A Psychoanalytic Reflection on Collective Memory as a Psychosocial Enclave: Jews, German National Identity and Splitting in German Psyche (*)

Abstract
In this paper, I argue that collective identity is built on collective memory, but that this memory is not stable. Firstly, different factions remember differently. Secondly, collective memory and identity are undermined by a fundamental, internal disorder, ultimately a dread of collapse, which I liken to Freud’s Unbehagen in der Kultur. From a psychoanalytic angle – in particular, recent theories of ‘social defence systems’, based on ‘splitting’ and ‘projection’ – factional conflict allows a retreat from the fundamental disorder, into a ‘psychosocial enclave’ by externalizing into conflict the otherwise internal dread of collapse. Social, cultural, political or military divisiveness favours such a structure, especially in support of ethnic or national identity. After providing the theoretical background for this model, I use the division and re-unification of post-World-War-II Germany as an example of coming to terms with the past in establishing a collective identity. Two unexpected consequences follow from a psychoanalytic approach: firstly, the conflict between the two Germanies established a psychosocial enclave, which allowed a retreat from memory of the Holocaust; secondly, the reunification of Germany brought out again the need to come to terms with Nazi period, in order to reclaim national self-esteem. National memories need to converge, and objectifying work, such as that to which German historians have contributed, is essential to managing collective identity in a reasonably stable, democratic form.

Key words:
Psychoanalysis, Freud, psychosocial enclave, collective memory, projection, social defence system, Nazi period, Holocaust.

If there are too many key words, then please try to keep at least psychoanalysis, Freud, collective memory, Nazi period, Holocaust

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Collective Memory

Collective memory, like individual memory, is the backbone that holds identity together. But, I will argue, collective identity is inherently unstable, threatened with dissolving into itself. The contradiction between identity and its dissolution creates an inner tension, an ambivalence, akin to what Freud (1930) called an Unbehagen in der Kultur – an unease or malaise in culture – that is quickly divided, projected and distributed into factions in the external world: political, economic, religious, cultural and ideological. The internal unease and dissension then appears stabilized by its transformation into conflict between them. This fragile, but stabilized, situation can be thought of as an organization of these factions. Each is now threatened by attack from the outside itself, rather than dissolution from the inside, and all are drawn together into a system. The story of this organization is recorded in the interlocking collective memories of these factions, and the whole system offers a haven from the dread of internal collapse.

Borrowing from a rich psychoanalytic literature on ‘pathological organizations’ and ‘psychic retreats’ (to be reviewed later), I call this haven a ‘psychosocial enclave’. Inside this organization, ‘normal’ life continues, relieved of the threat of an implosion of identity or of open conflict. Memories and histories consolidate the sense of identity, while offering channels through which ambivalence can be sufficiently mitigated by political processes, cultural activities and cultural analysis. While collective memory is shored up by idealization of ‘us’ and contempt of ‘them’, and by being drawn towards factionalism and conflict, the proto-history of record-keeping and the discipline of historical scholarship and debate test it against reality. ‘Successful’ collective identity is less collective, and more tempered by the disenchantment delivered by historical debate in a political forum that sustains it, as in a democracy.

With this model in mind, I aim to show how the instability of collective memory was managed in the face of the extreme challenge of reconstructing a tolerable identity in post-war Germany. Nazi Germany had erupted into annihilating violence, and left for post-war Germany the dilemma of how to remember, how to have a history and a collective identity, when that memory included the planned extermination of a people and thereby a necessary integration of an unconscionable period of history into the contemporary memory. This process has been called the Vergangenheitsbewältigung – the coming to terms while the past. It brought with it the ethical problem of whether it could ever be finished and the political desideratum of forming a democracy, which could not happen without the capacity to bear history, and it was enacted in the public forum of the Historikerstreit, the debate of the historians.

I conclude that the defeat and division of post-war Germany stabilized its identity by breaking up its idealized, illusory omnipotence and sequestering it in two identities in conflict with each other, but also in collusion to sustain a psychosocial enclave. Reunification reinforced the dream of recovering nationhood, but it also fuelled the return of the idealization, the eruption of ambivalence and the collapse of the psychosocial enclave. My aim is to bring the historical account into alignment with a psychoanalytic account and to show that there are points at which these accounts lock together and together to confirm the thesis of a psychosocial enclave.
The Struggle to Remember and to Forget

From a psychoanalytic angle, remembering is a difficult and compromised process. It is not just a matter of recalling information that has been out of awareness, but of re-integrating clusters of meaning-filled associations into the flow of consciousness – associations not just unnoticed, but held away from consciousness. These dynamically unconscious (Freud 1923, p. 18), virtual memories are distortions and fragments, scattered around the internal terrain of the mind and mixed with the external world by projection and introjection. It is the work of psychoanalysis to restore individual memory from these shards, and of historians to restore social memory and consolidate social consciousness. If remembering is so tortuous in the individual, how much more is it so in social remembering? Social memory ranges from what a few individuals have experienced and might recognize in conversation, to the often raw and immediate representations of events in the media, to the disciplined, systematic work of historians, which forms retrospective, corrected, matured representations that filter back into the society.

A model of individual or social memory, which is based on a concept of a dynamic unconscious, implies that remembering is always in the balance against forgetting. It seems almost a tautology to say that one retains good memories and forgets bad memories, or that the continuity of remembering would be easier if it built up a sense of a ‘good’ rather than a ‘bad’ person. The same would hold for social memory and the identity that it narrates.

Building on a Freudian base, my analysis will be principally in the Kleinian/Object Relations tradition. In such a model (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983), we would say that the infant – and the nucleus of infantile functioning in the adult – struggles to preserve a ‘good’ internal object, represented by the breast, against the destructive urges that attack it. In such a state of primal ambivalence, the psyche suffers from anxiety of persecution by an internal object that has turned bad from attacks that fill it with the ego’s projected aggression. It also suffers from the anxiety of having damaged the good internal object, with attendant guilt and the urge to repair it. It swings between what Melanie Klein called the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position (Klein, 1948, 1952). The ego identifies with its objects, and therefore its identity is bound up with the state of its internal object world. Following this model, I conceive of an internal world at the social level as an unconscious dimension held in common by the factions in the organization/psychosocial enclave, inside of which internal objects are projected, both to relocate them and to work them over. The collective memory of a faction will tend towards an idealization of itself, based on identifying with a good object and projecting bad objects into other factions, and the struggles to reintegrate them.

This internal world of psyches, shared and bound into a social psyche, is invested in the external world by projection, infusing external reality with the power of phantasy, and external reality is introjected into the internal world, stabilizing it. One could think of national identity as a social ego, with its attributes – what it holds dear to its self-esteem – as its good object, which would be subject to ambivalence as would the internal good object. (Hinshelwood 1987; Segal 1995). Leopold von Ranke, a name synonymous with history as a profession in the 19th century, came close to such a psychoanalytic perception of national identity.
Our mother country is not where we find happiness at last. Our mother country, on the contrary, is with us, in us…We are rooted in it from the beginning, and we can never emancipate ourselves from it’ (quoted by Maier1988, p.65)

Any actual society is composed of individuals too diverse, in social class, age, generation, gender, ethnic and religious affiliations, to speak of social memory. Nonetheless, to the extent that they cohere they also identify with each other and, in their ego-ideals, with the leadership that represents this coherence. In that respect, the society has a history, no matter how contested among sectors of the society, and at a more objective level, among historians. It is an aspiration to attain a collective memory, supported by a collective history, and it is an idealization.

I take this aspiration to include the wish to have a history that supports national esteem, and that this national esteem is the externalized form of preserving a good internal object. In modern history, perhaps the most overt case of aspiring to establish a collective memory, a history and a restored good object has been the reconstruction of Germany following the defeat of World War II and the suppression of the Nazis. The virulence of the assault on humanity, unleashed particularly on the Jews as a people, suggests an irrational primitiveness associated with an assault on the good object. The reconstruction of Germany has been riven with conflict over the nature of that assault: internally, over the recognition and response to guilt; externally, over restitution to Jews and to the state of Israel. It erupts in politics and in popular memory, but also in the striving for objectivity, in often partisan debates of the historians, especially the so-called Historikerstreit (the struggle of the historians), triggered in particular by Jürgen Habermas’ intervention in Die Zeit in 1986. The Historikerstreit took place in a public intellectual space in the press, and the historian’s work in the wake of it was not just for the profession, but was a ‘project of political pedagogy, implying a large-scale programme of civic education and school reform’ (Eley 1988, p. 194; for an overview, see Maier 1988).

Can one say that Germany as a nation has been tarnished by the Nazis; that all Germans through the generations are and will be morally responsible? How can a German identity be reconstituted without incorporating the Nazi period; yet if it is incorporated, how can there be a basis for an identity? The atrocity was so extreme that it can neither be brought into history nor written out of history. In Habermas’ view, writing in 1986, even the grandchildren of those too young to have been involved in the Third Reich are part of the identity of the Germany that did include it. ‘The simple fact is that even those born later have grown up in a context of life [Lebensform] in which that was possible’ (1986; translated by Maier 1988, p. 57). It was not a matter of shaming a younger generation, innocent of the crimes, but one of its inclusion in national identity, built up by sharing in a ‘life-world’ of symbols and culture, and a purposeful, rational, functional world. For Habermas, there is a ‘contract with the dead’ and a history that ‘must remain painful’(1986, p. 59). It is a language of contradiction in an external dimension, but chimes with that of an internal world, one that invites self-reflection among historians equivalent to that of the psychoanalyst (Maier 1988, p. 63).

There has been, however, a reluctance among historians to make use of psychoanalytic insights, including the extensive study by Alexander and Margarete Mtscherlich (1967), to which I will
return later. The Mitschertlichs argued that Germans affectively detached themselves from the past – repressed it. National repression, like the individual repression observed in the clinic, had frozen the mourning through which the nation, like the individual, could recover self-esteem and liberation from the past. The repression of history as national memory, akin to the psychic repression known to psychoanalysts, did not sit well with historians of the Nazi period, some of whom argued that attributing guilt to the nation obstructed the reconstruction of German national identity. Post-war German historiographical tradition broke into a plurality of historical views of German history (Berger 1995; Herf 1997), yet also hungered for German national identity – an identity threatened with the memory of its Nazi history (Eley 1988). Reunification promised the restoration of national identity, but also brought back memories. Eley (2004, p. 176) speaks of the wave of nationalistic enthusiasm, with '[p]atriotic expressions of belief drawing upon national history, which increasingly risked venturing even into the forbidden territory of the Third Reich...[but] [as] it turns out, public memory in unified Germany remains highly contested...the most spectacular evidence of this [accompanying] the publication of the German edition of Daniel Goldhagen’s controversial book, Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust.’

As historian, Bern Faulenbach, Chairman of the Social Democratic Party historical commission, put it in 1988:

> There have to be serious doubts as to whether or not complex societies can develop consistent identities at all... There is much to be said in favour of accepting the existence of different identities and developing a historical consciousness that allows for the tension which exists between those different identities, and which encourages critical self-reflection above all. (in Berger 1995, p. 194)

Yet the yearning for national identity remained. In his overview of historians’ attitudes toward nation-building before reunification, Berger, said that ‘...some historians see the determining characteristic of the Federal Republic as its provincialism [and] they have argued [that] the Federal Republic is revealed as an artificial creation of the Allies, bereft of any identity of its own. They see a new German nation-state as a genuine opportunity to transcend the old Federal Republic’s alleged lack of historical roots, and write German history from Karl the Great to Kohl the Great...’ (Ibid: p. 200; also see Eley 1988 on historians of both left and right who argue for recovering a sense of national identity and pride).

Berger points out that it is primarily neo-Prussian historians who see a return to ‘the cornerstone of the old völkisch nationalism, the idea of ethnicity [on which an] identity derived from ethnic collective memories’ will be built (p. 200). But not only right-wing conservatives hold this view. Even the distinguished labour historian and widow of Willy Brandt, Brigitte Seebacher-Brandt, ‘criticized the inability of the left to understand the “imponderabilities of the soul of the Volk”, and welcome[d] the return of the nation: “The nation remains the natural and normal, the obvious frame of reference for the people, into which they are born”’(p. 201).

The very public Historikerstreit was precipitated by the visit by President Reagan to a German military base in Bitburg, West Germany, on 5 May 1985 (see Bartov 1992; Eley 1988; Maier...
1988, pp. 9–16). ‘By intention, this was to be an act of symbolic resolution, a closing of the books on the past, the consummation of Germany’s long-earned return to normalcy’ (Eley 1988, p. 176). The event honoured Germany’s fallen soldiers as freedom fighters against communism, but it also brought together the commemoration of German soldiers, including the SS, and the victims of the Holocaust, implying a moral equivalence that cancelled the debt to the victims of the Nazis. The event unleashed fury on all sides, including German nationalists who saw Germany’s continuing moral debt as a victimization by its enemies. Jürgen Habermas opened the Historikerstreit with criticisms of an apologist tendency of some German historians, who wanted to lessen the moral burden of responsibility for Nazi atrocities, and to call for recognition of German suffering and victimhood, particularly in the East at the hands of the Red Army. At the heart of it was how to reconstruct a German national identity; whether and how to lay the past to rest, a past that had been corrupted by the Nazi period. Habermas called for a ‘constitutional patriotism’ based on Western liberal democratic values, as opposed to a nationalist patriotism, as a path of recovery from the deviation of German history from them, in the ‘Sonderweg’, or special path (Eley 1988, p. 183; Habermas 1986; Maier 1988, pp. 34–65).

The recasting of Germans as perpetrators into victims, both soldiers and civilians, as the equivalent of the Holocaust, was common (Eley 2004, p. 177; Herf 1997, pp. 82-97, 224; Lüdke 1993). For conservatives who wanted to preserve national identity, memory was being distorted by the youth and a few leftists who opened wounds from the past by exposing a Nazi period that best should have remained concealed (Eley, 1988, p. 198). They wanted to finish with Nazism and finish the normalization of German history, which the spectacular success of West German economic growth, its firm democratic structure and embeddedness in the Western Alliance and Western liberal values had already shown. Habermas recognized the suffering under the Nazi’s and the bravery of German troops and civilians in the East in the closing stage of the war, but argued that drawing an abstract moral equivalence between their victimhood and that of the Jews allowed a slippage in which the Holocaust lost its impact in German memory.

Nonetheless, everyone accepted that Germany had been cast into a process of Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Usually translated as ‘coming to terms with the past’, this rendering repeats a core post-war German conundrum. Literally ‘mastering the past’ (Maier 1988, p. 7), it implies overcoming it, getting over it. But to master the past leads away from remembering it in the sense of assimilating it in all its dimensions. While repression might not be the most appropriate way to understand an absence of a collective mood, or of a process, such as mourning, a psychological concept that includes an unconscious is still needed. ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ apparently recognized a moral burden of the Nazi past, but also did not recognize it. It was more management than Freud’s (1914a) concept of Durcharbeitung – ‘working through’ – in which memory is restored in the sense of an assimilation of the past into the flow of consciousness through repeated tracing of all the aspects of repressed memory in their emotional as well as cognitive dimensions (Adorno 1959; Bartov 1992, p. 283). Although post-war historians have concentrated on Vergangenheitsbewältigung and of historicizing modern German history, into which the Nazi period would find a place and therefore a historical meaning, they have generally not thought of the inclusion of the Nazi period as the recovery of memory from repression. There was no forgetting and there was no repression. The Holocaust was persistently in the public mind, the nation-state should be restored and the idea that Germany had not mourned its past aimed to create a mythic second guilt that obstructed it (Berger 1995,
Repressing and the surmounting of repression have been pinned to the Mitscherlichs and left there.

Reviewing literature on coming to terms with the past, Geoff Eley comments that

[w]hether or not they ‘were able to mourn’ [referring to Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich 1967], Germans had never been silent about the 1940s, and public talking was vociferously selective rather than merely repressed. Excellent new scholarship has been exploring how these mechanisms of memory worked. By hiding the reality of the full breadth of the support for Nazism, for example, the salient patterns of public remembrance during the 1950s repositioned the German people instead as victims – whether as the oppressed sufferers beneath the Hitler dictatorship, as the GDR’s official discourse of anti-fascism proclaimed; or in the Adenauer era’s emphasis on the ravages of the Red Army, the forcible expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe, and the imposing of Communism in the Soviet occupation zone. (2004, p. 177).

In his in-depth study of memory in post-war Germany, Jeffrey Herf (1997) follows Adorno’s view that ‘the extinction of memory is far more the accomplishment of an all too wide-awake consciousness than of its weakness in the face of the overwhelming power of unconscious processes’ (p. 10, quoting Adorno, p. 558). Herf details what he calls ‘multiple restorations’: the memory that emerged from the varied forms taken by this ‘wide-awake consciousness’, a divided memory in post-war Germany. The political, ideological and economic separations and confrontations between East and West Germany also divided and distorted the memory of the Nazi period, specifically of the Holocaust. Each Germany turned the other into an enemy at whose hands each was victimized, and this new history swamped that of the fascist perpetration. Beneath this victimization lay victimization of the Jews, which was forgotten in the mutual antagonism (Herf 1997, pp. 8, 25, 387). Omar Bartov argues that ‘[t]he elusive and yet ubiquitous presence attributed to the Jews by the regime played an even more important role in creating an inverted perception of victimhood throughout the Nazi era’ (1998, p. 784).

Jews and German Nationalism

The nationalist core in the life of the country is a collective illusory state of mind, with both an allure and dread of dissolution. In Freud’s (1921) model of the collective psyche, the organizing agency of the psyche, the ego, lived under the sway of the ego-ideal. Chasseguet-Smirgel drew out most clearly the developmental root of the ego-ideal and its distinctive influence in the formation and persistence of collective group life. Formed from ‘primary narcissism’ (Freud 1914b), like that of the infant, who lives in the unreality of an apparently objectless world, the ego-ideal promises a return to what might be called an infantile psychosis. The collective group re-instates a version of this narcissism through the coalescence of ego and ego-ideal into a state of collective, euphoric identity. In clinging to such a state, the collective group magnifies its narcissism into a delusional grandiosity, with sense of perfection and unlimited righteous power. The leader of the group, swollen by the massive concentrated projection of individual ego-ideals, becomes a messianic, mesmerizing leader. The group swells with narcissistic grandiosity as it is regressively pulled towards a virtual collapse of objective reality into objectless self-completion.
Its object-related, reality-based engagement with the world gives way to delusion, a regressive force, a pull, a sway, a thrall, not a realised state, for which psychosis is an appropriate label. Chasseguet-Smirgel had Hitler in mind, but also any display of collective group life and its correlated group mentality. One could speak of an absolute state of mind in society and the individual (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1984;1986; Figlio 2006; Freud1914b).

But what is the connection between the yearning for national identity and the anti-Semitism and the aim to eliminate Jews from Europe, which was the fundamental preoccupation of Nazism? The Jews represented this very quest for national identity. Their extermination was to establish German national identity for Germans, as if it were sapped by the Jews. In what Freud called ‘the narcissism of minor differences’, neighbours harboured the most persistent grievances against each other. ‘[P]recisely communities with adjoining territories, and related to each other in other ways as well, … are engaged in constant feuds and in ridiculing each other…’ (1930, p. 114). He went on to say that

the Jewish people, scattered everywhere, have rendered the most useful services to the civilizations of the countries that have been their hosts; but unfortunately all the massacres of the Jews in the Middle Ages did not suffice to make that period more peaceful and secure for their Christian fellows. When once the Apostle Paul had posited universal love between men as the foundation of his Christian community, extreme intolerance on the part of Christendom towards those who remained outside it became the inevitable consequence (Ibid: 114)

The clear implication was that Jews provided the ‘neighbour’ that the host community could vilify, exclude and annihilate, on behalf of its own coherence; and they provided it for any community. Without such a contribution, new ‘neighbours’ would erupt from immanent rifts inside the host community. As eternal neighbours, Jews might be different from their hosts, but as Freud says, ‘often in an indefinable way’ (1939, p. 91). Freud suggests that the antipathy of the narcissism of minor differences does not arise as a consequence of difference, but in the creation of difference that is then abhored. The problem is not managing difference, but managing the endogenous unease in human society, which presses for a difference to attack (Figlio 2012).

When Freud speaks of the special service performed by the Jew, one has to ask whether the hatred of the Jew expressed a particular aspect of entity/identity formation, one which brought out this highly regressive feature. The problem with saying that the gypsies, homosexuals, or, today, Islam, have experienced the same hatred as have the Jews, is that it does not discriminate the ultimate motives of hatred, or perhaps even the forms of hatred. I think the key ‘myth’ that underlies the Jewish experience is related to the Diaspora. For the Jews, it expresses a yearning to return; for the gentiles, it expresses a fear of being taken over by their return. In the German psyche, Jews represented a particular kind of foreign body: one that threatened to be so like them as to be indistinguishable; in effect, insidiously to become German. This anxiety was exacerbated by the belief that Jews aimed to insinuate themselves and to undermine the distinctively German character. They were a massive, centripetal force, threatening to implode...
the German national and ethnic character. In a paranoid state of mind, the Nazi state could also claim that war against the Jews and their Soviet allies was preventive war (Maier 1988, pp. 67–70).

While assimilation into German culture was often seen by Jews as well as non-Jews to be the way to resolve ‘the Jewish question’, Jews were reviled for the ease with which they could pass as Germans. They could be absorbed without anyone knowing it was happening. This crypto-assimilation was experienced as a treacherous force that undermined German national character. It was ubiquitous, pressing inwards from everywhere. It was like capitalism: an expanding, supra-national, cosmopolitan agency: the very antithesis of the uniquely ethnic, cultural basis of nationalism.

The image of ‘the Jew’ as the state's most insidious enemy by dint of being both distinctly and irreversibly alien and capable of such mental and physical dissimulation that made him appear ‘just like us’ was a legacy of late nineteenth-century political and racial anti-Semitism... If the new economic forces were anonymous and faceless, Jewish emancipation and assimilation created a new kind of Jew who could no longer be identified as such with the same ease as in the past. Seemingly indistinguishable from his gentile neighbors, ‘the Jew’ as an identifiable ‘other’ was disappearing, at the same time that his power, according to the anti-Semitic logic, was expanding immeasurably ...

Central to the ‘world view’ and functioning of the Third Reich was the assertion that its elusive enemies were at once ubiquitous, indestructible, and protean. That is why Nazism was not only committed to killing all the Jews but was predicated on the assumption that there would always be more "Jews" to kill’ (Bartov 1998, pp. 779, 780, 785–6).

This usurpation and depletion was happening inside German nationalism, and was therefore more like being drawn into an abyss. It was the social equivalent to psychosis: the ‘invasion’ by the Jews was, psychically, the re-introjection of the fundamental projection into the Jews of the urgent need to infiltrate and possess them. The Holocaust was a violent eruption against this threat, in its paranoid form, and it was against the resurgence of this catastrophe in the form of remembering the Nazi period that a psychosocial defence was organized in post-war Germany.

Collective Memory as a Psychosocial Enclave

The history – distorted, broken, displaced by the division of Germany – was also an unconscious history fashioned by ‘defence’ in the psychoanalytic meaning of the word. Repression is not simply forgetting, as historian critics have claimed: it is the breaking and displacement of affective investment in ideas (Freud 1915a). There are, in addition, defences that are more primitive, more elemental, than repression. They divide the psyche (splitting), so that memory is carried away in disowned psychic fragments. Such a fragments are ‘projected’ into another (projective identification), and not recognized (Klein 1946; on splitting vs. repression, see Hinshelwood 2008). This way of thinking about defence, which has become common in clinical psychoanalysis, has been applied to groups, which in their internal complexity or in their relationships to each other, become repositories of these psychic fragments (Segal 1987; 1995). Groups can act as repositories for each other, and the system of mutual repositories stabilizes all the components, because they need each other as repositories. Individuals retain their ‘normality’
because their membership in a sector or a group, consolidated by mutual projective systems, reinforces their experience of themselves as normal agents cleansed of unpleasant thoughts and memories. Systems of this sort, which have been studied in detail, are called ‘social defence systems’ (Hinshelwood 1987) or ‘psychic retreats’ (Steiner 1993) or what I call a psychosocial enclave.

The division of Germany into two states, each supported by a power bloc, each bloc aggressively confronting the other, divided the nation. This splitting – of the nation and of the psyche – prevented a catastrophic reintrojection of the massive aggression and the dread of dissolution that had been exported into enemies, internal and external. Much as the splitting separated individuals from relatives and friends, especially after the construction of the wall in 1961, it also provided one object for a purified identification and another object as a repository for projection of the catastrophe of dissolution. The consolidation of this process into an organization established a psychosocial enclave in which individuals could live apparently normal lives by depositing the catastrophe in a repository. The psychosocial enclave stabilized a primal ambivalence, akin to Freud’s *Unbehagen*.

Segal (1995) argues that ambivalence is built into the very nature of object relating. The core developmental task is to take on and work through this ambivalence; that is, to deplete it of its power by reconnecting it as much as possible to its origin, through symbolizing and repairing these primary object relations. Otherwise, individuals regress into their psychotic cores, in which they overcome the guilt of ambivalence by deflecting aggression into others, and projecting it as well, thereby creating hateful, threatening, aggressive enemies, over which they omnipotently triumph. This psychotic core protects them from guilt – indeed, ‘a very important function of the group…is to defend individuals against their guilt feelings’, but also for that reason, groups find it almost impossible to face collective guilt’ (1995, p. 165). When guilt threatens to emerge, they are tempted to opt for a manic solution, which confirms their omnipotence, rather than face the pain.

Groups take on this psychotic core by acting in a mad way, often megalomaniac and omnipotent, rather than anchored in reality, restoring the sense of normality to group members who continue to act psychotically, but with their psychosis assimilated by the group. Segal concentrates on psychotic mechanisms to assuage guilt. She argues that the loss of the Soviet Union as an enemy, after its disintegration, by nations in the West, entailed the loss of delusional superiority over a dangerous enemy and the need to find another enemy, in order to avoid collective guilt. Groups need enemies, in order to avoid facing internal reality, just as individuals do. Segal says that guilt about Vietnam provoked the Gulf war, and in agreement with Fornari (1966), that all wars provoked by the unresolved guilt from previous wars.  

If groups become psychotic to make the individuals in the group normal, then without an enemy of a nation, individuals would again be threatened by their psychotic cores and would create subgroups, factions whose psychotic behaviour would protect them. The faction members become ‘normal’ in the absence of guilt, while the faction madly creates and attacks enemies. The reason I emphasize the eruption of a psychotic core, rendered normal by the faction, is to return to Segal’s concept of a primal ambivalence, which is just this side elemental terror. ‘The earliest
defence set up by the ego is directed against the subject’s own sadism and the object attacked, both of these being regarded as sources of danger. The defence is of a violent kind, different from the mechanism of repression’ (Klein 1930, p. 232). This primitive world is a swirl of pure violence. Both the attack and the defence are violent, with no appeal to an external reality that might limit it – no appeal to paranoia, which, though also savage, anchors the source of the violence in an enemy persecutor that is attacked. Of course, because the enemy is a projection, the defence exacerbates the danger and fuels further conflict (Segal 1995, p. 164), but at least there is an object, albeit rooted in projection.

But what is violence that has no object, no differentiation from its source? With what name can we fasten it down? In my view, psychoanalytic writers from a variety of orientations have pointed to such a state. Freud called a prehistoric ambivalence, built into the fabric of the psyche, ‘primal ambivalence (1910, p. 200). Segal speaks of an ambivalence ‘which is there from the beginning’ (1995, p. 159). I will use it to refer to a primal state that adumbrates another reality, at the threshold of the emergence of a psyche in an object world (Freud 1915b, pp. 138–9; Figlio 2000, pp. 78–82), one that combines the deepest yearning with the deepest dread, one that does not distinguish them, and in that sense, is a primal ambivalence.

Primal ambivalence would characterize the limit of the fragmentation of the ego to the point at which one could no longer speak of an extreme form of splitting, but of fragments, or of confusion between ego and object. This state of catastrophe is evoked by likeness between subject and object, which loosens the anchor in external reality. Freud spoke of a ‘narcissism of minor differences’, in groups that were very like each other, whose very likeness provoked aggression (1930, p. 114; with respect to ethnic conflict, Figlio forthcoming). Here is where, as Freud implies, the Jewish people play their unique role.

Such a catastrophic primal state, which in itself lies beyond representation, may be captured in an organized psychic structure, a ‘defensive organization’, as a refuge against being overwhelmed by confusion and anxiety’ (O’Shaughnessy 1981, p. 360; Segal 1972), a safe haven from the guilt that reality brings to the surface, from paranoid anxiety and from the anxiety of indifferentiation (Bleger 1967). As O’Shaughnessy pointed out, such a protective organization offers more than relief from unbearable anxiety: it provides military service for attacking the object world that has become an enemy. Its weapons are degradation, mockery, distortion of the truth, arrogance – in general, a perverse excitement in traduction. It delivers its attack on the object world from the heights of delusional superiority.

Psychoanalytic writers have described various forms of such organizations as they appear in the clinical setting (Bleger 1967; Hoffer 1954; Hopper 1991; Jaques 1955; Menzies-Lyth 1959; O’Shaughnessy 1981, 1992; Steiner 1993), and many authors use similar ideas without naming the structure. John Steiner (1993) developed most fully the concept of a ‘psychic retreat’. For Steiner, the catastrophe is to be overwhelmed by anxiety pressed into the ego caught somewhere in a spectrum of psychic states organized around the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. The psychic retreat offers a haven from impingement by internal and external reality.
Steiner is concerned with relief from paranoid and depressive anxieties. Beneath this level there is an ambivalence that cannot be organized into good and bad by reference to experience, because it lies at the embryonic creation of an ego/object world. In Freud’s formulation, this ego/object world is created in aggression, in which the first differentiation of object from ego occurs. José Bleger (1967), who first drew attention to a retreat from indifferentiation, spoke of a catastrophic state of disorganization that he identified in psychotic patients. These patients needed, for sanity, to dissociate themselves from this psychotic nucleus, which presented itself as an entity in which no distinction could be made between self and other, good and bad, different identifications and different stages of development (p. 102) – a kind of organized indifferentiation (pp. 8–11).

Sanity can only be maintained if there is a ‘depository’ for this psychotic nucleus – a place to put it, from which a distance can be maintained, in order to avoid its forcing its way back into the ego and causing total psychic disorganization. In the clinical situation, establishing and sustaining such a dissociation depends on using the analyst as a depository and rigidly controlling the relationship, so that the nucleus remains in the analyst and the analytic relationship is immobilized (p. 47). ‘Loss of the immobilization and of control of the [psychotic nucleus], that is to say, its mobilization, is massive, blasting, paroxysmal and provokes or threatens to provoke the total and immediate extinction of the ego of the subject’ (pp. 47–48; my translation, Bleger’s emphasis). In my view, a similar mechanism operates at a social level. The repository is the enemy that is to be annihilated and also the object that must be controlled.

I would distinguish three components relevant to post-war Germany: firstly, a paranoid-schizoid defence of splitting in order to relocate the threat from internal dissolution into an external threat and to preserve an internal good object; secondly, an imminent guilt for the attack on the Jews as a good object; thirdly, a structuring organization of the defensive posture, withdrawing from the anxiety of psychic collapse and also from the paranoid anxiety of splitting and the depressive anxiety of guilt for the extermination of the Jews and the loss of the nation. Bleger concentrates on the protection from psychic collapse into indifferentiation, a psychotic state; Steiner focuses on a retreat from paranoid-schizoid and depressive anxieties. I think both are operative, and I include them in the concept of a psychosocial enclave.

From the angle of defence, one could say that the sense of German national experience, as a collective identity, was a psychosocial enclave. It depended on the process of eliminating internal deterioration. It also depended on collective memory, an illusion of being rooted in German national soil and having grown robustly until it was infected. It is in that sense that I speak of the ambivalence of collective memory. In post-war period, the defence included a retreat from the paranoid-schizoid anxiety of creating a Jewish enemy and from the depressive anxiety arising from the guilt of the Holocaust. Beneath them lay the dread of dissolution through the presence of the Jews, a dread conveyed by the need to eliminate them. Collective memory then had to build around the core identity of the perpetrator.

**Collective Memory of German Nationalism as a Psychosocial Enclave**
The post-war occupation zones crystallized into two states, one closely allied to the Western democracies, the other to the Soviet Union, followed by reunification in 1990. We have, therefore, a case of the political, economic, ideological and administrative splitting of a nation, followed by a reintegration. The theory of the psychosocial enclave implies that the division of Germany facilitated the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* by offering a retreat from internal dissolution, and that reunification brought back the dread of dissolution by undermining the psychosocial enclave.

According to the theory, the primal ambivalence, which covered the dread of dissolution (the catastrophe), fomented internal aggression (as in Freud’s *Unbehagen*). The explosion of violence aimed to project this internal aggression and the underlying catastrophe. The Jews as a people were the target object for systematically removing it, while aggression was projected everywhere, pushing Germany’s borders without limit. The humiliation of defeat in World War II forced the projected aggression and the catastrophe back into Germany – a ‘forced introjection’. But now Germany was two interacting systems, each a repository for projection by the other. The common task was to marginalize the Holocaust through an unconscious collaboration. The GDR, now part of the Soviet alliance that had fought the Nazis, regarded itself as essentially anti-fascist. The FRG, now part of the Western alliance, created a miracle of capitalist success, which in itself demonstrated well-being untrammeled by guilt, but which also held the GDR in place. The GDR projected its Nazi underbelly into the FRG, where it was surrounded by capitalist success. The FRG projected its Nazi underbelly into the GDR, where it was surrounded by Soviet antifascism. The GDR identified the FRG with capitalism and through capitalism Nazism and with Judaism, and could feel that it was a victim of them all. The FRG identified the GDR with Soviet tyranny, and through it to Nazi tyranny, and could feel it was a victim of them all. Their ‘unconscious collaboration’ created a psychosocial enclave, a haven from guilt and from the dread of dissolution. This haven was undermined by reintegration.

The Historikerstreit might be seen as a site in which Germans struggled to remember. The intellectuals, mostly historians, represented the conflicted versions of a fraught German identity, itself broken into power blocs. Their passions reinforced identifications with particular interests and ideals, and their shared professional integrity and objectivity pulled factions into a common identity. The language through which the battle to create a collective memory that would manage the Nazi period and provide the backbone for German identity reveals the conflict of psychic defence, which simultaneously acknowledged and repudiated its past. *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* acknowledges that there is a past with which German collective memory must ‘come to terms’, but its mode was mastery and defeat, not Freud’s *Durcharbeitung*. The language of mastery and defeat was akin to the language into which the memory of the Holocaust was transformed, in which the Germans were themselves victims of forces that mastered them. The Historikerstreit struggled both to escape from this cage, in order to bring the past to life in the restoration of the good object – Durcharbeitung and reparation – but also to reinforce the cage and keep the Durcharbeitung at bay.

Each part of the German nation dealt with the memory of the Holocaust in its way. Herf argues that the West did keep the memory of the Holocaust more in mind and in policy than the East,
and also that voters in the East released it from dictatorial suppression the moment there were free elections. But memory was conflicted.

The Holocaust was a tragedy without redemption. It did not fit into any optimistic theory of history or postwar policy of reconstruction, whether it promised the first socialist society in Germany in the East or an ‘economic miracle’ in the West. In both West and East, those who focused only on a bright future saw no place for an evil past. (Herf 1997,p. 392).

For West Germany, embedding the nation in the tradition of the Western democracies with their capitalist base was the only way the Germans could prevent a resurgence of fascism and restore their respect as a civilized people. The West German state paid restitution to Jews, supported the Israeli state and engaged extensively in self-searching into the origins of the fascist state and responsibility for the Holocaust. At the same time, Adenauer’s aim to establish democracy at the core of the state and of political consciousness ran counter to restitution and memory.

On May 8, 1945, 8 million Germans were members of the Nazi party. They and their friends and families would constitute a formidable voting bloc opposed to any serious efforts at postwar judicial reckoning or frank public memory…The lesson was that one could speak openly about the Nazi past or win national elections, but not both. (Herf, 1997, pp. 202, 203)

Democracy, spectacular economic success, embeddedness in the Western alliance and staunch opposition to the cold war communist threat subdued the guilt of Nazi perpetration. ‘Indeed, with the growth of prosperity, a German self-regard is being revived that is often not greatly removed from the values and standards of the Third Reich’ (Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich 1967, p. 51). German success in reconstruction and the fight against victimization transformed both Germanys from dishonourable perpetrators into honourable defenders of the nation. Omar Bartov said

[i]t has been noted that Germans experienced the last phases of World War II and its immediate aftermath as a period of mass victimization. Indeed, Germany’s remarkable reconstruction was predicated both on repressing the memory of the Nazi regime’s victims and on the assumed existence of an array of new enemies, foreign and domestic, visible and elusive. Assertions of victimhood had the added benefit of suggesting parallels between the Germans and their own victims. Thus, if the Nazis strove to ensure the health and prosperity of the nation by eliminating the Jews, postwar Germany strove to neutralize the memory of the Jews’ destruction so as to ensure its own physical and psychological restoration. [1998, p. 788]

The living ‘memory’ of German victimization in the war turned them into fighters against Jewish atrocities, rather than perpetrators of atrocities against the Jews. We can see this reversal as evidence of projection. If the projection were withdrawn, the atrocity would be inside the Germans, with guilt for the attacks on the Jews.
The elusive and yet ubiquitous presence attributed to the Jews by the regime played an even more important role in creating an inverted perception of victimhood throughout the Nazi era... Soldiers tended to ascribe massacres perpetrated by their own units to Jewish criminality, even when the actual victims of such atrocities were Jews, and civilians in the rear similarly attributed the destruction of cities by aerial bombing to Jewish thirst for revenge. Indeed, fear of "Jewish" retribution was very much at the back of Germany's stubborn resistance in the last and desperate months of the war, when the invading 'Asiatic hordes' in the East and the Materialschlacht (war of attrition) in the West were presented as expressions of the Jewish will for world domination (Bartov 1998, p. 784).

By contrast, success without memory sustained the omnipotent illusion of a continuous history of German superiority unmarred by horrific disregard for humanity. In 1967, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich reported that notes of 4000 patients at the psychosomatic clinic of Heidelberg University showed very little connection with the Nazi period (p. 32). Their overview of their extensive clinical experience adds an important subjective dimension to these raw figures. They argue that post-war Germans emotionally detached themselves from their involvement in Nazism. Although the Mitscherlich's speak of denial and a consequent failure to mourn, they also implicate the splitting of Germany. The West Germans replaced their dependence on Hitler with dependence on the United States, and shifted the rivalry that dependence evokes to the GDR. 'The contempt that, at bottom, Germans feel towards themselves for having been in thraldom to an authority is also shifted to the latter’s official representatives' (p. 49). The power of projection shows in the conviction that the Jews wanted to infiltrate and take over Germany and in the envy of the West Germans. The case of Hitler and the US is complicated by the war, but both showed the projection of aggression.

Reunification and the Collapse of the Psychosocial Enclave

Bergmann (1997) points out that anti-Semitism has declined in Germany since the end of the war, especially among young people, more so in the former GDR than in the former FRG, and that it has concentrated in a small group of right-wing extremists. One explanation is that public policy has not tolerated it, and that xenophobic resentment has shifted from this sort of deep ethnic and racial base to competition. The GDR not only had suppressed anti-Semitism, but had so to speak driven it out of the country. The GDR would not engage with guilt and reparation. It refused to recognize or pay reparations to Israel, and supported the Arab cause against Israel. It pushed the issue of German guilt into the West. The democratic FRG did pay reparations and was preoccupied with Nazism, which opened a channel for anti-Semitic expression (Herf 1997, pp. 179–200; Kurthen 1997, p. 47). Bergmann argues that the antifascist policy and self-image of the GDR, along with the conviction that fascism and antisemitism were problems of the capitalist West, suggests that 'the psychoanalytic model, which theorizes that something can be overcome by being worked through, does not apply to societies as a whole' (p. 24). To me, it suggests splitting, and the implication that reunification would undermine it and bring with it the identified by psychoanalysis pressure to work through the past.

In terms of psychosocial defence, reunification was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it fulfilled the dream of restoring German nationhood, but on the other hand, the stabilization achieved by the division dissipated (as Freud pointed out, nothing in the unconscious is worn
down, as it is in consciousness). For Michael Ignatieff (1994), the ‘two states offered both sides the necessary negative image of each other’. With reunification, ‘the negative image is the nation, the people themselves…Now that the state has vanished, the people itself – the nation – are blamed for its ever having existed’ (p. 49), and the FRG assimilated into itself disdain for GDR state as the GDR people joined them to reform Germany (pp. 49, 63, 69, 71). My thesis is that reunification brought back the dread of dissolution, with a consequent intensification of anti-Semitism and guilt, from which the enclave had offered a haven.

For the GDR, despite conscious recognition of the Holocaust, splitting had subsumed the Jews, along with West Germans and Western Allies, into the capitalist enemy. The state had persecuted the ‘cosmopolitans’ in their midst as dangerous agents of international capital, regardless of their socialist credentials, and the righteousness of their anti-fascism had replaced their ‘memory’ of perpetration. Fascism was, for them, a crisis of capitalism, not a feature of German history (Herf 1997, pp. 33, 35, 38-9, 56-7, 79-80, 83, 84, 93, 94, 106–61, 173). Now they were brought into an alliance with the suspect society and enemy, which had also been the object of fascination and desire. For the FRG, splitting had made the GDR, along with its soviet ally, into the socialist enemy. Their own spectacular economic success and democratization stoked a triumphalism in relation to ‘dictatorship’. Overall, these relationships implied, at least in the minds of some, an equivalence between the Third Reich and GDR/Soviet Union (Eley 2004, pp. 181, 184, 188). For both East and West Germany, the cold war marginalized Jewish concerns (Herf 1997, pp. 83-4, 163, 171-2, 261, 276). Self-righteous ideology on both sides consolidated an enclave that protected each side from the paranoid anxiety of their projections and the depressive anxiety of guilt for the deep vein of anti-Semitism throughout Germany, beneath which lay the ‘catastrophe’ of dissolution.

There were several indications of the collapse of the enclave with the fall of the wall and the process of reunification. Holocaust denial increased (Wetzel 1997, p. 161). West German politicians engaged in a ‘zealous pursuit…of communist injustice after 1990 [, which the historian, James McAdam attributed to] “uneasy memories about the handling of an only marginally more distant period in German history – National Socialism” ’ (Eley 2004, p. 181). Right-wing extremism increased (Kurthen, Bergmann and Erb 1997, p. 8). Re-unification was followed by a small, but consistent increase in anti-Semitism (Weil 1997). As Kurthen documents, German trends were in line with European trends, so we have to focus on the particular relationship in Germany between right-wing extremism and identity, including principally its anti-Semitism and its identification with the Nazi period. The substantial increase in right wing incidents and violence after reunification peaked in 1993, but remained higher than pre-unification rates. The majority were directed against foreigners, and the rate correlated with the increase in numbers of asylum seekers. Anti-Semitic aggression, though lesser in numbers, showed the same trend, but differed, in that the increase continued for another year before declining, which suggests that it was to some extent a distinct phenomenon (Kurthen, H. et al. 1997, p. 8; Bergmann 1997, p. 34).

In another survey, respondents were clustered into four groups according to their response to the question: ‘Do not want too much to do with’ (Turks/asylum-seekers/Jews/Blacks; then, within each cluster, their responses were given to the question with respect to the other three , with the
addition of ‘Arab’. Thus 34% of 721 respondents said they didn’t want too much to do with Turks. Of them, 66% said it of asylum seekers, 64% of Arabs, 50% Blacks, 25% of Jews. If the ‘test question’ referred to Jews, only 13% of 273 said they did not want to have much to do with them, but the percentage with respect to the sub-groups was higher: 88% with respect to Turks, 84% Arabs, 80% Blacks, 80% asylum seekers. In other words, anti-Semitism seems to be more fundamental than xenophobia (Bergmann 1997, p. 36; Bergmann suggests the perpetrator groups are different, p. 34). It may also be significant that damage to Jewish property has been ‘almost exclusively directed towards monuments, memorials or Jewish cemeteries’ (pp. 34–5). Bergmann sees it as ‘an iconoclastic redefinition of these artworks or institutions more than attacks against existing Jewish communities’ (p. 35). But these objects are not just artworks: they are the embodiments of identity, including ideals. To attack them is to aim to project into them a core anxiety of dissolution and to destroy it in the object.

Benz (2001) has shown that public language, such as broadcasting, can be laced with anti-Semitic stereotypes, despite a decline as a personal attitude. Right wing extremist publications are clearly antisemitic as well as xenophobic (Wetzel 1997). Antisemitism is more rooted in seeing Jews as anti-German than, xenophobically, as economic competitors (Kurthen, Bergmann and Erb 1997, pp. 10, 12). ‘[A]nti-Semitism’, Bartov argues, ‘even when it was least discussed, served along with economic anxiety and hardship, fear of revolution, a longing for national unity and greatness, and a generally xenophobic climate as an important adhesive that kept together an otherwise incoherent and irreconcilable ideological hodgepodge’. (1998, p. 783). In my view, this ill-defined concoction of all that threatened from within indicates this core psychotic anxiety. Interestingly, post-unification support for treating Jews as a special case, on account of the Nazi past, was stronger in the East than in the West (40%/30%), as was support for Jewish and Israeli claims for compensation owing to former GDR refusal of reparation (57% rejected these claims in the East; 75% rejected them in the West) (Kurthen 1997, p. 49). The figures suggest a rebound after reunification: the West from being the repository of guilt; the East taking some of it on.

Surveys give a broad-brush picture of a lingering core Unbehagen. Clinical work gives a deeper insight into the unconscious dimension. I will present one example, in which the appeal of right-wing extremism to a deprived boy also carried an identification with the Nazis of his grandparental generation. Streecker-Fischer (2000), from the Department for Clinical Psychotherapy for Children and Youth at Tiefenbrunn, in Brandenburg (formerly in the GDR), presented the case of a sixteen-year-old Nazi skinhead, a boy whose alcoholic mother abandoned him when he was three years old; whose father treated him as if dead; whose maternal grandmother, who cared for him until he was 12 years old, died, leaving him with his father and paternal grandfather. The grandfather was a soldier in the war, and the boy idealized his stories as ‘reports from a better world’. A background silence on the ‘traumata of war, such as the death of comrades, hunger, freezing, death anxiety, humiliation’, left them outside his awareness. His grandfather was, for him, a ‘powerful, potent person whom he feared and whose sympathy he sought, while father seemed to him weak and unfit as a model’ (Streeck-Fischer 2000, p. 58). Streecker-Fischer sees his case as typical. The youth of the GDR were turning to right-wing extremism as an identification with the Nazi period, which would reassert national pride and power.
If we consider the conditions in the post-war period in Germany, superficially reparation and the securing of existence was proclaimed, while the working over and mastery of traumata both of perpetrators of the Holocaust and victims of traumatic war experiences were cut off and remained un-worked-over. There was silence and no history of the horrific experiences was told. Colonizing [by the Allies] set in, which had a stabilizing character, whether in not being discovered to be a Nazi-perpetrator, or in defending against the humiliation and the painful traumata in connection with German capitulation. The silence of the post-war years was first and repeatedly broken only in recent years, [and] many Germans have been startled by the right-wing extremism that they encountered in the youth…

In retrieving right-wing extremist ideologies, the youth seek to recover, on the one hand, a piece of history, which members of the GDR and the FRG could hold in common [but which] must, on the other hand, make them aware of being the dupe of history, of a history that indicated in the example of its repetition, that they as Germans with dignity were nevertheless always on the losing side. The grievance of many unresolved problems after the destruction of their social structure leads to the call to law and order in familiar totalitarian structures, which right wing ideologies offer. (Streeck-Fischer 2000, pp. 68–9; cf. Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich 1967)

Reintegration, Memory and Reparation

Post-war Germany was a period of catastrophic loss: loss of the war, loss of national pride, loss of national identity, seemingly brought to an end with reunification. But while reunification brought a restoration of German identity, it also undermined the psychosocial enclave. The paranoid ‘security’ of the haven was lost; depressive anxiety of the internalization of the destroyed object and the psychotic anxiety of the internalization of the German-Jew object returned. Vergangenheitsbewältigung struggled to ‘come to terms with it all’. The public debate of the Historikerstreit reflected the underlying conflicts and tensions of their subjects, objectifying it, tempering it and raising it from incipient violence to democratic debate. Tony Judt captures the difference between memory space and historical space, when he says that ‘[u]nlike memory, which confirms and reinforces itself, history contributes to the disenchantment of the world’ (2005, p. 830). From this angle, one might say that the Historikerstreit sought to embrace and to shape a German identity whose Unbehagen had been parsed into factions.

Reunification meant losing control of the enclave, including control of the other side as a repository for projection. Losing control meant re-introjection, remembering, guilt, reparation, but also loss – losing an orientation in the world of reality; losing the delusion of defining and sustaining national identity. Losing, the Mitscherlichs argued, had to be mourned; to be mourned, it had to be remembered. But remembering is the backbone of it all; not recall, but the assimilation of the ambivalence, including the perpetrator’s hatred of the good object. For Germans, this good object was the German-Jewish object. Antisemitism remained a unique type of defence against internal catastrophe: the object that had to be attacked, torn to pieces, in order
to create an illusory, idealized German nation object, born into collective memory for collective adulation.

Underneath the two competing German identities, they ‘remembered’ being one German people, responsible for the post-war situation in which they found themselves. But at reunification, ‘West Germans and East Germans had few common experiences and memories left apart from National Socialism, the Second World War and the uprootedness many suffered as a consequence of these’ (Schultze 2006, p. 376). I would add that their other common experience was the psychosocial enclave, which relieved them of persecutory, depressive and psychotic anxiety.

My argument implies that collective memory is always unstable. It is always drawn towards factionalism and conflict because it exposes the Unbehagen in der Kultur that unsettles collective identity. ‘Successful’ collective identity is less collective and more informed by a political forum, as in a democracy, by the disenchantment delivered through historical debate; in general, by whatever undercuts idealization. But there is an additional factor. The ‘proper’ memory that is the backbone of ‘successful’ collective identity is reparative. Memory is reparation (on reparation, see Klein 1937).

Post-war Germany has been preoccupied with reparation, but the underlying question has been when would there be enough, so that the nation could put the Nazi period behind it, repair its history and move on. On the conservative side, it has been more a demand than a question, following quickly upon the end of the war, and re-appearing from then on. Maier, for example, sees it in debates over establishing historical museums, in which visitors will see their past. It was there at Bitburg, where commemoration, conceived as an act of reconciliation between the West and the FRG, brought fallen German soldiers, including the SS, into an equivalence with the victims of the Holocaust. A similar debate was evoked by establishing a German memorial in 1993, in a historic military building, with the sculpture by Kathé Kollwitz, Mother With Her Dead Son, at the centre. Dedicated to all victims of tyranny and torture, it seemed again to draw a moral equivalence (Marcuse 1997; though it is not his language, he thinks that it does promote reparation).

Reparation cannot be engineered. It must make its own path. External constraints divert it, and behavior is not necessarily its measure. In that sense, there is no time when enough has been done. Alford (2006) argues for a ‘reparative natural law’, which would provide a foundation for a natural law of ethics, but is incomplete because it does not garner an ethical commitment to the actual victims of unethical behaviour. Without the honing of commitment by generations of social life, it is an abstract force that could as well drive an aesthetic, even a narcissistic, preoccupation as it could a concern to make things better for people who suffer. Reviewing Alford, Hinshelwood (2007) shifts the focus, saying that ‘the truer meaning of reparation … is to restore (repair) damaged hope, as much as it is to restore internal objects’ (p. 202). Jonas (1984) argues that the assault on the Jews by the Nazis was specific in its aim of extinction, an aim that went beyond murder because the aim was to extinguish the very idea of there being a people. Though implemented against specific victims, what made it more than murder was the aim to extinguish hope. The murdered victims cannot be repaired, but reparation nonetheless must take
place through them, perhaps through identification with them by those who survived them, but also by the perpetrators and by community that identifies with either group (cf. Maier 1988, who addresses the issue of German responsibility to everyone who identifies with German nationality).

The expression of reparative urges in post-war Germany needs a separate study. I have aimed to set the historical account of the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* next to a psychoanalytic account of defences, and to establish locking points that would confirm the thesis. I have tried to show the pattern of defences against the recognition of the specific Nazi assault on the Jews: its origin in a specific relationship, on which identity was built and threatened; creating a psychosocial enclave in which the assault was marginalized, even while it was spoken about; the loss of the enclave with reunification; the return of drive to remember.

1 Freud conceived of a sharing of individual identity in the formation of a homogeneous social group. For him, the psyche was itself social, composed of agencies in relationship with each other, and therefore the social could be thought of in the same terms as the individual. If, for example, a leader – which could be a person or an idea – gathered the leader-like internal object of each individual – the ego-ideal – then, with everyone holding the same ego-ideal, they also shared, in effect, the same ego; that is, an identification formed among the individual egos, forming a social group, and the group became one expanded psyche. Under the thrall of the leader, the group sways with intensified emotion, which could over-ride ordinary judgment (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1984, 1986; Figlio 2006; Freud 1921). Freud’s model is the basis for later theories that use the internal world as the common core of individual and social and social dynamics.

2 The nuclear shield was a parallel enclave, which provided a delusion of safety and was also threatened by collapse. East and West toyed with destroying the world, but saw the aggression in the other and enveloped itself in self-righteous ideology, as parodied in *Dr Strangelove*. Each side lived in a paranoid-schizoid world, ‘safe’ from extermination because it could exterminate the other side. They shared this paranoid world, and they shared relief from the depressive anxiety of ‘nuclear winter’, in which the capacity to sustain life was destroyed. They also shared the exclusion of a psychotic descend into indifferentionation, in which there was no coherent relationship between them and between good and bad. Together they maintained a psychic retreat from all three anxieties (see Bleger 1967; Segal, 1987; 1995; Steiner 1993). Maier suggests a comparison. ‘It may just be fortuitous that a bitter controversy over the legacy of the national past [the Historikerstreit] has erupted at the very moment when a Soviet-American agreement to eliminate intermediate missiles and the advent of a reformist Soviet leader are changing the variables of the East-West balance’ (1988, p. 2).

References


