

PUBLIC USES OF DICTATORIAL PASTS

Visualizations in Germany

Usos públicos de passados ditatoriais. Visualizações na Alemanha

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to reconstruct the visualization of the past in Germany between 1945 and 2005. The remembrances of the National Socialism shows the myriad ways in which Germans have sought to memorialize this dark part of their history. The remembrances of the experiences of the Holocaust and the Nazism were incorporated in the society according to political situations. In this study we found five different stages that describe multiple discussions over forgetting and memory. In order to examine this subject, we offer an analysis based on a theoretical framework and historical events.

Keywords: Nazism; Memory; Forgotten.

RESUMO

Este artigo objetiva reconstruir a visualização do passado na Alemanha entre 1945 e 2005. As lembranças do nacional-socialismo manifestam-se de inúmeras maneiras pelas quais os alemães têm buscado para memorar esta parte tenebrosa de sua história. As lembranças das experiências do Holocausto e do nazismo foram incorporadas na sociedade de acordo com situações políticas. Neste estudo, encontramos cinco diferentes estágios que descrevem múltiplas discussões acerca do esquecimento e da memória. A fim de examinar esse assunto, oferecemos uma análise teoricamente estruturada e amparada por eventos históricos.

Palavras-chave: Nazismo; Memória; Esquecimento.

I. Introduction

Public debate over historical representation and its crystallization through collective memory and public policy is in full force in Germany's contemporary political scene. Central to this problem is the concern with redefining the focus and scope of analysis about the recent past – a tendency which has been revitalized over the last years. According to philosophers such as Nietzsche and Benjamin, the ways in which the State handles history for political purposes must be observed carefully. In *Von Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, the *monumentalische Art der Historie* (monumental history) is presented as a narcotic which petrifies life. In *Der Begriff der Geschichte* official history is associated with the oppression of the winners who silence the history of the losers. But are memory policies always unable to get to terms with a "proper" use of the past? The historian Enzo Traverso would answer in the affirmative. In his thesis on secular theodicy he warns about the government's use of the past. This happens when certain events of history are portrayed in a negative way in order to justify the current political order.

This paper aims to reconstruct certain issues visualized by the public use of the past in Germany between 1945 and 2005. This involves primarily a literary review of the work of German thinkers such as Nietzsche, Benjamin, Arendt and Koselleck, who were directly concerned with the subject matter. The analysis centers on the case study of German remembrances of National Socialism, focusing on cultural memory pertaining to the NS regime in Germany from the post war period to the construction of the memorial to the murdered Jews in Berlin. This entails an examination of memorials, museums, trials, laws and economic compensation, analyzed through the prism of various theoretical insights, such as the uses of history –i.e., various forms of articulation between remembering and forgetting, the interpretive process stemming from historiographical statements and even the very notion of truth, understood as a space where contending forces struggle with each other.

II. Responsibility, justice and silence after the war

Public interest for history, and therefore also for collective memory, points out certain remembrances that hold a set of values and beliefs called by certain thinkers a *civil religion* (GENTILE, 2007). Memory and forgetting are combined together in different ways and construct temporality. Therefore it is possible the spreading of certain discourses in which political implications are reflected during public commemorations.

Benjamin's propose that memory is linked to the theological component. *Das Eingedenken* (remembrance) and *die Erlösung* (salvation or redemption) are concepts that are couple with the setup of a new concept of history. It is a realization that, as announced in the second thesis of his Theses on the Philosophy of History, should carry through *eine*

schwache messianische Kraft (a weak messianic force) to redeem the history of what was not, of what might have been. These echoes appeal to events that are on the margins of history, because they have been silenced by the victors. The force of the preceding generations, of their dead, of those whose memory is in danger waits for a salvation that according to Benjamin, can be reached with memory. That is the task of the *Angelus Novus* and of the coming philosophy: to heal the wounds of the oppressed. The *Jetztzeit* (now-time) can reopen the history in those aspects that seemed to be irrevocable. But are all memories worthy of remembrance? What about totalitarian political projects that aimed to silence other memories?

In the case of German memory policies, questions such as what, how and in which sense the past should be remembered, have been put into consideration by thinkers who also distinguished an individual or a collective memory (HALBWACHS, 1997; RICOEUR, 2000; TODOROV, 2004). It is possible to observe five big stages from 1945 to nowadays.¹ The first one is situated in the post war years, where the main trials (the one in Nuremberg in 1945, the subsequent Nuremberg trials and the Auschwitz trial 1947 in Krakow) and economical compensations (Luxembourg Accord in 1952) were carried out (BAUERKÄMPER, 2013). The policies during these years were strongly influenced by the Allies. Due to the intervention of the international community that supervised the way in which Germany should “come to terms with their past” (ROUSSO, 2007) it is possible to observe a denationalization of the way in which the State dealt with history. In these years, the Nazi past had a leading role in judicial issues, but not in the political speech, which situated Germany as the guilty from the IIWW with the peculiarity of avoiding the Holocaust as a subject of discussion. These legal processes showed that the consequences sustained by historical developments are not metaphorical. Memory creates responsibilities (ARENDE, 2003). This means that the intervention of the memories acquires its material realization when it involves the possibility of distinguishing between what is consider to be innocent and what is consider to be guilty. The relevance of memory represents a political calculation in favor of certain duty that defines different positions on ethical dilemmas of a nation, and that establishes its union by combining past with sensitivities in vogue (JOHANN, 2010). The most complex discussion come up with the questions about the criteria through which good and evil are identified in a context where the most people has already made a decision about those aspects. This fear to judge may hide the idea of the impossibility for a person to respond for his owns acts where political trends can condition the people’s choices, which can allow us to think in a collective guilt conception. This notion could exculpate all who were really implied in the facts, something that would make responsibilities disappear. According to Arendt, nowadays political systems or trends are not judged, instead men of flesh and blood like you and me, something that makes impossible to evade personal responsibility:

Such statements have often served to cover up the guilty –when everyone shouts ‘we’re guilty’, one can no longer discover what real crimes were actually committed. Whether someone participated in the murder of hundreds of thousands or just kept silent and live in

seclusion then becomes a question where the degree of difference is irrelevant. And that, I think, is intolerable (ARENDR, 2007, p. 488).

Incipient discussions were held also in this period. In 1946 at least two emblematic publications reflected the debates around the Nazi past: *Die Schuld Frage*, from Jaspers, and *Die deutsche Katastrophe*, of Meinicke. The journal *Der Ruf* was also an important initiative that tried to promote discussions about the National Socialism, but soon its printing license was revoked in 1947 (PEARCE, 2008). According to some thinkers, after this initial debate and the sentence of the main Nazi officers, comes a second period that under a *Stunde Null*² conception, was characterized by silence (GUISAN, 2012, GROSSMANN, 1998). One of the reasons of this lack of debate on the public agenda may be that the main challenge by then was focused on the democratic consolidation, the reconstruction of the civil life and the willing to avoid nationalist revivals (PEARCE, 2008). Many policies were based on the notion of a "healthy silence" which enabled political power to incorporate in the government former supporters of the Nazism. As Herf says "democracy was possible, provided that it was inaugurated by a period of silence about the crimes of the Nazi past" (HERF, 1997, p. 225). The onset of the Cold War also strengthened this trend in favor of the struggle against Communism where a German "normalized" society should join the American side. As Pearce points out: "By the mid-1950, German atrocities in the Second World War had largely been reduced to a myth of demonization, whereby Hitler and a few associates were deemed responsible and the rest of the nation were portrayed as politically seduced individuals" (PEARCE, 2008, p. 17).³ But, why this reconstruction of the past was so criticized? While memory is usually considered as a political duty, as a way of coming to terms with the past by re elaborating it, forgetting is usually linked with silence and impunity. Those who want to preserve fidelity with the past in historical narrations, defend memory from forgetting. In few words: forgetting appears when memory fails. At the same time, forgetting is associated with the animal nature, incapable of retaining consciousness records. But is it possible to remember everything? Nietzsche (1980) is one of the most important thinkers that make a proclamation in favor of the forgetting. He argues that it introduces a link between history and a practical task of vital importance. According to this perspective, forgetting allows action and prevents possible paralysis caused by excessive memory. In the first page on his *Von Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, Nietzsche tells about a man who contemplate the grazing herd, that is completely enthralled by the moment:

But also wondered about himself, that cannot learn to forget but always remains attached to the past: however far and fast he runs, the chain runs with him. It is astonishing: the moment, here in a wink, gone in a wink, nothing before and nothing after, returns nevertheless as a spectre to disturb the calm of a later moment. [...] Then the man says "I remember" and envies the animal which immediately forgets [...] (NIETZSCHE, 1980, p. 8-9).

There is a very famous story from the Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges, called *Funes, el memorioso*, that tells a about a man who could remember everything; and because of his unlimited ability to remember, Funes found it difficult to think and act. Thus,

forgetting means something that would make life livable. In the contemporary scene, the Bulgarian historian and philosopher Todorov (2004) offers a work that warns about the excesses of memory and discusses the potential of forgetting in relation to the recent past. Since retaining all memories is factually impossible (both, the individual and the collective) certain doses of forgetting is necessary. But still, there is another theoretical contribution that can help us to think about the silence in the period. Paul Ricoeur (2000) establishes a difference between *mémoire empêché* (thwarted memory), *mémoire manipulée* (manipulated memory) and *oublié commandé* (enforced forgetting). The first one is based on Freud and Bergson's work and therefore, connected with psychoanalytical issues, such as reminiscences, trauma, symptoms, and unconscious. The second one is about a semi-active and a semi-passive attitude regarding certain episodes of the past. It involves a dark *vouloir-ne-pas-savoir* (willing of not knowing) and not being informed.⁴ This kind of strategy of avoiding the past may be useful to analyze the attitude of citizens and the government these years. At the same time it is possible to note an ambiguity in this behavior insofar as it could entail the same responsibility of negligence. The last kind of forgetting that Ricoeur mentions –and that may be also of help when studying this stage– is related to forgiveness. He points out that in the French language there is an odd and interesting similarity between the term and the concept of *amnésie* (amnesia) and *amnistie* (amnesty). This resemblance exists too even in German: *die Amnestie* and *die Amnesie*. This closeness approaches forgetting with forgiveness as well. In many cases of amnesty the official purpose is focused in a citizenship-reconciliation and civil peace. But on the other hand, one of the most complicated consequences is that it involves the erasure of the narratives of terrible crimes in the past that could prevent further recurrences in history. So is this pretended unity loyal with the past of a nation? It could be stated that this kind of policies have a commitment with a useful goal but not with historical true.

III. The awakening of a memory

This widespread silence changed later, in the sixties, when two more trials were held: the Eichmann trial in 1961 and the second part of the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt (1963). These legal confrontations had political and social impact. According to many historians, these events provided information about the past and awaked people's interest on this subject. One of the most famous discussions was around Arendt's concept of the *banality of evil*, when reporting Eichmann trial for an American newspaper.⁵ The special attention to Nazi crimes was also due to a temporal change that brought questions of new generations. At this very point, young people claimed to need explanations and blamed the older generation of silence and repression (PEARCE, 2008). But how to transmit the Nazi experience to those who didn't suffered it? Which would be the proper way to hold the memory of something that was not experienced? In fact, it actually exists one proper way to do it? To confront the past didn't mean in these years legal but moral concerns. Questions around how to put such a catastrophic past behind where reformulated: it was now about bringing

it to the present in order to analyze contemporary politics. The famous work of Adorno *Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* was one of many philosophical interpretations that showed this huge concern during these years. Certain attitudes of political governors joined also this trend and expressed a change in the way of facing the NS past, by exposing a willing to apply this *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (past overcoming). The most famous cases are the visit of Willi Brandt and of Helmut Schmidt to key memory places that were seen as a political signal.

Since not all memories share the same status –there are some that are strong while other are weak (TRAVERSO, 2011), periods of transitions like this one have a special relevance. Strong memories are generally inputs used by official memory and are promoted by governmental institutions, meaning they are the dominant representations. On the contrary, weak memories remain in the darkness and excluded from politics. Nevertheless, – and as we can appreciate in this case – in a democratic context there are not fixed status, as long as they change according to the political context. In this sense, Peter Novick (1999) presents a study based in the American society where he argues how the memory of the Shoah was hidden to become later into a *civil religion*. Such example reveals the selective use of memory, which operates highlighting certain events and hiding others, and also showing that all memory implies in return that something is forgotten (HUYSEN, 2004).

According to some intellectuals, the dominant path in the memory culture left behind the perpetrators point of view and started telling victims stories. In these years, many studies focused on memory installed with great force the identification of the witness with the victim (WIEVIORKA, 2013).⁶ For instance, Primo Levi's *La tregua* (The truce) and *Se questo e un uomo* (If this is a man) were published at first in Italy, but then all over the world, becoming one of the most emblematic and influential testimony-writings of these years. The stories told about living experiences situate memory as a particularly subjective record: it contains the events attended by witnesses, considering the impressions that they claim as part of the story of the past (BENJAMIN, 1977; RICOEUR, 2000, LEVI, 1987). Quoting the Italian philosopher Agamben, Levi points out that in despite of the fact that the testimonies given came from those who didn't "touch bottom", the survivor's memories could reconstruct the destiny of the deportees. Nevertheless, beyond the huge value that these testimonies represent, Levi admits how fallacious this kind of record could be. When it comes to memories of traumatic experiences, the memory of these facts is not innocuous because it arouses pain, contradiction, shame or even guilt. But, should the same questions address to historiography and memory? Does it make any sense to demand truth as according to the conformation of things and intellect to memory?

In spite of this awaking of memory, it is possible to find during these years public expressions of a will of impeding past to be brought to the present. One of the most emblematic representations was in 1963, when Federal Republic of Germany [RFA/BRD] settled the first national memorial with the following inscription: "*Den Opfer der Kriege und der*

Gewaltherrschaft" (To the victims of war and totalitarianism). This was hardly criticized because of its lack of precision.⁷ Moreover, this absence was double: on one hand, it didn't make a difference between victims and perpetrators, and on the other hand, it avoided pointing the NS regime (this assessment could be also addressed to the German Democratic Republic) (KUHLE, 2004). This could be a precise example of how governments could use history in order to justify the current political order: in the middle of the cold war, the assimilation of the Nazi past with the Soviet government could be seen as a way of placing the evil in that political regime and goodness in the capitalism.

As years passed, discussions about the NS regime became more and more intense. By the late seventies and early eighties many artist, filmmakers, intellectuals and historians started showing a special interest about the politics of memory (NOLAN, 2004). Two of the well known expressions that produced massive interest were the German sitcom *Heimat* and the American one *Holocaust*.⁸ The rebirth of memory discussions about the Holocaust was probably influenced by the questions of a new generation who wanted to know what happened during those years (KUHLE, 2004). This renewed debates about responsibility, guilty, trauma, memory, representation of the horror and lessons from the past (BAUERKÄMPER, 2013). Questions such as, is it possible to come to terms with the past? Or, why past do not passed away stood out in public discussions. At the same time, this period was called internationally as a *memory boom* that affected not only the historiographical research but also the philosophical and political ones. The new interrogations demonstrated that in the past were still unhealed wounds that needed a new elaboration. The memory was seen as an ethical duty emphasizing the "never again" motto.

In the intervening years, legal regulations about the Holocaust memory were implemented. For instance, in 1982 Schmidt approved a regulation against apology, deny and trivialization/banalization of the genocide (article 194 of the criminal code).⁹ Two years later, new measures against denying were also created. This kind of governmental interventions raises questions about the legitimacy of coercive memory instruments: Is it proper for the State to regulate history with constraining mechanisms? How to establish a criteria for the limits in which the State should intervene in the historical narratives? If commemorative discourses have not only an informative but a prescriptive nature, that means that the main concern is not to inform the population about pasted events, but to promote a vision of the public memory. Furthermore, these instruments, far from being homogeneous, vary according to the configuration of actors, their traditions and cultural customs. Not all laws or decrees come from a centralist model. Many times this politics are the result of consultation and negotiations with different actors. But what happen when they are not? The most intricate aspect may be knowing if all legal provisions are valid. For instance, the *lois de mémoire* (memory laws) are in France a point of controversy. These measures are on the side of one specific version of history and aim not only to create public proclamations but also to establish criminal offenses and sanctions that could be seen as an act against freedom of speech.¹⁰

In this period a new phenomenon called *countermonument* appeared in different German cities. These initiatives rejected the traditional concept of monument and offered the public an instance of self-reflection where they won't be any longer in a receptive position. They tried to change the role of the visitors by asking them to interact with the *countermonument*. A monument against Fascisms must be done against itself: "In fact, the best German memorial to the Facist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all – but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name, and to what end" (YOUNG, 1993, 21). One of the most famous *countermonument* is placed in Hamburg, where Esther Gerz and Jochen Gerz were in charge of a monument against the Fascism. They designed a *Gegen-Denkmal* and decided to locate it in the commercial center of the city. A 12 meter high pillar was set in this place and visitors were asked to write their names on it. But their names would not remain: the column gradually disappeared into the ground until its final unveiling in 1993.¹¹ Before this creation (in 1987) Jochen Gerz made another *countermonument* in Sarrebruck, with 2146 pavement stones with the name of the existing Jewish cemeteries before the Second World War. What call the attention of this monument is that nobody can see the inscriptions because that side of the stones was looking to the ground. There is also one made by Horst Hoheisel, with a similar perspective that created a negative-form monument around the Aschrott Fountain in Hall Square.¹² These *countermonument* represent a void that present the idea of a no aesthetic commemorative representation that stimulate memory. The representation is not defined in this instance as static or finished, but in constant motion. By revealing his absence, the identity creates not a value, rather a construction.

IV. The memory boom

According to many analyses, the culture of memory has been radically altered since reunification, which brought new concerns about the nazi past. First of all, multiple aspects nurtured big changes. For instance, the creation of a national identity imperative was added to the symbolic representations; the objective was stressed in a coming postnational identity. Secondly, new actors were involved with the intervention of more generations. Studies around the teenager's point of view started being focused in questions such as how to remember the Nazi past, if that is really a problem of new generations or it was just a problem from older generations, what to ask to great-grandfathers, the visualization in the school, and the link of the NS history with other social problems.¹³ In third place, reflections on past have become more polemical insofar as they were no longer focused in the uniqueness of the Holocaust. The emphasis was put instead in the behavior of the perpetrators and in the way to remember and compensate victims or family victims. This provided new impetus for the development of a "counterdiscourse on Germans as victims and on the seemingly agentless production of a diffuse and varied category of victims" (NOLAN, 2004, p. 106). Non least, many other controversies have altered the politics of memory. For instance, Daniel Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*; the photo exhibition *War*

of Annihilation (*Vernichtungskrieg*): *Crimes of the Wehrmacht, 1941-1944*; and the Steven Spielberg movie, *Schindler's list*. This three interventions share a special particularity: they didn't showed new evidence as a result of a scientific research; rather, they showed a different and sensitive point of view. They were focused on the criminals, the complicity and the perpetrators.

Representation issues received big relevance in the politics of memory creating a whole new Berliner cityscape, replete of memory evidence: "The Berlin Republic and Berlin as city are indelibly marked by the presence of the past as well as by the impossibility of reconciling the memories of perpetrators and victims, of Germans and Jews" (NOLAN, 2004, p. 106). New memorials started being planned and constructed. In a few years, Berlin concentrated the Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted under National Socialism, the Memorial in Marzahn for the Sinti and Romanies Murdered under National Socialism, the Memorial to the Association of People Persecuted by the Nazi Regime, the Sculpture and Memorial Slab "Operation 'T4'" (Euthanasia), the House of Wannsee Conference, The Memorial to Deported Jewish in Berlin called "Verlassener Raum" (a table, a chair and a falling chair), commemorative plaques for victims and institutions, Stumbling blocks (*Stolpersteinen*), a memorial for the German resistance (*Die Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand*), and the Plötzensee prison memorial, among and others.

There was also a huge discussion in 1993 around the Christian image of *La Pietà*, situated in one of the most memory key places of Berlin. Instead of the image of a male soldier, Käthe Kollwitz's sculpture of a mother holding her dead son symbolized the sufferance of many mothers during the war. The main critics addressed to this memorial claimed that as the statue was a Christian symbol, it excluded the Jew community and that it was not proper to join the remembrance of victims and criminals (according to this memorial, German soldiers were consider victims as well). Due to this controversy and after a big debate held after the remake of the *Neue Wache*, two plaques pointing the different victims were added (KATTAGO, 2012).¹⁴ Because of this disconformity the construction of the *Holocaust-Mahnmal-Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* was proposed.¹⁵ This monument replaces the centrality that *La Pietà* and the *Neue Wache* had before (BAUERKÄMPER, 2013). This memorial was erected after several discussions after the German reunification, where not only governmental authorities, but also civil actors were involved. According to his architect and other thinkers, the main characteristic of this memorial is that represents a new paradigm of memory, where Nazi criminals, victims of the war and victims of the Holocaust are distinguished (EISEMANN, 2006; AGAMBEN, 2005). The monument was placed near the Bundestag, the Tiergarten and Brandenburger Tor, a very central area of Berlin. There lays 2711 stele of different heights that are located next to each other, and have a small space between them, enough for a person to circulate there. This establishment offers a journey without beginnings or endings, where visitors get lost between high and crippling wakes. No inputs, outputs or a suggested route: the memorial is presented as an open space that promotes the visit of all those transiting the area. This opening has as counterpart a sense

of closure: who is placed at its center, can lose sight of the exterior, since according to the perspective you have, the stele can become the only visible. There is either no inscription on the surface to provide information. The American architect recognizes that the absence of names corresponds to an intention that visitors experience a "living memory" of the past, in the present: "In other words, the present would be able to bring the past into the present as something living. I wanted the experience of the camps to be something that would be a living presence when people were walking in the field of pillars" (EISENMAN, 2006, p. 3). There is an information center located in the basement of the monument, which traces the history of the Holocaust and retrieves testimonies of some victims of National Socialism. Nothing to read also refers to something unsayable. From this, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben says:

In the book of stone memories of Peter Eisenman there is nothing to read. However, who through their steps transit between differently inclined steles, some rising and others falling, would feel that have entered in another dimension of memory; browsing the pages of another book. While hesitant to set foot on the steles that are at the same level that the ground and his view is lost in the alignment of the vertical steles, left step by step behind the memory, which can be recorded and archived to enter the unforgettable [*das Unvergessliche*] (AGAMBEN, 2005, par. 2).¹⁶

Agamben calls *Unvergessliches* (the unforgettable) what belongs to something ineffable. It is an experience that comes into contact with an extreme phenomenon, which has no words for analysis; one might think that where you want to express something verbally about it, one could only stumble. Any form of representation would reduce its meaning. Following the review of Agamben, this supports the existence of a second memory which refers to the archival, and calls *Erinnerbares* (neologism that may be translated as "the memorable"). So that a first memory – *das Unvergessliches* – is placed on the surface of the monument and a second – *das Erinnerbares* –, in the underground information center. The combination of both is what makes the deepest sense of the *Denkmal*:

The intangible threshold between these two memories is precisely the place of the monument. That is why it is very important to distinguish them, otherwise bad conscience, that only want to forget, would cover with thousands of memories what must remain unforgettable. Discontinuous and unreadable as the stele, in the unforgettable [*das Unvergessliche*] continually interrupt fictions of collective memories (AGAMBEN, 2005, p. 4).¹⁷

One of the main innovations that this huge memorial shows is the intention of express a lack of sense in these deaths. While traditionally most of the monuments to the deaths tried to give sense to it by representing a victory, a sacrifice or heroes, this memorial shows a total senselessness of this atrocity. There are no human bodies represented, and either names. There are no entrances and no exists. This creation intends a tour without beginnings and endings, where the visitors could get lost among tall and oppressing stelae. This overwhelming experience creates an atmosphere where nothing is stable and where a message of a warning is transmitted.

While its creator defend that this memorial is exclusivity dedicated to Jews (since they were exterminated and the others were murdered), others thinkers claims that this monument organizes the victims hierarchically and that it was built following the same categories that SS used. The hierarchy of the victims denounced is focused in the great relevance that Jews have in this memorial that overshadows other victims in the Holocaust such as Sinti and Romanies and Homosexuals. Thinkers as Koselleck argue that this memorial hides facts and that blocks a proper remembrance of this tragic episode in our history by denying its reality. He asks if shouldn't this memorial be erected to the humanity. Although this project was not planned under a unidirectional position (because many members from the civil society were involved), according to Koselleck's point of view, this memorial is oppressive with the memory of the less powerful victims. Due to the discontinuity of memory that holds the writer, this monument seeks unsuccessfully to represent a primary memory:

Obviously it is impossible to assume the legacy of genocide, of organized crime, the spirit of sacrifice, and the systematic terror, and as is said of "overcome" by any kind of mourning. Any recognition of guilt and accountability leave an insurmountable residue (KOSELLECK, 2011, p. 137).¹⁸

In such attempts such problems arise, which involved groups of victims, who begin to act like *lobbies*. This means that when personal sufferings of people claim to be the only legitimate spokesman memory, the sense memories monopolizes and "degenerates" in the formation of a group that excludes senses in the act of transmission. The most important question is no longer then who should be remembered and reverses a provocative *Wer darf vergessen werden?* (Who can be forgotten?). Who should be remembered? Who were victims of the Nazi regime or who in addition to being victims, have political power? That some deaths are worth more than others is but a grim irony that responds to a quantitative criterion and suffocating grief in a nation of perpetrators. Basing the construction of the monument on the same categories that operated Nazism, it is committing a serious recklessness:

The categories of extermination were configured and arranged by the ideologues of the race of the SS, who proceeded in their actions pursuant thereto. Death was the same, so unique and so different as they were human beings who were incardinated blameless in that death machine (KOSELLECK, 2011, p. 132).¹⁹

In short, in this section we sought to articulate the politics of memory in Germany, considering them from the end of the Second World War to the present. In this context we saw that it is possible to distinguish five main stages. We ended this section with of one of biggest memorials in recent times, which is claimed by many and attacked by others. We will now give place to a recap and then move to conclusions.

V. Conclusions

This paper has sought to rebuild the relationship between history and politics considering memory policies in Germany. Since the end of the Second World War to the present, we distinguished five stages: a first one in which offsets are closed and prosecutes major Nazi officials, a second marked by oblivion and silence, a third began in the sixties, in which new concerns appeared but didn't have a great impact, a fourth stage which takes place in the seventies and eighties in which the culture of memory gained momentum from civil initiatives, and a fifth stage opened by the reunification German. In this last stage we saw the relevance of the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, which was at the center of discussions. In this sense we summarized arguments that focus on the radicalism of this proposal that claim that steles open reflections and questions in an endless tour where space becomes time. We also gave rise to other studies that disagree by remarking the unfair representation of the Jews and not all victims of the Holocaust. The strongest argument that can be derived from the perspective of Koselleck is that the delimitation of an "us" to build a collective memory, presupposes an act of violence. In light of the recovered elements we wonder whether this monument, built in the land of the perpetrators, can be thought of as a way of apologizing and if this would make sense considering that those involved in the construction are not the same actors who committed the crimes. Thanks to the journey we did, we could say that this looks more like a cautionary gesture towards the Germans and a claim to a historically oppressed and persecuted folk, but that still makes a hierarchy with the victims.

On the basis of the above, the representations of the past involve disputes over the way, object and purpose of their reconstruction. When it comes to the past "that has not passed" referring to traumatic events that were not sufficiently mature to settle the wounds left behind, the definition of these aspects are more complex due to the possible political uses of them, something that would reduce the past to a functionality. However, the "uses" proposed for this analysis do not intend to reduce history only as a way to achieve a given objective.

After this brief review, many questions arise: what, how and who must be remembered? Is there a risk of an abuse of memory? Is forgotten unethical? Can be memory manipulated according to political interest? Is it possible to distinguish between a "good" use of the past and a "bad" one? Are the stories of the losers lost forever? Should state control the past? Can memory be ruled? Can primary experiences become institutionalized? What that seems to be clear is that a self-reflecting society offers different possibilities for the narrative(s) of the past. In the overview of each stage for the German case, it was not only the State the one who intervened in the changes that compose the memory environment. In a democratic context, intellectuals, artists, media, civil society and the politicians are all involved in the construction of the memory. This can only take place in a pluralistic context where conflicting memories could co-exist (KATTAGO, 2012) and where historical representations replicate the past but at the same time, they produce it. That is what politics is about: a totalitarian order would present one single truth, one single version of the past.

Instead, a democratic context put the antagonism in the core of politics. In the light of this, it might be stated that one of the fundamental axes in this area of analysis is located in the struggle for the meaning of the past.

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Notes

1 We will focus on the experience of BRD, ie, in the Federal Republic of Germany. We included some of the most important works on political memorials in Germany referred to the Holocaust, in which we rely greatly. The first one is the monumental book *Das umstrittene Gedächtnis* of the German historian Arnd Bauerkämper, published in 2011, which, besides working on conceptual issues, gathers studies on the treatment of memory in Europe after 1945, in which Germany has an important place among thirteen other countries. This text shows the political controversies of the memorial cultures on representations of the Nazi, fascist and collaborationist past. Carrier's work (2005) and Pearce (2008) were also of great help to the development of this section of this research.

2 *Stunde Null* (military term that means "zero hour") is the name usually given to the initial post-war period, that is also called *Nachkriegszeit*. About these concepts, see Guisan (2012), Herf (1997) and Grossmann (1998). Koselleck (2011) admits that Germany went through in the postwar period marked by a *Verdrängung* (repression).

3 Also Jelin (2006), quoting Olick shows how Germany sought to appear before the world as a standard nation: "One way of reading the history of Germany's policies toward its past is to see it as successive attempts to normalize the past (and also the present), trying to present Germany as a "normal" country (OLICK, 2003). Very succinctly, from the post-war period and up to the early sixties, the German government tried to show the world that Germany was a reliable nation: through institutional reforms, a clear alignment with the West, and large payments to Israel in the form of reparations. These policies were attempts to show the world that Germany was a reliable country" (JELIN, 2006, p. 3). The author holds a similar thesis in the case of Argentina. In the nineties, the memorials policies also obeyed a demand for "normalization" requiring the operation of neoliberalism to the entry of foreign investments demanded a guarantee of democratic stability.

4 Among the possible incentives for working a memory of a society, Ricoeur mentions Henry Rousso, who in *Le syndrome Vichy*, reviews the attitude of the French with respect to that stage in its history, having now a memoirist obsession.

5 The terminology proposed by Arendt focused on the banality of evil portrays the bureaucrat as a new criminal. The writer describes the figure of the petty bourgeois that does nothing but receive and fulfill orders in the civil service, without generating any distinction that allows reflections regarding human extermination.

6 The French historian Annette Wieviorka (2013) describes the changes that testimonial record has had since the end of World War II until today. A first stage, which happens immediately to the Shoah, was characterized by a dissipation of records and clung to the words bequeathed by those who had not survived the camps. The second

stage begins with the Eichmann trial, and shows a renewed emergence of the figure of the witness at the judicial level. The last stage, which called *L'ère du témoin* (the era of the witness), is where the testimony became a social imperative *par excellence*. A democratization of the actors of history is thus produced and by this process the voice is extended to those who lacked it.

7 Koselleck (1998, parr. 4) states this problem as follows: "Als seien alle gefallenen Deutschen des Zweiten Weltkrieges genauso passive Opfer des Nationalsozialismus wie jene Millionen schuldloser Menschen, die von uns umgebracht worden sind. Man bedenke: Den rund sechs Millionen hingemordeter Juden steht in etwa die gleiche Zahl an gefallenen Soldaten gegenüber. Aber nun werden sie allesamt als Opfer ein und derselben, der sogenannten Gewaltherrschaft rubriziert; gleicherweise die Täter - denn irgendwer muß wohl die Juden ermordet haben - wie die Opfer, die nur als passive Opfer begriffen werden können. Die Frage, wer hier wen - oder sich - für was geopfert hat oder wer hier warum für wen geopfert worden sei, bleibt unbeantwortet. Die Frage wird gar nicht gestellt".

8 This show was viewed by 15 million Germans. The large audience captured the attention of Novick (1999; 2002) and this phenomenon was the main input for his thesis about the presence of Holocaust memory in the American memory.

9 In the Bonn Republic various regulations not directly punishing the denial, but related behaviors, such as advocacy of crime or vilification of the dead were instituted. Manifestations of racial hatred were also coded. Only in 1982 the law of apology, denial and trivialization of genocide, which underwent some changes in subsequent years was approved. After reunification, imprisonment were established. The best known case was that of Günter Deckert, who was sentenced to one year in prison after advocacy of Holocaust denial. But the legislation varied considerably in a few years, both nationally and in the provinces. With respect to the memory of the Holocaust, revisionist theories played a central role. To learn more about the regulations with regard to the denial in the German and European legal tradition, see Luther (2008).

10 For a more detailed study of memory policies, see Johann (2010).

11 *Die Absenkung* (the sinking) was not put in evidence until many of the citizens who participated with their signature on the pillar, saw their names disappear. After some complaints, it was announced that the pillar was built contemplating his disappearance. The fact of leaving the scene as it was before, confirm that the anti-monument contemplates his own oblivion: "For in calling attention to its own fleeting presence, the counter-monument mocks the traditional monument's certainty of history: it scorns what Nietzsche has called 'monumental history', his epithet for the petrified versions of history that buy the living. In effect, it might even be said that the counter-monument negates the very basis for the epithet's central trope: after the counter-monument, the 'monumental' need no longer be conceived merely as a figure for the stone dead. By resisting its own reason for being, the counter-monument paradoxically reinvigorates the very idea of the monument itself" (YOUNG, 1992, p. 279).

12 During the 80's there was as well a huge historians debate, where conservative historians relativized the uniqueness of the Holocaust by comparing it with others genocides. For instance Ernst Nolte and Michael Stürmer where hardly criticized by other thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas and Martin Broszat. The controversy finally tipped the scale to the ones that defended the uniqueness of the Holocaust.

13 An illustrative review of this aspect was published in 2010 by the *Zeit Magazin* under the title *War Ur-Opa ein Nazi?* See: STAASSS, 2010.

14 "With the naming of each category of victim and of National Socialism; nor a Jew with a German civilian; rather each historical context would be recognized in its uniqueness. The common theme linking all of the dead was one of irrecoverable loss" (KATTAGO, 2012, p. 84)

15 About the beginnings, the decision process and discussions that went through the project, see Kühle (2004) Heimrod, Schlusche and Seferens (eds.) (1999) and Stavginki, (2002). These texts show a chronicle and analysis from years before the reunification to its opening in 2005. The initiative came from the circle of Lea Rosh, *Förderkreis*, and then was subjected to debates in the Bundestag. Once it was approved, a tendering process was opened. But the first winning project was later rejected. So the call for tender in which Eisenman comes along with Richard Serra, it was not the first. This second winning proposal was approved with modifications that asked 2711 instead of the planned 4350 and an information center, which left Eisenman alone leading the Project. Another problem which caused great debate was the use of anti graffiti paint that covered the trails. The company that could provide it, Degussa, had been involved in the provision of Zyklon B used in Nazi concentration camps and extermination.

16 The translation is mine. The original says: "In Peter Eisenmans versteinertem Buch der Erinnerung gibt es nichts zu lesen. Wer jedoch zwischen den unterschiedlich geneigten Stelen die mal ansteigenden, mal abfallenden Wege

abschreitet, spürt, dass er eine andere Dimension des Gedächtnisses betreten hat; dass er in den Seiten eines anderen Buches blättert. Während er zögert, seinen Fuß auf den aus abgeflachten Stelen bestehenden Boden zu setzen, und sein Blick sich in der Flucht der vertikalen Stelen verliert, lässt er Schritt für Schritt die Erinnerung, die aufgezeichnet und archiviert werden kann, hinter sich, um ins Unvergessliche einzutreten”.

17 The translation is mine. The original says: “Die immaterielle Schwelle, die diese beiden Gedächtnisse trennt, ist der eigentliche Ort des Denkmals. Sie auseinander zu halten ist deshalb so wichtig, weil sonst das schlechte Gewissen, das nichts als vergessen möchte, mit Unmengen von Erinnerungen das verdecken würde, was unvergesslich bleiben muss. Diskontinuierlich und unlesbar wie die Stelen, unterbricht das Unvergessliche immer wieder die Fiktionen des kollektiven Gedächtnisses”.

18 The translation is mine, the original says: “Evidentemente es imposible asumir la herencia de los genocidios, de los crímenes organizados, del espíritu de sacrificio, y del terror sistemático, y tal y como se dice de «superarlo» mediante cualquier tipo de duelo. Todo reconocimiento de la culpa y toda asunción de responsabilidades dejan un residuo insuperable”.

19 The translation is mine, the original says: Die Vernichtungskategorien wurden von den Rasseideologen der SS entwickelt, sortiert und exekutiert - der Tod war der gleiche, so einmalig und so verschieden die Menschen auch waren, die unschuldig in diese Mordmaschine eingeschleust wurden (KOSELLECK, 1998, parr. 13)

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