to become monadic rather than interactive. At this point, the arguments of Revisionist Holocaust scholars like Faurisson are difficult to rebut: without recourse to the intertextual context, the meaning of words like resettlement and special treatment appearing in Nazi documents, or unworthy life and creatures cited in the Morell document, are indeterminate, and thus subject to an infinite range of equally valid constructions (including the outright denial of Nazi genocide).

While coherence and context form a floor for interpretation, the distance between it and the roof is vast indeed. To extend the metaphor yet further, there may not even be a roof, properly speaking, but the wide vault of the sky over the floor, big enough to permit an inexhaustible range of interpretive acrobatics. The Holocaust historian Christopher Browning conceives of historical evidence as a continuum or scale of facts and interpretations which shade gradually off into one another. At one end of the continuum are facts that even the Revisionists do not dispute, such as the fact that Adolf Hitler was the leader of a Nazi government in Germany from 1933 to 1945, or that the Japanese navy attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Browning’s continuum
then runs from these bedrock facts to historical evidence permitting a greater degree of interpretation. His example is the debate over the nature of Hitler's decision to implement the Final Solution (the existence or nonexistence of such an order and when, if at all, it was made). At the far end of the spectrum are historical questions that invite still greater creative embellishment, such as assessments about the meaning of the Holocaust, "and what it tells us about Western civilization or the modern industrial/bureaucratic society or human nature."

While he believes in a zone of indisputable signs, Browning doubts that "some scientific or positivist methodology...can delineate absolute boundaries along this continuum, that can say here is where bedrock, indisputable fact ends; here is where transparent, politically motivated falsification begins...." 49 Along Browning's continuum, as between the floor and the sky, there is room enough for endless flights of imagination. That these flights are constrained by the tug of gravity beneath their wings is not so much an abridgment of freedom as a contextualization of it--a recognition that the mind's autonomy, like the body's movement, is always situated.

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49 Browning, 33.
CONCLUSION

The "linguistic turn" in 20th century Western thought poses both exciting and formidable challenges to the humanities as they head into the 21st century. The virtual revolution in language study unleashed by J.L. Austin and Ludwig Wittgenstein, and theoretically elaborated by French intellectuals like Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault, has left an indelible mark on contemporary literary theory. It augurs a no less enduring impression on historical studies. As the linguistic turn increasingly makes its presence felt in the discipline of history, it will continue to divide the profession between those enchanted with its promise and those repelled by its nihilism.

The fears of many historians are not without grounds. The diverse assortment of trends falling under the catch-all phrase "the linguistic turn" holds the common belief that language is the farthest outpost of epistemological inquiry, that no "reality" exists beyond the ne plus ultra of linguistic expression. The more radical forms of postmodernism pursue the implications of this concept to its logical outcome--namely, the type of unlimited semiosis and symbolic indeterminacy examined in Chapter 2. In the eyes of some historians, this radical skepticism about the value of studying the historical context threatens to undermine their own profession. They would likely agree with the assessment of Walker Percy's Will Barrett, who referred to Pascal as "the last French intellectual who was not insane."

Implicit in the preceding essays is the belief that the linguistic turn is not a fad
destined to flare and fade, but is likely here to stay, in one form or another. The entry of
postmodern theories of language use and analysis into historical studies need not be rued as
a calamitous event; it can be embraced as a means of expanding our understanding of
historical texts and the production of meaning which occurs within them. In Chapter One,
I argued for a self-consciously post-structuralist, semiotic critique of ideology based on the
work of Hayden White and Norman Fairclough. My approach emphasized the formal
properties of a text--its grammatical/lexical elaboration--as a clue to how ideology is
produced through language use. I adopted a view of ideology as a process, by means of
which a sign system peculiar to a certain group, and serving its interests, is substituted for
an extratextual referent the text alleges to talk about. In its emphasis on the lability of the
relationship between signifier and signified, my approach is clearly influenced by
postmodern linguistic theory.

Of central importance to the analytical method I defended in Chapter One was a view
of language as involved in more than communicative or entertainment functions; it is also
imbricated in socio-historical patterns of conflict and domination, wherein powerful groups
struggle with less powerful ones over linguistic formulations favoring the interests of the
former. The victory of the more powerful over the weaker in these contests represents the
"naturalization" of the victors' discourse and its imposition on the social order--an imposition
which both creates and sustains inequalities in power. The triumphant discourse, with time
and repeated usage, takes on an appearance of "common-sense," of "naturalness," of being
in accordance with the laws of "Nature." This process was dramatically illustrated in
Morell's agonism toward his opponents explored in Chapter Two. In this contest over language the proponents of human rights and humanity toward the weak and defenseless were routed; the status of mentally handicapped human beings became that of "creatures" unworthy of life, fit only for "healthful extermination" by a proactive State. And so it went.

The ease with which the signifier of an instance of discourse can be decoupled from its referent, as in Morell's substitution of National Socialist mythology for the laws of nature, can lead to the radical skepticism concerning the relationship between language and the world discussed in Chapter Two. There I suggested two constraints on "unlimited semiosis": textual coherence and the intertextual context. With reference to Umberto Eco, I contended that these two conditions formed the "intention" of a text a reader must take into account before interpreting it. Preserving the integrity of the text and the historical context in which it is imbedded is one way of appropriating postmodern language theory into historical analysis without condemning historical study to irrelevance.

Of equal importance to me is redeeming the value of an ideological critique of language. A serious flaw in traditional Marxist ideology critique was its view of ideology as masking the "Real," of obfuscating an objective historical reality--i.e. the material conditions of human existence--that Marxism alone could properly interpret. A semiotic critique of ideology as supplemented by Critical Discourse Analysis avoids this fruitless impasse by focusing on the role of language in social struggle. In this respect, I make no bones about one of the crucial ends ideology critique can pursue: the transformation of society. By becoming conscious of how culture- and class-bound linguistic categories produce, sustain, and reproduce asymmetrical relations of power, we can advance closer to
challenging--and changing--those relations. This perspective grows unabashedly in the soil of the Enlightenment. With Karl Mannheim, it endorses a conception of knowledge as structured and determined by a concrete historical setting, while maintaining the freedom of human beings to become aware of their social determinants, and, in the act of becoming aware of them, to become empowered to change them.²

In this fashion, the linguistic critique of ideology intersects our interests in both the past and the future. By laying bare the mechanisms by which domination in ages past was thrust on the voiceless, linguistic ideology critique discloses patterns of inequality here and now, in the ceaseless struggle over the control of language.

² Mannheim writes: "Those persons who talk most about human freedom are those who are actually most blindly subject to social determination, inasmuch as they do not in most cases suspect the profound degree to which their conduct is determined by their interests. In contrast with this, it should be noted that it is precisely those who insist on the unconscious influence of the social determinants in conduct, who strive to overcome these determinants as much as possible. They uncover unconscious motivations in order to make those forces which formerly ruled them more and more into objects rational decision." Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1936), 48.
APPENDIX

DR. THEO MORELL'S MEMORANDUM TO ADOLF HITLER (UNDATED)

Source: National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Roll 44, Morell file #81

Formulation:

The lives of mentally ill persons, who since the x year of life have been so badly physically deformed or mentally incapacitated that they can only be kept alive by continuous care, or who are so misshapen that they would cause revulsion when seen in public, and whose intellectual relationship to their human surroundings stands on the lowest animal level, [the lives of these persons] can be shortened by medical operation by means of a stipulation in the law concerning the extermination of life unworthy of life.

The question of how to carry out [this policy] can be formulated as follows: Should the measure have as its basis a public law or should the measure be implemented by a secret administrative order. The latter way appears incomprehensible at first glance. However, I believe it is indeed justified to handle it in this way, given the situation. It touches on an issue that is expressed in Meltzer's statistics. A number of parents have expressed: Had you only said or done something so that our child had died of an illness. One could take this into account. One is not permitted to think that one cannot carry out a salutary measure without the approval of a sovereign people. Many a measure of foreign policy and of national

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defense are dependent upon only a small circle of people knowing about it. A similar manner of governing in the area of public health would be of no concern ["harmless"] with regard to the constitutionality of the law.

The other form of the initiative for these measures, in contrast to the "laws on genetic heritage" [Erbgesundheitsgesetz], is already justified alone by the fact that the circle of persons affected by such a law is of a totally different sort. It is much easier to get a grasp of the situation. First and foremost, those persons should be included who are in the care of public institutions. And that is most of them, because most of them are in need of institutional care. The rest of those outside the public institutions are known to the welfare agencies or the guardianship courts.

Those who have a right to petition according to the "law on the offspring of the genetically ill" [Erbkrankennachwuchsgesetz]:

Sec. 2  a) those to be sterilized

b) the lawful representative. (No allowance is to be made in the case of extermination for those with the right to petition according to Sec. 2, rather one could give the representative the right to file an appeal.)

Sec. 3  a) the district medical officer

b) the director of the caregiving institution: Misgivings with regard to the directors of these institutions have often been raised in the literature. The district medical officer is harmless, yet the office of the state's attorney would be better. The involvement of the physicians is then reserved for evaluation.

Yet to be shown: if one may not allow close relatives to file a petition, that is, to
initiate a petition.

Suggestion for implementation: two evaluations issued by physicians under oath, one of whom has observed the creature involved for at least three weeks. (If circumstances so merit, only one evaluation, further assessments then only when guardians make use of their right to file an objection.)

The question of how the killing should proceed need not be made a part of the discussion. Since there are enough painless possibilities. However, it would be advisable to give definite instructions to the few sites to whom the execution of the measure is entrusted. (Reason, that no one will want to be a party to the act. Anonymous act.)

Costs: borne only by the state

Notifying the relatives of the measure?

At what stage of the procedure?

Finally, a thought about human rights plays a role in the objections [raised against the policy]. Human rights, as they developed out of the intellectual currents of the French Revolution, were a reaction to the previous lack of rights of the individual (the subject, sujet). The idea has something right about it, as a principle it is wrong. There is as little subjective right of this sort regarding an unlimited private sphere as there is regarding property.

Many who believed that they were able to participate in this discussion confused their own economic positions, and especially the economic position of the individual, with that of the society. Things are going too well for them and for this reason they do not see a pressing need. They are sated bourgeois [or "Philistines"]. We, on the contrary, are
insatiable when it comes to increasing the strength of our people, even if it is amidst the what
to all appearances is the most tranquil peace. What is a pressing need for society can only
be inferred from the nature of what is important to society. However, this cannot be derived
from a situation that is momentarily fortuitous, but rather it must take into account a longer
time frame and also pay attention to future eventualities. It is best compared to the
provisions of the businessman for the success of his undertaking.

The nature of the thing: current law [Latin: de lege lata, "law as it is carried out"] is
not always harmless, the law as we envision it [de lege ferenda, "law as it ought to be carried
out"]--this viewpoint is necessary. Ebermayer clings in a way to the words "permission"
which is only the title of the Bindingian book, but, however, does not correspond to its
content. Then in the case of idiots it does not concern permission, but rather an action of the
state. It may even be that B. chooses an unusual path so that the execution is left to private
means.

The thought that something healthful had not been done would be the most
unpleasant thing for me, and to the end of my days.

The comparison with some aspects of the animal kingdom (Ernst Mann, p. 9) is
certainly no insult to human beings. Even though the experiences of animals are played out
several rungs lower down, the constant harmony in the laws of nature is instructive to us, as
it is no longer reflected in our care of idiots. The lives of these creatures are no viable work
of God. They live only through the intervention of their fellow men, in contrast to antisocial
man.
The incipient scarcity of caregiving personnel (under Economics)

Obligation to report instead of right to petition.

The reference in Gaupp, p. 3, to the strong differences in the interpretation of applicable law is interesting. The statistic of Meltzer's is more damning still than he himself admits. Most naysayers have nothing against the killing itself, they just do not want their consciences burdened!!!

Human rights is a slogan of the past that has been hounded to death, the concept of "the healthy sensibilities of the people" threatens to succumb to the same fate in the present.

Historical notes:

Certainly there were fewer idiots in earlier times than today. Because back then, nature as well as culture offered remedies that have withered with the "advances" of modern times. Already in the wake of the epidemics (plague, cholera) some of the mentally ill would have been carried away. Besides that, the stringency of the penal code had an indirect effect. Compare with our current laws, for instance, the large number of criminal acts that were punished by death in the Penal Code of Emperor Charles V. With the association [Einhergehen, "going along"] between criminality and mental disease that is well known to us, the penal code would also doubtless have seized upon many of those creatures either who were themselves unworthy of life or who would have procreated creatures unworthy of life.

Even if the thoughts of the law giver and judge (better: of penal authority) from those times were turned in large measure to other considerations (deterrence and punishment), he nonetheless touches consciously or unconsciously upon our problems. And with that fulfills the sense that Rosenberg, quite correctly in my opinion, attributes to punishment. From our
experience with genetics we can conclude that the scant regard for the lives of criminals in the Middle Ages was just as advantageous to the composition of the society as the horrible cleansing of the epidemics, which, however, also took with them an outrageous number of those worthy of life. Here, with reference to the moral side of our problem, one notes that this more prevalent use of the death penalty is not so immoral as it appeared to a later generation, that which gave birth to universal human rights. With our modern measures for the maintenance of security, we again approach the old laws without, however, being able to muster the courage to draw the final conclusion.

Emphasis has been placed on just such a comparison of our measures with the penal code because some opponents derive their objections from the fact that limits in assigning the worth of specific groups of persons is fluid and therefore that no proper limit to our measures may be drawn (Ebermayer). In light of the preceding discussion, they are correct that the moral evaluation of criminality is related and must be related to the moral evaluation of the mentally ill because, for our purposes, both are inferior. There is no reason, however, not to conceive why logic should not find a limit for practical measures that is workable for our moral sensitivities. The arguments of Ebermayer are actually no other than those that are brought up against the death penalty. As far as the current moral point of view on this question is concerned, it is clear that we are not absolutely opposed to the death penalty. The fear that ultimately the measure may be carried too far, a fear that leads to intellectual and political paralysis that runs counter to the interests of the community. Let us be reminded of the famous argument concerning capital punishment. At one time, early overwhelming significance was attached to it until a precise re-examination yielded that capital punishment
appeared to be practically excluded from the proper administration of justice. The value of
the measure is so great in this case that one may not be frightened by it, even if it is possible
that certain individuals could suffer from it. The person who might actually be unjustly
subjected to the death penalty would no doubt belong to the chiefly inferior ranks. I cannot
simply deny that it was a sanctioned execution if an autopsy of the brain of the executed
murderer shows that he could have availed himself of Sec. 51 of the penal code [granting
leniency for those shown to be mentally retarded]. The same success was achieved in this
thoroughly salutary execution as was achieved by medieval justice, and which our penal code
can no longer hope to achieve because of its leniency.

And still more in addressing the fears of excess. In my opinion, they can be even less
justified, above all with the limits suggested by us, than those relating to the excessive
application of the death penalty. Indeed, the old wives' tales about the man held against his
will in a mental institution correspond to the romantic fantasies that unfortunately lie near
the German heart (Casper Hauser romanticism). They are, however, flatly impossible with
the current arrangements, and for this reason cannot be decisive in any scientific discussion.
The promise of successfully battling such fears lies in the design of the measure. Besides,
history teaches us that whoever wants to rid himself of unpopular persons has so many means
at his disposal that our measure would appear to him much too circumstantial and time-
consuming.

Refusal to give aid to the non-viable and the offense of abandonment.

5,000 idiots at an annual cost of 2,000 Reichsmark each = 10 million annually. At
5% interest this corresponds to a reserve capital of 200 million. This should mean something
even for those who concept of numbers has been somewhat confused since the time of 
inflation. In addition, the release of domestically produced food stuffs and the lowering of 
the need for certain imports must be taken into particular account.

(translation by David Knight and Michael Bryant)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


