Repentance for the Holocaust

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After the war ended in the summer of 1945, although different periods were dominated by different sets of questions related to the legacies of the Nazi past, one set seems particularly resilient: questions concerning guilt. One might have expected that, after the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt, Karl Jaspers’s *Schuldfrage*, the Nuremberg trials, and so on, the issue of guilt would have been settled once and for all. But this was not so. Not only was guilt a fiercely contested question in the immediate postwar years, but it resurfaced periodically—especially when postwar generations came of age in the 1960s and then in the 1980s respectively—with a seemingly undiminished intensity that dismayed those who opposed the question altogether. Hence it is especially revealing to

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trace the “repentant disagreements” (and their opposites) along the line of postwar debates concerning guilt.

In early 1945, even before the war ended, Swiss theologian Karl Barth did in Switzerland what Victor Gollancz was doing in the United Kingdom (P1) almost simultaneously—he problematized the idea of collective German guilt on the one hand, and “guiltified” the “innocent” audience on the other. Speaking on the topic “the Germans and us” in front of his fellow Swiss citizens, Barth must have tried his listeners’ patience by listing the “Swiss sins” in Nazi wrongdoings, from the maintainence of “not only correct but friendly relations” with the Hitler regime to supporting the German war industry to the “newfound” antisemitism of Swiss citizens and peasants. “We have spoken a lot about the Germans, but only very little about ourselves. A complement on this side is urgently needed.”

Thus when Barth later spoke in Stuttgart in November 1945—the first time after the war before a German audience—about hoping that the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt would also be pronounced “by the other sides” (of German society, that is, aside from the Protestant church), he had already done just that himself outside: for and to the Swiss. And when he told the Germans that it was in their best interest now to remain undistracted by the guilt of others while focusing on dealing with their own guilt, he himself had given them reasons and “proof” to do what was required. Thus when “the war was the sole guilt of the Germans” was the consensus of Jaspers, Niemöller & Co., Barth, Gollancz et al. were finding guilt in their own national contexts. But apparently for some in Germany, this was not enough. They felt that unless the guilt of the others was also dealt with together with—if not prior to—German guilt, a new injustice would have been committed.

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4. Ibid., 93.
An articulate example of this sentiment would be Helmut Thielicke, a theologian based in Tübingen. On Good Friday (the Friday before Easter) 1947, Thielicke gave a sermon in Stuttgart in which he called the practice of Allied occupation a “scandal” (Ärgernis) in the biblical sense, that is, something that causes others to fall.⁵ Citing the example of the internment camp in Darmstadt, he criticized the “automatic imprisonment” of both the guilty and the innocent as “undignified for human beings and soul killing.”⁶ “In the name of denazification, what happens among us is not just injustice: it is the murder of soul and faith (Seelenmord und Glaubensmord).”⁷ According to Thielicke, the twofold “scandal” that caused a good many Germans to lose faith lay precisely in the “injustice of the occupation powers” and “our silence in the face of it.”⁸ Sounding almost like Martin Walser, he lamented, “I can no longer listen to the church’s guilt confession in public, as long as it is not also publicly, so harshly and mercilessly said vis-à-vis the others.”⁹

Thielicke, and the like-minded,¹⁰ saw a “continuity” between the silence of the church in the Third Reich and its silence now under the Occupation; supposedly, the breaking of this continuity now would be a repentant act on the part of the church. A letter writer in support of Thielicke’s sermon, which he quoted approvingly, formulated this idea more directly thus:

That the internal front in the Third Reich was not clearly distinguished, and so the good, faithful Germans were left to the followers of satanic powers, it was something that the church’s silence then was to blame. But the church’s confession of this guilt today will lose it crediblity and hence its repentance-effecting power (Buße wirkende Kraft), if the

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⁵. Thielicke quoted Matthew 18:7 on “scandals.”
⁷. Ibid., 11.
⁸. Ibid., 10.
⁹. Ibid., 12.
¹⁰. See, for example, the documentation in Matthew Hockenos’s chapter “The Guilt of the Others,” in his Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
church continues with its accursed silence today and again contributes nothing to the clear distinction today [sic] between the kingdom of God and the reign of Satan.\textsuperscript{11}

It was in reaction to this kind of criticism and attack on the credibility of the church that Thielicke exclaimed in his sermon: “Someone should stand up . . . so that it will not be said again that the church remained silent. . . . As caretaker of the soul (\textit{Seelsorger}) and teacher of the church . . . I have the duty to say this out loud to the whole public—precisely so that \textit{the others} can also hear it, for perhaps they have no one who would bring this up to their conscience.”\textsuperscript{12}

Thielicke obviously knew that “no one” was an exaggeration, for later in his sermon he also praised Gollancz’s plea for the Germans (P1), whose Jewish mercy should shame the (Allied) Christians.\textsuperscript{13} He also quoted an “English reporter” who had dutifully recorded what he had heard from a student in Germany: “For God’s sake, don’t turn us into Nazis.”\textsuperscript{14} But instead of assessing and presenting these as initiatives of turning in the outside world and warning his audience accordingly, Thielicke “agreed” with the turners’ self-condemnation, thus seeing in them the exceptions that prove the rule, that is, the case he was trying to make. “How merciless is this world,” he concluded. “Truly, this all is a merciless world. . . . So we stand as messengers . . . in our world of scandals and traps.”\textsuperscript{15}

According to Thielicke himself, this sermon received largely positive feedback from its audience.\textsuperscript{16} But there were others who felt that there was something terribly amiss in this way of sermonizing over the guilt of others. Hermann Diem, a contemporary German theologian, saw that what Thielicke was doing was tantamount to giving poison to his fellow Germans, when they needed medicine

\textsuperscript{11} Thielicke and Diem, \textit{Schuld der Anderen}, 34.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 12–13 (emphasis added).
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 14–15.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 26.
instead. He wrote in a sharply critical letter to Thielicke: “That was no sermon. . . . The listeners left empty-handed. They have received stone instead of bread.” A single objection emphasized in Diem’s critique was against the tendency to turn the biblical call to confess one’s own guilt into an “objective” law, under which even perpetrators can “rightfully” lay claims against the victim:

I’ve also succumbed to the temptation . . . to lay down the confession of guilt as a law (Gesetz), even as I, as a theologian, should have known that it doesn’t work like that. . . . It is entirely out of the question that the “guilt of the others” should mean a scandal for us, or even that we may or must defer the confession of our own guilt because of that. That would mean in effect to defer the comfort of the Good News (Trost des Evangeliums) for us and our people.

The only “law” that Diem deemed appropriate for his fellow Germans in their present situation of guilt was to be found in the Torah, which also served as an explanation as to why the sole focus on one’s own guilt was so crucial. Quoting the book of Exodus (20:5–6), in which cross-generational divine punishment (and also mercy) was proclaimed, Diem said: “[This verse] is more shocking to me than all the news about the present condition in Germany, for then I know why such shocking things happen today in the aftermath of the war. But then I also know that I may do nothing other than preaching this law in the Good News (dieses Gesetz im Evangelium) to my listeners, so they can also believe that it is the merciful God before whom they should confess their guilt, in order to be free from it.”

Diem castigated Thielicke for committing the grave error of turning the attention of his listeners to the guilt of others instead of their own: “You have contributed in the strongest way to that unrepentant (unbußfertig) self-justification of our people. . . . [for] such talk leaves the listener no way out other than that which

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17. Ibid., 19 (emphasis added). See the biblical reference in Matthew 7:9–10.
18. Thielicke and Diem, Schuld der Anderen, 20–21. It is noteworthy that Diem saw the “comforting” role of a “carer of the soul” differently from Thielicke.
19. Thielicke and Diem, Schuld der Anderen, 30.
leads to national self-assertion.” And if, Diem went further, what Thielicke was after was also the turning of the others, he should have addressed them directly instead of going through a domestic audience. Thielicke would concede in his defense that “repentance-readiness” (Bußfertigkeit) was also his goal; but in order to achieve this, he countered, he needed to shore up his credibility as a preacher by speaking also of the guilt of the others. And he questioned whether audienceship should be prioritized over objectivity. Again, he cited the “agreement” of foreigners who had heard his sermon as proof of his point.

Concerning the “instrumentalization” of the guilt of others, Diem’s rejection was absolute. He insisted on the priority of one’s own guilt—even when, as he put it, one could only “believe” in it: “One cannot deal with the guilt of the others simply in order to clear the way for the realization of one’s own guilt, because one must first realize and confess in faith one’s own guilt, and only then can one be done with the guilt of the others.”

In his own sermon on the Day of Repentance (Landesbußtag) Diem illustrated how, by using verses from Jeremiah and Isaiah, a preacher could speak of the guilt of the others without losing the central focus on the guilt of the directly addressed community:

20. Ibid., 21.
21. Ibid., 19.
22. Ibid., 24.
23. Ibid., 23.
25. Thielicke and Diem, Schuld der Anderen, 20. There is a subtle but significant difference between the “belief in guilt” (daß man diese Schuld nur glauben kann), to which Diem referred in his letter to Thielicke, and the belief in the divine origin and purpose of punishment because of one’s own guilt, which he actually pointed to in his own sermon (54–55). In any case, I’m of the opinion that it would be a mistake to take Diem to mean a guilt that is beyond intellectual/perceptual grasp. What “one cannot be persuaded and convinced of,” as he put it, seems rather the three-dimensional relationship among God and human beings (see R2), which “one can only believe in.”
27. The Buß- und Bettag is a Protestant tradition in Germany that can be traced back to the sixteenth century and continues to this day (www.busstag.de).
We must not merely talk about our misery in order to complain and accuse, but in whatever we say, it must resonate like an unmistakable undertone that we have heard and remembered the word of the prophet: “I will not completely destroy you, but I will punish you with moderation, that you will not consider yourself innocent.” How completely different would the discussions have been . . . if they came out of this faith, that God has sent us all that, in order to make us conscious of our guilt.28

Thus in “repentant disagreement” with outside turners such as Gollancz and Grosser, who unequivocally presented the injustice in occupied Germany as Allied guilt rather than “divine,” that is, justified punishment for the Germans, Diem and the like-minded29 invoked a perceptual framework that included this as part and parcel of the legitimate consequences of German guilt. Hence the vehement objection of Diem to his colleague’s “reversal espousal.”

To be fair, Thielicke was no simple sower of German victimhood, for he could—and did—argue in his defense that he had also matter-of-factly stated at the beginning of his Stuttgart sermon that “what we are suffering is our guilt.”30 He seemed only to be reacting to an accusation against the church that he could not take—namely, the church must speak against injustice now or risk its credibility.31 And above all, he had also suffered Nazi oppression in his time because of his links to the Confessing Church, a status that, if Barth’s rule is to be followed, would afford him the authority to speak out against Allied injustice in occupied Germany.32

28. Thielicke and Diem, Schuld der Anderen, 53 (emphasis added). The quote is from Jeremiah 30:11. The translation used by Diem would seem today unusual, for most versions available at present do not read “that you will not consider yourself innocent (daß du dich nicht für unschuldig hältst),” but “I will not let you go unpunished (doch ungestraft kann ich dich nicht lassen).” Diem was apparently quoting from the 1912 version of the Lutherbibel, from which the 2017 version quoted above differs. Regardless of which translation is “closer” to the Hebrew original, the fact is that the 1912 translation lends itself readily to justifying his “guilt-consciousness” interpretation, whereas the newer ones do not.
29. See those propagating the recognition of punishment as just in P4.
30. Thielicke and Diem, Schuld der Anderen, 7.
31. Ibid., 9.
32. Karl Barth, “Ein Wort an die Deutschen,” in Der Götzte wackelt (Berlin: Käthe Vogt Verlag, 1961), 93. This is again in “repentant disagreement” with
Thielicke explained to Diem, “I’m willing to take the risk in order to bring the credibility of my ‘subjectivity’ to bear on these uncertain questions—exactly as I [did] in the Third Reich.” Thielicke’s message to his German audience was evidently on the side of “We Germans deserve it, but the guilt of the others is there” rather than “The guilt of the others is there, but we Germans deserve it.” This but is a decisive difference, a difference that determines the relational thrust of the message.

Remarkable also was Thielicke’s “repentance tone deafness,” that is, his inability to discern the turning efforts of the others as such, but taking this self-criticism as “objective proof” of his own accusations against them. This tone deafness was what Diem roundly criticized when he found the German “inconsistency” in rejecting criticism of Germany or the Germans by foreigners as “interference in German affairs,” while at the same time gladly embracing foreign criticism of themselves (such as criticizing the Nuremberg trials or denazification) as “even the foreigners say so.”

One could imagine what happens when the same takes place in reverse: that is, outsiders taking German self-criticism as “proof” of their definitive condemnation of them.

About fifty years or some two generations after the Thielicke-Diem debate, the question of German guilt did not just “fade away,” but was revived, in 1996, in a controversial book by a young Jewish-American scholar, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, which dealt specifically with the perpetrators of the Holocaust, Hitler’s Willing Executioners. The attention aroused in Germany was unusual for an academic work: by the time its German translation appeared, the German turners like Jaspers, who would not allow even surviving Nazi opponents like himself—who shared the “metaphysical guilt” (see P2)—to take up this weighty task of “turning the others,” until a time “when an atmosphere of trust is there, [and] then one can remind the other of the possibility of guilt (Schuldmöglichkeit).” Karl Jaspers, Die Schuldfrage (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1946), 105.

33. Thielicke and Diem, Schuld der Anderen, 25.
34. Ibid., 28.
number of German essays relating to the book’s thesis and reviews of the book itself was so great that a “documentation” of these could already be published as a book by itself.\textsuperscript{36} And the debates that the author and his thesis ignited lasted in the German press until 2003.\textsuperscript{37}

In the author’s own words, which appeared in the preface specifically designated for the German edition, “In no way is a claim on the eternal ‘national character of the Germans’ made here. . . . I expressly reject such concepts and notions . . . ; I want to make clear why and how the Holocaust happened, why it could become possible at all. . . . The goal of this book is about historical clarification, not moral judgment . . . , I categorically reject the notion of collective guilt.”\textsuperscript{38} Yet, in addition to these rather (by now) uncontroversial statements, the thesis was packed with explosive convictions: “The Holocaust had its origin in Germany; it is therefore first and foremost a German phenomenon. . . . He who wants to make the Holocaust understood must grasp it as a development in German history. . . . The Holocaust could only occur in Germany, . . . I bring forth in this book evidence that shows the complicity (\textit{Mit-täterschaft}) was far more widespread than hitherto assumed. . . . The number of Germans who have committed criminal acts is enormously high.”\textsuperscript{39}

Indeed, the seemingly inconsistent statements, aims, and outcomes of the thesis, especially when it comes to collective guilt, were conducive to multiple (mis)interpretations; hence a large part of the debate had to do with contesting claims as to what the author, Goldhagen, was \textit{actually} saying and/or trying to say

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} Torben Fischer and Matthias N. Lorenz, eds., \textit{Lexikon der ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ in Deutschland: Debatten- und Diskursgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus nach 1945} (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007), 296. See also Avraham Barkai, “German Historians versus Goldhagen,” \textit{Yad Vashem Studies} 26 (1998): 295–328.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 7–12.
\end{itemize}
with his thesis. One unmistakable critical voice against the Goldhagen thesis, though, came from a prominent Jew in Germany at the time, Ignatz Bubis (see P7). In a colloquium in Bonn in the September 1996, which was solely dedicated to Goldhagen’s thesis and jointly organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft, Bubis flatly rejected Goldhagen’s work as “a bad book” containing “many contradictions.” He agreed with Goldhagen when he said that the concept of guilt should only be applied when a person in fact had committed a crime. “But right after that Goldhagen said exactly the opposite: ‘And every individual is part of the collective.’ I think this is very inconsistent.” Bubis also found Goldhagen’s interchangeable use of “Germans” and “perpetrators” unacceptable. “He minglesthe Germans and the perpetrators time and again. In many places he speaks correctly about the perpetrators, but then immediately equates them with the Germans. . . . Goldhagen calls the Germans a people of perpetrators on the one hand, and he rejects the thesis of collective guilt on the other. I don’t know what to make of it.” For Bubis, the only good thing coming out of Goldhagen’s book was the debates.

By calling “ordinary Germans” “willing executioners,” Goldhagen’s thesis was in fact a “turning back” of what Arendt, Gollancz, and Grosser had promulgated: that not all Germans were Nazis or criminally guilty. Nazi propaganda would have succeeded if the outside world thought that Nazis and Germans were the same, argued Arendt in 1945 (P1). True, Goldhagen did not equate the two; all he did was simply take the “Nazi” out of the historical account, and in its place inserted the “German.” In doing this, he was in “agreement” with German turners like Niemöller and Jaspers, who had argued that giving the guilt to the Nazis was not enough, and

41. Ibid., 52.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., 64.
that all living Germans were guilty (in different senses), individually and collectively (P2). Furthermore, as in the case of Thielicke, the turning efforts of the others have become “proof” of Goldhagen’s accusation against them. In supporting his argument that “because the perpetrators of the Holocaust were Germany’s representative citizens, this book is about Germany during the Nazi period and before, its people and its culture,” Goldhagen cited the confession of a former Hitler Youth, which contains stark accusations against the “millions of Germans” sharing antisemitism and the “majority of Germans” behind Hitler.

Goldhagen’s thesis also overturned, perhaps inadvertently, another “movement” Jewish turners before him had endeavored to bring about, namely, to bridge the perceived gap between their audience (i.e., Jews and non-Germans) and the “German” perpetrators/bystanders, for example, by de-demonizing the latter (e.g., Langbein and Arendt; see P1). Time and again, Goldhagen emphasized the “abnormality” of the Germans in Nazi Germany:

The notion that Germany during the Nazi period was an “ordinary,” “normal” society . . . is in its essence false. Germany during the Nazi period was a society which was in important ways fundamentally different from ours today, operating according to a different ontology and cosmology, inhabited by people whose general understanding of important realms of social existence was not “ordinary” by our standards.

[They] were living, essentially, in a world structured by important cultural cognitive assumptions as fantastically different from our own as those that have governed distant times and places.

This comforting distance between “them” and “us” (assuming “us” as non-Germans) was flatly rejected by Yehuda Bauer. On 27 January 1998, the German memorial day for the victims of the

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44. In Jaspers’s conception, whereas “criminal,” “moral,” and “metaphysical” guilts are personal, “political guilt” is expressly collective: “There is . . . collective guilt (Kollektiuschuld) as the political liability (politische Haftung) of the nationals of a state (Staatsangehöriigen).” Jaspers, Schuldfrage, 56.
46. Ibid., 460 (emphasis added).
47. Ibid., 597 (emphasis added).
Shoah, the preeminent Israeli historian from Yad Vashem gave a speech in the Bundestag. Although he did not name the Goldhagen thesis, the reference was nonetheless readily discernible:

And what is terrible about the Shoah is precisely not that the Nazis were inhuman; what is terrible is that they were human—like you and me. It is only a cheap excuse when we say that the Nazis were different from us, that we can sleep in peace, because the Nazis were devils and we are not, because we are not Nazis. Equally cheap an excuse is the view that the Germans were somehow genetically programmed to carry out this mass murder. Many believe that what happened then could only happen in Germany and that it cannot be repeated because most people are not Germans. This attitude is nothing other than reversed racism.48

While Goldhagen’s book was criticized by prominent Jews like Bauer and Bubis,49 it was upheld on the German side by Habermas and others. In 1997, one year after his book first appeared in English, Goldhagen was awarded the “Democracy Prize” in Germany by the Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik, a periodical that was started in 1956 with the support of, among others, Martin Niemöller and Robert Scholl, the father of Hans and Sophie Scholl.50 In his laudatory address for Goldhagen, Habermas “disagreed” with the Jewish critics of Goldhagen’s thesis, who had called it “self-contradictory” and “a bad book.” While taking note of the fine difference between Christopher Browning’s “ordinary men”51 and Goldhagen’s “ordinary Germans,” Habermas

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49. To be sure, there were also numerous German critics of the book, including Marion Gräfin Dönhoff. See Dönhoff, “Warum D. J. Goldhagens Buch in die Irre führt,” Die Zeit, 6 Sept. 1996.


nevertheless saw in the latter not a “stigmatizing reproach” of the Germans, but a “counterfactual reflection (kontrafaktische Überlegung) that has the good sense in a historical context to point out the undisputed high dissemination of antisemitic dispositions in the German populace in that era.”

Goldhagen’s antiuniversalizing focus on the German cultural context was also to praise, for subsequent German generations, argued Habermas, needed exactly this “public use of history” for their self-critical, ethical-political self-understanding:

In historical retrospection, which parts we attribute to the persons and which to the circumstances, and where we draw the line between being free or forced, guilty or not guilty—these depend [on more than just facts, but] also on a “pre-understanding” (Vorverständnis). . . . The hermeneutical readiness to recognize the true extent of responsibility . . . varies with our understanding of freedom. . . . How we see guilt and innocence divided in historical retrospection mirrors also the norms that we mutually, as citizens of this republic, are ready to respect. Here I see Goldhagen’s true merit. . . . [His] clarification refers to specific traditions and mentalities, to ways of thinking and perceiving of a certain cultural context. It refers not to something unchangeable . . . but to factors that can be changed through a change of consciousness (Beweßtseinswandel).

In a subtle reference, Habermas seemed even ready to compare Goldhagen with Jaspers, who was allegedly mocked by Carl Schmitt in 1948 as “a repentance preacher (Bußprediger) who deserves no interest.” Yet, as we have seen in the case of Thielicke, the problem of audienceship—not to mention the content—makes this interpretation of Goldhagen’s role and message nearly untenable, except when embraced and translated by someone from the “inside” to an intra-German message, as was the case with Habermas’s Laudatio.

53. Ibid. “Change of consciousness” is in fact the direct translation of metanoia, or “repentance” in Greek as used in the New Testament. See the introduction.
54. Habermas, “Warum ein ‘Demokratiepreis.’”
In a way, the Goldhagen controversy was a continuation of the Historikerstreit, or “the dispute of historians,” in the 1980s, in which the main question of historical comparison was discussed, and in which Habermas argued also for the “cross-generational liability” thesis (see P12). In his study of this dispute, historian Charles Maier commented on the necessity of “repentant disagreement,” or the phenomenon of “asymmetrical obligations of memory”:

If it behooves Germans to stress the anti-Jewish specificity of the Holocaust, it is sometimes important for Jews to do the opposite. . . . The obligations of memory thus remain asymmetrical. For Jews: to remember that although they seek legitimation of a public sorrow, their suffering was not exclusive. For Germans: to specify that the Holocaust was the Final Solution of the Jewish problem as its architects understood it. The appropriateness of each proposition depends upon who utters it.\(^55\)

In an age where the academic consensus is that the mere mentioning of the author’s/speaker’s biographical background in relation to his book/speech is tantamount to committing the fallacy of ad hominem, Maier’s insistence on the significance of relational position is remarkable. Yet in the foregoing exposition we have seen precisely the existence of this “repentance disagreement” between German and non-German authors/speakers—in its various contexts with its various opposites—in postwar Germany. In abstract terms, the central questions in this disagreement are those concerning the relation between objective truths (whether historical or moral) and the parties in a wounded relationship. It seems that in the realm of mutual-turning dynamics, a “pre-understanding” (Habermas) is required: that certain objective truths are “medicine”—to borrow the “stone instead of bread” metaphor used by Diem—when spoken outside, but are “poisonous” when expressed inside, and vice versa.

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In this light we can better assess the pitfalls of Friedrich Meinecke’s *Deutsche Katastrophe* (German Catastrophe) as a German historian’s—or perhaps the German historian’s—response to the German downfall.\(^{56}\) It is not that it lacked a critique of Nazi Germany and the Germans, or insights into the longer-term, more culturally rooted “causes” of the catastrophe. The problem is that instead of concentrating his readers’ attention on areas in which German turning could take place, Meinecke positioned himself, thereby prepositioning his German readers, as an objective historian (with the credentials of a Nazi opponent) observing great currents of history and standing *outside* the triad of historical truth, the victims, and the perpetrators. Hence the impulse to be “fair” in answering the “historical question” and judging the two human groups: even the victims had their faults,\(^{57}\) and even the perpetrators had their merits.\(^{58}\) This is not the position of the accused, much less the self-accused sinner, but of the self-elevated, self-exempted judge. This is altogether different in spirit from the “historiography of repentant disagreement” required of and by the turners.

For a successful repentant disagreement to form, one needs to pay attention to the specific sets of speaker-audience configurations. This involves risks of abuse for either side of the speaking parties as they embrace the more difficult parts of the truth, as neither has control over the response of the other, which they nonetheless depend on. In the following chapter, we will turn to a particularly

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57. “The antisemitic movement from the beginning of the 80s brought the first signs of lightning. The Jews . . . had given rise to various scandals (*mancherlei Anstoß erregen*) since their full emancipation. They have contributed much to the gradual devaluation and invalidation of the liberal world of ideas.” Meinecke, *Deutsche Katastrophe*, 29. Though immediately he also spoke about Jewish intellectual and economic contributions to Germany.

58. “We searched for what could be ‘positive’ in Hitler’s work, and found also something that corresponded to the great objective ideas and requirements of our time [i.e., his fusion of the two currents of nationalism and socialism].” Meinecke, *Deutsche Katastrophe*, 112. Though again the historian also concluded that Hitler had left the Germans nothing but rubble.
risky move by the victims—the turning toward their own guilt—which exposes them to both abuse from the outside and attack from the inside. Yet it is also this move that completes repentance as mutual-turning—after turning as mercy in its various forms (R3) and turning as participation in the sinner’s renewal (R6).