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SELF AND MORALITY IN AMERICAN DISCOURSE

ABOUT MORAL ATROCITIES

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SELF AND MORALITY IN AMERICAN DISCOURSE ABOUT MORAL ATROCITIES

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
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ABSTRACT

SELF AND MORALITY IN AMERICAN DISCOURSE
ABOUT MORAL ATROCITIES

Publication No. _____

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This study is about American public cultural conceptions of self and their correlated moralities from the end of WW II through 1979. Those conceptions are studied in American discourse as it examines moral atrocities in literate, public journals, magazines, and a few other similar resources. The specific moral atrocities generating the body of literature examined are the Holocaust of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Gulag, the massacre at My Lai, and the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

As authors reflect on and react to these events their diatribes and arguments reveal assumptions of self and morality. The self is challenged by events inexplicable to former views. Morality is revealed as authors ground their claims finally in goods for which they apparently see no need for further justification. Assumptions of both self and morality are most thoroughly disclosed at points of conflict—where authors who disagree about particular claims appeal to the same foundations of individuality and subjectivity or of teleological purpose.

Despite the reasonable assumption that self should change dramatically through such tumultuous times, it does not. The psychological self, along with the conflict between determinative psychical causes and essential autonomy, persists. The modern self, conceived as rational and improving both historically and personally, also survives. The discourse material examined supports the interesting claim that the more varied are the descriptions of self and corresponding ends the more apparent it is that the one characteristic most common to every self is the yet unachieved completion of his particular end. That is to say, the more varied, inconsistent, conflicted, and irreconcilable the teleology described by different aspects and perspectives of self, the more evident is the inescapably teleological and therefore moral context of the self.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is about American public cultural conceptions of self and their correlated moralities. Those conceptions are studied in American discourse as it examines moral atrocities in literate, public journals, magazines, and a few other similar resources. As particular aspects or versions of self meet and sometimes conflict, so will their moral corollaries. Although the material studied does reveal some of these specific relationships and interrelationships, the primary issue addressed here is neither which moral assumption or assumptions follow from a particularly theorized self nor which moral assertions or assumptions are correct, but that moral assumptions are inherent in public conceptions of self. That there is a relationship between significant moral events, the discourse about them, and the self and moralities revealed in that discourse is assumed. Discourse about the extremities of moral experience provides substantial material for the examination of assumptions about self and morality in American culture. Discourse from 1945 to 1979 about issues where moral claims and horizons of comprehensible human behavior meet present a picture in which self and morality are impossible to separate, linked by teleological conceptions of the self. This dissertation contends for the intrinsic cultural relationship between self and morality from public intellectual discourse about moral atrocities.

Assumptions about self are integral to every discussion of human interest. Since such assumptions are integral to discourse, discourse in any particular culture will be circumscribed by what thoughts are possible about self. In other words, conceptions of self will form boundaries of discussion, as well as foils against which probing ideas will

rise. If there is anywhere that the most fundamental conceptions of self will surface, it will be at the boundaries of human experience—at the places where individuals are confronted with the previously unimaginable acts of other individuals and compelled to explain what was formerly inexplicable, or perhaps even unthinkable. It is at these horizons that the most basic of assumptions will surface, potentially coming under scrutiny if not explicitly at least in the attempt to reconcile their implications with incongruent circumstances. Certainly the assumption of the progressively civilized American comes under scrutiny when All-American boys shoot non-threatening old men, women, and children in a Vietnamese village. Such scrutiny does not necessarily mean that the self so described is abandoned, only that it is brought to the surface for examination. It might seem reasonable to expect certain ideas of individuality, subjectivity, identity, and the psyche to wane while others take form. However, the most interesting observations come from conceptions of self that persist and therefore in some way stand in a uniquely significant relationship to ways of perceiving self in American public discourse. In other words, since the self is tried in examination of moral atrocity, only the most inescapable of the self's aspects, attributes, or descriptions should go either unchallenged or have the tenacity to endure what challenges there are.

There is no easy way to comprehend events as universally condemned and divergently explained as the Holocaust in German-dominated Europe, the Gulag of the Soviet Union, the slaughter of civilians at My Lai in Vietnam, or the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. But the difficulty authors face dealing with those objects of discussion is the catalyst revealing their most interesting and important assumptions about the self as they fall back on their most basic assumptions of human agency and responsibility. It is also the case that concepts of identity and subjectivity along with other descriptions of the self provide a suit of tools for studying discourse about these

topics. For instance, certain things assumed about the essence of modernity, civilization, and psychology as cultural perspectives of self appear in the unique discursive wake of extreme human circumstances. Both the condition of victims and the choices of perpetrators of what come to be known as crimes against humanity provoke such discourse. Terms such as "inhumanity" and "brutality" typify the confrontation with circumstances and behavior which do not meet an author's minimum expectations of a particular conception of culture. An assumption of this study is that by seeking to inform and persuade its readers the discourse about these horrific events has drawn from contemporary conceptions of self and morality. The anticipated accomplishment of this study then is not to resolve the moral conflicts or historical questions surrounding the named events, but rather to discover American limits of thinking about self or of identifying what it is to be a human subject, agent, or member of humanity.

Peter Novick addresses the lament of Jews during WW II that commitment to being Jewish was being replaced by a vacuous universalism. He disagrees, and asserts that the only thing replacing Jewish loyalty during and after WW II was loyalty to America (a development consistent with the rise of America as a telos during the 1950s, by the way.) But he also notes what every historian must know. "One can, to be sure, find examples of this—one can find examples of anything" (32). There are many ways of classifying and identifying the self among scholars. The approach of this paper is not to verify or impugn those descriptions. Instead the intention is to read everything available in the targeted discourse and use instances of similar vocabulary and argumentation to infer common assumptions about the self. There is no scientific objectivity implied. Categories and descriptions from Elias and Rose, for instance, certainly do shape the categories and vocabularies by which the material is examined here. But its examination is not a validation or rebuttal of their noteworthy systems as

true or untrue. Since the self examined in this paper is innately cultural, the only truth to be examined in its essence is the truth of its cultural perception. Similarly, the material is not arranged into separate sections on, for example, victims and perpetrators. The obvious contrast between those subjects is exactly where the common elements of self are found.

There is an important merger of ideas about the appropriate way or ways of identifying, defining, and therefore expecting of the human subject wherever moral discourse examines difficult objects. The goal here is to approach these issues where they meet in discourse about issues where human behavior grates the rim of human expectation. It comes as no surprise that there is a heterogeneity among descriptions of self. It is that diversity that makes the study of self interesting—an examination of contemporary conceptions underlying sometimes ignorantly competing moral claims. The broader the heterogeneity, the more inclusive and authoritative the common ground must be—the more fundamental to contemporary ways of thinking about self.

The twentieth century is a perfect target for study since it has been described as the *Century of Genocide*, the title of a work by Samuel Totten with William S. Parsons and Israel W. Charny—a reference to massive events of deliberate human destruction from the Armenians in Turkey to the recent and in many ways ongoing Balkan crises. The American confrontation with these kinds of acts is particularly interesting during the heart of the century, from the end of WW II until the end of the 1970s, a period in which there are not only significant international moral crises from which to draw, but also issues of self and morality seeking resolution, although not necessarily finding it.

The reason for the chosen period is simple, evidenced in several ways. It begins in 1945 when public commentators begin to take seriously reports of Nazi atrocities in Germany, especially with the capture of Buchenwald. Evidence of the importance of

this time of moral discourse comes in the form of new vocabulary which is not simply forcibly introduced to the language, but finds a place in the mainstream of American commentary ever since—specifically Raphael Lemkin's coinage of the term "genocide" (Totten and Parsons xxiii). Peter Novick argues that the Holocaust did not have the significance during the 1950s and 1960s that it took on from the 1970s and afterward. (127). He proves his point in several ways, including tracing the development of the importance of the term "Holocaust," which did not become the dominant description of Jewish destruction under Nazism until the late 1960s (coincident, by the way, with the introduction of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* and the moral weight attached to "Gulag.") However, Nazi practices and the conglomeration of events including what comes to be known as the Holocaust do represent the standard of evil against which subsequent moral atrocities are measured.

The three areas studied are chosen because of their chronology, their practically universal condemnation, the variety of conditions and situations they present, and the relationship they bear inside the discourse examined (that is, in many cases authors directly relate the event of their immediate consideration with the event or events prior to it.) It is not necessary that they be proven as the worst events of the twentieth century, however that task would be done. Rather, they are significant exactly as they are described and defined in the discourse examined. These particular cases offer a chronological progression from WW II through the 1970s, offering an opportunity not only for comparison and contrast, but for the exploration of the development of particular ways of understanding self. Of course, the most interesting discourse comes in the immediate wake of these events or their discovery during the most intense times of examining and grappling with previously unchallenged assumptions. The Holocaust directly assaults many assumptions about Western civilization, and therefore about the

soundness of the civilized self as authors describe the dehumanization and devaluation of both victims and perpetrators. Further, the Holocaust provides the moral event against which other objects of moral discourse are measured and understood after WW II. The Soviet Gulag provides a context through which authors seek to distinguish behavior based on explicitly American assumptions. Literature about Southeast Asia from 1969 through 1979 not only reveals a transformation of assumptions about the American telos but also reveals how far the point of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" had come in public thinking since its adoption by the UN following WW II. Importantly, these events have provided a stream of discourse not just about the nature of political atrocities, and not even just about the nature of human behavior, but about ways Americans understand, as Nikolas Rose puts it, human being. In their assumptions, those writing about these events have provided lessons about morality that stem from their understanding of the self. Sometimes they are subtle or even unintentional. Other times they are straightforwardly didactic. But either way they always contribute to what it is not just to be a human, but to be a good or a bad self.

The reasons for looking into public periodicals like *Harper's*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Saturday Review* include the important fact that the authors of articles in these publications have an interest in carefully thinking through the arguments they are presenting to a respectably literate audience in the general public. That the journals are public (rather than purely scholarly) is significant since the object here is not simply ideas about morality or human rights, but how discourse about morality has shaped and been shaped by contemporary conceptions of self. It is not the intent here to justify or conversely undermine the specifically philosophical, moral, or didactic claims of any of the discourse examined. In fact, the most interesting observations come when an author's claims are internally inconsistent, or when authors with divergent opinions

share similar (although often unrecognized) assumptions. Contradictory claims with common assumptions and views are especially helpful. Significant assumptions are also revealed in works intended for the public which oppose standard treatments (such as the Army report's departure from McCarthyism and supposedly moderating claims about Soviet moral values.)

So the strand of discourse examined is at the popular level and addresses atrocities in three areas, the Jewish Holocaust in German-dominated Europe, the Gulag in the Soviet Union, and the My Lai massacre and Pol Pot's rule in Southeast Asia. It seems reasonable to assert both that the discourse material examined draws from informed perceptions of public conceptions of self and morality in order to establish the authors' claims and that inferences from this body of discourse may also be cautiously applied to public ways of thinking and speaking of the self. The articles, stories, and reviews examined here address significant moral and historic challenges which demanded (and still demand) consideration. Just as interesting, however, are the insights into self and morality provided by the assumptions, rationalizations, and even vocabulary the discourse.

The vocabulary used throughout this work is drawn primarily from sources such as Norbert Elias, Michel Foucault, Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Nikolas Rose, and Richard Rorty—an eclectic group to say the least. But the use of their vocabulary does not require the use of their conclusions about how that vocabulary works together or what it implies. For instance, for MacIntyre the modern self is the emotivist self, certainly psychological in nature but absolutely not tethered to any telos (23–24). And MacIntyre's argument for such a characterization is solid if not impregnable. But his definition of that modern self is not at issue here. That is, the goal here is not to begin with a series of categories of the self and evaluate their worth in public discourse. The

goal is to examine public discourse from the stated period and infer from those writings public perspectives on self and therefore morality. There is no question that the categories and tools by which the self is located, characterized, and identified in this work are at least informed and in some ways undeniably limited by the vocabulary of the authors mentioned above. But that informing and limiting only provides the foundation from which this examination is built. It is also important to note that describing publicly held assumptions of the self in relationships and contexts contradictory to those of the above authors does not need to imply a conflict with the authors' views (although it does not rule out conflict either,) since the goal of this paper is less theoretically inclined than any of their works.

Several terms require an explanation of their use throughout this work and, in some cases, their relationships with each other. However, explaining a term does not provide a final definition for it. The approach of this work is empirical rather than *a priori*. Terms are defined through their repeated and varied usage throughout the discourse, not simply by the definitions given below. The goal in this respect is for the vocabulary to be neither clearer nor more vague than its use throughout the material examined. To define a term within limits that exclude the use of some authors would be as errant as leaving a clearly defined term too vague. The repeated examples given in the context of statements about self and humanity are intended to leave an impression from which meanings can reasonably be inferred.

With that statement made, it is still important to have at least a reasonably clear starting point for terms that can be used in a variety of ways by different disciplines and in different contexts. Statements below refer to how terms are understood at the outset of this work. Obviously the first significant term is "self."

The self is defined by discourse about "autonomy, identity, individuality, liberty, choice, fulfillment" (Rose 1). Contemporary questions about self are not about its nature, but about how it is held or described in a particular culture. The self is described in certain ways and in certain contexts. The descriptions of the self as modern, civilized, and psychological in a teleological context stand out in the literature being examined. To say the self is modern, civilized, or psychological, is to attribute a certain characteristic or set of characteristics to the culture's perspective on the human subject. For instance, the concept of self as identified or parochial (both terms mentioned below) directly influences the claim that empathy for the victims of human rights abuses wanes as those victims are less and less like those who empathize, or the claim that individuals who do not have genuine familial loyalty are less likely to care about other peoples and nations (Charny xvi–xix). In this illustration the self is perceived psychologically and described in its racial and even closer familial identification. As this case illustrates, the self is not simply defined or described uniquely, but along different axes that intersect. Some descriptions of the self provide context without which the subject cannot be understood, such as the identified, national, modern, or civilized self. MacIntyre accomplishes this contextualization by tracing historical philosophical developments to their results in the modern self (30–32). Other descriptions venture to identify subjective attributes directly, such as psychological. Rose takes on this task in the introduction to *Inventing Our Selves* and is able to assume it through the rest of the book (22).

A valuable aspect of descriptions of self that depend on context is that claims about the self will be paralleled by claims about the context in which the self is described. Claims about modernity necessarily reveal assumptions about the modern self. A significant part of this correlation lies in the telos of the context. If modernity's

telos is complete comprehension, then it is predictable that the modern self at its moral best will use, for instance, rationality to grasp and control its circumstances. This argument is not the same as the claim that changing circumstances (another form of context) implies a changing self. Quite the contrary is true. For instance, it is not necessary that atrocities create changes in self and morality. While that statement can be followed by the argument that the self is always changing and therefore moral claims are always changing, it can also be followed by the claim that some ways of describing the self are remarkably persistent.

Another term is used to represent a variety of descriptions that pervade the discourse. Dehumanization is the process or set of events that causes a person to be described in subhuman terms rather than in terms that fit the complete conception of the self. Terms such as barbarity, bestiality, and brutality reveal the difference between being simply human, and being a self. It may seem strange to claim that to be subhuman or dehumanized is to be a diminished self, rather than a diminished human. But that is the point. Either because being a self is part of being a complete human or because the subjectivity of the individual is perceived as the only way in which the person experiences full humanity it is the diminution of self that defines dehumanization.

Descriptions of the self do not need to be unique, and are almost always presented in amalgamations that are sometimes reasonably consistent and other times inconsistent. For example, the psychological and material self are almost inseparable when authors limit the psychological to that which has arguably material causes. The modern and civilized self are often indivisible since civilization can serve as an expression of modernity's progress and the psychological self provides a place for the internalization of restraints (to use Elias' explanation of civilization.)

The most common assumption of self during the period of time examined is psychological. Rose makes a similar claim. "Over the past half century, in the liberal, democratic, and capitalist societies of what we used to call the West, the stewardship of human conduct has become an intrinsically psychological activity" (81). To accept Rose's statement is not to argue that every aspect of the psychological subject is new to the twentieth century. It has obviously been the case that the subject has been perceived with inner depth, emotion, will, mentality, and innumerable other psychologically defined attributes throughout history. But the context of psyche and its meaning to the self has changed. With that change, every aspect of the psychological self changes. Where is the change? If it is true that the understanding of self as psychological changes with the introduction of Freudian ideas, especially that the self is motivated by psychical influences with comprehensible (even if not yet fully comprehended) causes and effects, then it is also true that the view of the psychological self as autonomous is inevitably affected even though autonomy has been significant in relation to the human subject at least since Descartes, and arguably long before. It is not necessary to assume that the public view of self somehow theoretically or practically resolves this dispute. In fact, as it turns out, this conflict is significantly present throughout the material examined, and substantially unresolved. It is simply important to understand the starting point for using the description of the self as psychological.

Determinism in this work is set opposite to autonomy. Materialistic determinism is the view that material influences are the cause behind a given action or behavior. Psychological determinism is the view that psychical influences determine the behavior of the psychological self. Its opposition to autonomy is obvious. B.F. Skinner's behaviorism provides a perfect example of determinism as it is used in this work:

> An experimental analysis shifts the determination of behavior from autonomous man to the environment—an environment responsible both for the evolution of the

> species and for the repertoire acquired by each member. Early versions of environmentalism were inadequate because they could not explain how the environment worked, and much seemed to be left for autonomous man to do. (205)

Where autonomy may recognize external influences of all kinds, none are absolute. The determined self is subject to modernity's explanations. The autonomous self is aporetic.

The identified self is closely related to what Taylor calls the self's location in moral space. He contrasts Locke's self in which self-awareness is essential with his own description of self. "But it is not at all what I have been calling the self, something which can exist only in a space of moral issues" (49). Taylor's argument is that the self exists as an identity only in certain contexts. The "I" is an "American" or a "Baptist" or a "Smith," to give a few examples. So in this work the identified self is the self defined by its context, whether familial, national, racial, or other. One form of the identified self is the parochial self. Parochial is used because of its broad association with regional elitism. Nationalism is a form of parochialism. But so is racism. In other words, parochialism is elitism based on a particular self-identity.

The contrasting tendency to comprehend all of humanity in a single milieu is universalism. It includes a corollary expectation of moral intervention at an international level, or internationalism. Such a demand is not without controversy, and was certainly not presumed at the end of WW II. The lengths to which Raphael Lemkin had to go (importunately presenting to UN officials the cause of a declaration against genocide with international ramifications) testifies so. Michael Ignatieff acknowledges the intrinsic limitations, (or predictable opposition,) to universalism:

> This paradox defines the divided consciousness with which we have lived with the idea of human rights ever since. We defend human rights as moral universals in the full awareness that in a place like Kosovo moral universals are unlikely to stay the hands of those bent on massacre and deportation. But we have lived with this knowledge since the Holocaust. (58–59)

The place for conflict is present from the start. Universalism is often presented as a good without need for explanation. It is the foundation for certain moral arguments.

Immediately following WW II it is strongly related to civilization's development and expansion, and therefore to civilization. Obviously then the civilized self in such discourse recognizes commonality among all of humanity.

Modernity stems from the Enlightenment and rationalism and presumes optimism and perfectionism. Because it is built on the progress of humanity's comprehension of things, the term "incrementalism" is also associated with it. If Karl Popper's works advocate modernity and incrementalism, Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* opposes it. Peter Novick describes modernity as it is used in this work (although without specific reference to the term.) "(More generally, the pessimistic worldview now so fashionable didn't derive from the Holocaust. The first post-Holocaust decades in America were notably cheerful and forward-looking. It was later, when Americans for various reasons took a bleaker view of life, that it became common to cite the Holocaust as justification for such a view)" (242). Modernity may provide the most dominant context of self in the literature examined.

Civilization is another important context in which the self is constantly described. There is no single standard of civilization in the discourse material examined. (Such a case is why the inductive approach to definitions is important.) Most often civilization is defined in the material by the terms that turn up in contrast to it. For a more helpful starting point, Elias' definition works as well as any. Elias' self-described task in *The Civilizing Process* is to relate how modes of behavior now called civilized in Western cultures came to be recognized as such. The second section of his book, originally a separate monograph, concludes with his summary of the meaning of the term, "civilized." "Precisely this is characteristic of the psychological changes in the course of civilization: the more complex and stable control of conduct is increasingly instilled in the individual from his earliest years as an automatism, a self-compulsion

that he cannot resist even if he consciously wishes to" (445). Again, it is not the purpose of this work to challenge or confirm Elias' definition. Most authors in the discourse studied use the term without any apparent awareness of his definitions. But this paper does, with Elias' claims as a starting point, examine what is assumed by the word "civilized" as authors use it, how that usage relates to assumptions of human agency, and whether Elias' standard holds up as a reasonable understanding of civilization's meaning.

Finally, it is important to briefly clarify the term "telos." There is no argument for a single, overarching telos in this work. But there are repeated references to teloi and teleology. For instance, because modernity is progressing to an end, a telos, it is essentially teleological. The fact that the self is teleologically defined does not necessarily imply a single telos. As Foucault points out, there need not be a single form of human nature which is being targeted in acts of liberation or definition (282). But there is more to teleology in this work than simply to acknowledge that there is no single telos, only teloi. It seems clear that every explanation of self has an end, however broadly defined, toward which progress is made or from which domination (to use Foucault's term) prevents advance. Even Richard Rorty cannot avoid teleological vocabulary (43). Taylor argues that the self is inherently teleological:

> My underlying thesis is that there is a close connection between the different conditions of identity, or of one's life making sense, that I have been discussing. One could put it this way: because we cannot but orient ourselves to the good, and thus determine our place relative to it and hence determine the direction of our lives, we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a 'quest.' But one could perhaps start from another point: because we have to determine our place in relation to the good, therefore we cannot be without an orientation to it, and hence must see our life in story. From whichever direction, I see these conditions as connected facets of the same reality, inescapable structural requirements of human agency. (51–52)

Such teleological assumptions are apparent throughout the public discourse examined in this work.

Under scrutiny about the self then are claims of what can be (not just what should be) expected from moral agents. Since there is no single telos in the literature, it is predictable that as these claims are exercised, they will inevitably clash at certain points. Two particular conflicts stand out. The conflict between assumptions of autonomy and the task of modernity to comprehend human agency is one. The other is the conflict between identification and universalism. Identification is vital to maintaining traditions including, for example the memory of the Holocaust. It is also basic to assumptions of modernity rooted in specifically Western civilization's expansion and distribution of concepts like liberal individualism throughout the world. On the other hand, universalism is important if the claims of one group's tradition or heritage are to have any sway in another group. Also, some commonly assumed views need reexamination in the light of public discourse. Two views in particular come under serious scrutiny when considered in the light of the public descriptions examined in this work. One is the view that can be worded as the decline of modernity and its replacement with post-modernity. Such a view of modernity's decline in public conceptions is not supported by the material researched here. The other is a corollary of modernity, and so affects the result of views about the first. The corollary to modernity is its telos, or the morality it implies. For MacIntyre there is no telos to be associated with modernity, but instead ultimately criterion-less emotivism (31). The material studied here indicates however that the inexorable telos of modernity is the human comprehension of the cosmos, a telos obviously implying moral obligation on the part of that which has attained modernity toward that which has not. What matters now is how these terms and relationships play out in the material at hand.

CHAPTER II

SELF AND MORALITY REVEALED IN RESPONSE TO THE HOLOCAUST

The primary literature examined in this chapter is from the two years after the close of WW II. These years are the most insightful and creative for the purposes of this research due to their proximity to the war itself. During this time journalists and commentators were vigorously mounting conceptual hurdles to deal with issues they almost could not believe. Also, though, shortly after the war the attention shifted from Nazism's fulfilled evils to Communism's potential. "Those who initiated the campaign to admit DPs were, in their concern for the surviving Jewish victims of the Holocaust, looking backward to WW II. But by the time the campaign got under way, in 1947, most eyes were turned to the emerging cold war" (Novick 88). ("DPs" are displaced persons.) So the discourse of the day, with its focus on WW II atrocities and subsequent re-examinations of subjectivity provide the material for this analysis. First, it is important to understand why the events of WW II Europe comprised horizons of human experience and therefore a venue for the study of self. Second, those assumptions of self—specifically how the literature describes its identity and its psychological or material makeup—need to be examined. Finally, this chapter relates those conceptions of self to moral assumptions in the public material researched.

2.1 Postwar literature as crucial discourse material about self and morality

2.1.1 Horizons of human experience as perimeters for conceptions of self

The contrast between expectations of humanity based on assumptions of self and morality and the events of WW II Germany produces a volume of discourse in which those assumptions are tested. Clearly, the kinds of conflicts that produce such discourse are rampant immediately following the Holocaust and throughout the more than fifty years since the discovery of Buchenwald, for example. It is not at all the case that authors need to be aware of these revelations or changes in their writings. In fact, what may be most interesting is what their phrases, vocabulary, and tropes reveal about their possibly unexamined or under-examined assumptions about self.

The edges of human experience and of defining humanity are brought together in a comment by Rebecca West as she reports on a radio interview she heard with an English officer shortly after the liberation of Buchenwald. "Faintly he said it was difficult to describe them [his experiences at Buchenwald], because what had gone on in the camp had had nothing to do with the rest of life. The things he had seen had made it hard to keep faith in humanity" (22). Her paraphrase of his comments is particularly important because she parallels the discontinuity between "the rest of life" and "what had gone on in the camp" with the challenge to "faith in humanity." The context of the statement implies not just that assumptions of what humans are like and act like come into question, but that thoughts about what humans could be or could do have been threatened. This point is precisely where discourse is most likely to contribute valuably both to formation of conceptions of self and to understanding contemporary cultural assumptions about self. Robert Pick, while reviewing a book about the planned murder of Jewish children in occupied France, moves the discourse about the periphery of

human experience from the mouth of one English officer to generalizations about Western culture:

> The widespread tendency to disbelieve atrocities (so superbly dealt with in Arthur Koestler's recent essay on the subject) yields to a growing disinclination to call them to mind again—and this exactly at the moment when the sober language of official records is about to do away with whatever rational doubts were mustered before in the attempts not to face the whole depravity of man. (34)

Pick starts with minds not wanting to believe that the reports they are hearing about human behavior could be true. They "disbelieve atrocities." Then they simply refuse to think about the acts, presumably because it is too disturbing to their sensibilities, sensibilities rooted in assumptions about what people are like. But his concluding remark is what pins the subject to the nature of humanity. In this comment it seems apparent that Pick is not just alluding to some Calvinistic view of depraved mankind, but to the very worst of what can be deemed human behavior, "the whole depravity of man."

So Nazi-dominated Europe provided a perfect point of conflict and merger for issues of self. The event pushed people to deal with the previously unthinkable while the literature produced by this push shaped and was shaped by conceptions of self. This worst of human experiences (by definition of the contemporary discourse, regardless of current arguments) brought together two different developments in discourse about humanity. The first was a transition in defining the acts perpetrated by the Nazis; the second, a move from well-examined modern era conceptions of self toward still significantly undocumented contemporary conceptions. Assumptions about self and morality in literature throughout the rest of the century was altered in both of these moves.

2.1.1.1 The transition from murder to genocide

Scholar and international lawyer Raphael Lemkin managed to escape Warsaw with his brother after the death of the rest of their family at the hands first of the Nazis then of the Communists. His crusade from that time forward was to introduce the word "genocide" into the documentation of atrocities committed in Nazi-dominated Europe and to push the United Nations to sanction genocide everywhere. His crusade has obviously been successful on both counts. As early as 1946, he emphasized the significance of the distinction between experiences before WW II and the events from which he had just emerged. "The last war has focused our attention on the phenomenon of the destruction of whole populations—of national, racial and religious groups—both biologically and culturally" (227). His presentation of the issues is transitional and significant. Lemkin's arguments comprehend important matters of self because he encompasses the identity of selves in moral space with their essence. Individuals subjected to what is now commonly identified as genocide are not only physically destroyed, but culturally destroyed as well. Lemkin presents his arguments with the assumption that previous views of moral atrocities such as committed in Poland during WW II are not adequate. He argues that fundamental changes in ways of thinking about what is taken from an individual or a group when such acts are committed are necessary:

> Would mass murder be an adequate name for such a phenomenon? We think not, since it does not connote the motivation of the crime, especially when the motivation is based upon racial, national or religious considerations. An attempt to destroy a nation and obliterate its cultural personality we hitherto called denationalization. This term seems to be inadequate, since it does not connote biological destruction. (227)

Lemkin's explanation clarifies the importance of his arguments by claiming that the only way to deal sufficiently with the breadth of the Nazi actions is to create a new way

of categorizing (through the word, "genocide") what he calls their crimes against humanity. In his reasoning other terms such as "mass murder" and "denationalization" do not allow for the essential convergence of identity which its deprivation through genocide has revealed. Biology, spirituality, cultural identity, and citizenship are all essential to the experiences of humanity which Lemkin wishes to address, but which he argues could not be adequately represented before the events he has just survived. Of course, also implied by his arguments is the psychological self, the identification of "the motivation of the crime." This kind of pivotal transition, in this case from accepting the self's parochial identities as only ancillary to defending their essential importance, is exactly what any examination of self needs. Lemkin may or may not be correct in his direct assertions about these issues of self. What is important is that his writing typifies the transition in thinking and discourse that takes place in the postwar years. So one axis of transition centers on post WW II commentary because of the sheer magnitude and unusual nature of that period's events.

2.1.1.2 The transition from modern to contemporary

Another axis also pivots at the point of the Holocaust and its surrounding events. The way in which commentators regard modernity is obviously and drastically challenged. If there is a single point at which the view of modernity as the post-millennial progression of humanity is ultimately challenged it is the "discovery," (perhaps "reluctant acknowledgment" better describes the process of revelation in this case,) of prison and death camps in Europe just after WW II. *The Nation's* inclusion of a speech by Sumner Welles is typical:

> The tragic decades through which we have just passed constitute the blackest period of modern history. Little by little we have seen vanish almost every one of those standards of international conduct and of humane civilization which had gradually been built up during preceding centuries. We have seen the entire face of the earth burst into the mightiest conflagration that peoples have ever known. We

> have seen warfare assume the most frightful guise which mankind has ever yet devised. But worst of all, we have seen humanity itself sink to its lowest level. (511)

While it is true, as a few sources below illustrate, that this dissolution is painful, slow, and incomplete, it is also true that if there is a single moment in the culture at large at which the concept of the modern self from Descartes forward appears to be abandoned in favor of what develops along different lines as a truly contemporary self, it is here. Welles' paragraph reveals the significance of the change in concepts. The incrementalism implicit in modernity is explicit in the remark, "those standards of international conduct and of humane civilization which had gradually been built up during preceding centuries." The shock with which Nazism's revelation overthrew this progressive and consummately modern view is apparent in his opening and closing lines. His "worst of all" scenarios is the loss of what humanity itself had gained through modernity.

While it might seem that the death and destruction of WWI would have brought an end to such modern, progressive views, it is apparent in the discourse following WW II that the modern mindset during the interwar years had recovered at least somewhat:

> That was near enough the truth and we can perhaps congratulate ourselves on our realism, which is an advance on our easy faith of the nineteen twenties that human beings were incapable of evil and caused pain to others only under constraint. But those congratulations had better be withheld if we go on to draw another conclusion, and identify these evil men with the Nazis, and to assume that the Buchenwald kind of horror will come to an end because the Nazis have been defeated by us who, being their enemies, must be virtuous. (West 22)

West points to two new assumptions (in her view) which will affect views of self and morality. First, there is something about the nature of being human which does not fit the modern model. And second, whatever that violation of the presumed goodness of humanity is, it is not unique to the Nazis. Both claims are important in the development of concepts regarding self: the first because it indicates the need for a new way of seeing humanity, the second because that new way of seeing humanity will be universal

(in her use), that is, not unique to the Nazis, Germans, or even Axis powers but true of all humanity. But perhaps the most interesting line in West's statement is that "we can perhaps congratulate ourselves on our realism, which is an advance on our easy faith of the nineteen twenties...." The realism she wishes to congratulate, which she calls an advance, contains the degraded view of humanity. It is ironic then that she is not able to shrug off the notion of the progressive development of mankind even while espousing a deliberately opposing view. It is important to note, however, that what may appear logically to be an internal inconsistency is more likely simply a revelation of how profoundly the modern self influenced discourse in the postwar years even while the need for a less progressive view could not be ignored.

2.1.2 The postwar years as a horizon of human experience

The journey from modern to contemporary concepts of self in Western thought inevitably either begins at, or at least takes its root in, discourse about the Holocaust period because the events of that time so fundamentally challenge the ways of thinking that had formerly been taken for granted. "And that brings me back finally to the prison camps. I have seen the pictures, I have read the stories. What is it possible to think of them?" (Strout 15). Richard Lee Strout's question is not just what to think of the camps, but what thoughts are possible concerning them. Novick recognizes the importance of this reference in his 1999 book:

> For the political center—on some level for all Americans—the Holocaust has become a moral reference point. As, over the past generation, ethical and ideological divergence and disarray in the United States advanced to the point where Americans could agree on nothing else, all could join together in deploring the Holocaust—a low moral consensus, but perhaps better than none at all. (13)

It is reasonable to claim that the event against which all other instances of moral repugnance during the Twentieth Century are measured is the Holocaust of German-

dominated Europe. And the issues involved are not just significant, but fundamental to ways of thinking about being human. Civilization, modernity, technology, bureaucracy, knowledge, sanity, and more—all of the categories that help shape identity, belonging, purpose, even nature—are brought into question when examining the decade around WW II. "Its mixture of madness, science, orderliness, and obscenity is characteristic of the special blend of poison with which Nazism infected mankind" (Gumpert 597). The consequences of Nazism are characterized as oxymorons only from the perspective of modernity. It is modernity that posits madness as opposite of science and obscenity as the opposite of orderliness. Martin Gumpert's issue seems to be that the formerly assumed mutual exclusivity no longer holds—that people must begin to understand the goals and potentialities of humanity in different ways.

Even as Thomas Mann argued for the repentant attitude of Germans—on the one hand condemning their actions and toleration while on the other hand presenting their attitudes as penitent—he made it clear that the events of Germany should teach a universal lesson about what humanity can be, in the negative sense:

> Call it the dark potentialities of human nature in general that are revealed here, but remember that it was Germans, hundreds of thousands of them, who revealed those potentialities. The world shudders at the sight of Germany. Even the German who escaped in ample time from the realm of National Socialist leadership, who did not like to live in the vicinity of these abodes of abomination, did not like to go about his business in ostensible virtue and pretend to know nothing while the wind carried the stench of charred human flesh to his nostrils—even this German is ashamed in the depths of his soul for the things that were possible in the land of his fathers and his masters. (535)

The question that remains for the discourse immediately following WW II then is what assumptions or conclusions were abandoned or adopted about the nature of human being (Rose 18). While some concepts may be overturned explicitly, most will be questioned, forsaken, or adopted only by inference. It may even be the case that

conceptions of self explicitly rejected by the discourse are, in reality, just beginning to be considered as a possibility.

2.1.3 A historiographic note on the nature of the Holocaust

While it is common practice today to characterize the Holocaust primarily in terms of Jewish suffering, and perhaps rightly so, the assumption of the days immediately following the war was different. Peter Novick correctly points to this issue. There are a variety of reasons why something currently considered such a uniquely Jewish experience at first did not have that identity. Anti-Semites who favored United States entrance into the war following Pearl Harbor wanted anything but the impression that they were somehow focused on rescuing European Jewry. At the same time, Jewish leaders did not wish to alienate any who advocated entering the war. So descriptions often numbered Jews as simply among prisoners and displaced persons of many different racial and ethnic groups as a result of Nazism's thus universalized offenses. On the other side of the issue, however, is the simple fact that the first prison camps overrun by Allied forces were more general political prisoner and prisoner of war camps such as Buchenwald, rather than the concentration and death camps targeting Jews specifically.

2.2 Self as conceived and revealed in discourse about the Holocaust

There are different lines along which the self can be conceptualized: lines, for instance, of identity, inwardness, or essence. In each of these lines there are points of departure. Identity can be chronological, geographical, familial, and so on. Inwardness can be emotional, motivational, experiential, and so on. Composition can be biological, spiritual, or even economic. Four points are important for the examination of discourse

which follows. First, the authors may or may not have had the slightest intention of conveying concepts about self. Their contribution is as significant (perhaps more so) when they speak from assumptions not even recognized by themselves as when they try to address the nature of human being specifically. Second, and obviously following closely from the first, there is no presumption here that in any certain period, including the period immediately following WW II, there was agreement among these authors about what comprised a self. Varying authors may have responded to others' assertions about subjectivity or identity with hostility. Their heterogeneity is valuable. The more varied their approaches, the more fundamental must be their shared assumptions. In fact, seemingly unrelated accounts of self would contribute even more to the underlying picture than cooperating or even competing views. Third, (and more about the analysis than the discourse,) the particular taxonomy used below does not pretend to be uniquely accurate. The goal is to provide one way of understanding the self as it is presented in this body of discourse and leads into discourse in the decades that follow. The interrelationships in each of the conceptions of self described below are as important as their distinctions. Some of these relationships are significant in the final section of the chapter, dealing with the teleology of self in the discourse material. Fourth, there need not be a continuity between the self introduced, reintroduced, or abandoned here and views of self in following decades. That is, it would not be surprising if a view introduced in the postwar years is only reluctantly and haltingly adopted into the mainstream of cultural views. Novick makes a strong case that this halting adaptation of ideas is exactly what happens following WW II, and it is only reasonable to expect views of self to follow suit, or more accurately, to demonstrate the same kind of pattern of adoption.

2.2.1 The identified self

One of the most important characteristics of self is location in moral space, as Charles Taylor puts it (49). In this body of discourse, conceptions of that location appear to divide into three related loci: civilization, modernity, and ethnicity. These "groups" are more than just ways of categorizing people. They are the instruments by which any person knows who (or even what) he is, where he is, what is expected of him and he can in turn expect, in the discourse of that day. When a conception of self changes, understandings of potential, purpose, and responsibility also change.

2.2.1.1 The civilized self

One of the most important locations by which the Western individual identifies himself is civilization. That is to say, only the civilized qualify as being in possession of full humanity. "The way in which men who have plenary power treat those who are in their hands and helpless is as good a criterion as any of their civilization. We may justly call the Germans debased because they used their power over prisoners bestially" (Barth 510). The relationship between civilization and human being is clearly assumed in this passage. What this author, Alan Barth, or others in this time period may have implied by "civilization" is not as important in this particular section as the fact that he identifies bestiality with the failure to pass his particular test of civilization. The overarching assumptions identifying civilization are discussed below. Again, the supposition is that civilization itself must be in some way overturned, neglected, or at least tainted by the infusion of activity from those whose behavior excludes them from it. "The crimes committed by the Nazis and by their accomplices against the Jewish people are indelible stains upon the whole of our modern civilization" (Welles 511). But, in the discourse, it is not just that civilization is threatened. The loss of civilization

is the endangerment of the human race as a whole. Further, without civilization, self is lost. West's article cites a now obscure book by Christopher Burney, *The Dungeon Democracy*, and evidences this line of thinking:

> My interest is to see the world cured of a pestilence which will eventually cause the destruction of the human race unless a swift cure is found. That pestilence is inhumanity, and this book is designed simply to give warning of its presence and of its activity and especially to guard against the fatal tendency to think that it is a direct offspring of Nazidom and will perish with its father. (24)

Burney's concern is a twofold revelation of his underlying assumptions about self. The end of civilized behavior is the end of humanity. And the threat for such an end can come from anyone or any group inclined to "inhumanity," by which word he specifically infers the inhumane treatment of others.

2.2.1.1.1 Acting towards others as civilized humans

As it turns out, the two key ingredients of "civilization" in late 1940's discourse about Nazi practices were acting towards others as civilized humans and acting as a human. The first, acting towards others as members of humanity, is typified in much writing about the treatment of prisoners, whether Jewish, political, or prisoners-of-war. First there is obvious contempt for the Nazi treatment of Slavs and Jews, for example. "It was quite in order for the master race to torture, starve, and exterminate such inferior creatures as Poles and Russians and stateless European Jews" (Barth 509). Here Barth loathes the Nazi doctrine of racial superiority and links it directly to their actions toward others. His argument is that once the Nazis had determined the inferiority of Poles, Russians, and Jews, it was only natural for their actions to change toward those people who should have been, by Barth's assumption, held as members of civilization.

But Barth continues his argument by extending the error of the Nazi's to his own nation. In a remarkably consistent and well-thought article, Barth next introduces the

danger of uncivilized behavior in other countries that consider themselves civilized as well:

> Perhaps the outstanding sample of racist reasoning was offered a couple of weeks ago by Paul V. McNutt. He remarked in the course of a speech at Chattanooga that he was in favor of 'extermination of the Japanese—in toto.' Asked if he meant the extermination of the Japanese army or of the people, he replied that he referred to 'the people.' Mr. McNutt, no doubt, thinks of the Japanese as uncivilized. (510)

Obviously Barth's comments lead to some conclusions important to understanding the day. Barth apparently uses McNutt's call for the extermination of the Japanese three ways. First, explicitly, he compares McNutt's attitude toward the Japanese with the Nazi's attitudes toward "inferior races." By so doing he mocks McNutt, putting enough into the statement for the reader to infer that it is in fact the Japanese who are civilized, while McNutt is barbaric. This inference is important because it still equates civilization with the just treatment of the civilized. Second, as explicitly as his use of sarcasm will allow, his condemnation of McNutt's statement means that he expects civilized people to accept the Japanese as civilized also, not a common theme in the United States in 1945 but consistent with his goal of raising standards of conduct toward others by raising opinions toward others. Third, Barth is generally disdaining the concept he is recognizing. He is arguing that there is no cause (at least none apparent) for regarding some as inferior members of civilization. In fact, his assumptions seem to point toward his earlier claim, that the real mark of civilized humanity is the treatment of all other people with the same respect accorded other civilized people.

This extension of civilized behavior turns still further as other authors deal even with the treatment of the dead. There is, for instance, the difficulty with which the dead are distinguished from the near dead in Buchenwald by Charles R. Codman. "There were fewer there when I was there. I did not count them, but the shelves were still well filled. Some of them were living human beings, but the majority were almost

indistinguishable from the corpses we saw in the death cart" (54). His comparison of corpses and barely living bodies extends beyond the common. He contrasts those still living but "almost indistinguishable" from corpses with "living human beings." Somewhere between health and death there is a point at which, on Codman's (admittedly possibly emphatic) view, whatever is left is not a living human being. It is at exactly this kind of lapse that West cringes. Her contention is that people should be shocked by the sight of cadavers in a way distinct from their response to living human beings. "If human beings are not appalled by the difference between living bodies and corpses they will make living bodies into corpses without compunction, and our race will perish in a welter of murder" (20). The point for her is clearly about desensitization. But her assumption involves an important comment about the obligations of humans acting towards others as humans, and extending the definition of humanity as far as possible in every direction.

2.2.1.1.2 Acting as human

On the other end of the spectrum, and implied by Barth's issues above, is the examination of the actors (as opposed to the victims.) Above, the argument includes the assumption that when others are regarded as less than civilized human beings their security at the hands of those assumed civilized is dubious. The other side of that issue is whether anyone who treats others in such ways can be considered worthy of human identity—whether that person is civilized. While it is certainly possible, and in fact probably correct, to claim that none in the period immediately following WW II would argue that Nazi war criminals were not biologically human, it is equally correct, and perhaps more important, to recognize that many commentators did argue, or at least imply, that those criminals were not acting as humans in their capacities as tormentors and executioners. It seems apparent in the discourse of the late 1940's that civilization,

with its expectations and taboos, was an assumption in conceptions of self. Because the self was perceived in the context of civilization, and without moral context the self does not exist, assaults on the wholeness of Nazi perpetrators as uncivilized and therefore less than human are revelations about assumptions of self. An individual uncivilized might be the recipient of biologically human composition, but he certainly was not acting as a human. Mann argues that surviving victims of the Holocaust have reentered a world in which humanity's laws are practiced. "It is a solace to know that these few have been wrested from the power of their tormentors and returned to the laws of humanity" (535). The obviously intentional entailment of his statement is that the victims were not in the hands of humanity while they were in the hands of their German captors.

There were undoubtedly a variety of estimations of the nature of German character or identity after their defeat. Those estimations ranged from proud resistance to abject contrition. Mann's encouragement is for Germans to admit fully their failure to identify with humanity during the war years and so return to that identification. He indicates as much in response to the incitements of a Bishop Galen to regard the Allies as the enemy (after Germany's fall.) "Do not, like this ill-advised cleric, regard yourselves primarily as Germans, but as men and women returned to humanity, as Germans who after twelve years of Hitler want to be human beings again" (535).

Terms castigating German humanity are ubiquitous in the literature of the time. They are enflamed rhetorical devices. But they also reveal the frustration of those trying to put vocabulary to the previously incomprehensible acts of people. When people regard others as inferior and then act on that regard, they become savages. "One of the dominant Nazi ideas is the doctrine of German racial supremacy. This doctrine was used to justify all the hideous acts of savagery within Germany which have lately come

to light" (Barth 509). When civilized, conscientious mankind sees the behavior of the Germans, they cannot explain their nature or behavior with terms of the civilized and "tongued." So the kind of people who would commit such acts are incommensurate with humanity. "By its very legal, moral and humanitarian nature, it must be considered an international crime. The conscience of mankind has been shocked by this type of mass barbarity" (Lemkin 228). Lemkin's point is especially important since he not only verbalizes the severance between civilization and barbarity, but also because he argues that the "international crime" of Germany is against civilization itself, against the "conscience of mankind," and therefore merits the description, "mass barbarity." Person-hood and the recognition of self-hood depend in large part on the recognition of civility. And the recognition of civility hinges significantly on whether actors are acting as human toward others.

2.2.1.2 The modern self

The popular intellectual discourse of the postwar years addresses a conspicuous conflict between the desire to continue faith in the historical, incremental growth of mankind's nature and the contrasting evidence of Holocaust Europe. This view posits each person as a part of a progressive, historical development of mankind. Each person may not be better than those who came before, but he will be part of a modernity which is necessarily advantaged by its position at the current head of whiggish progress. It comes as no surprise that a Gestalt type of change in views of the modern world is provoked by the discovery of Nazi practices. In general, the juxtaposition of Nazi sterilization programs with what people expected in a rational, modern continent not only disturbed sensibilities but provoked a reexamination of exactly what they should expect from modernity. "One would like to read it [a particular account of Nazi sterilization programs and practices] as a fragment from a dark primeval age. But the

events it described happened very recently" (Gumpert 597). But such a transformation of expectations about humane and rational humanity does not come easily. A culture steeped in Enlightenment hope does not easily relinquish its belief that people are basically good and that if properly educated, they can overcome all obstacles to human fulfillment. In cultures where modernity is valued, people want to hold views of humanity consistent with views of modernity. Assumptions of the Enlightenment regarding human worth and ability provide such a consistency. American views of humanity following WW II were no exception, despite a hiatus of optimism on the immediate heels of Buchenwald's discovery, for instance. "Every editor will tell you that 'horror stories,' whether documentary or fictional, can no longer count on anything like a general interest. Reconversion to the pleasant belief in the innate goodness of man is in full swing" (Pick 34). Even in the face of blatant and horrific human rights violations, to use the contemporary term, people in such a culture of modernity apparently find a way to revert to confidence in the human spirit, which is exactly what Pick is describing as already happening in September of 1945. Allusions to the Holocaust in following decades attest to the fact, however, that this "reconversion" does not remove the seed laid by these and innumerable similar assaults on optimistic views of man.

2.2.1.3 The political, national, or racial self

Israel Charny's discussion of personal identification can be parsed into claims that run in two important directions (xvi–xix). One poses questions of belonging, worth, and meaning for each person in terms of the group with which he identifies. The other poses questions of isolation from and therefore responsibility (or actually the lack thereof) toward groups from which the person separates himself. In the former case, conceptions of who he is and what he does will be developed from this identification.

But such developments will include more detail: how he became who he is, how he achieved what he has, what he will be and do if he becomes fully what his identified group projects as complete, or what others or other groups project onto him as an individual or them as a group.

In the case of the latter, recent arguments include the premise that the more grounded in familial identity a person is in early development, the more likely he is to develop a sense of responsibility toward other groups, and eventually all of mankind (Charny). This universalism, the appeal for all people to recognize their commitment as members not simply of a national group, but as members of humanity generally, has grown since Holocaust Europe to the point that the formerly (apparently) solid line of division between national autonomy and intervention on behalf of international human rights violations has been blurred, if not elided altogether.

The importance of this sense of identity, within the context of some kind of governmental (in the broad, not necessarily nationalist sense) or cultural heritage, is apparent in the discourse following WW II. Two particularly important crises arise in this area of self in the wake of the Holocaust and the overthrow of Nazi rule. Most obviously, Jewish identity faces a critical moment. Despite the traditional view that persecution has only strengthened Jewish identity throughout history, there is during this period a significant challenge to the essential nature of being Jewish. In some cases individuals and families retrench in their tradition. But in other cases it is apparent that the commitment to Jewish-ness, whether viewed traditionally or racially, wanes:

> The effect of persecution has been to drive the survivors to extremes: either they have become Jews in a more positive sense than ever before, or they have decided to lose their identity as Jews. [. . .] Day after day in the *Journal Officiel* one finds columns of notices of Cohens and Levys who have changed their names to Dumont and Bontemps. (Levin 75)

The contrast between this "take-it-or-leave-it" Jewish-ness and the racial essence of the Jewish person prerequisite to past pogroms and the Holocaust itself is unmistakably important. Most importantly, though, it reveals an underlying sentiment allowing for the recognition that racial and traditional identifications can be—may be—arbitrarily or culturally constructed. The fact that the will of the Jew to entrench as a Jew or to dismiss his Jewish-ness is a topic at all is a significant issue for the meaning of self in the post-war years, not only among Jews, but among any who read these changes as something more than simply the adjustment of public records.

Novick argues that Jewish identity is at the core of a dilemma during and just after the war years. On one hand there is the desire to have the Jewish plight recognized and uniquely associated with Jewish-ness. "But insofar as Jewish identity could be anchored in the agony of European Jewry, certification as (vicarious) victims could be claimed, with all the moral privilege accompanying such certification" (9). On the other hand, there is during the war, and as a carryover after the war, a desire to universalize the purpose of entering the conflict:

> There was another reason for not emphasizing Hitler's 'war against the Jews': to sidestep the claim that America's struggle with Germany was a war *for* the Jews. The claim that American Jews were dragging the country into a war on behalf of their brethren in Europe was a staple of prewar isolationist discourse. (Novick 27)

In these statements Novick recognizes a conflict that serves as a significant backdrop for subjectivity. Is Jewish-ness essential to identity or not? Is the victim status essential to identity or not? The issue here is not in answer to those questions, but in the observation that the questions are asked.

On the other side of discourse in this same domain is the issue of German identity. Both German and Jewish identities experience pressure from two sides following the war. As the quote above illustrates, there is an unquestionable pressure to

relinquish Jewish-ness in favor of, most likely, security and acculturation. But at the same time there is a drive to preserve and even exalt Jewish-ness in spite of all past and potential opposition, evidenced in one part by the early demands for a Jewish homeland. German identity is similarly skewed. On one hand there is shame about perpetrating and tolerating the acts unveiled following the war, as well as a sense of embarrassment about losing the war at all after the fervor over German technical, bureaucratic, and economic superiority so thoroughly foisted on nationalist pride before and during the war. But on the other hand, there is at least an appeal from those who opposed Nazism and its consequences for Germans not to give up their identity as Germans just because they have lost the war. "Power is lost, but power is not everything. It is not even the main thing. And German greatness was never a matter of power. It was once German and may be German again to win respect and admiration by the human contribution, by the power of the sovereign spirit" (Mann 535). Mann implies the importance of the German national identity (of selves) by separating that identity from the brute strength imposed by the Third Reich and associating it instead with characteristics of the fulfilled individual, a fulfillment of self specifically separated from the nature of German nationalism, or at least German National Socialism. There is a turnaround. Instead of selves finding identification through national German power, German national identity is found, in Mann's argument, through the exercised power of "the sovereign spirit." Of course, there is a sense in which this liberal individualism is not a new development at all. Wilhelm von Humboldt certainly advocates a view of self and fulfillment focused on such an individualism in his earliest works. Not only is Humboldt focused on such a shift in views of the individual, but in the government's responsibility which can only be fulfilled by not interfering with the full development of the individual. But there is another sense in which this view of what it means to be a

complete human is a new development. Nikolas Rose argues convincingly for this development (101–115). Rose's contention is that the contemporary regime of the self has developed along psychological lines precisely because of the transition typified by the implication of Mann's statement above. That is, the desire of government to nurture the independent psychological development of subjects necessarily without coercion indicates a different and developing view of both humanity and psychology. While this specific subject is mentioned below, it is important here since it is not uncommon for such a psychological self to appear woven together with German national identity in this Western postwar discourse.

Another tie between the individual and his identity within a national and governmental setting relates to observing nations, including those eventually brought into the war:

> For we and our governments, to which we have intrusted power during these years between the Great Wars, cannot shake off the responsibility for having permitted the growth of world conditions which made such horrors possible. The democracies cannot lightly attempt to shirk their responsibility. No recompense can be offered the dead. (Welles 511)

His argument does not condemn the government and recognize citizens separately. His claim is that "we and our governments" bear a responsibility for the events of persecution in Europe. For Welles, personal responsibility follows with national identity. Welles goes on to argue the responsibility of democratic nations to provide for the refugees of war. "The great powers must press for the success of such negotiations. By doing so they will provide the best assurance that a just, and a final, solution will be found" (512).

Commentary following the war also sometimes portrays class identification as significantly as race and nationality:

> Most people's morale is supported by the corset of their social prestige and rank and status. Strip those corsets off and they sag. They lose all self-respect and the proletarians look at them with contempt. You want examples? Well, the SS gave us a brothel in 1942, fourteen girls from another camp. The secret camp committee decided to put it out of bounds for all politicals, but some of the upper-class people paid their two marks and soon they were fighting for the girls and stealing in order to give them presents. It was the same with the 200 Polish boys. That was the sort of thing which made the proletarians say that the bourgeoisie have no self-respect when you take off their corsets. (Crossman 123)

It is difficult to decide which inference to take from this statement. There is an inclination to take the source of Crossman's quote, a former political Buchenwald prisoner identified only as K—, directly. That is, there is reason for understanding the source's statements as a repudiation of the essence of class to humanity. When class is stripped away the prisoners appear equal, at least in basic appetites. But there is another option, and probably a more thorough inference from the source's words. If the behavior of the camps is debased and tending to bestiality, then Crossman's real point, or at least the underlying assumption of his choosing this particular statement for quotation, is that without the "corset of their social prestige and rank and status" a significant part of their humanity, including self-respect, is gone.

2.2.2 The psychological self

2.2.2.1 The therapeutic self

One hallmark of contemporary views of self is the therapeutic. Since at least Rieff's 1966 treatise on the subject, it has been common to discuss self in terms of psychological and ethical autonomy. A complete self is one capable of self-regulation, self-motivation, self-examination, and self-fulfillment; one capable of functioning as an individual within a liberal democracy without outside intervention (at least apparently

and ideally.) Or, more precisely, a mature self is one capable of balancing effectively what Rieff calls controlling and releasing influences in the culture and in the individual. Basic to this therapeutic self is the psychological wholeness of the individual. Foucault and Rose present impressive cases for regimes of the self designed to produce exactly this sense of wholeness through governments and structures of expertise and administration. These emphases presuppose a competent psychological self, a status stripped of Holocaust survivors in much postwar literature.

What provides from one perspective the ability to maintain sanity and hope is from a different perspective a refusal to fully face substantial realities. "Of all the survivors I talked to, none was without a story of sisters, brothers, mother, father gone, and yet none ever said these loved ones were dead unless he had actually seen them killed" (Levin 74). This psychological description of Jewish Holocaust survivors (the focus of Levin's article) can be taken different ways. Focus on denial and the difficulty of dealing with familial loss point to the fractured psyche of survivors. But it is also possible, and Levin does this, to focus on the universality of the psychological game of denial and its positive evidences. Either way, what makes the observations interesting coming from Levin is their appeal to something of a universally psychological human nature, the therapeutic value of that nature in individuals, and Levin's own place in the historical debate over the nature of the Holocaust as either a universal or specifically Jewish tragedy. Levin continues his observations in the same article. "There are certain facts so massive that the human mind for a long time rejects them, and this has happened with the story of European Jewry. The survivors themselves, after living these years within the massacre, don't believe their own knowledge of its completeness" (74). Levin is clearly and deliberately locating the Jewish response to the Holocaust squarely within human norms, particularly psychological norms. In Levin's analysis, a part of the

victimization of the persons involved in moral tragedies is the loss of their therapeutic wholeness. (It is this same Meyer Levin who proposes his adaptation of Ann Frank's diary as the only properly Jewish stage version. He argues against the gentile adaptation which went on to commercial success on stage and ultimately on film.) The concern for therapeutic wholeness is significant, especially as it develops in later decades. Rose describes its importance in 1996:

> And for those selves unable to conform to the obligations of the free subject, unable to choose or anguished by the choices they have made, dynamic and social therapies offer technologies of reformation consonant with the same political principles, institutional demands, and personal ideals. They are mainly supplied by free choice in the market. They are legitimated in terms of their truth or their efficacy rather than their morality. And they promise to restore the subject to autonomy and freedom. Government of the modern soul thus takes effect through the construction of a web of technologies for fabricating and maintaining the self-government of the citizen. (79)

While Rose's specific concern is with the role of government in relation to conceptions of self, he establishes significant claims about subjectivity itself along the way. In post war literature, one way to present the suffering of the Jews in a universal light is psychologically, revealing cultural assumptions similar to those from which Rose draws. Yet always in the background of these universalizations, and not too far back, is the urge to maintain the specific identity of those who suffered. Psychological claims are even employed by Welles as he argues specifically for a Palestinian "National Jewish Homeland":

> I firmly believe, and I am confident that enlightened public opinion throughout the United Nations will also maintain, that one of the immediate responsibilities to be assumed by the international organization, as soon as it is established, must be the carrying out of effective plans to take care of the refugees who have been driven from their homes by Nazi persecution, so that they may be afforded the opportunity of living out their lives in safety and happiness. (511)

Welles assumes safety and happiness suffice as common denominators for the purpose of determining the course of postwar activities. As long as Jewish refugees were forced

to live without the prospect of safety and happiness, they could not be whole. Such qualities typify circumstances of normality and wholeness. West's commentary on the report of the English officers about Buchenwald contains the same kind of assumptions. "A— B— represented the reaction of normality to Buchenwald. That could not be said of X— Y—. He was not mad; he was not to the faintest degree mentally affected. [. . .] To the day of his death there will be a strangeness about him, though he belongs to the least strange type of Englishman" (21). While West's description is deliberately enigmatic, it does still assume a value in psychological normalcy and its deprivation in the victim of Buchenwald. In fact, a reasonable inference is that she intends for her description of X—Y— to reflect poetically her reading of his person after the war, a person permanently impacted and even impaired, though not insane, by his experiences. He is a victim of the war. Although the terms are not yet pointed to this purpose, he has lost his therapeutic wholeness.

Novick argues in his chapter on the postwar years that the titles given to those who escaped the Holocaust with their lives ranged from DP's (displaced persons) to New Americans, obviously depending on many variables. However, he also remarks on the later development of "victim" as the standard description of anyone who survived the Holocaust, particularly Jewish survivors.

Although most of this section on the therapeutic and psychological self is focused on statements about victims, there is also evidence of the therapeutic self in descriptions of actors and even bystanders. One article by William Lynch points out this psychological factor in both groups with particular detail and clarity:

> There is something in the nature of man, a factor perhaps meant to preserve his sanity, that steels him rapidly to the acceptance of horror and pain after the initial shock. The old story of the ancient Chinese mandarin who by taking each day a small but increasing dose of poison made himself immune, is somewhat parallel to the point. The human mind can be brought very easily to a stage where it will be untouched by the gruesome, when in order to be stirred by evil things it must see

> only those more horrible than the last. It can be desensitized to such an extent that it becomes brutalized. Already in too many instances the involuntary gasp accompanying the first sight of the atrocity pictures has changed to a mere tsch-tsch. This brutalization could be the most bitterly ironical victory for the enemy. (14)

Several of Lynch's statements bear comment and shed light on conceptions of self, especially the psychological and therapeutic self. His claims are universal. They are about "something in the nature of man" and "the human mind." His argument is not about something unique to a race, or appearing in some people but not others. His claim is that there is something present in the makeup of man that cauterizes his psyche from too much "horror and pain." He even compares the process to the pharmaceutical (albeit mythical) example of developing an immunity to physical poison. The most interesting turn in Lynch's statement is the inversion in this comparison. While it seems reasonable to infer that developing an immunity to poison is positive, it is clear throughout this article that Lynch is strongly critical of the immunity being developed as a result of increasing exposure to the atrocities of WW II. Specifically, he is presenting one side of a written forum in answer to the question, "Should We Exploit the Atrocity Stories?" He answers "no" with this article. So while he explicitly repudiates the psychological process he interprets as happening in response to the atrocity stories, he implicitly and probably unknowingly presents the nature of the human psyche as a therapeutic device. To clarify: since his claims are universal in nature his argument serves as a revelation of developing cultural assumptions about the nature of the human psyche. Later in the same article Lynch's vocabulary reveals how essential his claims are to the nature of humanity. "But one look at the hard-jawed and unashamed German civilians whose pictures are now coming over the telephoto lines is enough to make us fear the dehumanizing effect of exposure to mass brutality" (15). He describes something like a vortex of dehumanization. Not only are the atrocious acts brutal, but the developing

insensitivity as a result of exposure to the brutality is dehumanizing. There is also an obvious point of conflict in his discourse. In Lynch's terms, the thing typical of humanity ("something in the nature of man") is producing a "dehumanizing effect." Lynch does not reconcile this contradiction in terms. In fact, from the tenor of the article it is safe to say he does not recognize it. Yet it would be rash to accuse him of not writing intelligently or not thinking through his arguments. There are things about dealing with the aftermath of the Holocaust which juxtapose incompatible conceptions. Lynch assumes that a mitigated emotional or visceral response to the suffering of others is bad. He therefore concludes that exposure to the atrocities of the war should be minimal. What is interesting about Lynch's statements is that they were made in June of 1945. Lynch's observations of the waning emotional responses of crowds to "atrocity pictures" were published only one month after the German surrender.

2.2.2.2 The responsible self

2.2.2.2.1 Choice and responsibility

Another facet of the psychological self is responsibility. Questions of choice and responsibility are so pervasive in arguments regarding immorality and evil in the aftermath of WW II that the immorality of any who actively participated in the decision-making leading to genocidal practices is assumed while great pains are taken to expand responsibility to those less actively involved in the process. Arguments rose in later years to rationalize or explain these choices as more than simply reflections of free will. Zygmunt Bauman is probably the best example of these efforts. Among the most important of his claims is that bureaucratization allowed individuals in the Third Reich to perform their particular task without facing or necessarily realizing responsibility for the product of the bureaucracy. But for reporters and scholars in the

postwar years such isolation due to technologization was not a considered option, at least not yet. Those who did examine the separation of individual acts and actors from the nature of evil shortly thereafter, such as Hannah Arendt in 1963, found less of a justifiable explanation in favor of the actors than a new way of seeing and understanding evil, including being more wary of apparent banality. The point is that authors of the day commonly ascribed the motivation behind the evils that had taken place before and during the war to what is today derogatorily called folk psychology. Included in that assumption is a person with a will whose choices are influenced by his beliefs and attitudes. As obvious and commonsensical as such a folk psychological approach might seem, its imbedded-ness in American culture is both somewhat unique and important. "But modern Western societies are unusual in construing the person as such a natural locus of beliefs and desires, with inherent capacities, as the self-evident origin or actions and decisions, as a stable phenomenon exhibiting consistency across different contexts and times" (Rose 22). The question with which commentators were grappling during this time was whether that will is independent although influenced by circumstances, or if its decisions are determined by its circumstances. The question may not have been new, but confrontation with the Holocaust and new ideas of psychological causes put it in an entirely new light. The circumstances influencing the will could vary from education to chemical factors, but the fundamental issue was the same. Lemkin's plea for accountability begins with this kind of personal responsibility:

> The liability for genocide should rest on those who gave and executed the orders, as well as on those who incited to the commission of the crime by whatever means, including formulation and teaching of the criminal philosophy of genocide. Members of governments and political bodies which organized or tolerated genocide will be equally responsible. (230)

But Lemkin quickly moves to expand that responsibility beyond the most actively involved participants to those who formulated and taught the "criminal philosophy of

genocide." And these inclusions are not just responsible, but "equally responsible." The point for this section is responsibility is all measured in comparison to the moral accountability, or assumed free moral agency, of the primary actors.

2.2.2.2.2 Passive responsibility

As postwar commentators sought to expand responsibility beyond the most directly involved, they first looked to the people who in their estimation had turned a blind eye on the victimization that transpired around them. Levin, part of an American Jewish population which would face its own crises of passive responsibility, implies the responsibility of the German population, for example, through his description of the motivations of those who suffered through and survived the European slaughter of Jews. "No, they could not imagine going back to live among the people who had let this be done to them" (75). Speaking of the refugees of the war, and pointing toward an argument for the establishment of a Jewish national homeland, he justifies what he perceives as a reluctance to trust neighbors who did not intervene when they should have. They are the people who "let this be done to them." Not only is the self capable of making decisions (i.e., either possessing or comprised of a will), but in the description of Levin, the self is responsible for making choices. Not to choose to intervene is wrong. The implication of Levin's reasoning, which is emblematic of many commentators during this time, is that will is not just present in the individual, but essential and active. By holding such a neighbor responsible, Levin reveals that he cannot conceive of a person who is not acting out of a choice.

Strout's article, which answers Lynch's in the *Saturday Review* forum about exploiting atrocity stories, more plainly asserts this assumption about will and choice. First, Strout establishes his belief that the Germans have only demonstrated through Nazism the tendencies of mankind as a whole:

> I do not think the German people, or even the Nazis alone, are indicted by these pictures of prison camps which Mr. Lynch would prefer to treat so gingerly. I think it is a trait of mankind, here shown in its ultimate historical example, that is indicated, and that here offers an object lesson almost as solemn for us in America as for the Reich itself. I say, show these pictures. (16)

Mankind is indictable. But why? What is it that causes Strout to spread the responsibility for German actions to all of mankind? "So far as I am concerned I come back again and again to this fact. It is the ability of mankind to close its eyes. These things were happening all around them, but the average neat German family—close-knit, affectionate, patriotic—wouldn't see" (15–16). Strout quickly eliminates the possibility of innocuously passing off his claims on the bulk of humanity by drawing attention to a single, typical (in his eyes) German family. He is emphatic. It is not that the German family did not or could not see. It is that they would not see. Will and choice are involved.

Another interesting conflict rises here, this time between the therapeutic value to mankind of being able to "close its eyes" but the moral responsibility of opening them. The similarity between Strout's description here and Lynch's earlier comments bears mentioning. Both condemn passivity on the part of observers. But both also begin their comments with descriptions that imply something good about the mechanisms that provide for that passivity. For Lynch it is "a factor perhaps meant to preserve his sanity, that steels him rapidly to the acceptance of horror and pain after the initial shock." For Strout it is "the ability of mankind to close its eyes." Strout does not ascribe this ability to an individual, or to a choice, but to something in the nature of mankind. Neither author attempts to reconcile the conflict. It is most likely true, based on the tenor of the articles, that neither recognizes the conflict in their own writing. But the opposition speaks volumes about well-established and developing views of self in their world. In their attempt to convince the culture they perceive, they conclude their arguments with

an appeal to something that can be taken for granted, that people are comprised of a will and responsible for what they do with it. But they do not begin with that assumption. Each begins with a recognition of influences perhaps not yet accepted culturally, or even in their own opinions, but which cannot be ignored in the light of behavior which simply does not add up as no more than the evil choices of extremely evil people. Each begins with some kind of mechanism, in these cases, a psychological/therapeutic mechanism, which allows them to approach the subject rationally. They are attempting to answer the question, "what could have caused people to do these things?" But they know that they cannot conclude with anything that will exclude or even diminish the responsibility of the actors. So they rephrase the question as, "what could have caused people to choose these things?" Although the second question does not resolve the impending public controversy or thoroughly analyzed philosophical question, it does give them a rhetorical way out of the issue in the public discourse. In one breath they are able to claim that some universal human attribute caused them to act this way. And in the next breath they revert to language that depends on an understood free will in order to have its full impact.

It is not at all the point that Lynch or Strout thought through these issues, or that they were demonstrating ignorance or hypocrisy by avoiding such a reconciliation or resolution of ideas. In the light of some fairly simple philosophical and analytical tools, it is apparent that these two authors similarly follow what will end up being separate rhetorical curves. That is, they pursue the evidences which determinism dictates, in whatever form it may take, to establish the mechanisms that influence humanity. Then they follow folk psychological claims to draw their conclusions. The fact that their discussions unite at the cusp of these issues is a revelation about issues coming to a head in public discourse immediately following the war.

2.2.3 The material self

There is little doubt that the American public mindset following the war did not regard the self materially. Psychological, social, and spiritual descriptions are pervasive. Material descriptions are sparse, and mostly presented in a condemnatory light as authors comment on perceived Nazi views. Such views include the biological self, (for example, the reproductive, and the racially/genetically determined,) and the economic self, the only material self portrayed in positive terms in all of the discourse examined.

2.2.3.1 The biological self

Of course, ethical values are among the most difficult of issues to address when self is taken materially. It is difficult to distinguish between insidious and banal, or even between evil and good, when the only way to describe anyone's action is as the result of forces in a system where causes are only materially described. On the most difficult side of the issue, the things that motivate murder also motivate nurture. But closer to the issue of the postwar years, the point is that the things that motivate genocide also motivate racism. As easy as that statement is to accept in contemporary culture, it is a difficult tenet for postwar America, but one that certain authors are quick to embrace and proclaim. The battle in public discourse after the war is not about whether the limits, motivations, purposes, and nature of humanity is fundamentally biological or material. But the difficulty of handling such an ostensibly moral issue with claims that seem dependent on a materialist/biological self does surface. The claims by authors who recognize this conflict make for some of the most didactic, even pedantic, rhetoric following the war:

> Now, strangely and ironically, we are beginning ourselves to interpret this savagery in racist terms. Some people in reacting to recently disclosed German war crimes attribute them directly to defects in German genes. Here we have the typical Nazi

> confusion between race and nationality; the assumption of German racial inferiority is as unintelligent as the Nazi doctrine of racial supremacy.
>
> This sort of thinking was implicit in a recent statement by Representative Ed Izac of California, a member of the House committee which will inspect prison camps in Germany. The German atrocities, he told a reporter, could not be laid solely at the door of the Nazi system or of Hitler. Rather, he said, they were the result of something innate in the German people. (Barth 509)

The innate-ness in Izac's description of the motivation behind "German" behavior reveals the tendency to materialize explanations. That tendency has obvious roots, as Barth attests, in racism throughout history, including strongly in the United States. But there is also something new about it based on the technological and scientific claims that came from the Third Reich. On one hand, it seems only appropriate that Nazi claims of Aryan genetic superiority turn back on them after the war. Those who live by the sword die by the sword. But on the other hand, the adoption, (or really, furtherance, since racism is already firmly established in American culture,) of rhetorical tools based on genetic and material, technologized and scientified claims about human nature requires an examination similar to Lynch's earlier claim that the Nazis, while losing the war physically, may have won the war through the desensitization and brutalization of those exposed to mass-barbarity. "There is a school of thought that accepts these sickening discoveries as final crushing evidence of something cruel in the German soul. To me this seems preposterous. [. . .] Those who accept the sinister theory of German racial corruption are borrowing it right out of Nazism itself" (Strout 15). The point of these particular citations is not that the self is or is not material, a fairly useless question since the study of self is an examination of cultural conceptions. The point is that post-war authors are struggling with the emergence of a view of self which offers much sought after explanatory power for observers at every level, but which excludes the easy moralization associated with a spirit or soul.

When the philosophical reduction is performed on humankind, the typical result is a material self. Most discourse following the war in which the human is described in reduced form is scathing commentary on supposed Nazi beliefs and practices, and it is always negative. Gumpert provides an example of this kind of commentary as he condemns the practice of sterilization by citing the whole of a letter from an unidentified author from Amsterdam outlining such practices there during the war. "He announced that if a Jew married to a Gentile would agree to be sterilized, he, or she, need no longer wear the Jewish star, and his capital, confiscated as Jewish, would be given back to him" (597). Gumpert clearly cites the letter to reveal Nazi practices. While he obviously abhors the system of beliefs that leads to such practices, he presents this material precisely because he wants those beliefs to be seen and rejected. The letter he cites presents a case in which Jewish-ness is strictly tied to physical reproduction. A man is identified as a Jew if he is able to have children. If he forfeits, through sterilization, the ability to have children then he is no longer identified as a Jew. The letter goes on with a specific example to make this biological identification even clearer:

> Eugen B—, born in 1906, owner of a big laundry in Arnheim, born a Jew, baptized a Catholic, married to a Catholic woman, father of three sons, was notified that his factory would be confiscated and he would be deported unless he agreed to be sterilized. He therefore "volunteered" for the operation. The sterilization, in his case, was followed by severe depression and inferiority feelings; so he decided in November, 1945, to undergo a new operation to obtain—if possible—restoration of his sexual functions. (598)

A change of religion would not change the Jew's identity; neither would marriage, or the decision and effort to raise children as Catholics. But sterility would do more than secure his property. He would no longer have to wear the yellow star, and the property taken from him would be returned. Of course it is true that different factors play a part in the Nazi practice so described. There is the desire to eliminate posterity which might

or might not follow the father's religion. There is the opportunity for experimental medical practice on victims with no apparent means of cultural, political, or legal redress. But those are not the emphases of this letter or its depiction of Nazi practices, and presumably not of Gumpert either. The emphasis here is on the perceived Nazi belief that a Jew who could no longer reproduce Jewish children need no longer be identified as a Jew at all. This identification is particularly interesting because even the economic motive, the ability to claim the Jew's property for one or more Aryans, is removed since property is returned upon sterilization. Also, experimental or purely sadistic medical practices are not part of the letter's picture. "Dr. Meyer had announced further that if Professor Rogholt would certify the infertility of one of the partners in a mixed marriage, an operation would not be necessary. Professor Rogholt had accepted his professorship from the Nazis and was much criticized for this, but he used his position to help many people by falsely certifying them as sterile" (597). Existing sterility, once properly certified, was sufficient. The fact that sterilization was only an option for Jews married to Gentile spouses, (and not for Jewish couples, for instance, with no children) does introduce some vagueness into the picture. Nevertheless, while the view introduced in this letter is not purely material, it certainly is based on physical and biological conceptions, and so requires a mention as part of the foundation for discourse regarding similar discourse in following decades.

2.2.3.2 The economic self

The self as a political/economic unit appears in American discourse about the war primarily in the form of the dislocation and relocation of Holocaust refugees. As Welles engineers his view of a national homeland for Jews, he speaks primarily in economic terms. "By the proper utilization of these resources, many hundreds of thousands of additional persons can profitably be assimilated into the body politic of

Palestine" (512). For Welles, profitability is the key to assimilation. While it may seem obvious that economic limitations be discussed in such a context, and that Welles is being nothing more than pragmatic, the introduction of persons and potential in a strictly economic light is worth noting. "But certainly upon one point I am confident, and that is that should the international organization, as I so earnestly hope, establish an international trusteeship over Palestine, the number of Jewish immigrants permitted entry into Palestine would in the future be limited solely by the capacity of the land profitably to take care of them" (512). Admittedly only tipping his hat to such concerns, Welles' statements are as close as any in this strain of discourse to portray the economic self.

2.3 Teleology in the discourse

As MacIntyre argues, a telos provides a common ground for ethical discourse (54–55). With a common telos, disagreements about morality or the ranking of moral concerns is simple, with ultimate appeal to the value not yet had but desired. Although the universal telos of Aristotle may have vanished with the polis, and its remnant with modernity's emphasis on rationalism, the public discourse of moral claims, and therefore of self, appeals to commonly held ideals. While philosophers may have abandoned notions of a teleological self, public discourse is awash with assumptions of what ought to be true of personhood and the influences that shape it.

2.3.1 The telos of civilization

Civilization forms an obvious teleological locus in the postwar years. It is presumed that to be civilized is to be good. Evil is evidence that civility has not been achieved. Terms of incivility, such as barbarity, savagery, and bestiality, typify the condemnation of German practices. The concept of civilization plays an important part

in answering questions about the kind of person who would or could commit the acts of the Holocaust, in broadening responsibility for the Holocaust to a sort of brotherhood of nations (that is, spotting identification in civilized mankind rather than only a particular nation,) and in expanding the potentialities of all men to include that which any have done. As with anything teleological, civilization is something considered inherently and unarguably good, as yet unachieved (at least fully,) and on the cultural level the eventually inevitable product of positive development. Uncertain though civilization's exact manifestation or meaning might be, the assumptions of what it is not, and what it does not contain, and that which is unnecessary to it, are fairly clear in public discourse just after the war.

2.3.1.1 Identity in civilization

The significance of recognizing identity within civilization, rather than a single nation or race, appears in different forms following the war, but all with an underlying assumption that a broader identification with civilization is the avenue to peace, or at least to avoiding another Holocaust. That focus is not teleological, however. As a means, civilization is simply a tool. It becomes a telos only when civilization is so identified with good that to be good is to be civilized, and to be uncivilized is to be evil. Such implications are also present in the literature after the war.

In Lemkin's case for a United Nations resolution specifically opposing genocide, he relies on the universal responsibility of mankind for human rights. In so doing, he attempts to broaden citizenship beyond national boundaries to humanity:

> Genocide is the crime of destroying national, racial or religious groups. The problem now arises as to whether it is a crime of only national importance, or a crime in which international society as such should be vitally interested. Many reasons speak for the second alternative. It would be impractical to treat genocide as a national crime, since by its very nature it is committed by the state or by powerful groups which have the backing of the state. A state would never prosecute a crime instigated or backed by itself. (228)

As mentioned above, this broadening is one of the hallmarks of the ways modern civilization is portrayed. But next, after establishing that the United Nations already holds the view that human rights transcend national boundaries, he uses a vocabulary that appeals to some universal value he apparently believes is present in the kind of people he is hoping will respond to his pleas. In Lemkin's pursuit of a genocide specific United Nations declaration, he expands the claim that individuals should sense affiliation with all of mankind to the obligation to intervene on behalf of groups experiencing genocidal treatment. "The Charter of the United Nations Organization also provides for the international protection of human rights, indicating that the denial of such rights by any state is a matter of concern to all mankind" (228). Of course, Lemkin's statements do not take the full step of recognizing civilization as a value in itself, but recognizing the "matter of concern to all mankind" implies something more than the pragmatic nod he explicitly gives it. Other authors, with articles chronologically closer to the war than even Lemkin's writings, do explicitly reveal the assumption of civilization as a telos—some negatively, others positively. Negatively, a theme following the war recognizes the universal potential for evil in all men, regardless of nationality. Positively, authors appeal to a universal citizenship in mankind, a recognition typical of civilization, to promote sympathy (and therefore more civilized behavior) toward other peoples.

In the sense of avoiding another Holocaust the issue is one of recognizing the universal nature of human potential for evil. "Perhaps Representative Leonard Hall of New York suffered from a similar confusion after viewing the horrors of Buchenwald. 'You have to see Buchenwald,' he said, 'to realize fully what debased beasts the Germans are'" (Barth 509). Barth claims that Representative Hall must have "suffered from a similar confusion" in order for Hall to associate the evil of Nazism with a

bestiality uniquely debased in Germans. He continues in an explicit examination of the statements of another member of the U.S. House of Representatives:

> Representative Luce, on the same occasion, was enigmatic. "The most important thing to remember," she declared, "is that this could happen to us in twenty years. Only a few years ago some were talking about there being good German people. After seeing this, one wonders whether there is good in any German people."
>
> One also wonders, if this could happen to us in twenty years, whether there is good in any Americans. And one knows, when one thinks of Georgia chain gangs and Florida sweat boxes and riots in Detroit and West Coast attacks on Americans of Japanese ancestry, that Mrs. Luce is quite right—it could happen here. No people is altogether without elements of savagery and sadism. These elements are sublimated or unleashed, depending on the cultural environment. (509–510)

Barth's statements are important on two levels. First, he recognizes the universality of human nature, claiming that whatever was possible in Germans before and during the war is also possible in other peoples. Second, his vocabulary asserts that the kind of behavior that provoked questions of whether "there is good in any German people" rises from evil elements of "savagery and sadism." The claims together portray the importance of identifying with humanity, the claim that humanity's potentials are shared, and the good of that humanity being civilized. Levin illustrates the point of humanity's shared potential for evil only two months after the close of the war:

> In France, of 350,000 Jews, 175,000 survived. The French people as a whole were sympathetic during the German occupation and helped Jews to hide; but now the atmosphere is different. Every Jew who returns to Paris and tries to recover his apartment, or his business, or his job has to displace a Frenchman, and though the law declares that the victims of Nazism shall have their belongings restored, each returning Jew faces a court battle, and in each case a new little circle of anti-Semites is created. Some new tenants' organizations, such as the Locataires de Bonne Foi, have urged their members to use force to prevent Jews from moving back into their apartments; even returning soldiers—propagandized in German prison camps—have demonstrated against Jewish shopkeepers. (75)

Of course, it is important that Levin assumes that only German propaganda could have convinced French soldiers to despise Jews. His own prejudices, whether justifiable or not, are a part of his writing. But the point here for Levin is that two months after the

Germans surrender in a war fought "justly" against them because of their evil attitude toward Jews, French citizens and even soldiers who fought against the Germans are demonstrating the same attitudes and behaviors.

In the sense of providing an avenue to peace, a consequence of civilization, the issue is identifying positively, sympathetically, with other peoples. One of Barth's opening points in the *Nation* article is the embarrassment that American concerns about German behavior were not seriously piqued until the victims looked, spoke, and valued like most Americans. "Indeed the savagery was not widely recognized as sadism until we discovered its application to French and British and even American prisoners of war" (509). The tenor of his article makes clear Barth's disdain for such limited sympathies and his assumption that the reading audience shares his value. This concern about highly parochial sympathies is why Charny titles his forward, "Which Genocide Matters More? Learning to Care about Humanity" (xiii). He illustrates the need for a larger, more inclusive scope within which the self is located. He claims that empathy for the victims of human rights abuses wanes as those victims are less and less like the audience. As biological evolution has presented the case that macro-evolution is typified by the varying stages of a developing fetus—ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny—Charny claims that civilization's development into a society of universal concern (and therefore international intervention) is reflected in the healthy psychological development of the civilized individual. "Within the context of such optimal psychological development, there grows an appreciation of the holiness of all life, and there develops a value-commitment to opposing the mass destruction of any people, religion, ethnicity, or nation" (xviii). At the mid-point of the century, in the postwar years, that value is assumed. Self is civilized or uncivilized. Self has a position in and therefore responsibility to all people. As dogmatically as Nazi propaganda

portrayed the worth of individuals based on their racial and national identity, postwar discourse portrays the worth of individuals based on their civility.

2.3.1.2 Tradition of civilization

While civilization as a telos is certainly not new at this time, there are several reasons it should draw attention. It is one foundation to moral discourse following the war. Its particularly important role as a means and as an end in references to the Holocaust integrate it into moral discourse in following decades. Those writing morally about the Gulag or the My Lai massacre will draw from premises that the appeal to civilization following the Holocaust reveals and inscribes in the public discourse.

One of Lemkin's appeals is a poignant revelation of the value of civilization as something within which traditional, trans-generational values are passed:

> Our whole cultural heritage is a product of the contributions of all nations. We can best understand this when we realize how impoverished our culture would be if the peoples doomed by Germany, such as the Jews, had not been permitted to create the Bible, or to give birth to an Einstein, a Spinoza; if the Poles had not had the opportunity to give to the world a Copernicus, a Chopin, a Curie; the Czechs, a Huss, a Dvorak; the Greeks, a Plato and a Socrates; the Russians, a Tolstoy and a Shostakovich. (228)

As glaringly European as Lemkin's presentation of civilization may be, it is still in his rationale an appeal to civilization as the value of every culture and its contribution from one generation to the next. Further, it is impossible to know whether his depiction is strictly European in context and recognizes only religious, scientific, and aesthetic leaders as an outflow of his own view of civilization, or if he limits his appeal to that which he believes will effectively draw on the assumptions of his audience. Either way, it is "our culture" which would be "impoverished" without the contribution of other peoples. The recognition of such a tradition as essential to the cultural fabric and, as it is

in this case, an important part of making a moral claim puts the type of argument Lemkin exemplifies into an important position in moral discourse.

2.3.1.3 Technology excepted in the teleology of civilization

One important observation about the understanding of civilization during the postwar years stands out. There is no value attached to technology, or more properly, technologization. Although much effort will be spent later to identify technological superiority with moral victory there is no such identification here. Postwar commentators do not mitigate German technological superiority. Neither do they hesitate to condemn German behavior with terms designed to isolate Nazi practices from anything civilized. There appears to be no qualm about acknowledging high technology and low civility. "And meanwhile, as they kept their eyes closed, a cool, calm, scientific system of mass-murder had been worked out in the horror camps, using starvation, club, and Moloch-furnace on a sort of production line basis, arranged by businesslike sadist-bigots who justified it all by a bestial theory of eugenics" (Strout 15). The most primitive means of destruction, including pagan practices two millennia past, are deliberately juxtaposed with the terms "scientific system" and "production line." The social-scientific practice of "eugenics" is a "bestial theory." In the immediate wake of the war, technology is not included as a necessary element in the teleology of civilization.

2.3.2 The telos of autonomy

2.3.2.1 Classical liberalism versus determinism

Assertions of madness and evil on behalf of the perpetrators of what come to be known as war crimes are practically universal in postwar discourse. The dilemma in

which commentators find themselves as they examine the atrocities of the war is not new, but runs deep in their writings. In broad terms it is the conflict between modernity's desire to comprehend behavior causally and the opposing effort to cling to human responsibility as a consequence of the will's autonomy. In the examined body of discourse consternation at the convergence of behavior described as morally insane but methodologically competent surfaces regularly. "That these people are individually and collectively mad there is no possible doubt. But there is method in their madness and a kind of genius for evil. The important thing is that this evil should be fully understood" (Codman 56). To attempt to understand the evil is to credit it to explicable causes. Qualifying "method" and "genius" together and opposing them to "madness" and "evil" reveals inherited modernistic assumptions about these characteristics. Codman's desire to fully understand the madness and evil implies something prevalent in many author's following the war—the belief that there must be a causally explanatory mechanism behind even the most inexplicable behavior. Observers and commentators struggle to make sense of the kind of behavior exhibited in the prison camps about which they are now reading. They cannot imagine a tormentor choosing to behave as such with a free will. So they seek mechanisms of influence and even determination on which to lay blame. But there is a simultaneous pressure, not necessarily external, to maintain the autonomy and therefore personal responsibility of individuals from German prison guards to industrialists. "It is also that a psychological ethics is intimately tied to the liberal aspirations of freedom, choice, and identity" (Rose 97). Rose's point fifty years later explains why this struggle was so difficult for the postwar writers. They wished to understand and explain. But their ethics were based in a psychology that would not relinquish the uncaused and therefore inexplicable.

As noted above, it is Strout's contention that the atrocity stories should be used to force open the eyes of people who otherwise would ignore an important revelation not only about the Germans, but about themselves as a part of mankind. It is Lynch's argument that exposure to the atrocity stories should be minimized in order to avoid saturating and thereby dulling the conscience of Americans. On the way to making their cases, each stumbles across an issue implicit in the public discourse and essential to understanding self. As mentioned above, although neither seriously describes it, neither can avoid mentioning an unspecified mechanism which protects people from being overwhelmed by the suffering of others. Both authors mention this mechanism then fall back on the individual responsibility of those who committed the crimes against victims of the Holocaust. The fact that this issue surfaces, (albeit still below the recognition of the authors,) in the opposing dialogues of Lynch and Strout reveals the importance of this conflict, and its inevitable emergence during this time of discourse.

The struggle is significant, and not easily shaken even by those aware of at least one aspect of its importance. For instance, Barth attacks the idea that biology is somehow responsible for the behavior of individuals. "It is true enough, as Mr. Hall observed, that the Germans, or at any rate those responsible for the horrors, are 'debased beasts.' But it is vital to understand that the debasement stems from the ideas and values with which those Germans were indoctrinated, not from any biological peculiarity" (510). Barth is offended by Representative Hall's determinism (shallow though it may be) when it is biologically founded, but extends a psychological claim similarly rooted in determinism. Indoctrination may receive credit for causing the Germans' behavior, but biology must not. Barth does hint that he recognizes the amoralizing potential of his claims, just as he condemns the impact of claiming a biological cause. "To understand this is in no sense to condone their guilt; it is merely to

distinguish the real root of the evil. The evil that men do undoubtedly lives after them; but there is scarcely a biologist outside of what is left of Hitler's Reich who would hold that it lives in the chromosomes and is genetically transmitted" (510). In the light of efforts in the last half of this century to reduce human behavior and psychology to physical and chemical processes, his statement is almost ironic. Barth's statements are also interesting in the light of the current implications of the regime of autonomy described by Rose as developing in Western democratic societies. Barth recognizes the autonomy of the individual, but also recognizes the practically determinative power of the technologies that manage that autonomy, in this particular case indoctrination through education. He is careful enough in his wording not to place the responsibility only on Nazi authorities, as if to ignore the autonomy of the individual, but recognizes both the power of the state to sway individuals and the individual's responsibility as a free moral agent after the influences have run their course.

2.3.2.2 Virtue

The individual's responsibility for morality surfaces in literature after the war in a very traditional form, the form of virtue. Virtue here simply places morality in the subject rather than in his behavior or its consequences. And in the context of a culture steeped in the importance of personal responsibility and autonomy, a virtue-based ethic prizes the most essential element of liberalism, the individual. The autonomous subject capable of fulfilling his "complete and consistent whole" without the intervention of external forces is at the core of the liberalism that rises from authors like Wilhelm von Humboldt (10).

The importance of the internal characteristics of subjects typical of virtue appear in the examination of Nazi ideology and the rise to power of ideologues:

> Adherence to an ideology can give individuals the power to form a group which can take control of an organization; but it cannot give them the power to resist the temptation to use that ideology as the cover for the indulgence of greed, ambition, and the nastier notions of fun. That can only be derived from a personal decision always to say yes to good and no to evil, from a resolution to scrutinize every such decision to see that it is truly what it claims to be. (West 24)

West addresses the public with the assumption that they will relate to the meaning of a "personal decision always to say yes to good" and then will accept her claim about the importance of that inward moral choice. For West and many of her contemporaries, educational influences and adopted ideologies cannot change that inward appetite for good and repulsion of evil. West deliberately and specifically attacks deterministic views of human behavior while defending the strength of virtue:

> It may be argued that this misconduct was due to the years of sequestration and ill-treatment to which these men had been subjected. But this is beautifully disproved by those others who retained their integrity unchanged through years of imprisonment. In the hospital, where nearly all the staff had cynically abandoned the bodies and souls of the sick, three German Communists, unskilled laborers by calling, gravely set themselves to acquire what medical skill they could, applied it to their patients with the utmost diligence and kindness, and refused to let themselves be used as executioners or vivisectionists. In the disinfection station there worked a Pole who loathed and despised the Jews. That is natural enough: the Czars worked hard throughout the nineteenth century to foster anti-Semitism by such means as the deportation of large numbers of Russian Jews into poverty-stricken Polish areas. But this Pole, who had to work sometimes for three days and nights at a time on the filthy and louse-infested bodies of Jews arriving in delirium and the spasms of dysentery, never touched one roughly or spoke to one rudely. (24)

Whether West is right or wrong is not the issue. The issue is that articles like West's evidence an abiding cultural assertion of a virtue-based ethic. The strength and directness of her argument, however, also evidence the growing favor of arguments crediting behavior to something other than internal character. For West, although the Czars work to imbed hatred toward the Jews, something that apparently serves to some as an excuse for their behavior or attitudes, one Pole who resists personal attitude to behave respectfully exemplifies her assertion that personal integrity can win out. It is an obvious conflict in the literature, if not always cleanly divided. Even here West does

attribute the loathing attitude of the Pole to the anti-Semitic promotion of the previous century. She also slights the significance of the Pole's attitude in light of his gentle behavior—behavior based not simply in a deontological ethic but in a virtuous "personal decision always to say yes to good and no to evil." The issues presented leave no doubt that the authors assume a morally autonomous subject. So some authors write to defend a virtue ethic (loosely construed) in order to oppose the idea that behavior can be somehow explained by external influences.

The other threat to virtue implied by the discourse of postwar authors is the loss of a common moral heritage, in this case Christianity, or more precisely, the church:

> We were conscious, as we listened to the tales of Buchenwald, in our village school, that such danger might be overhanging us; and I think we were all halfway to suspecting that it might be as Christopher Burney tells us and that there is no way of averting that danger, save for each one of us to resolve that all our lives long we should prefer the agreeable to the disagreeable, love to hatred, and good to evil. Such resolutions, in the past, were usually reinforced in the village church. But though a fair proportion of us attended the meeting at the village school that Saturday night not many of us would meet at church on Sunday morning; and I do not know the answer to the problem implied in that disharmony. (West 25)

The opening chapter to Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* is what he calls the disquieting suggestion that contemporary moral debate has lost its moorings in a common heritage and finds itself therefore appealing to what appear to be completely arbitrary rules (1–5). The conclusion to West's article, just quoted, mentions exactly the same scenario, although in a localized fashion. She does not promote religion. She does not propose any solution. But she does present a case that recognizes the conflict between an ethic rooted in the autonomous subject and the increasingly hostile theoretical environment in which that autonomy exists. Authors following the war may not know or agree on how to maintain the subject's will, or how influences are or are not limited in their influence over it, but they do draw on the value of the virtue ethic that stems from it.

2.3.2.3 The context of practices

The issue of passive responsibility, discussed above, also bears mentioning here. Commentators deal with those whose behavior could be explained by the choice to obey with the responsibility to value something more highly than obedience, even when in the role of underling, servant, slave, or prisoner:

> 'Don't talk about duty,' a brave Jewish teacher and World War I veteran in charge of a hundred and fifty orphans snapped back at one of these *policiers* when he came to pick out another bunch of children for deportation, 'you are doing your job. That is something else again.'
>
> Is having done one's job under German orders to be regarded as collaboration, and punishable as such? Much ink will be spilled in France on that question, and even more heated words exchanged. (Pick 34)

A temporary job and pragmatic concerns for personal survival are, in Pick's usage here, no match for duty which, whatever else its mention may entail, certainly carries something of a more enduring moral obligation.

One summary comment regarding virtue in the body of discourse ought to be brought up. MacIntyre constructs three legs on which he argues a modern virtue can stand without the benefit of a *polis* or agreement on Christianity: the narrative of a human life, the context of a tradition, and the context of practices. The first relates to each subject as a project, the second to subjects as part of a historical and therefore universal project, and the third to the specific context within which each subject exercises or experiences virtue. It is worth noting that the assumptions of the postwar years provide an easy groundwork for MacIntyre's claims: the individual project of psychological or therapeutic wholeness, the historical project of civilization, and the personal commitment to moral integrity. It is not at all the case that the authors themselves influence MacIntyre or that they have his concepts in mind. Rather, in the assumptions of these authors thirty-five years prior to MacIntyre's book are the

evidences of broad cultural ideals that make his prescription as close to the popular cultural mind as it is far from the philosophical.

2.3.3 The telos of stability

Authors and journalists at the close of the war also share the assumed value of stability. Demographic and economic stability appear regularly as goods without need of explanation or defense. While the self may seem insignificant in such broad social issues, it is actually present in a way which will become more prominent in later presentations of subjectivity. It seems clear that the identified and psychological self is fundamentally teleological, whether in postwar literature or contemporary scholarship. On the other hand, the teleology of the material self is obvious in the postwar discourse examined here only in its larger social or scientific context.

2.3.3.1 Demographic stability

The accepted good of demographics in the examined discourse material is stability. Nazi goals are evil partially because of their aim of unsettling the demographic makeup of Europe. Raphael Lemkin provides the best example of this kind of consideration. He is not the only one to make such observations which, in fact, are common. But his object of motivating the UN to pass a resolution as a result of Nazi practices forces him to speak in terms that incorporate a more authoritative language than sympathy can provide. He writes in terms of quantifiable ends. Even though his own articles and proposals contain practically no statistics at all, his appeal is to that which can be quantified. It is not surprising that Lemkin would present a case grounded in the more authoritative language of the day. The value he places on demographic stability begins with a nod to interdependence. "The German practices, especially in the course of occupation, are too well known. Their general plan was to win the peace

though the war be lost, and that goal could have been achieved through successfully changing the political and demographic interrelationships in Europe in favor of Germany" (227). Lemkin condemns the Nazi determination to change "political and demographic interrelationships" in favor of Germany. The context of his argument is not that the demographic changes were bad because they caused a war, but rather that a part of Nazi evil is that whether they won or lost the war, they would have changed the demographic makeup of Europe. Changes in patterns of migration and habitation are "pathological." "There are also practical considerations. Expulsions of law-abiding residents from Germany before this war created frictions with the neighboring countries to which these people were expelled. Mass persecutions forced mass flight. Thus, the normal migration between countries assumes pathological dimensions" (Lemkin 228). It is a part of the stable social fabric for people and even groups to immigrate and emigrate. But when German policies force the movement and even liquidation of large groups of people, unsettling the makeup of regional and national populations, it is pathological. Further, it is Lemkin's assumption that groups have a right to exist, and that their right is universally important:

> Moreover, as in the case of homicide, the natural right of existence for individuals is implied: by the formulation of genocide as a crime, the principle that every national, racial and religious group has a natural right of existence is proclaimed. Attacks upon such groups are in violation of that right to exist and to develop within an international community as free members of international society. Thus, genocide is not only a crime against the rules of war, but also a crime against humanity. (229)

He is arguing the case for establishing an international resolution against genocide which will then proclaim every group's right of existence. Lemkin argues for the resolution, ultimately successfully, because the assumption of the each demographic group's value to mankind is already had. It is his goal, and one that apparently carries popular weight, that the resolution proclaim this value, not create it.

2.3.3.2 Economic stability

In Lemkin's strategy economic stability is simply another tool to promote his resolution on genocide. It does not appear often, if ever, in other postwar literature about the effects of Nazi practices. It is worth noting, however, that economic stability appears as an accepted value in Lemkin's comments:

> Again, international trade depends upon confidence in the ability of the individuals participating in the interchange of goods to fulfill their obligations. The arbitrary and wholesale confiscations of the properties of whole groups of citizens of one state for racial or other reasons deprives them of their capacity to discharge their obligations to citizens of other states. Many American citizens were deprived of the possibility of claiming debts incurred by German importers after these importers were destroyed by the Hitler regime. (228)

Two things are important about his comments. First, the value of economic stability is assumed. The inability to collect on international debts is obviously bad. It is bad if citizens are deprived of "their capacity to discharge their obligations." These assumptions form the foundation from which Lemkin is able to argue for an international resolution against genocide. Second, he bases an argument against human destruction on economic issues. While his argument is not particularly philosophical, and may not have been intended as a re-ordering of values, it does serve that purpose, especially in the light of debates in other regions of the world and in subsequent decades.

In conclusion, it almost goes without saying that the events surrounding the Holocaust shape moral discourse throughout the rest of the twentieth century. While the material self is important, it is not extensively considered in public discourse. The most prominent conceptions of self in the postwar years were the self identified as civilized, modern, and parochial and the self assumed as psychological and therefore both therapeutic and autonomous. The teloi apparent in relation to these assumptions of self

include civilization with its corollaries of the universality of humanity and the tradition of historical development, autonomy understood in the context of the liberal individual's fulfillment, and a stable environment in which civilization and autonomy could flourish. These assumptions provide a basis for comparison and contrast in the next two chapters, especially as discourse about the Soviet Union during the ensuing early cold war years strongly isolates the American Western self from the perceived Soviet oriental self.

CHAPTER III

SELF AND MORALITY REVEALED IN RESPONSE TO THE SOVIET GULAG

Although American journalists and commentators use the Holocaust as the standard of evil from the end of WW II until the present day, it was only two years after the liberation of Buchenwald that they began to focus on a different instance of that evil. Attention shifted from Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust to the Soviet Union, communism, and the Gulag. This chapter examines the importance of the Gulag in American public discourse based both on claims about the Soviet prison camp system itself and on how authors related it to the Holocaust. In articles from the late 1940s through the early 1960s discourse about the Gulag and the Soviet system behind it reveals American assumptions about the self and the teloi that follow those assumptions.

3.1 The Gulag as material for the analysis of self and ethics during the 1950s

"GULAG" (Gulag throughout the rest of the chapter) is an acronym for *Glavnoye upravlenie lagereiy*—the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps—the authority responsible for running the Soviet prison system. Of particular interest is Stalin's use of the Gulag, as the prison camp system itself has come to be known. Under Stalin the Gulag's most significant time was from 1934 to 1953. 1934 was the year Kirov, head of the Communist Party in Leningrad, was assassinated and Stalin began to purge the Soviet political ranks of his enemies, resulting in well-known show trials of the late 1930s. 1953 was the year of Stalin's death, after which the Gulag's impact on Soviet life declined significantly. There are several reasons for studying literature in and

around the 1950s about the Gulag that are pertinent to a study of self and morality. First, the number of people imprisoned and enslaved under Gulag authority is enormous, meriting consideration in any examination of twentieth century morality. Their imprisonment and forced labor along with innumerable deaths when finally revealed evoke as much concern about inhumanity as any other event of this century. But the magnitude of the Soviet Gulag is only part of its significance. In most 1950s literature about the Gulag it serves as a symbol (in fact, the embodiment) of Soviet Communism itself. Second, just as Communism acted as heir apparent to Nazism as the world's moral menace, so the Gulag became the focus of humanitarian concern, following in the footsteps of Nazi concentration and death camps. Third, even though Gulag criticism and revelation follows in the wake of similar condemnation of Nazi practices, the vocabulary and assumptions of Western authors writing about the prison camps reveal some important changes regarding self and morality from the 1940s to the 1950s and beyond.

3.1.1 The significance of prison camps under Gulag authority

Any examination of the Gulag must acknowledge its statistical enormity. As with the Nazi concentration and death camps, only estimates are possible. Reviewing a book by Alexander Weissberg, a former Gulag prisoner, Bertram Wolfe cites Weissberg's claim of nine million as the approximate number of prisoners from 1936 to 1938, at the peak of Stalin's Great Purge. Even this estimate is loosely hazarded, however. Weissberg was a leading world physicist and used his statistical training to draw the conclusion (Wolfe, "Inferno" 14). Other prisoners made similar efforts to estimate the numbers included in their condition. John Noble, an American citizen, lived in Dresden throughout WW II. When the Soviet army occupied Dresden he was

eventually imprisoned as a Nazi supporter. He was held in jail, then prison, then a labor camp from 1946 until 1955. His experience in and record of the Gulag is particularly important for this study. He claims the following:

> According to records we were able to piece together, throughout the entire Soviet Union in mid-1954 a total of twenty-five to twenty-eight million people were held in slave-labor camps, concentration camps, secret camps for foreigners, PW camps, repatriation camps, MVD prisons, investigation centers, MGB prisons, juvenile labor camps, and juvenile detention homes. An additional twelve million not in custody were interned in restricted areas. All told, a monstrous mass of slaves and persecuted peoples. (119)

Deaths were constant and common in the Gulag. Despite the fact that the number of deaths throughout the entire Soviet Labor Camp period, from 1919 to 1975, is estimated between fifteen and thirty million, most authors in the 1950s focused on the evil of slave labor and the inhumane living and working conditions which pervaded the prison system.

American humanitarian concern for the Gulag rose to a level of some importance only after it was assumed that American troops from WW II were being held secretly in the Soviet prisoner of war camps. From the beginning, however, their recovery, and subsequent claims about Soviet practices focused more on humanitarian than political aims, at least in public discourse. Addressing the United Nations' Commission on Prisoners of War at Geneva in 1953, James Dunn (the U.S. Ambassador to Spain) identified the commission's responsibility as humanitarian. "We have never underestimated the difficulties you have faced as you undertook to review and evaluate the information furnished by the interested governments and have sought to discover new approaches and devices for solving the humanitarian problem with which you have been confronted" (429). Although it is certainly possible to ascribe this government official's statements to underlying political motives, it is in keeping with the tenor of the vast majority of comments about Soviet practices that even if political ends were in

mind, they were motivated at least somewhat by humanitarian concerns. To make the point another way, even if, for example, Dunn's claims were entirely politically motivated, his appeal to humanitarian causes is a revelation about assumptions of public opinion regarding morality. If his desire was to garner public support then he must have been assuming that Americans had certain expectations regarding the treatment of human beings, regardless of where and why they were being held.

The extent to which Gulag practices offended the expectations of humanity (defined obviously by American standards) becomes more apparent through the descriptions of those confined under its jurisdiction. Jerzy Gliksman was taken as a prisoner in 1940. He describes his first sights after three weeks of transportation by rail. "It was an infernal view: thousands of living shapes, some of whom had already lost all resemblance to human beings, their faces blue with cold, thin, matted with hair" (Herling 45). His description is not unusual. One author after another picks up the theme and describes the dehumanizing effects of Gulag life. John Noble makes similar statements throughout his book. At an intermediate prison where he was held temporarily before being transported ultimately to Vorkuta, he compares prisoners with dung. "Mühlberg was like a vast sewer, with rotten things, the prisoners, floating in it. Rottenness seemed to touch almost everybody" (46). There is little doubt that such descriptions evoked images of the recent Nazi Holocaust. How and to what extent this dehumanization took place is discussed below. What is important so far is that claims about the Gulag's statistical magnitude and moral condition were key in provoking American commentary.

But no amount of humanitarian vocabulary can obscure the fact that 1950s American rhetoric about the Gulag, in fact, about anything in Soviet life, was also

political. In the United States the emphasis had shifted from the enemy of Nazism to Communism, and therefore from Germany to the Soviet Union:

> The apotheosis of evil—the epitome of limitless depravity—had been relocated, and public opinion had to be mobilized to accept the new worldview. Symbols that reinforced the old view were no longer functional. Indeed, they were now seriously dysfunctional, reminding Americans of how recently our new allies had been regarded as monsters. (Novick 86)

Novick claims that enmity had to be shifted from Germany to the Soviet Union in order to successfully mobilize the country for the Cold War. By the middle of 1950 it was so apparent that any group not supporting the Cold War effort would be denounced, or worse, de-funded, that even major Jewish organizations had shifted attention away from the Holocaust itself toward the Soviet Union and its evils, including the Gulag. The struggle to pin evil on a single great representative pervaded public discourse in the early 1950s. In the wake of the Rosenberg spy case came Joseph McCarthy's accusation of extensive Communist infiltration in the State Department. While McCarthy's influence stifled open dialogue in many venues, it provoked considerable criticism in others. In 1954, the New Republic took a deliberate slap at the Senator from Wisconsin when it published an "Army Report on Siberia" branded by McCarthy as sympathetic to communism. (This publication came just days before the Army's official accusation of McCarthy's improper influence regarding G. David Schine which eventually effectively ended McCarthyism.) The point is that on both sides of arguments about Communism there is commentary about Soviet practices, leading the way to comparisons in vocabulary and symbols which reveal seminal concepts of self and morality.

For Americans viewing the Soviet Union as the great enemy, the Gulag served as the perfect target. In the troubles of the Gulag authors anticipated trouble in the Soviet Union generally. When John Noble claims that the "labor camps in the Soviet Union are seething with trouble and only waiting for something to touch it off," there is

no missing his implication that the Soviet Union itself is precariously held together, only waiting for something to tip it over (48). Such broad usage of the Gulag as a symbol of the nation are everywhere in 1950s literature. Bertram Wolfe argues that revelations of the prison system, practically universally condemnatory, are revelations of the Soviet government as a whole. "'No one knows what kind of government it is,' Tolstoy once wrote, 'until he has been in its prisons'" ("Dance" 10). Every opportunity to reveal another horror or injustice from the Gulag was another slap at Soviet, and therefore all, communism. Wolfe's use of Tolstoy also hints at another prevalent Western attitude toward the Soviet Union mentioned sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly and discussed in more detail below, the belief that the citizens of the Soviet Union, along with valuable assets of its culture, were being held captive by their government and the Communist Party.

Most authors were still dumbfounded by the purges of 1936–1938 when they focused on Soviet life and policy in the 1950s. They struggled to make sense of public confessions to outlandish charges and the removal and even execution of so many high ranking government officials. The whole character of Soviet life, as presented to the American public, bewildered many, and drove a body of literature in the form of articles and books directed at fitting Soviet practices into Western rationality. Wolfe lauds this goal directly as he reviews the book, *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession*:

> The authors of this study have been in Soviet prisons, and in serene, detached fashion, as if their personal suffering had been no more than an opportunity to study a fearful yet fascinating phenomenon, they have written a treatise on Soviet prisons, concentration camps, purges, and confessions, and offered some thoughtful and seminal conclusions as to what these teach concerning the true nature of the Soviet state. ("Dance" 10)

Of course, Wolfe's praise of the authors' objectivity reveals his confidence in a kind of scientifically certain expression of cultural fact. That revelation is in itself an indication of the good-versus-evil and truth-versus-deception mentality behind cold war attitudes.

Just as interesting for this study, however, is his confidence that their analysis of "Soviet prisons" reveal something about the "true nature of the Soviet state." In its own right, then, material about the Gulag from the 1950s is worth study for at least four reasons: the statistical magnitude of the Gulag, the humanitarian language of its critics, its importance at the center of political debate, and its use as a symbol of the Soviet Union generally.

3.1.2 Comparisons to Germany

Discourse about the Gulag in the 1950s is also worth study because of its place in history. Although many of the atrocities described in the 1950s occurred before and during the Holocaust of Nazism, authors did not focus on Soviet practices until WW II was over and political expediency pushed attention away from Nazi to Communist practices. Albert Herling justified his decision to author a book entitled *The Soviet Slave Empire* almost entirely based on comparisons with Nazi Germany and American responses to the Holocaust during WW II. He mentions the refusal of the American public to believe what the Nazis were doing, and his desire to alleviate that error regarding the Soviet prison camp system. He also indicates man's capacity for evil and the importance of people knowing the measure of that capacity. He expresses his motive for telling the story of Soviet slavery without embellishment because he remembers the reluctance of Western readers to believe the accuracy of the horrors described in Germany (vi). In short, Herling's reasons for writing his book about Soviet prison and slave camps are all based on comparisons with Nazi concentration and death camps. Before Herling's book Vladimir Petrov produced a monograph recounting his experience in the Soviet prison system. He entitled his book *Soviet Gold.* The title is pregnant with meaning, implying that slave labor is a valuable commodity to the Soviet state, that the Soviet government is making the mistake of valuing gold (for which

many slave laborers mined) over humanity, and even that the gilded appearance of the Soviet state only masks underlying corruption. In his review of Petrov's book Martin Ebon places the Soviets squarely in the legacy of Nazi immorality:

> I wonder who will read this book. It is long, repetitious, terrifying, and depressing. I remember how the Great American Public closed its ears to the stories of German concentration camps, from the time the Nazis came to power until the day American troops entered Buchenwald and Dachau. With the sophistication of the naïve the horrors of the Nazi State were shrugged off as the exaggerated horror tales of emegrés with a grudge. From Petrov's evidence, the Bolshevik State appears to be running the Nazis a very close second. (16)

There is, in Ebon's statements, evidence for two facts about the position of the Gulag in American discourse. First, he himself assumes a relationship between Gulag and Holocaust events. Second, and just as importantly, he recognizes that the American public's response to Gulag accounts will likely follow the path of Holocaust accounts.

Authors writing more generally about Soviet practices and politics also readily compare Nazi German and Communist Soviet practices. While contrasts are numerous (and discussed in more detail below) many contrasts reveal more common ground than distinction. For instance, when Leslie Stevens, a retired Navy Vice Admiral with extensive education about and experience in the Soviet Union, describes Soviet leaders, he describes them in the context of Hitler. "The Soviet leaders are not reckless gamblers, nor are they adventurers like those who surrounded Adolf Hitler" (Stevens, "The Russian People" 32). His reasoning is that Soviet practices are so similar to Nazi practices that a person might expect their leaders to be comparable. Of course, contrast always implies comparison. In this case, the comparisons are so ingrained that they speak significantly to the place of Gulag literature in American discourse as the replacement (even though only temporarily) for Holocaust didactic material. It is as if authors about the Gulag feel compelled to tip their hat to its moral ancestor, the Holocaust.

Although there is a significant body of discourse about the Gulag during the 1950s, and it stands to reason therefore that it was a significant part of the public mindset regarding the Soviet Union, the term "Gulag" was not common in the west. Slave labor camps, penal colonies, and prison camps are described in detail, including the authority over them, but not using the acronym "GULAG." However, by the 1970s the term "Gulag" itself finds a place in the public mindset, primarily through Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*. The editor of the abbreviated English version of the work makes the point this way. "For a few decades the word *Holocaust* has served us well as a shorthand term for modern man's inhumanity to man. In recent years a second such shorthand term has entered our working vocabulary: *Gulag*" (xi). The Gulag clearly occupies a significant place in moral discourse following the Holocaust.

There is one other way in which the Gulag has a unique relationship with the Holocaust. The fact that a Soviet Communist administration occupied Eastern Europe at the end of WW II means many places typical of Nazi terror fell under the control of what came to be known as a Communist terror. Buchenwald is a perfect example. The epitome of Nazi evil when overrun by American troops in 1945, it had become a Communist prison by the time John Noble was held there in 1946. "Buchenwald had been branded as a virtual Nazi abattoir, Yet, from prisoners who had been in the camp under *both* the Nazis and the Communists, I heard repeatedly that things were even worse *now*" (36). Such comparisons make the relationship between Nazi Germany and the Communist Soviet Union clear. This particular passage also supports Peter Novick's conclusion that the direction of American discourse deliberately shifted attention from the former evils of the new protectorate (West Germany) to the former ally and newly established enemy, the Soviet Union.

3.1.3 Contrasts with Germany

With the acknowledgment that in every contrast with Nazi Germany there is an implied comparison between the two totalitarian states, it is also important to recognize that the contrasts are in some cases significant, especially regarding the nature of the persons participating in the atrocities and their relationship with the state. First and foremost in blatant distinctions between literature about Nazi Germany and the Communist Soviet Union is the ascription of practically all responsibility for evil to the government itself, rather than to the individuals who participated in it. In 1950s discourse the Soviet Union is a monolith. The Gulag is a reflection of that monolithic system. The Soviet system is the moving force behind whatever evils are perpetrated within its borders, and in international affairs. Stalin is the embodiment of Soviet power and the ultimate mover behind its evil, although if he were not there, someone else would be. The Russian economy itself is centrally controlled. The impression of the discourse is that tormentors are simply advancing the political and economic goals of Communism. Victims see themselves as infinitesimally small and dispensable pieces in an enormous system. Stalin is the only individual to whom specific responsibility is sometimes attached, but even he only sometimes and because, as will be seen below, in much of the literature he represents the state itself. By 1952 speculation was already taking place about Stalin's death and who would replace him. A. J. P. Taylor reviews such a book, Louis Fischer's *The Life and Death of Stalin*, and makes this comment about the insignificance of Stalin's then anticipated passing. "The Soviet system depends on its institutions, not on its men; and even Stalin does not now amount to much in it. It is a hateful system and, so far as political maneuvers go, a very clumsy one, but before writing it off we should bear in mind that it is an effective system for manufacturing power" (175). Of course, the argument about Stalin's insignificance is

not correct in every context. To the millions of Gulag prisoners released in the years following 1953, his death was very significant. But the point here is that authors during this time attributed practically everything about Soviet life to the system as a whole, and not to individuals. This attribution shows itself inside the prison walls as well. In Noble's account of his stay in Vorkuta he mentions occasionally attending clandestine Protestant services. It was, of course, against Gulag regulations for the services to take place. However there was only danger if two or more guards came upon the service at the same time. Most guards making rounds alone would act as if they saw nothing and pass by the group. This circumstance is typical of Gulag descriptions. It is not the guard's fault that the group is not allowed to meet for a worship service, and he certainly has no concern if they do. But the system does not permit the meeting, and the presence of another guard implies the presence of systemic authority (Noble 117). This distancing of the behavior of individuals in the Gulag system from the responsibility of the system as a whole is still entrenched when Solzhenitsyn's account reaches the public in 1974. "Every former prisoner remembers his own interrogation in detail, how they squeezed him, and what foulness they squeezed out of him—but often he does not even remember their names, let alone think about them as human beings" (66). Apparently the die of responsibility was cast in the 1950s, and there was no change to it in the ensuing decades. The obvious weight of Solzhenitsyn's last phrase for self is mentioned below.

Returning to Noble's account of the guards, although he attributes responsibility to the system, he does not trifle about the significance of the guards' deeds. His bitter description of the casual behavior of Gulag guards before prisoner executions presents several aspects of this perspective:

> In that joking was summed up a startling difference between these guards and the Nazi death squads about which those prisoners who had known both sometimes

> spoke. The Nazis, they said, killed viciously, because they were convinced that the people being killed were actually their enemies. The Russians killed because, almost literally, a number had been drawn from a hat, because some meaningless document in some meaningless proceedings had said to snuff out the candle. No ferocity attended the executions. The reasons for the killings were as remote and irrelevant to the Russian guards as was the concept of death itself. Their joking, then, was not forced. When they patted a prisoner's shoulder, the action came easily. Life had to end for certain integers in the state table of statistics. That's all, comrade. Nothing personal, comrade. (31)

Whether right or not in his claims about Nazi viciousness, Noble's argument is typical of claims throughout the 1950s and, as indicated above with Solzhenitsyn, all the way into the 1970s. His particular reasoning explains the guards' behavior as a natural consequence of Communist ideology, expressed through the state's practice of supposedly statistically driven decisions. In other words, in Noble's case (which is typical of many of his contemporaries) the system at least included, and may have been dominated by Communist, specifically Marxist, ideology. Not every author attributes such behavior to Communist ideology. Lyman Legters presents both sides of this case. That is, he recognizes that Communist ideology in the form of Bolshevism lays the foundation for what will be interpreted in the West as the violation of human rights while also making the more practical observation that by the time moral atrocities peak under Stalin, ideology is no longer the driving mechanism. "The informing principles of Bolshevik revolutionary thinking, before it degenerated into cynical manipulation, included several elements salient to the deportations of whole nations during WW II" (Legters 113). Two things make his statements pertinent to this analysis of Gulag literature even though Legters article is dealing more with the practice of deporting nationalist groups within the Soviet Union than with the Gulag itself. First, the motives behind relocating entire populations to remote regions of the Soviet Union share significant characteristics with the motives that operated the Gulag. Second, many of those who were relocated or were scheduled for relocation with their fellow nationals

ended up in labor camps anyway, either as prisoners, or as the civilian workers whose conditions were little better than the prisoners.

Stevens' assertions about the quality of individual Soviet citizens contrasted with their unfortunately totalitarian regime is typical. In other words, Stevens is typical in assuming that individual Russians were good people who unfortunately came under an evil government:

> It is noteworthy that the literature on Soviet prison life, written by people who have experienced it, so often stresses the impersonality of abuse when it occurs, and remarks on how rare it is that the enforcers of the system, unlike those in Germany, seem to take pleasure in cruelty or brutality. Brutality is more apt to take place because the system demands it. By and large, the Great Russians are a decent folk with a well-developed conscience which is generalized rather than personalized. ("The Russian People" 31)

The contrast between Stevens' claim and the implications of Strout and Welles from the previous chapter is striking. Strout and Welles both point to the common belief held at the conclusion of WW II that something must have been wrong with the German people for them to allow Nazism's atrocities. Stevens is arguing just the opposite about the Russians, and his argument is typical.

There is, however, a strand of discourse which presents the responsibility for Soviet evil in a different, if not necessarily contradictory light. Some authors indicate a belief that something in the nature of Russians as people or in the nature of Russian society is ultimately responsible for the behavior of the Soviet state. This responsibility is expressed in a variety of ways, but most authors point finally to the belief that Russians as a whole act as if they have a need for totalitarian control. Ebon's review states that Petrov's account of the Gulag "is a powerful indictment of Soviet society, a frightening revelation of totalitarian inhumanity in our time" (16). Ebon's typical account holds totalitarianism responsible for Soviet inhumanity, and Soviet society responsible for totalitarianism. It may appear that there is a contradiction between those

who credit Soviet behavior to communism alone and those who credit it to Russian nature. In some ways there is a conflict. Edward Crankshaw wrote an account of his stay in Moscow entitled *Cracks in the Kremlin Wall.* Michael Florinsky reviews his book for the *Saturday Review of Literature.* In his review, both sides of the conflict are apparent. That is, Crankshaw's assertion that the fault behind Soviet malevolence is in Russian history and society, rather than in Communist ideology is juxtaposed with Florinsky's own belief that Marxism is at the root of the evil. "It is even more difficult to agree with Crankshaw when he states that Stalin is 'no longer interested in Marxian theory' and that the policy of the Soviet Union is directed only towards 'the survival and greater glory of the Soviet Union as the monstrous re-embodiment of the Czarist Empire of Great Russia'" (9). Of course, in this particular passage Stalin is the embodiment of wrongdoing in the Soviet Union. More important for the moment, however, is the distance all authors, including Crankshaw and Florinsky, put between individual Russians and the responsibility for perceived evil in the Soviet Union. That distinction is one of the most profound differences between these writings and literature from the late 1940s about Nazi Germany. The fact that the discourse material deals with the Soviet Union in such a monolithic way bears an obvious impact on the understanding of the humanity perceived to be caught under its weight. Assumptions about how citizens relate to their state, how that relationship bears on their place in the historic development of man, whether their existence is civilized, the nature of their psychological condition, even their essential nature, are all affected by this unique conception of the communist state.

3.2 Self and morality in 1950s discourse material about the Gulag

3.2.1 The identified self

As mentioned in chapter two, one of the most important distinctions of self in modernity is its location in moral space. The self is conceived in terms of its position along an indefinite number of culturally significant axes such as the political, racial, religious, and historical. Certain attributes of the self identify its place along these axes. And certain attributes of the axes allow assertions about, for example, humanity and inhumanity, civility and incivility, modernity and barbarism.

3.2.1.1 The modern self

Modernity assumes progress. It also assumes rationality and the expansion of humanity's comprehension of the world. Claims of modernity are often equivalent with claims of rationality. The assumption of 1950s literature is that modern humanity is rational. Dunn's appeal to the United Nations commission includes such an assumption. With his speech he intended to press the Soviet Union to cooperate with the commission's work of accounting for missing and imprisoned troops from a variety of nations at the end of WW II. His argument draws on assumed values of humanity. "These are completely reasonable questions to which simple humanity demands prompt and truthful answers" (429). The inference is that Dunn is taking advantage of a common public assumption (that humanity is reasonable) while also implying that the Soviets have not been participating in that rationality. Dunn presents the argument so that the fact that simple humanity demands an answer depends on the claim that the question is reasonable.

The same assumption (of the value of rationality) accompanies reviews of literature about the Gulag specifically. Wolfe's review of *Russian Purge and the*

Extraction of Confession compliments the two authors of the book with just such a praise of detached objectivity. "No cry of anguish, no word of personal suffering escapes their lips. With the detachment of scientist or historian they questioned cellmates, elicited stories from former NKVD men and examining magistrates, recorded the mechanism of confession, gathered reports at second hand and third from men transferred from other prisons and veterans of more than one arrest and sentencing. The result of their involuntary and voluntary investigations is the first scientific treatise on this weird phenomenon" ("Dance" 10). Wolfe contrasts what he asserts is the praiseworthy scientific method of the authors with the inexplicable behavior of the Soviets. The dehumanization inferable in the passage is mentioned in the concluding chapter, and contributes an interesting insight into the value of technology in the 1950s contrasted with its apparent neutrality immediately following WW II.

The difficulty Western authors faced in attempting to reconcile reports of Soviet behavior, typified by the criminal justice system, with their own conceptions of humanity is obvious. First they needed to explain what appeared to be the simply and completely irrational behavior of Russians in terms that made Western analysis meaningful—in other words, in terms that jibed with Western conceptions of modern humanity. A *Newsweek* review of one of the many books written about the Soviet justice system during this time posits one explanation of Soviet behavior comprehensible to the Western mind:

> From the viewpoint of the labor camps, Russia seems a nation held together by a philosophy compounded in equal part of illogic and hysteria. For how else can one explain the arrest for sabotage of workers who took parts from one derelict tractor to repair another? What fears could bring about the jailing of a totally illiterate boy for reading "a pamphlet considered dangerous"? ("Nightmare" 123)

The authors of the review plainly seek to explain what they believe must make as little sense to their readers as it does to them. Fear is an insufficient explanation. Only

"illogic and hysteria," descriptions fit only for those whose behavior is not rational, suffice. Granted, the argument is somewhat tautological. The authors use terms that define irrationality to explain the irrational. But that tautology is the point. In the face of what eludes their modernized concept of human behavior, only terms defined by inexplicability serve their purpose. Other authors, exemplified below in Leslie Stevens, attempt to find some common ground on which at least a show of understanding can stand. But authors like those at *Newsweek*, and typical of the majority, are satisfied with terms that leave Soviet behavior as little illuminated as illogic and hysteria in a rational culture. The *Newsweek* review further illustrates the point. "Larsen records the implacable inhumanity of the Russian penal system. The scale of this apparatus and the paralyzing fears and stupidities which maintain it are almost unbelievable in the West" ("Nightmare" 123). Humanity must be capable of rational mitigation, or placation. To be implacable is to be inhuman and inhumane. Fear that motivates to action is understandable. To be paralyzed by fear is to step below full competence as a person. Sheer "stupidity" must be behind the unintelligible behavior of the Russians, or so the authors imply.

As mentioned above, however, some did believe that Russians must have had some similarity with people in the west that made their behavior explicable in terms that meant more than that their behavior was inexplicable. Leslie Stevens' article, "The Russian People," not only poses the problem of understanding Soviet loyalty but attempts to address the problem within the bounds of rationality. "The loyalty of large numbers of Russians to the regime seems capable of explanation only on the grounds that they believe in it, and that they consider their belief to be not a blind faith, but founded on rational science" (32). Although not necessarily in the majority, his explanation is common. There are a couple of important elements involved in the

approach his statement represents. One is that blind faith is not a satisfactory explanation of human behavior. In a culture steeped in the value of rationality, such an assumption makes perfect sense. To claim that the Russians acted on blind faith would be to explain no more than the *Newsweek* authors. It would leave Russian behavior incommensurate with the behavior expected of humanity. The other is that the faith they must have is not in some mystical, arcane phenomenon, but it rational science, even if poorly practiced, as Stevens article implies. So the first task undertaken by many authors was to explain Soviet behavior in comprehensible Western terms of humanity.

But second, along with explaining simply irrational behavior, came the task of comprehending a culture that was built either on illogic, hysteria, or blind faith on one hand, or rational trust in a false system on the other hand, and yet somehow managed a success reserved for those in whom justifiable rationality and progress reigned. Authors of the 1950s imply that a system which could produce the Gulag could not be run by people exhibiting the elements of Western civilization's modern man. The problem is that no system run by such sub-modern people should be able to become a leading industrial power or progress profoundly in technology either. The more economic industrialization and technological development took on roles of value (unlike their moral neutrality following WW II) and became associated with modernity and the progress of humanity during the 1950s, the more imperative it became to associate them with rationality. Albert Herling deals with this conflict as he explains the reluctance of Americans to believe the horrific accounts of the Gulag beginning to be told early in the 1950s, including in his compiled book. "The refusal to believe the mounting evidence was not so much an expression of confidence in the Soviet Union as it was a reluctance to believe that a society rapidly developing into one of the leading industrial powers of the world in this era was resorting to such a discredited and degrading system as

slavery" (v). Herling's reference to slavery itself is significant because of that theme in much of the discourse about the Gulag generally (discussed below.) More important here, however, is how awkwardly he perceives the juxtaposition of a "leading industrial power" and the "discredited and degrading system" of slavery. Slavery does not fit the pattern of justification and progress (as opposed to discredit and degradation) expected in an industrializing culture. He does not propose a solution to the conflict. He simply uses his observation of it to explain why Americans in particular are slow to accept accounts of Gulag atrocities. This lack of explanation is interesting at least, especially in the light of the efforts of those who do not offer any real rationalization of Soviet behavior to explain how technological or economic progress could be achieved in a rationally backwards nation. Earnest Lindley writing for *Newsweek* gives an example of this kind of explanation. "Many Westerners mistakenly supposed that because the Soviet mind was politically mutilated it could not achieve much in science and technology. They may now err as badly in supposing that attainments in those fields herald recovery for the mutilated Soviet political mind" (28). By dividing the world into discreet realms, Lindley provides what must seem to be a satisfactory explanation of Soviet prowess in areas of science and technology beside the "mutilated Soviet political mind." What makes his effort most interesting is how it stands in comparison with authors who advocate the idea that Soviet rationality is justifiable, although in terms not readily grasped in the west. In other words, both groups of authors find some way of rationalizing the conflict between primitive Soviet behavior and modern Soviet successes. Those who do not find that explanation in the Soviet belief in their system as scientific find it by categorizing the world so that progress in science and technology can be achieved independently of the progress of their humanity. Either way, an ultimately rationalist picture of the American mind-set of the 1950s emerges.

3.2.1.2 The civilized self

3.2.1.2.1 Civilization as existence beyond mere survival

In the same way that many comments regarding humanity place personality at the front of a chronological progression, the modern self, other comments emphasize the position of self in civilization. As noted below, for some authors civilization apparently entails little more than living beyond the minimum requirements of survival. For others it involves a complex cultural process of transferring restraint from mechanisms which are external to the individual to restraints which are internal to the individual. However defined, in American discourse of the 1950s civilization is assumed to be a universal good, the violation of which merits the unconditional acknowledgment of wrong.

Noble's use of the term "civilization" typifies references in the 1950s to what is apparently at least one of its essential elements, living beyond the mere means of survival. When he refers to starvation, his comment is that he "didn't feel very civilized" (121). In a similar vein, when his particular camp in Vorkuta was afforded a minimum of money to be used for discretionary spending, they used it to buy tea, margarine, sugar, and marmalade which he claimed gave their camp "some superficial aspects of civilization" (136–137). Another of Noble's quotes illustrates the importance of civilization, of belongings that indicate more than simply survival, to the whole concept of being fully human. When first imprisoned he went through a process of degradation including isolation, interrogation, and a variety of extreme treatments, sometimes disciplinary and other times inexplicable from his point of view. He describes times when guards would strip the prisoners in a cell, go through all of their belongings, and leave their possessions scattered on the floor. "To see the paltry scraps of one's only personal life—shreds of soap, a wad of toilet paper, a saved crust, an extra

pair of torn socks—thrown on the floor and then to have to scramble for them was a brutalizing experience" (36). What Noble here calls brutalizing is what he and others who similarly describe circumstances assume is the opposite of civilization. Such a view makes particularly good sense in the light of an American culture in which two things about the Soviet Union were commonly held: first, that the Soviet prison system was a picture of Soviet life generally, and second, that in the typical Russian's life most incidental goods and many practically essential items were not available. In the American mind, the Soviet Union was failing the test of civilization.

3.2.1.2.2 Civilization as self-restraint

A second way of looking at civilization, mentioned above, is the transfer of restraint from external to internal mechanisms. Norbert Elias presented a thorough version of this concept of civilization in 1939 in *State Formation and Civilization*, although it was not translated and made widely available in English until 1982. He summarizes his definition of the civilizing process as he explains that its progression does not imply intelligent design.

> It has been shown in detail above how constraints through others from a variety of angles are converted into self-restraints, how the more animalic human activities are progressively thrust behind the scenes of men's communal social life and invested with feelings of shame, how the regulation of the whole instinctual and affective life by steady self-control becomes more and more stable, more even and more all-embracing. (443)

His work is mentioned here as an influence neither on popular American views in the 1950s nor on the authors being examined, but as a valid conceptualization reflected in the public mindset. This way of seeing civilization also leads to a view which pervades American literature about the Gulag period in which practically all Soviet citizens are slaves in an uncivilized nation.

As the literature demonstrates, some Americans apparently did understand that Soviet views of American life might be similar to American views of Soviet life. Stevens nods toward this fact in his article on the Russian people.

> The Party leaders really believe that Wall Street and monopolistic capital control the West. They consider this controlling element to be completely conscious and profoundly Machiavellian, and to be continually laying deep plans aimed not only at greater ill-gotten gains, but towards the defeat of communism. (32)

However, the tenor of Stevens' article matches that of practically all comments that touch on this subject—that the Russians are wrong in their estimation of America. He does not combat what he says the Russians claim because it is not important in the question of civilization. That is, it does not appear sufficiently important to authors that Russians accuse Americans of dependence on Wall Street to even provoke a response. One reason for this nonchalance might be the fact that it would not threaten their sense of civility. To acknowledge a dependence on Wall Street capitalism is only to acknowledge a high level of interdependence, an integral facet of civilization, based on Elias' standard (457). In contrast, most Americans apparently held a view of controls in the Soviet Union which did not rely on internal restraints and desirable interdependence, but rather on sheer, physical coercion.

This theme is easily the most dominant in 1950s discourse about the Soviet Union—the Russians as slaves to a coercive system. This view of the Soviet government was a handy tool for comprehending much of what was most baffling about Soviet behavior. Soviet foreign diplomacy is an example. As Americans dealt with Soviet foreign diplomats about everything from arms to prisoners of war, they had to deal increasingly with what seemed to them to be bald-faced lies and intentional stonewalling. Commentators found one way of explaining this behavior in the model of Soviet justice practices. One author titles his article about this very issue, "Kremlin's Diplomacy is of a Piece With its Lubianka Third Degrees!" (Stypulkowski 12). The

approach exemplified by Stypulkowski's article is important because it reveals a belief not only that the Soviet Union could not interact as a peer among civilized nations because its tactics were inherently coercive, but also that Gulag practices were symptomatic of a general Soviet condition. There were, of course, efforts to explain the disparity between Soviet and American practices without reverting to claims about civilization itself. For instance, Walter Lippman's "End of the Post-War World" address in the *New Republic* places both nations on a globe consisting of distinct worlds, or world views:

> The one world which we always have taken for granted in our thinking has been succeeded by many worlds. We now live amidst these many worlds. They compete with one another, they coexist with one another. They trade with one another and, in varying degrees, they co-operate with one another. This change from one world to several worlds is a deep change. It is a change not only in what we think about our foreign policy but in the very way that we have to think about it. (10)

While there are a few references to Lippman's kind of statement among other authors, his willingness to explain the Cold War predicament in such terms of permanent division is not typical. Most of the discourse of the day insists that civilization's standard is universal, and should be met by the reticent Soviets. Dunn's speech to the United Nations commission gives the clearest example of this view. In a public speech obviously intended to garner political favor in the United States as well as to impose diplomatic pressure on the Soviet Union, he declares that "the Government and people of the United States" are offended "that the Soviet Union could have treated this issue with such callousness and with such complete contempt for civilized international practice" (429). Their violation is of civilized international practice, not just American or even Western standards. He repeats his assertion just as emphatically referring to the commission's request that the Soviets cooperate regarding the whereabouts of prisoners of war and other missing soldiers. "It is merely asking that the Soviet Union conform to an accepted principle of international law as it has customarily been given effect by all

civilized nations" (429). Dunn also engages terms like "all decent people" to point out the Soviet's exclusion from civilized practices. The point is that Dunn depends on, uses, and demonstrates a dominant theme in estimations of the Soviet Union, that its practices are more than simply anti-American or non-Western, but uncivilized.

The description of this incivility is most prolific regarding the Gulag, a fact not surprising considering its manifest disregard for internal restraints and dependence on external controls, from fear in the general population through torture during interrogation to forced labor and physical discipline in the prisons and camps themselves. "The Soviet citizen is a slave but does not know it" ("McCarthy" 6). This phrase is often repeated in slightly differing forms throughout the literature of the 1950s, and it is very commonly used in the context of stories that unite the destinies of civilians and prisoners. Numerous stories are told in different contexts of judges, guards, wardens, and even politburo members who became prisoners. These stories usually involve the testimony of someone who suffered at the hands of some authority figure, only later to share a cell or ward with them. The implications of such stories are numerous. For instance, no residual animosity awaits former judges when they are imprisoned, implying a lack of personal responsibility. Also, and more important for the moment, the same terror used to control the prisoner telling the story is used to control those who had imposed the terror on him. In the descriptions of most authors external controls, specifically terror and punishment, are the only effective means of Soviet state functioning. Another kind of story, although similar, illustrates the main point however, that every Soviet citizen was considered a slave of one sort or another. The "Army Intelligence Report on Siberia" published in the *New Republic* includes the story of an engineer who had been working seven years away from his family as a civilian attached to a slave labor camp. When he finally tried to escape his job assignment and simply

flee back to his family he was arrested near Moscow and taken back to the camp, this time as a prisoner with a five year sentence ("Army Report" 7). The fact that his condition as a prisoner was identical with his condition as a civilian (at least in the Army report's accounting) appears to be the point in each of the stories of this type. The implied lack of autonomy, independence, and therefore legitimate interdependence appears to be enough evidence to justify the claims of incivility pervading American commentary on the Soviet Union.

There is a significant body of work in which this national incivility is excused on the part of its citizens, and uniquely blamed on its government—as if a completely external power had surreptitiously and suddenly seized controls. This view is important to understanding American impressions of Soviet life since such a government would represent the ultimate source of external force and control. Again, the Army report gives a good example of this view:

> The "free" worker in the USSR is as much chained to his job and local area as is the convict. He has no voice in determining his place of work, working conditions, or wages. His only advantage over the convict is that he can live with his family and can spend his limited income as he sees fit. He has no redress against a harsh authoritarian government. He is forbidden to raise his voice in criticism, to develop independent views, or to acquire unbiased information. His voting rights are a travesty on the ideals and purposes of democracy. He enjoys no acknowledged rights for his person, life, or property. He is the helpless prisoner of a slave state. ("Army Report" 16)

The word "free" is printed in quotation marks. The civilian is "chained" to his job. He has no means of redress and no means of gaining it. Further, he is "helpless." This picture is common regarding Soviet citizens, and reflects an American belief that the developments of Western Civilization have not reached the Soviet Union. In this vein of blaming incivility uniquely on the government Stevens also writes:

> We necessarily hear more about the millions of victims in the prison camps than about the countless Russians who have helped many of the victims in one way or another, usually at great risk to themselves. The condemned have always been regarded in Russia as unfortunates. In spite of all that Russia suffered at the hands

> of the Germans, there was no animus in the attitude of the Moscow crowds toward the long lines of prisoners passing through from Stalingrad. ("The Russian People" 31)

The government oppresses through the prison camps. Citizens comfort those contained within their walls. The great risk Stevens mentions introduces a comparison Stevens apparently hopes the reader will infer. Russians sympathize with those in the prison camps because they live under the same terror. They sympathized with German prisoners because they were the constant prisoners of the Soviet state. References like these all present an image of Soviet citizens almost completely dominated by external restraints, a picture exclusive of Western conceptions of civilization.

On the other hand, there are scattered references to a few reasons why the Russian people themselves could be responsible for their uncivilized state. In other words, some authors imply, though not necessarily in these terms, that the people simply had not developed the internal restraints required for a civilized nation. One such explanation, in Stevens' article, deals with something curiously parallel to American experience. In the middle of the nineteenth century, he points out, one third of the Russian population, about twenty million Russians, served as serfs. He describes serfdom as a "condition of genuine slavery." Emancipation from serfdom came in 1861, but the legal and economic consequences of that transition were never resolved. His conclusion is clear. "There is little doubt that serfdom and its later problems have left a strong imprint on the national character and conscience" ("The Russian People" 30). Part of what he implies is that Russian citizens have a dependency that makes them vulnerable to the uncivilized practice of government. It seems likely that he expects the reader to infer that Americans progressed from the emancipation of slaves (only four years removed from the emancipation of serfs in Russia) to become a civilized nation while Russians did not.

American articles about the Soviet Union are rife with references to its incivility—to the natural consequences of uncivilized practices in the Soviet Union—from the deprivation of goods beyond the level of mere survival to the lack of the development in individual Russians of internal controls or restraints. This explanation of Soviet behavior served the purpose of defining Russians and their practices in terms that made sense to American expectations. But it also served another purpose. It explained the depth of the threat imposed by the existence of such a nation. Herling's book provides one of innumerable examples of this perception of the Soviet Union—that is, the perception that Soviet practices were not just bad in themselves, but a threat to the civilized world. "An unbelieving world has too long refused to face the growing menace of slavery in its new 20th century guise—the slave-labor camps of the Soviet Union and its satellite states" (v). Herling compares the practices of the Soviet justice system in the middle of the twentieth century to the practices of American slavery in the nineteenth century with particular emphasis, at least in his introduction, on the threat it is to a century supposedly freed from such barbarity.

3.2.1.3 The parochial self

As Americans documented the perceived threat of the Soviet Union, their descriptions also included elements that distinguished Russians from Westerners in general and Americans specifically. These distinctions appear primarily in the form of racial and cultural origins. Stevens' article in the *Atlantic Monthly* emphasizes the uniqueness of Russian behavior in the context of their racial origins. He contends that one of the best ways to understand what he calls the Russian soul is to study its origins ("The Russian People" 28). He approaches this goal with a mixture of conclusions about Russian cultural and racial backgrounds. But his conclusions all point toward a claim that fits typically into the implication of many authors about Russians, that they

are not like Westerners. Stevens is in fact explicit in his repeated attempts to explain and claim that the Russians are much more oriental than occidental. "The intriguing and devious side of the Russian nature, its love of proverbs, its respect for and love of office, its lavishness, its fondness for jewels, gold, and horses, and its subtle and complex attitude towards woman all seem more Eastern than Western" ("The Russian People" 28). It is important that he associates what he later specifically calls oriental traits with the "intriguing and devious side of the Russian nature." It seems reasonable to infer that Stevens, like others, emphasizes these distinctions in order to reconcile otherwise divergent impressions about Russians. In other words, his statement is practically tautological. The attributes of Russians which do not fit typically Western patterns are evidence that Russians are not Western, that is, not European.

There is a conflict in the thinking here exemplified by Stevens. The discourse points in two directions without reconciling them. On the one hand, the Soviets are obviously not European because their behavior is so obviously opposed to everything modernity and civilization has brought to Europe. However, the Soviets are doing exactly the same thing the Nazis did in Germany and have inherited the role of world menace from them. These inconsistent conclusions do not even appear to be addressed in any of the material of the day, much less resolved. Why would authors pursue such contradictory tracks? The reason for the comparisons with Germany are fairly obvious and documented above. Victimization in the Gulag alone appeared so similar to reports of Nazi German concentration and death camps that comparisons were practically inevitable. Then the question that remains is about why authors would try to alienate Soviets from Europeans, and presumably even more so then from Americans. There is ample evidence that there was a desire to distinguish Soviet attributes from European attributes. Stevens' article continues making the distinction as follows:

> Secretiveness and suspicion, to an Oriental degree, play their part to make the scale of Russian values different from our own. This has been a Russian trait from Tartar days and before, and it was as marked under the Tsars as today. The Russian has a conspiratorial nature; and in spite of his deep patriotism, intrigues for power in high places have always flourished. It seems almost unnatural for him to take an associate unquestioningly at his face value, and often for good reason. This is natural and fertile soil for the police state, which, in one form or another, has always existed in Russia. ("The Russian People" 28)

He claims that Mongolian influences produce secretiveness, suspicion, a conspiratorial nature, and skepticism in Russians. Further, he argues that these traits produce in Russians a susceptibility to the tactics and power of a police state. His argument goes on to mention that Russia was excluded from the "Renaissance and the Reformation, which have largely determined the basic character of the Europe of today" ("The Russian People" 30). These distinctions between Russians and Americans add up to a way for Western, in this case American, authors to maintain their assumptions about Western civility and modernity and still handle the disturbing aspects of Russian life, including the barbarity of the Soviet justice system.

There is one other aspect of the description of Russians in which parochialism is apparent. The "Army Report" published in the *New Republic* gives the clearest statement of this idea. The idea is that many Russians were motivated (in some cases the implication is that they are motivated foolishly) by a sense of national identity and patriotism. This patriotism showed itself as the pride of Russian citizens in things as varied as climate, geography, art, population size, science, and language. The contention in the "Army Report" is that the Soviet government used patriotism to motivate the labor force (9). The author implies that this motivation partially explains the Russians' willingness to work under conditions in which voluntary cooperation seemed otherwise inexplicable to Americans.

This parochialism is important to the authors of the day since it provides a mechanism for dealing with a people whose behavior and attitudes appeared atypical of

the world's progress toward modernity and civilization. Both the exclusion of the Russians from long-term historical developments in Europe (such as the Renaissance) and the concept of a myopic Russian patriotism gave authors a tool for fitting Soviet behavior into a world where the concepts of a modern and civilized self governed Western thought.

3.2.2 The psychological self

There is ample material among scholars in which the self is understood primarily psychologically. As Elias defines the nature of civilization he assumes a self which is predominantly psychological. Rose's therapeutic self is, in practical terms, equivalent to Elias' civilized self. Elias argues that civilization is evidenced where restraints have changed from external impositions to internal controls. Rose describes the therapeutic self in modern democracies as one in which restraints have been similarly internalized to generate what appears to be an autonomous self. This autonomy is essential to the idealized Western self conceived psychologically, in Rose's terms, as a locus of beliefs and desires which serve presumably as sources of motivation. In contrast to autonomy stand determinism on one hand and external manipulation on the other.

3.2.2.1 Autonomy

Views of man which relegated self-conception to the purely behavioral or reactive were anathema to most authors criticizing the Soviet regime, and Gulag practices in particular. Noble reveals this attitude as he describes the external influences and internal weaknesses and strengths of his fellow prisoners in Dresden:

> But those men fared best who went through the indignities calmly and stoically, without cringing or losing their tempers, apparently with an inner conviction that the Communist animal terror could not break them. The Communists could not

> cope with men, it seemed to me, who insisted on remaining more than the animals which Communists regard men to be. (Noble 37)

Several aspects of this statement are worth mentioning, especially in the contrast between animal and human behavior. Noble's accusation that Communists regard men to be animals is typical. The first implication of his use of "animal" is as it contrasts the calmness of prisoners with "an inner conviction." That is, seeing the self psychologically provides a mechanism for explaining the mature and "manly" behavior of prisoners who do not simply react, "cringing or losing their tempers," but are insistent on remaining more than animals. But he also mentions the "Communist animal terror" as he describes the behavior of the Gulag guards, putting the guards and Communist ideals in the same low estate as prisoners who have sacrificed the "inner conviction" of the psychological, autonomous self. The ability to be calm in the face of terror is one implication of autonomy to the nature of the self. Authors who refer to autonomy's sacrifice imply nothing less than the degradation of the humanity of the subjects in question.

Bertram Wolfe, whose favor for Western rationalism is mentioned above, also reviewed a book by Alexander Weissberg entitled *In Soviet Inferno*. As a dedicated Communist, Weissberg, an Austrian Jew, accepted an invitation to develop his work as a physicist in the Soviet Union. Five years later, his wife was arrested and imprisoned on a weapons charge, and for plotting the death of Stalin—something authors of the 1950s like to claim Stalin must have believed about nearly everyone in the Soviet Union during the purge years. His attempt to intervene on behalf of his wife and subsequent arrest and imprisonment provide the background for his book. Wolfe's review ends with a comment that makes clear the importance of autonomy in his evaluation of Weissberg. "Thanks to a brave spirit and an unquenchable intellect, the over-all effect of the entrance into the inferno of the purges with Dr. Weissberg is one of deepened

understanding and compassion and pride in the capacity of the human soul to resist torture and preserve its integrity" ("Inferno" 14). His spirit is brave, his intellect unquenchable. In clearest terms, his soul resists torture and thereby preserves its integrity. The integrity of the soul, the thing that keeps it from being fragmented or lost, is its autonomy, its resistance to external causes such as torture. The particular event of Dr. Weissberg's first intervention on behalf of his wife gives Wolfe a particular forum for describing the "mad logic" behind the purges. Weissberg's first contact with authority revealed that acknowledging her guilt and trying to help her endangered his own standing as trustworthy, while denying her guilt put him in the position of criticizing the government, still a dangerous position. From this incident, Wolfe describes political and judicial acts as mad because they, in effect, negate or deny the autonomy of the individual. According to Wolfe's account, powers in the Soviet Union refuse to allow for liberal thought even when unaccompanied by conviction or action. To them, to have a particular thought is to hold that thought as a belief. There is no room to think but not believe something. He argues that they presume the response of citizens under duress. When someone suffers at the hand of the government, they must become "anti-state," not allowing for a sufferer still to favor the government in particular or communism in general. He claims that in Soviet life, guilt is defined by the actions of the government, not the condition or history of the individual—"that arrest makes a man guilty." Similarly, punishment is not a response to a person's crime, rather a person's crime is defined as his punishment unfolds. Finally, confession is "extorted," never offered freely or as a result of the conscience, the motive behind Gulag interrogations. He emphasizes his accuracy by pointing out that only such a mad logic could be responsible for Dr. Weissberg's arrest. In what sane world would a rational scientist committed to his government find himself so suspected? ("Inferno" 14).

Noble and Wolfe serve as examples of the assumption among many similar authors that without psychological autonomy, either in fact or in its recognition by the regime, inexplicable behavior is inevitable. One statement from Wolfe highlights autonomy as the ability to resist external intervention, the mind as the capacity to comprehend, and sanity as the ability to hold together beliefs and experiences. "Even as he suffered and fought, 'confessing' when the strain became intolerable and withdrawing his confessions each time the strain let up, his powerful mind was engaged in trying to understand what was happening, seeking to salvage his sanity and a modicum of his illusions concerning the regime" ("Inferno" 14). One inference in this quote is that sanity is derived from understanding, and understanding, in this particular case, relates to the comprehension and assimilation of the behavior of the regime within the system of beliefs of the individual. The individual's psychological wholeness depends on his ability to hold together his chosen beliefs and his imposed circumstances. This relationship takes on even more weight as regimes, in this case political regimes, recognize that a psychological self is significantly autonomous and attempt to develop tools for relating to, or controlling, such a self.

3.2.2.2 Psychology as a regime tool

Rose's assertion is that the more the self became psychologically construed, the more important it became to governments (broadly defined) to develop institutions and practices which could both define and manipulate the self so conceived. He contends that the only political environment in which such institutions, such as what he calls the "psy" disciplines, could have attained such a hegemony were the liberal Western democracies. His argument is not without merit. It is certainly true that liberalism underlies the potential for seeing the self as a purely, or even predominantly, psychological project or entity. But it is also true that either Western authors impose

such a psychological conception on the Soviet regime or the Soviet regime actually uses the "psy" disciplines to a greater extent than someone like Rose would expect.

Recognizing such influences, and such Western characterizations, means more than discovering government programs of psychological manipulation. The development of the self occurs under a variety of governments, some not political at all. Leslie Stevens' articles on what he calls the Russian people and the Russian doctrine, which appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1952, give a perfect example of how American authors described a regime which was divergent from Western influences in its result, but predominantly psychological in its assumptions. Stevens' gives a lengthy review of what he sees as uniquely Oriental psychological features in the Russian character, crediting these features to regimes within the Russian culture, rather than purely or directly to the Soviet political structure. Several times in his article Stevens points out both the dissimilarity between Russian and Western character while also assuming the psychological nature of that character:

> The only prudent rule to follow, and one which constitutes a great stride towards understanding, is never to expect a Russian to act as we would act under similar circumstances, for he is influenced by different values than we, or at least applies different weights to such values as we hold in common. Things that seem important to us, or which we are in the habit of assuming or expecting, do not have the same importance for Russians, and their habits have formed in other channels. ("The Russian People" 27)

At least three important assumptions appear to underlie this statement. First, the subject is understood psychologically. He is influenced by values to which he applies different weights. Second, his psyche is not Western, since he values things in ways different from Western assumptions. He is not going to act "as we would." Third, the regime of influence in his psychological makeup is different from the Western regime. These terms are not Stevens', of course, but they do reveal that at which he is driving. The

channels within which Russian psychological development takes place are, in Stevens' argument, certainly not Western.

In the first vein, identifying the Russian subject psychologically, Stevens is definitely not alone. William Crankshaw also spent time in the Soviet Union during and after WW II, and writes based on his experience there. In a review of his book, *Cracks in the Kremlin Wall*, Michael Florinsky points out Crankshaw's predominantly psychological approach. "Much of the earlier part of his volume is devoted to what may be called a psychoanalytical study of the Russian character" (8). Florinsky's observation is particularly interesting since Crankshaw's work is generally targeted at explaining and anticipating the actions of Soviet foreign policy. He claims that understanding the Russian psyche is the best way to grasp the behavior of policy makers and representatives, as well as to understand why the people have accepted such an otherwise unacceptable form of government.

These kinds of claims are what lead to the second assumption assigned to Stevens above. Once a basically psychological explanatory approach was taken, it became important to establish why motivations and consequences in Russia were so different from what Americans experienced. Why would Russians tolerate one totalitarian regime after another? Why would they confess to outlandish charges? Why would they hold such a low regard for the truth, willing to lie to bring a successful conclusion to an arrest and interrogation or to leverage an advantage in diplomatic negotiations? Psychologically based answers required a psyche that was non-Western, one provided repeatedly and freely by authors like Stevens. While apparently trying to generate understanding, if not full blown toleration, of the Russian people, he argues that their curious behavior is simply a product of their non-European existence:

> There is a Russian proverb which says, "The soul of a stranger is darkness." The Russians are stranger and more alien to us than any European people; they are full

> of dualities and contradictions, and with a natural talent and affinity for what seems to us to be deviousness and cunning, but which to them seems something quite different, carrying no opprobrium. ("The Russian People" 28)

Stevens uses remarkably tolerant language, claiming that their behavior only "seems to us to be" devious and cunning, implying that cultural distinctions are not necessarily condemnable. It is not surprising, however, that his attempt at toleration is limited by other assumptions of Western superiority. For instance, he ascribes responsibility for Russian "Asiatic squalor and poverty" to their non-European "cast of mind," rather than to any economic or material shortages ("The Russian People" 29). Another example is Stevens' account of what he experienced firsthand and characterized as a general Russian attitude of excessive humility before foreigners. He questioned the sense of the Soviet government tolerating such obeisance before foreigners while ferociously scathing America and Americans in general through government media. His reckoning includes the interesting observation that Russians also confronted each other in terms at which most Westerners would have been offended, but which seemed to pass almost unnoticed in their relationships. More importantly, his article summarizes his views on the Russian humility before strangers with the particular point that their psychology is non-Western. "Inferiority complexes and lack of self-confidence may have something to do with it, but face-saving and its obverse, the putting up of a front, which are related to self-abasement, undoubtedly weigh higher in the scale of Russian values, as in Asiatic countries generally, than in the West" ("The Russian People" 29). It appears that as authors struggled with the juxtaposition of values regarded so non-Western with such typically European physical appearances that the psychological provided a realm within which distinctions could be emphasized and similarities downplayed.

The question that remained was from where the psychological distinctions came. The answer often pointed to the regime under which the psyche developed. Regime here is not just a reference to the political government, but to all forms of authority and

influence exerted that provide both means of defining and treating the psychological subject, as Rose describes. Of course, in the Soviet system as seen through the eyes of American authors in the 1950s, the political government is a huge factor in that regime, if not the only factor. Stevens' acknowledges Communism's hand behind the psychological development of Russians even in his somewhat generous description of literary influence in Soviet Russian culture:

> The broad sympathies of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Pushkin, and a host of other Russian writers whose names are less familiar in the West, are still those of the Russians of today. Except where it conflicts with ideology or sheds too unfavorable a light on the operating code of that ideology, as in much of Dostoevsky, that literature is still taught in Russian schools, and forms an admirable part of the mental and ethical equipment of most Russians. ("The Russian People" 30–31)

There are several ways to take this statement by Stevens. Whether he is crediting the Russian psyche to the body of literature mentioned, to the schools presenting the literature, to the government behind the schools. or to the ideology behind the government, it is clear that he is presenting the influence of a regime that produces a certain type of psychological existence. The "Army Report" mentioned earlier makes a similar recognition of influences. Referring to the prowess and fierce reputation of Soviet soldiers, the "Army Report" dismisses any "innate" distinctions between Soviet and European troops, claiming that their "basic psychological endowment" is the same. However, the report goes on to recognize the uniqueness of the Soviet soldier's "performance on the battlefield," and accounts for that divergence through "differences in environment, training, and indoctrination" (13). It is clear from the bulk of the report that the differences described, whether from environment, training, or indoctrination, are primarily, if not solely, psychological.

Such an emphasis on the psychological within the regime of the Soviet Union is not always explicitly presented, especially in the 1950s. But it is implied in at least two

ways. There is a direct manner in which the psychological subject is understood through Soviet practices surrounding the Gulag. That is, authors present communism's pragmatic use of psychology, with the impression that as a practical consideration communists did not maintain that humans were only physical, but believed that understanding and controlling the psychological person could produce substantial economic results. The "Army Report" provides an indication of this avail of the psychological as it claims to describe the pattern of Soviet governmental influence over citizens from the remote centers of power to local Party members. "The role of the Party members in the lower strata is far more persuasive than compulsive, and the exploitation of reward incentives, group spirit, and group pride is an indispensable part of the Soviet social drive mechanism, and has always played an essential role in Russian social dynamics" (8). In other words, as it is presented in this report, despite the use of "terror" as a motivating factor from Moscow and despite American impressions to the contrary, at least at the local level, Russians were more motivated in their factory jobs, for example, by group spirit and reward incentives than by fear. Either way, the influence is presented as that of a regime deliberately using the presumably psychological nature of its subjects. Noble also implies such an effort to control the prisoners of the Gulag, although obviously described much more harshly. One particular passage portrays his early dismay at the effectiveness of the Gulag authorities to dismantle the psychological makeup, particularly the autonomy, of the prisoners. "As we dismounted from the bus, inside the prison area, it was obvious that some of the prisoners had virtually lost the ability to walk without specific directions being given to them" (42). Noble repeatedly comments on the significance of the psychological manipulation, or more accurately, suffocation of the prisoners. However, he does not directly credit the Soviet authorities with planning this psychological control. His

descriptions are much less directly related to the Soviet government as a regime, and much more focused on the apparently natural consequences of the Communist Party's policies and practices, including what he characterizes as their inept bureaucracy and short-sighted material goals. But the results are described in psychological terms, revealing Noble's typical assumptions about the value of the human incarcerated in the Gulag. He again reveals those assumptions describing events during the Vorkuta uprising. Early in the rebellion of thousands of prisoners at Vorkuta, Gulag officials actually relented regarding certain issues about which the prisoners demanded change, including bars and locks on dormitory windows and doors, as well as the serial numbering on their clothing. When news came that officials had agreed to these particular demands, some of the prisoners immediately began to pull the bars from the windows, disassemble the door locks, and tear the numbers from their clothing. (Noble points out that the concessions were not extravagant since they were still locked in fenced enclosures and isolated by fifteen hundred miles of arctic wilderness.) But many prisoners refused to remove their numbers. Some refused out of protest, claiming that as long as they were still prisoners the number existed whether they wore it or not. But others refused out what Noble characterizes as a dependence on that number for their otherwise lost identity. "Later, punishment was threatened for all who did not want to take it off. But many men felt lost without a number on their clothes. Their stupid, dead life had become a formula and they had forgotten how to think" (154). Their life is dead when their ability to think autonomously has been taken away. Again, while Noble does not credit Soviet scientific or technical prowess with the production of this psychological debilitation, he does place the responsibility for it squarely within the overall regime of power, a social and practical regime, not just a political or bureaucratic one, that produced and operated the Gulag.

3.2.2.3 Passive responsibility

There is another important context in which the relationship between the regime of power and the psychological individual surfaces, the topic identified in the last chapter as passive responsibility. In postwar literature about Holocaust Germany individuals who did not take some kind of active stance against Nazism are condemned outright. Regardless of direct intimidation by the Nazi government or the more subtle manipulation of racism or xenophobia already at least somewhat present in those not targeted by the Holocaust, authors repeatedly contend that they should have intervened in one way or another, and that their refusal to do so was immoral. A moral self could and should stand against such a regime of domination psychologically, with measurable consequences, whatever the cost. The case is remarkably different in literature about the Gulag. Russian citizens, including those who stand idly by while neighbors and entire populations are unjustly interred, are consistently excused for their inactivity and even praised for their ability to survive under such trying circumstances.

It is not just the case that the Russians are excused for otherwise unacceptable practices because Communism is such a monolithic evil in the eyes of American authors, as mentioned in detail in the section above. It is also true that toleration for personal inactivity may have grown as sympathy for people under "totalitarian" governments grew. The word "totalitarian" was still fairly new, having been introduced just prior to Hitler's ascension to power in Germany. More importantly, as Novick convincingly points out, American support for the German people in the postwar years forced some reconsideration of the strong language used about Germans during and just after the war. In the light of his arguments, it seems reasonable that the newly found sympathy for German citizens, by which American economic and military assistance to West Germany could be defended, would spill over into a perspective that could abhor

the totalitarian Communist regime but sympathize with its oppressed citizens. This appears to be in the background of Stevens' assumptions. "The more the Soviet Union becomes the villain on the world stage, the more we tend to be sweeping in blaming 'the Russians,' without going much beyond the fact that they are a perplexing nation which is obviously composed of oppressors as well as oppressed" ("The Russian People" 27). As the Soviet state replaces Nazi Germany as the great evil in the world, sympathy for oppressed Germans (which developed only after the war) becomes sympathy for oppressed Russians.

These ideas provide some background for the relaxed attitude authors demonstrate toward Russian citizens. But two other ideas are apparently the foundation for accepting Russian passivity to injustice as a positive attribute. The first depends on the identities discussed above: specifically, that the Russian mindset is Oriental rather than Western. That is, while German passivity evidenced a moral lapse based on Western judgment, Russian passivity could not be similarly judged since their ways of thinking and moralizing were not Western. The Army report takes this approach. "The idea of actively opposing the government on political questions is incomprehensible to the Soviet citizen" (9). It is not just difficult, or precluded by government domination, but incomprehensible. The Army report's statement is not an indictment, condemning Soviet shortsightedness. In fact, the report's overall approach is so lenient toward Russians generally that McCarthy entitled the Congressional report of the hearing about it, "Communist Infiltration in the Army." Stevens similarly dismisses the responsibility of the Russians. "I do not believe that the Russians are responsible as a people for either communism or the present difficult world situation" ("The Russian People" 33). At this level of discourse, authors consistently make the point that passivity on the part of Russians does not make them responsible for the actions of the Soviet state. There is a

temptation to see this distancing of responsibility away from the individual as the result of a diminished view of personal autonomy. That is, since the Russians cannot control their circumstances, they must have less autonomy than Westerners whose liberalism has produced revolutions and democratic governments. But that view is not espoused generally. Instead, the second general explanation for the lack of emphasis on passive responsibility apparently lies in the assumption that in a positive way the typical Russian is somewhat stoical. His autonomy has been internalized. The portion of the Army report reprinted in *New Republic* opens with several paragraphs asserting the mental stability and lack of "psychopathic troubles" in Russians (7). The Russian's ability to be content in the face of miserable circumstances is a revelation of his autonomy, and it seems reasonable to infer an affirmation of every human's ability to be psychologically sound, regardless of external powers.

3.2.3 The material self

It comes as no surprise that the only substantial reference to a material subject in American literature about the Gulag is in response to what is perceived as the Marxist reduction of human souls to economic units, to something more akin to statistics or animals than to the unique psychological and autonomous projects of Western thought and civilization. Authors pervasively criticize such a treatment of humanity. Referring not just to the show trials of Stalin's purges but to the massive court system through which the accused inevitably became prisoners, Wolfe alludes to this perception of Soviet devaluation. "What manner of 'trials' are these which turn off prisoners faster than America's belt conveyors do bolts and nuts?" ("Dance" 10). His equation of humans with bolts and nuts, and the Soviet court system with America's industry is significant and often repeated, though in different terms.

Noble is covering the same idea when he recalls that, "According to GULAG regulations, only a very small percentage of the work force could be sick on any given day" (107). In his account, illness is not defined by the condition of an individual compared with some kind of personal standard but by statistical evaluations of the labor pool. As in all of his descriptions of Soviet practices, he makes no attempt to hide his disdain for this reduction of humanity to statistics.

Of course, the use of statistics is common, including in the evaluation of moral causes and the establishment of priorities. Even in liberal democracies this dependency is undeniable. But when Americans appealed to statistics to make their case against Soviet practices, for instance, they were careful to qualify the numbers with a moral weight that distinguished their values from what was perceived on the Soviet side. James Dunn is using just this strategy as he addresses the United Nations' committee on prisoners of war:

> But having mentioned statistics, I would hasten to add that the tragedy of the missing can never be considered in purely numerical terms. We are not concerned with cold statistics. We are dealing here with human beings—with fathers and brothers, with sons and daughters, with families who refuse to give up hope for the eventual return of their loved ones. It is only when we view this problem in terms of human grief and anxiety that we can fully appreciate its meaning to these nations. (429)

In other words, only when a person is considered relationally and psychologically is he being considered as a human being. Dunn conveyed in his speech the common message, that the Soviet Union reduced "human beings" to statistics. Authors attack what they perceive as the reduction of humanity to the status of highly trained animals just as bitterly. Noble's evaluation of the nonchalant attitude of guards he observed carrying out execution orders reveals this bent:

> I knew little about theoretical Marxism at that time, but in this attitude toward death I sensed the gulf that separated these MVD officers from the Christian civilization to whose extinction they are committed. They believe that man is an animal, no more. To kill a man is no more significant than to kill a highly trained

> horse or a cow. If the beast becomes unmanageable, it is killed. If the man-beast becomes unmanageable, he is killed. (30)

His comments here are significant because of the contrasts he chooses to emphasize, including between Marxism and Christian civilization, and between animals and man. Noble identifies the Western view of man with Christian civilization, and implies that it is higher than the Soviet view of man as nothing more than an animal. More importantly, in his contrast between Marxism and Christian civilization there is the connotation of the ideological threat of Marxism underneath the denotation of their military and political threat to the West. As is apparent throughout the literature of this period, the suggestion that man could be material—that the project with which each subject might busy himself could be no more than contributing economically or being trained physically to perform certain tasks—was apparently sufficiently viable (although likely just barely sufficiently) in the West to merit these and other direct attacks on perceived Soviet beliefs and practices.

3.3 Teleology in the material of the 1950s about the Gulag

3.3.1 Personal fulfillment as telos

"Fulfillment" and "telos" are so closely related semantically that the phrase, "personal fulfillment as a telos," could be taken as a redundancy. But the phrase is intentional. The question for MacIntyre, for instance, as he struggles to restore a single standard from which moral arguments can be presented, is not whether individuals have personal goals, or teloi, but whether all people share the same telos. The final appeal of all moral arguments becomes easy with the assumptions of a teleologically based morality and a common telos. Two observations at this point make these comments relevant to this chapter on Gulag discourse. First, as in Holocaust discourse, authors do find it easy to condemn Gulag practices, doing so practically universally. This ease

opens the door to one possibility: that authors have tacitly agreed on a telos while holding a presumably teleological morality. Of course, there are many other sources from which their agreement could have sprung, but, as indicated below, the material supports this one. Second, one significant part of the telos authors appear to embrace is personal fulfillment. As indicated in the introduction, and alluded to in the opening comments of this section, personal fulfillment does imply a teleology. However, the fact that authors decry the abortion of personal teloi through Gulag experiences does not mean that they come to or from a common measure of that personal fulfillment. Some are addressing the lack of civilization, others the theft of psychological autonomy, still others nothing more than the waste of economic potential. The point is that moral claims regarding the Gulag, and by extension the Soviet state represented by it, are almost always linked to some kind of unachieved end, one significant and pervasive part of which is related to incomplete personal fulfillment in a variety of forms.

Even authors seeking to create a sympathy for the Soviet people generally do so by contrasting the fate of Russians under Communism with what could have or would have been theirs otherwise. Stevens' article on the Russian people aims at exactly this goal. "The more understanding one acquires of the Russian people, the more one realizes that in spite of the darker side of their dualities and contradictions, they not only cannot be held responsible for the acts and policies of the regime, but are capable of far better things and deserve a far better lot than they have today" ("The Russian People" 33). He, along with other authors, is not specific about the "far better things" of which they are capable. But framing their unachieved potential in terms of capability and deserts makes the teleology of his assumptions unmistakable.

The evil experienced by Russians entering the Gulag through the court system and under the thumb of Soviet oppression is similarly described. As recent authors

analyze Soviet justifications for actions that seem unjustifiable through Western eyes, they attribute a great deal to the substitution of long-term Marxist goals for short term personal goals. Lyman Legters argues this way:

> Nor was the historical socialist commitment to democratic procedure and individual rights permitted to impede the radical measures on which the ruling Communist party had fastened. Conscious that Russia was not "ready" in a conventional Marxian sense for socialist revolution, the Bolsheviks perceived their task as requiring them to surmount exceptional difficulties, thereby justifying in their eyes the resort to policies and practices of equally exceptional severity in the implementation of their program. (113)

Legters' generous language, "policies and practices of exceptional severity," is by no means a justification of Soviet policy. Instead, he is using the closest approach to explaining what seems to many to be inexplicable to improve his readers' understanding of what drove Soviet leaders. In the process, he points out two areas that happen to summarize his assumptions of what the Soviet evil accomplished, or more accurately, impeded, democratic procedure and individual rights. The loss of democratic procedure is expanded and explained in the context of other authors in the section on "America as telos," below. But the loss of individual rights puts Legters' concerns squarely in the middle of much commentary from the 1950s on the loss of ends associated with the liberal individual. Regardless of what form the individual's fulfillment might have taken, the theft of the rights which would have granted him access to that fulfillment is evil. In Stevens, it is even tragic when the right to the ideal communist state is taken away by a young man's injection into adult Soviet life. He paints the picture of a youth whose "dreams" are tarnished and "enthusiasm" is replaced by "disillusionment" when he becomes a "cog in the vast machinery of Russia" and "comes in contact with the seamy realities of Soviet life" ("The Russian People" 33). It does not seem to matter that the youth's ideal was itself a part of something inherently opposed by Stevens himself. The failure is both in the inability of the Soviet state to keep its promises as

perceived by the youth, around which the youth built his telos, and in the adult's continued loyalty to the Soviet state when his dreams are gone, apparently an indication of a compromised personal fulfillment to Stevens. There is a similar criticism of Soviet life in the Army report." "They do accept national and local calamities, such as invasions, droughts, famines, and in recent times, increased work norms, and more stringent controls, with a quiet dolor which suggests passivity and stoicism" (7). Two things about this quote need to be clarified. First, the author of the report is careful to portray this "quiet dolor" as negative. He is not complimenting their stoicism, but painting their loss of personal expectation or hope. Second, he does not claim that this passivity is negative because it implicates the citizens in the actions of their government, but because it indicates fatalism. In other words, the Army report describes a Soviet citizen who has lost direction, expectation, and even hope because he is missing what could be described as the telos of the liberal individual.

Many authors from the 1950s and even into the 1960s include comments which apparently spring from their own theories about the Soviet view of the person, especially regarding criminality. While different concepts of the Soviet view are espoused, they do apparently seek to explain the lack of recognition in the Soviet Union for what would be in Western cultures taken as typical claims about the individual and the project of his personality. The Army report typifies several such claims about the Soviet judicial system. "Russians do not seem to regard any individual as inherently good or bad, as is apt to be the case in Western culture. His acts may be good or bad, wise or foolish, and he must accept the consequences, either way" (9). With claims similar to this one authors apparently tried to comprehend a system in which a Russian was a hero or a high ranking official one day and a prisoner the next. One inference which can be taken from the statement is that behavior in the Soviet state is measured

independently of what would be the narrative of the person's life in "Western culture." There is an interesting contradiction of opinions that follows, and that sheds light on why Western commentators had such a difficult time reconciling Soviet behavior with their expectations. The contradiction comes in the fact that other authors, including former prisoners providing autobiographical descriptions of the Gulag, do categorize criminality as chronic, always distinguishing them from the innocents, political and religious prisoners. This distinction does not simply rise from the difference in circumstances of the authors. Others, not writing from the perspective of the prisoner, record the same emphasis on the "whole man" (Berman 605). Two reviewers of a 1960s book in which George Fiefer discusses his admiration for the Soviet justice system after having witnessed it first hand as a visitor mention the inclination to "analyze the criminal, not just the crime" (Henson 26). In other words, Soviet jurists considered anything from the person's background that indicated a need for incarceration. This emphasis seems directly opposed to the idea that individuals were not considered inherently good or bad. The contradiction comes to a head in Noble's explanation of the hierarchy of prisoners in the Gulag system—the guide by which prisoners were considered more or less dangerous. Noble describes what appears to him to be inverted:

> The fact that they had merely robbed, raped, beaten, or even murdered was an extremely important difference. Unlike us, they were not "untouchable." They were not "degenerate" agents of the Fascists or capitalists. They were not saboteurs, spies, wreckers, counterrevolutionaries or any of the terrible things that we were. They were not, in short, dangerous in any way to the Soviet as such. They were, instead, often helpful. (77)

The most dangerous of offenders by Western standards, rapists and murderers, were given special privileges in the Gulag. The prisoners which seem the least offensive by Western standards were often abused to death in the Gulag. What seems a confusion to Noble is the point of divergence from the telos of the liberal individual. It is reasonable to infer from the gist of commentary on the Gulag that Western authors are offended by

the lack of concern in the Soviet Union for the protection of the individual. Western observers perceive a lack of moral behavior in the Soviet Union because the telos of the individual, which would be indicated in this case by the right not to be murdered or raped, is nowhere near the significance of the importance of the state's political direction. Stevens' expands on this distinction when he describes how Soviet police handled a drunk driver who had led them on a dangerous and noisy chase before finally being cornered, apprehended, and immediately released. He introduces the anecdote with this statement. "Today the individual Russian is remarkably free to blow off steam, provided only that he does not get political in so doing" ("The Russian People" 31). Getting political would mean becoming dangerous to the state. Simply driving drunk does not. In the estimation of many American authors, the telos of the individual, of personal fulfillment, was not the priority by which the behavior of Soviet citizens was measured. But it is the standard from which their own moral claims were derived, leaving them in a quandary about Soviet judicial behavior.

Prisoners also directly confronted what they describe as the abolition of their own direction as human beings. As mentioned above, descriptions of the reduction of prisoners to nothing more than animals are common. But one of the most important aspects of that reduction is that authors tie the immorality of their dehumanization to the theft of their hope, or direction. In other words, it is when prisoners are deprived of the conceptual distinction between their current condition and their hope for better that they are most violated. Noble points out this violation first regarding hunger. "Hope, in these prisons, was just something to disturb the stomach and make it churn more around its animal feedings" (64). He argues that prisoners gave up hope in order to survive, but thereby sacrificed an important part of their humanity. Similarly, by the time their transport is concluded, he bitterly describes a mass of people who have lost their ability

to anticipate, and therefore have lost their autonomy. "The gates of the cage were opened, the guards herded us out, blinking and wondering, into the sun. No one spoke. No one speculated—we were long past that. We just waited, not moving until prodded and the way pointed out" (71–72). He describes the prisoners in a world without any perceptible purpose, and so led about as animals. His antipathy toward the system which deprived the prisoners of their humanity is obvious. A review from *Newsweek* of a similar book is equally critical and typical, relating both hopelessness and hunger at the end of a list of violations against prisoners. "What is believable, however, are the details of life in these prison camps—and these Larsen treats with the power that comes from intimate knowledge. He tells of the theft, bribery, hopelessness, and, worst of all, hunger" ("Nightmare" 123). It is repeatedly apparent that prisoners who finally escaped the confines of the Gulag believed that part of the system's strategy and evil was to eliminate self-actualization (to use Maslow's term) by reducing prisoners and workers to wanting more basic needs, such as food.

In stark contrast to the evil of the Soviet Union stand descriptions of Western civilization in which the ability of individuals at least to busy themselves with realizing their personal goals is paramount. After his release, Noble's account of his first impressions of regained freedom in West Germany is a perfect example:

> I had crossed a border that separated two worlds. The world of fear, terror, deceit, Godlessness, and slavery was behind me in the east. I was returning to the west, to a world of busy people developing their lives according to their abilities, a world of freedom and of moral standards almost unknown to the people of the Communist realm. (174)

It is worth noting that Noble puts "a world of busy people developing their lives according to their abilities" as the first part of his description of the "west" with its freedom and moral standards. In fact, in these intentionally significant, closing remarks of the book, this telos of personal fulfillment is the only contrast to the Soviet block's

"fear, terror, deceit, Godlessness, and slavery" on which he chooses to put explanatory flesh, leaving freedom and moral standards as abstract skeletons. This telos is still a priority, if not the priority, when Solzhenitsyn pens the introduction to the *Gulag Archipelago*. "I have absorbed into myself my own eleven years there not as something shameful nor as a nightmare to be cursed: I have come almost to love that monstrous world, and now, by a happy turn of events, I have also been entrusted with many recent reports and letters" (xvi). Solzhenitsyn's statement embodies the telos of personal fulfillment and the antipathy for the Soviet system that undermined it. His ability to absorb his time in the Gulag into himself portrays his own personal advances towards the goal of his life. Further, his ability to "love that monstrous world" puts the current advance of his personal telos in direct contrast to the desperate world he describes throughout the book itself.

3.3.2 Communist economics as telos

On the opposite side of the telos of personal fulfillment is the telos of communist economics. As authors record their understanding of Soviet behavior it becomes clear that they choose to identify a Soviet telos which is economic rather than personal, but without acknowledging its validity as a justification for Gulag practices, for instance. In other words, Western authors acknowledge an economic telos as explanatory, but not justificatory. Recent scholarship also depends on this perspective. Legters' evaluation of Soviet practices includes a dominant emphasis on the kinds of actions necessary for the Soviet Union to enact an ideal communist state prematurely (in terms of Marx.) "One consequence was a willingness to move people around, either voluntarily or coercively, in actions that one might term 'demographic intervention'" (114). The explanation for actions supposedly unacceptable to Western thought, despite Japanese internments in America and German practices from only a few years earlier,

was that the Russians, or at least the Soviet state, held a different telos, an economic one. Legters also provides an example of the fact that claims of economic manipulation are an issue in explaining the Gulag:

> Demographic manipulation has been evident in other ways, of course, oftentimes involving coercion and even brutality. [. . .] A parallel policy resulted in the removal of segments of the local population. The penal system evidently played its part here too, for Solzhenitsyn (1978) has recorded the disproportionate incidence of minority nationalities in the prison camps. (115)

Explanations of the Gulag have converged around the kinds of claims here embodied by Legters, that the Gulag was only one manifestation of the system needed to deal with a monolithic approach to the economic development of the state toward communist perfection, rather than the provision of opportunities, including economic, for the individual. Petrov's introduction to *Soviet Gold* is an early indication of this thinking. "Contemporary Russia cannot be understood without an understanding of life in a camp. Not a camp as a place where innocent people are tortured or criminals are punished, but as a place in which millions of the most ordinary citizens live in accordance with the basic laws of the Soviet State" (viii). The "basic laws of the Soviet State" require that millions of ordinary citizens live in prison and work camps. The use of the term, "basic laws," provides perfect ground for inferring that the Soviet telos is fundamentally different than the Western telos of personal fulfillment. Martin Ebon's review of Petrov's book runs with this distinction in a parenthetical note. "(Camp jargon, with bitter irony, described those prisoners whom mental and physical exhaustion had placed in a state of moronic indifference as 'dokhoydyagas' or 'arrivists': those who have arrived at the Socialism, 'the finished' type of citizen in the Socialist society)" (16). Ebon's comments point both to the explanatory value of the economic telos, including an admittedly shallow description of the project of the self as purely economic, and to the fact that this explanation is in no way justificatory. Instead

of contentment or fulfillment for those who arrive or finish there is "moronic indifference."

Wolfe summarizes the different telos required by such a program of absolute economic development and control:

> For government by purge is an integral part of this new system of state-decreed fixity of the citizen, state-decreed official truth, state-determined categories of 'potential' and 'thought-crime' enemies, state determined feelings, thoughts and culture, in an absolutist, bureaucratic, *apparatchik* state that is total in its scope and universalist in its aspirations, that wages psychological and physical war on its own people even more than it does on other peoples, and is presided over by an autocratic leader who is infallible in all fields embraced by the all-embracing state. ("Dance" 11)

In Wolfe's explanation, the state controls the "potential" and even thoughts of individuals. Such control is necessary (explanatory from the perspective of the author) because the ultimate project has shifted from the self of Western thought to the state of communist thought, or more precisely, to the state of Stalinist thought.

3.3.3 America as telos

As American authors review Soviet policies and practices it becomes apparent that they are assuming a specific example of teleological accomplishment, America itself. For instance, Stevens places the American Bill of Rights intentionally at the peak of a list of significant documents associated with the development and later understanding and protection of individual rights. "He has never known the sort of organized safeguards of the individual against government and authority which developed through the centuries in the Magna Carta, the Anglo-Saxon common law, and the American Bill of Rights, and his sort of freedom is comparatively more primitive" ("The Russian People" 31). Stevens does not preclude the idea that Russians have freedom, but is explicit that the freedom that could be had in the Soviet Union is

"primitive" when compared with the significantly (if not fully) developed freedom of America.

But the Army report, despite its offensiveness to McCarthy as a document too tolerant of the Soviets, provides the clearest examples of how ingrained was the picture of America as the ultimate standard of moral accomplishment. When Russian morals are lauded, it is because they are comparable to the "Christian" pattern readers expect to be associated with America. But those ethics are similarly compromised in the Soviet Union by the demands of the Soviet state's policies against America. "Basically, Russian ethics conform to the conventional Christian pattern of the West. Ideals of honesty, loyalty, duty and mutual obligation, though rationalized to the point of negation in dealing with the 'hostile capitalistic powers,' are applicable in personal relations within Soviet society" (9). The claim that their morals are "rationalized to the point of negation" underscores the tension between basing morals in American expectations while still remaining critical of Soviet practices. Psychological claims about the self resort ultimately to the same picture of America. "The universal psychological drive for social recognition, always intensely developed among peoples undergoing rapid economic expansion, and the attendant social changes, is at least as prominent among present-day Russians as it is among Americans" ("Army Report" 8). Of interest for later in this statement is the implication that material circumstances drive psychological change. But for the present purpose two implications are significant. First, hinting at a material teleology, the report implies that the Soviet Union is following America's economic example of expansion. The context of the report makes it reasonable to infer that they are significantly behind economically, but that their similar psychological makeup gives them some of the competencies required to achieve America's accomplishments. Second, the report refers to the psychological condition of

Russians from the perspective of the psychological condition of Americans, presumably using assumptions of the American psychological condition as a standard of psychological normalcy. A final reference to the section of the report mentioned above makes America's role as a telos clear:

> The American viewpoint of life in the Soviet Union remains valid in all essentials. The Soviet citizen enjoys neither the liberty nor the civil rights which we cherish and insist upon as the natural endowment of all men. The "free" worker in the USSR is as much chained to his job and local area as is the convict. He has no voice in determining his place of work, working conditions, or wages. His only advantage over the convict is that he can live with his family and can spend his limited income as he sees fit. He has no redress against a harsh authoritarian government. He is forbidden to raise his voice in criticism, to develop independent views, or to acquire unbiased information. His voting rights are a travesty on the ideals and purposes of democracy. He enjoys no acknowledged rights for his person, life, or property. He is the helpless prisoner of a slave state. ("Army Report" 16)

The elements of a successful project of the self are identified with America. "Liberty," "civil rights," "natural endowment of all men," the freedom to pursue a career and influence working conditions, "redress" against government, free speech, intellectual freedom, and the rights of the person, his life, and property, are all identified with American ideals while the Russian, whether incarcerated in the Gulag or not, is the "helpless prisoner of a slave state." Practically every word opposes the significance of the American ideal. Being helpless, a prisoner, a slave, and the emphasis on state oppose the American telos.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the issue is not that one of these three teloi holds true, either in an ontological sense or in the sense of being advocated by the authors. It does seem significant, however, that the three work together to form an implicitly accepted telos in the vast majority of 1950s literature about the Gulag centering on personal fulfillment and balanced by the recognition and disapproval of communist economics on one hand and American rights and liberties on the other. These teloi are rooted in descriptions of self that vary in some ways from descriptions in

the postwar years. Articles addressing the Gulag as a representation of Soviet evil reveal a self still significantly identified as modern and civilized, but also identified deliberately much more parochially, especially as occidental. The self is still conceived psychologically with continued emphasis on autonomy, but with a new emphasis on the organized manipulation of the psychological self. These developments are particularly interesting in the light of the immediately ensuing 1960s and 1970s when American parochial and teleological superiority would be taken every way but as an assumption.

CHAPTER IV

SELF AND MORALITY REVEALED IN RESPONSE TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

The American response to the My Lai massacre and its affect on opinions about American involvement in Vietnam generally and also later in Cambodia provides another body of writing for examination. This chapter studies that literature as it reveals assumptions about self and morality in a culture facing several significant transitions including from blatant racism to at least a show of anti-racism and from America as the standard of national progress to anti-American demonstrations.

4.1 My Lai and the Khmer Rouge as material for analysis of self and morality

The event which came to be known as the My Lai massacre occurred on March 16, 1968 when U.S. soldiers entered a small hamlet in a presumably Vietcong infested region of South Vietnam. In their mission to search out and destroy Vietcong elements in the village, a handful of GIs managed to murder as many as five hundred villagers, mostly old men, women, and children according to every report that is specific about the victims. But the event of the spring of 1968 was not nearly as important to the American public as the swirl of discourse that emanated from it beginning a year and a half later. Ronald Haeberle, an Army photographer, was present at My Lai. On November 20, 1969 Joseph Eszterhas published Haeberle's photographs of the incident in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. Throughout December of 1969 and the first half of 1970 moral discourse about My Lai abounded. At first, authors did not know what to title the event. "My Lai," or "Mylai," was a generic title assigned to many different villages. The one "searched and destroyed" on March 16, 1968 was known as "My Lai 4."

"Songmy" was another name assigned to the village. "Pinkville" was the name soldiers assigned to the largely communist sympathetic region of Quang Ngai (in South Vietnam) where the My Lai incident occurred. After a few months of discursive interaction, for no explicit reason, but as likely as not because of its alliterative quality, the "My Lai massacre," under varied spellings, became the titular norm for the event.

At the same time in Southeast Asia, the prospects of a Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia were beginning to form. Prince Norodom Sihanouk's government was replaced by Lon Nol, who remained in power for five turbulent years of Khmer Rouge guerilla warfare. Most Cambodians celebrated the Khmer Rouge arrival in power in Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975 as a relief from years of civil conflict, only to be shocked by the command to evacuate the city hours later. The Khmer Rouge remained in power until a successful Vietnamese invasion on December 25, 1978 culminated in the ouster of the Pol Pot government from Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979. American discourse directly responding to the emerging discovery of the genocide practiced by the Khmer Rouge regime peaks in 1978 and 1979. Khmer Rouge influence, through Pol Pot's threatening presence in remote parts along the border between Cambodia and Thailand and the fact that the official United Nations ambassador from Cambodia was a representative not of the acting government but of the Pol Pot regime, continued well into the 1990s. But the Khmer Rouge years were 1975 through 1978, when approximately one and a half million Cambodians were destroyed. Throughout the Khmer Rouge years very little information left the country. American authors speculated where necessary, but did not even know the names of the leaders in Democratic Kampuchea (Cambodia's title under the Khmer Rouge.) Once the walls came down, however, and journalists, for instance, were allowed to travel in the

country, focus shifted directly to Pol Pot as the head of the Khmer Rouge, and the chief perpetrator of the genocide there.

Two things make public discourse about these events interesting for moral inquiry. One is the savagery and cruelty of the perpetrators, both of the soldiers at My Lai and of the Khmer Rouge regime, making later references to Nazism and Stalinism common. The other is the new (at the time) and unique focus in literature on America and Americans as the agents of atrocity, even in Cambodia.

4.1.1 The significance of My Lai and the Khmer Rouge

Within three weeks of Eszterhas' publication My Lai pervaded public discourse. That the description of such an event demanded a reconsideration of American ideals and morals beyond the horizon of previous experiences is apparent from the start, when authors repeatedly emphasized denial on the part of many Americans. "The *Wall Street Journal* reported that a large proportion of some 200 Americans questioned around the country either refused to believe the Pinkville story or dismissed it with such remarks as 'That's the way war is'" (Osborne 18). Of course, as important as Osborne's citation of public denial is his disdain of it, explicit throughout his article. That is, Osborne, like many authors of the time, implies that the task of journalists was made more difficult by the reluctance of the public to acknowledge the issues which My Lai raised—issues tending to controvert American assumptions of self and morality.

It is not necessarily the case that prior events did not equal or exceed My Lai in the moral issues that could have been raised. From destruction and displacement of Native Americans to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, opportunities for such a critical national self-examination abound. But it is apparent in the literature of late 1969 and 1970 that the evaluation of American morality rising from My Lai is at least

perceived at the time as unique, and justifiably so. As word of the My Lai massacre first disseminated through American culture, a commentator for *The New Yorker* said the reports of My Lai had "left the nation stunned and vexed. We sense—all of us—that our best instincts are deserting us, and we are oppressed by a dim feeling that beneath our words and phrases, almost beneath our consciousness, we are quietly choking on the blood of innocents" ("Notes and Comment" 27). The article continues with the marked distinction between the ability of Americans to condemn soldiers from Germany, for instance, and the ability (or inability) to condemn America's own. He claims the reason for the difficulty rests in a "complete dissociation of ourselves from the people we condemned." Further, he notes a distinction between atrocities in the past seen through the eyes of the victims and this atrocity seen through the eyes of the perpetrators. The fact that this commentator, straining for satisfactorily emphatic vocabulary, claims that the search for American self-examination must go beneath "words and phrases" and even "our consciousness" reveals just how horizonal was the perception of this event—how distant from ordinary issues—and how significantly authors believed it could affect assumptions of self and morality. The same author describes the reaction to seeing the *Life* magazine pictures in typically national and parochial statements. "To block it out, we may freeze. If we face the massacre for what it is, we are torn by almost unbearable grief, but if we turn away and let the rationalizations crowd into our minds to protect us we are degraded" ("Notes and Comment" 28–29). The first observation of significance in this statement is the confrontation with American brutality. Americans are "we." There is a corporate grief to be faced, not because victims suffered at My Lai, but because "we" committed the atrocity. As the discourse unfolds, this corporate psyche becomes prominent as a housing both for guilt and atonement. The importance of this corporate conception is discussed below with the parochially identified self. But

the examination is not only corporate. There is, in a variety of terms repeated by many authors, something in or of Americans, unknown until My Lai's revelation, whose recognition is "unbearable." But, as this author argues, failing to bear up to the examination would be the failure of being fully human. The need to bear up under the full examination provoked by My Lai's realization makes perfectly good sense in the light of Zygmunt Bauman's explanation of modernity.

The My Lai massacre took place during the lengthy U.S. response to the Tet Offensive. Most commentators agree that the offensive succeeded in shocking Americans with how unsuccessful and far from over the presence of GIs in Vietnam really was. Criticism of U.S. involvement in Vietnam was commonplace before My Lai—and so were atrocities, albeit not nearly as significantly reported, and more importantly, without nearly the public (or media) response when they were reported. For example, a soldier who had served in the same brigade as Charlie Company, the group that acted in My Lai, but in a different company, reported similar activities as the norm, although he only admitted it after the revelation of My Lai:

> The indiscriminate slaughter of Vietnamese women and children was commonplace in his unit. "Our company was credited with hundreds of kills," Reid told a reporter. "In the first firefight our company encountered, my platoon alone accounted for forty kills. Yet no one in my platoon saw a [Viet Cong] body. But I witnessed many civilians being shot down like clay pigeons." (Hersh 56)

The use of dehumanizing terminology is common in reference to the victims of atrocities. It is common in discourse about My Lai, both as justification from actors in the massacre and as revelation of just how barbaric U.S. soldiers had become. My Lai serves as a pivotal point in defining American activities in Vietnam as inhumane. Authors seized on the claim that Vietnam in general was defined by My Lai's baseness. It was becoming clear that there were no good tools for making distinctions in Vietnam. There were no clear distinctions between friends and foes, between soldiers and

civilians, even between humans and animals. As a result, authors began to describe My Lai as a predictable (though not predicted) consequence of the Vietnam War generally. "Therefore, the issue of the massacre at My Lai is inextricably bound up with the issue of our entire presence in Vietnam" ("Notes and Comment" 28). The object of relevance in public discourse became the discovery of My Lai's causes including almost any (if not every) part of American culture. For example, early commentary cites the nature of the war in Vietnam as the cause of the soldiers' dehumanized activity. "When he was asked if it was true that 'a dirty, jungle war' like the one in Vietnam 'brutalizes large numbers of young Americans,' Secretary of State William P. Rogers said on the National Educational Television network that 'I don't think there is any way to deny that'" (Osborne 17). Each journalist's and author's search for a cause is also a revelation of assumptions of causation, and therefore of the nature of the human participants. As these presumed causes are examined, the discourse turns increasingly on horizonal statements about the American experience in Vietnam. Referring to the same kind of cause Osborne mentions above in the *New Republic*, a *Commonweal* author points simultaneously (with obvious irony) to the inexplicable nature of My Lai and its explanation. "The situation is tragic beyond words, yet was anything else to be expected" ("Going Beyond Mylai 4" 325). It is where tragedy goes "beyond words" yet commentators still speak that investigations into the nature of self and moral claims can be most fruitful.

Authors found the My Lai massacre an occasion for directly examining issues which, at least in their opinion, had been previously unengaged. Politicians had been criticized. So had the military. The earliest articles do not even identify the particular nature of what might need to be examined, other than to say, for instance, that "some basic national assumptions will come in for some very rough rocking" ("Going Beyond

Mylai 4" 326). As the discourse develops, the "murky aberration" by which this author identifies My Lai is said to rise from a variety of settings, including corruption in top government officials, and depending on from which end of the political spectrum a commentator comes, universities like Berkeley, the capitalist system, ignorant or overly tolerant voters, and even a violence-promoting entertainment industry. William F. Buckley, Jr., the notoriously conservative editor and author, delves into the investigation as well. Posing the issue early on he considers the possibility that one company commander or platoon leader may have acted aberrantly, without implications for America generally. Then he considers what he apparently takes to be the actual case. "If, on the other hand, it transpires that ten, twenty, thirty, even fifty men concerted in the act of genocide, then we must seek an explanation for why a cross-section of young America found itself capable of utterly barbaric behavior" ("My Lai: Whose Fault?" 1339). It is the fact that critics from all ends of the American political spectrum (narrow as it may appear) address the same issues that makes this body of literature so interesting. Conclusions may vary. But those varying conclusions meet in assumptions of responsibility and morality from which they are drawn.

The examination of American responsibility and involvement in the Khmer Rouge genocide of Cambodians is equally insightful. As Peter Novick points out, Americans were tired of Southeast Asia by 1975, when the Khmer Rouge took control of the country (248). That lack of interest, plus the fact that even after two years of Khmer Rouge control and easily over one million deaths there was a dearth of information leaving the country, created an American environment in which authors found ways to avoid expressing too great concern for Cambodia. A common rationale presented was that refugees were inherently anti-regime, and so could not be trusted for accurate reports of conditions in the country. As late as 1977, journalists were still

finding ways to imply cautious optimism toward the Cambodian regime (Chandler 210). What was believed to be generally true was reported, but without its retrospectively obvious implications for Khmer culture and humanity. "The regime—which calls itself Democratic Kampuchea, but is known to most of its people as *angkar*, 'the organization'—has moved millions of people out of towns and cities onto rural work-sites, in a process aimed at increasing agricultural production, fostering self-reliance, and destroying what it calls the 'old society'" (Chandler 207). These kinds of reports, typically represented here by Chandler's *Commonweal* article, stop short of praising the Khmer Rouge for bringing new life to Cambodia, but also stop short of being explicitly critical of ominous activities. Millions of people thrust out of cities into the countryside and the destruction of the "old society" appear now to be obvious indicators of the Cambodian genocide, ineptly and irresponsibly ignored by commentators during the Khmer Rouge years, partially revealing the American desire to ignore Southeast Asia. However the exponential increase of information leaving Cambodia in 1978 and the beginning of 1979 provoked a lengthy flurry of journalism about the severity of what transpired there. Authors began to demand attention for the atrocity by emphasizing its greatest extremities. "Even in our most violent century, the fate of Cambodia marks a new level of horror in war, multiple invasions, and self-genocide" (Luttwak 38). The "new level of horror" and "genocide," in any form, reveal not only the desire to interest American readers again, but the assumptions of journalists that the reopening of Southeast Asia would be worth the effort—would open unexplored territory in the examination of American values. One article after another claims some form of impotence in the effort to explain the tragedy of Democratic Kampuchea. In the *New Republic* article above, it is because there is no event in the twentieth century with which to draw an adequate comparison. For others, it is because words alone cannot

suffice to convey the truth. Pin Yathay tells of his escape from the Khmer Rouge. The escape includes elements similar to the better known but slightly later account of Dith Pran. In his account he makes a statement typical of those who escaped, and of those who visited Cambodia shortly after the fall of the Khmer Rouge. "Every article, every book I have read about Cambodia under the Khmer Communists is a pale copy of the wretched ghastly original" (1589). Yathay's explicit goal is to provoke an American response to Cambodia.

In 1978 the United Nations' International Rescue Committee sent a team to Thailand where refugee camps for Cambodians were prolific along the border. Buckley reported on the comments of the leader of that group, Leo Cherne. "About Cambodia, Mr. Cherne could only think to say: 'The events which have taken place in Cambodia and which continue to make of that country a land so inhuman tempts one to wonder whether here, finally, is a place where the living envy the dead'" ("Report from Bangkok" 486). It is interesting that organization Leo Cherne represented was "founded in 1933 to help refugees from Nazi Germany. " But more important for the moment is the claim that the land is inhuman, that there is a place where death is better than living. It is reasonable to infer that such extreme claims were intended to provoke American concerns and interest, while describing what was in other terms beyond description.

Yathay's description of Cambodia emphasizes inhumanity and dehumanization repeatedly. For example, he recorded his impression of Khmer (indigenous Cambodians) along the roadside as he was being transported from one work camp to another. "These were city-dwellers. Now they toiled silently like brute work animals under the guns of Khmer Rouge soldiers" (1589). In this passage, Yathay points the responsibility for dehumanization of the Khmer directly a the Khmer Rouge. In other places, however, the process of brutalization is sustained by the appalling conditions of

lack. "Humans, cats, dogs, all disappeared. There were macabre incidents—starving people who ate the flesh of the dead. It was a period of acute famine. My brain was numb from the suffering and death I witnessed" (1590). Yathay's numbness is Buckley's (as an example) justification for provoking American consideration of the atrocities in Cambodia.

My Lai and the Khmer Rouge demanded attention from and in public discourse in the 1970s for two dominant reasons. First, Americans appeared to be guilty of what they could not even explain in other nationalities before My Lai. Second, American assumptions of self included moral responsibility: an assumption undermined by My Lai, but required by both the investigation of My Lai and the revelation of the Khmer Rouge.

4.1.2 Comparisons to Germany

Another manifestation of the significance of both My Lai and Cambodia in American literature is the manner in which discourse lays the mantle of WW II Germany on Southeast Asia. It is also the case that Cambodia particularly is frequently compared to the Soviet prison camp system. But even when the details of one article, as an example, in the *National Review* portray Khmer Rouge treatment of the entire civilian population with the treatment of Gulag prisoners, the title emphasizes European Holocaust vocabulary: "The Nation as Concentration Camp" (Groueff 988). Examples of Holocaust and WW II Germany comparisons abound. American soldiers at My Lai are like German troops. American intervention in Cambodia is as important as the Allied rescue at Buchenwald. Only three months after My Lai's introduction to the media, commentary was already drawing significantly on other commentary about the massacre. Edward Opton and Robert Duckles reported on a small survey they

conducted about the My Lai reports, a survey they claimed to have results consistent with larger studies conducted by major news sources:

> A fictional German psychiatrist, the creation of satirist Art Hoppe, tells his American patient who is troubled by Mylai to repeat three times a day: "I didn't know what was going on. These things happen in war. I was only following orders as a good American. Our soldiers are good American boys. The war is to save the world from Communism. Our leaders were wrong. The unfortunate victims were members of an inferior race." With a single exception, Hoppe's compilation of German clichés after the "Final Solution," accurately summarizes American reactions to Mylai, as they emerged in a survey we and our colleagues at The Wright Institute in Berkeley, California, made last December. [. . .] Americans have reacted like Germans to reports of atrocities. (14–15)

The only cliché Opton and Duckles claim Americans avoid is "The unfortunate victims were members of an inferior race." That distinction is discussed below. It appears that the authors of this article, and of the satire itself, assume that the other clichés, denying active and corporate responsibility, or defending the nature of war in general or of Americans or of this war specifically, are so strikingly similar to those harshly credited to the Germans after the Holocaust by the same Americans who will read their account that the readers will be confronted with a painful and otherwise avoided self-revelation.

An editor for *The Nation* also refers to German atrocities as he responds to the comments of an attorney for one of the two soldiers who were prosecuted for the event at My Lai:

> The reaction of the counsel for one of the accused soldiers is also reminiscent of Nazi reasoning. "It would have been better for the U.S. if these men had never been charged," this lawyer said to Barry Cunningham, a *New York Post* reporter. "These kinds of incidents give our enemies something to seize upon. I regret to see our country prosecute its own people for trying to carry out a mission and win a war." In short, anything goes. ("The American Conscience" 619–620)

The author's conclusion that arguing against the prosecution of Medina and Calley means effectively arguing that "anything goes" in war, and that such an argument is evil is based on only one strand of reasoning, that it is "reminiscent of Nazi reasoning." Obviously, he assumes that one strand is sufficient. Many Americans argued against

prosecuting Calley and Medina. Calley was convicted and sentenced to life, only to be released after three and a half years. Medina was acquitted after one hour's deliberation. This author apparently recognized that many Americans would argue with prosecution. But he, and others in similar ways, assumed what could take the form of a question: "What American would argue for anything reminiscent of Nazi reasoning?"

An author for *Commonweal* makes the same kind of comparison. "But not until the terrible story of Mylai 4 filtered through the wraps of government secrecy and military cover-up was the country confronted with the hard fact that 'our boys,' a strong cross-section of them at least, were as dehumanized as an SS Storm Trooper; that, indeed, they were cold-blooded murderers" ("Going Beyond Mylai 4" 325). There is the need for a confrontation with a hard truth. There is the false distinction between "our boys" and former perpetrators. Perhaps most interesting is that the definition of dehumanization is the SS Storm Trooper. If American troops acted similarly to SS Storm Troopers, then American must deal with dehumanization among its own. No other argument needs to be made, in the assumptions of this *Commonweal* author.

The comparisons with Germany are not always specific, but always portray German activity in WW II as the standard of evil and menace. Anything similar to it is evil by its definition. Anything opposing it is at least fundamentally, if not specifically, justified. American defenders of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, both in Vietnam and Cambodia, repeatedly compare the fight against communism in the East with the fight against Hitler in Europe, and in Africa. "The war was brought to Cambodia by Hanoi, not by the U.S. If Cambodia could have been spared a war by ignoring the Vietnamese, Egypt could have been spared World War II if only the British had ignored the Germans in Libya, west of El Alamein" ("Devil" 664). The comments constantly pull at two assumptions: that intervention in WW II was entirely justifiable, and that the threat and

reality of Southeast Asia were comparable to those in Europe and northern Africa during the 1940s. Since WW II Germany's description is such a defining standard of self and morality, the constant comparisons to it made by commentators are also important.

4.1.3 Contrasts with Germany

As frequently as the discourse draws comparisons between WW II Germany and Southeast Asia it also uses those similarities to emphasize the unique aspects of My Lai and the Khmer Rouge. Comparisons with Germany are apparent in the statements of contrast journalists make between Americans at My Lai and Germans in Europe. Sometimes Americans are worse than the Germans; other times they are better. For instance, a *Nation* article compares the Americans at My Lai with the Germans at Lidice, the Czech town wiped off the map by Nazis in response to a resistance assassination attempt. "If these stories are true, the Americans involved behaved with an on-the-spot savagery that exceeded even that of the Germans at Lidice in World War II. The Nazis wiped out the village, shot all the men, and dragged the women and children off to concentration camps" ("The American Conscience" 619). The author implies that the Nazis were bad, without argument, but that the Americans were worse since they not only shot the men, but the women and children as well.

There are also times when Americans are portrayed as better than the Germans. However, that superiority usually resides in the American public generally, rather than in the soldiers themselves. And sometimes the improvement appears to be as much a result of the passage of time from 1945 to 1970 as the trip across the ocean. The Opton and Duckles report of their survey points out a difference in at least the willingness to publicly acknowledge racist sentiments:

> There was, however, one justification reportedly used by post-war Germans which we did not hear. Our respondents, with one exception, did *not* tell us that, as Art Hoppe put it, "the unfortunate victims were members of an inferior race." Both hawk and dove respondents often said that GIs tend to look on Vietnamese civilians as subhumans, as "gooks," "slopes," "dinks. " But with one exception ("I think it's true"), every subject coupled this awareness of racial prejudice in others with an abstention from publicly subscribing to it himself. (14–15)

The authors themselves recognized that denying racism may have been no more than a public face, but it was better than the alternative, to publicly acknowledge what was reasonably accepted as the standard of evil in Germany, including publicly acceptable racism. It is also important to note that the authors associate inferiority of race with sub-humanity.

While it was common for critics of the Vietnam war and the handling of Cambodia to hold America responsible, it is interesting that even the defenders of U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia accept U.S. responsibility, at least in a mitigated form. "'Cambodia was not a mistake; it was a crime,' says Shawcross, and so obsessed is he with the crime that he fails to notice the mistake, which was to attack the North Vietnamese too late and in the wrong place" ("Devil" 664). As evidenced by Buckley's publication, and pervasive in 1970s literature about the subject, the attempt at mitigating American responsibility takes the form of diverting attention from intentional criminality to unintentional incompetence. Either way, commentators are acknowledging both American responsibility for the events of Southeast Asia and American failure in effectively handling the responsibility. This acknowledgement comprises one of the most significant distinctions between dealing with Germany and dealing with Southeast Asia. In Southeast Asia, America lost and, as journalists repeatedly emphasize, did not do much right in route to the defeat, leaving America with a new and unique role, not having prevented the predicted but absent slaughter of the South Vietnamese, and having been partial contributors to the rise of the holocaust in Cambodia.

One interesting contrast many authors make, but which Buckley states most clearly, is between the perceived interest in the European Holocaust and the lack of interest in the Cambodian genocide. There are two elements in the contrast. First is the general apathy of Americans for the growing evidence of atrocity in Cambodia. "The litany becomes all the more horrible for its failure, over a period of three years now, to arouse attention. It is as if the daily figures were to be read out publicly for Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz, to an assembly where everyone was engaged in playing gin rummy" ("Report from Bangkok" 486). It seems reasonable to infer that for Buckley there is no doubt that Americans responded strongly to the reports of German atrocities (Of course, there was a period of denial and doubt about the first reports coming out of Europe as well. But by the time reports of the Khmer Rouge were being considered, that fact had been lost on practically all the journalists.) Either way, perceived American indifference certainly fits within the framework of apathy and even antipathy toward Southeast Asia in the wake of the Vietnam War, and that lack of interest provides a contrast with perceptions of the American response to the standard of evil in Germany. Another contrast by Buckley strikes even more closely to the distinction between American interest in Europe and in Cambodia:

> The thing is hard to say—in fact it feels shameful to say it—but judging by the response here and abroad by people by no means deficient in human sympathy, the genocide now taking place in Cambodia is, in fact, *boring*. The nightly TV docudrama on a 35 year old Holocaust has been evoking far more interest, comment, and passion than the actual Holocaust taking place at this moment in that distant Asian land. ("Banality of Evil" 570)

There is the direct criticism that Americans were more interested in pictures and docudramas than in a current crisis of similar proportions. There is, as Novick points out twenty years later, the fact that it took a concerted effort over several decades to develop the interest in the Holocaust of Europe evidenced by Buckley's comments. And there is the distance of the "Asian land." Charny's contention is that the distance is

much more related to the perceived difference of racial features than any geographic measurements. The point is that discourse saw the relationship between the atrocities of WW II Europe and Southeast Asia sufficiently closely related that even where there were distinctions, they were posed in light of the comparisons. And most of the distinctions, including the role of America, provided a new backdrop against which questions of self and morality were raised.

4.2 Self in discourse about My Lai and the Khmer Rouge

4.2.1 The identified self

4.2.1.1 The modern self

It is no great surprise to find what may be described as anti-rationalist or anti-modernist sentiment in popular discourse during the late 1960s and 1970s. While certainly not postmodernist, there are clearly indications of the kinds of thinking that are as disdainful of optimism and perfectionism as many scholars had been since the end of the nineteenth century, particularly since the end of WWI. One of the soldiers at My Lai removed himself from any further involvement in the assault by intentionally shooting himself in the foot. Hersh used his interview with that soldier to question rational development in America generally. Hersh provided *Harper's* a preview of the book he was having published at the time, *My Lai 4: A Report on the Massacre and its Aftermath*. The following excerpt is the penultimate paragraph in that thirty page preview:

> Herbert Carter shot himself in the foot, perhaps to get out of My Lai 4. For him, there was no later sense of personal shame, only a feeling of amazement and irony at the response to the event. "I still wonder why human beings claim to be human beings but still conduct themselves as savages and barbarians," he said. "The United States is supposed to be a peace-loving country; yet they tell them to do something and then they want to hang them for it." (84)

Hersh does at least two interesting things with this paragraph. First, he has Carter assign to the United States generally what many readers would expect to be applied only to the soldiers who were at My Lai. Carter contrasts those who act savagely and barbarically with human beings. Then Hersh has him assign irrationality to the behavior of Americans who want to "hang" soldiers who simply obeyed the orders of the nation. The only likely inference a reader can make is that Carter (based on Hersh's use of his statements) is not questioning the humanity of the soldiers at My Lai, but of the Americans who want to condemn them. It seems reasonable to assert that by creating the anticipation of another condemnation of the soldiers at My Lai, Hersh surprises his readers by suddenly turning the condemnation on them—on Americans generally—not for savagely murdering civilians at My Lai, but for irrationally attacking the soldiers they sent there. This turn leads to the second interesting thing which can be inferred in the paragraph. While Hersh is certainly questioning rationality's presence (or survival) in the United States, he does still allow it to be associated with the nature of humanity. Irrationality is savage and barbaric. America is irrational. That much of his claim is clear. But it is not clear whether he doubts the meaningfulness of assumptions about rationality generally, or simply condemns its absence in this particular case.

Commentary doubting the presence of rational behavior in America is plentiful during the time in question. By the time Cambodia took center stage, even the most conservative of authors expressed doubts about the validity of assuming the modernity of America. In another of his articles lamenting American apathy toward Cambodia, Buckley blames the lack of care on a lack of television coverage. Of course, as a result of Khmer Rouge policies, there was no coverage at all, except what was provided by refugees. Buckley complains that as narrative reports did manage to get through to Americans, they did not care. He comes to the conclusion: "Mass murder,

proportionately perhaps the worst in recorded history, is a muffled rumor, heard from far away" ("Banality of Evil" 570). Buckley deliberately describes the Cambodian situation in the most extreme of terms. It is "the worst in recorded history. " Yet the perception of it in America is diminished. In other words, not only are world circumstances worsening, so is American concern. Again, all Buckley may intend by this typical criticism is that modernity is failing in America, not that it is a failed cause altogether.

Doubting the value of modernity's assumptions, including rationality and/or incrementalism, is a different issue. When it does happen, it reveals a deeper transition, or potential for transition, in thinking about self. There are hints of that kind of doubt in the literature by the end of the 1970s. But they are only hints, and even then, only of particular aspects of modernity's claims. For instance, early among responses to the Khmer Rouge regime is an article in *The New Republic* in which Morton Kondracke condemns the idea of scientifically categorizing events revealed in this case by a fondness for statistics:

> Another sign of an Indochina reassessment is the increasing (though still inadequate) attention being given to the monstrous events that have transpired in Cambodia since our side's collapse. With the same penchant for numbers that gave us body counts and kill ratios as the measure of success in the war, there has been a good deal of squabbling in the press and before congressional committees over how many Cambodians have to die by execution and how many by starvation and disease in order for what is going on there to be labeled "genocide" or a "bloodbath." (21)

For Kondracke, the events are monstrous, but the attempt to contain their meaning numerically is foolish. It becomes apparent just how ingrained modernity's tactics are, however, when even Kondracke, after such a condemnation, cannot completely abandon taking a scientific approach to the problem. He continues in his article to claim that the very best way to find out how extensively the Cambodians were suffering would have been to send an "impartial international organization" and ideally for them

to be "computer aided" (21). His appeal for objectivity in the form of impartiality and for the use of computers to meet the need of quantifying the harms in Cambodia are intrinsically modernistic.

For most authors, even in the 1970s, modernity is securely ingrained in the assumptions of their writings. Rationality is praised, and present in American culture even if not elsewhere. And its absence elsewhere is assumed to be an evidence of the lack of development there. When it is absent in American practices, it is because of a lapse or reversion. Hersh's interview with Carter provides another example of this kind of assumption. While the practices of the United States are irrational, rationality sheds light on them. "As far as he was concerned, Carter said, what happened at My Lai 4 was not a massacre, but a logical result of the war in Vietnam: 'The people didn't know what they were dying for and the guys didn't know why they were shooting them.'" (Hersh 84). The ignorance of the soldiers and the civilians is bad. But the result of it makes perfectly good sense when logic is applied. Even the irrational can be rationally explained.

The same assumptions hold true in statements in the later 1970s regarding Cambodia. Leo Cherne, commenting after his UN committee's visit to the Cambodian border with Thailand, places the irrationality and inhumanity of the Khmer Rouge in the same light. "The inhumanity which continues to exist in Cambodia is so beyond rational description that it is probably unlikely that evidences of world concern so long withheld will have any moderating effect upon the behavior of the Khmer Rouge" (Buckley, "Report from Bangkok" 486). Buckley's quotation of Cherne not only emphasizes current inhumanity and irrationality among the Khmer Rouge, but also claims that the lack of rationality precludes any hope of moderating activities in Cambodia through international pressure, implying that only brute force will change things there.

Perhaps the most important aspect of modernity is the assumption of incrementalism in the form of positive development and improvement. Such an assumption still dominates public discourse, even in the light of My Lai and the Khmer Rouge, in the 1970s. Again, Kondracke provides a typical example of these underlying assumptions. "We have avoided pointing fingers of blame at each other for the war, but we have avoided learning its lessons, too" (21). Learning lessons implies both meaning in the current event and improvement for the future, both of which are implications of modernity. Buckley's use of Pin Yathay's testimony of escape contains the same idea. "I tried now to analyze the awful deeds I had witnessed, to learn some lessons that might keep me alive a little longer" (1589). Yathay was educated in Montreal, then returned to Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge takeover. The underlying implication of the article is that rationality, at least partially present to Yathay because of his Western-educated background, could deliver him from the Khmer Rouge.

At the core of much of the discourse about Cambodia in the late 1970s, and well into the 1980s, is criticism of William Shawcross' works. The well-known English author wrote extremely critically of the United States government's actions, in the late 1970s holding the United States more responsible for suffering in Cambodia than the Khmer Rouge. Most authors in public literature during the late 1970s cannot be harsh enough in their attacks on him. Edward Luttwak is such a critic, not only of Shawcross, but of two academic reviewers who favored Shawcross' work:

> And yet professors Hoffman and Waizer and others praised the book especially for its treatment of the evidence. Are we to understand that they would allow their students to write academic papers in the manner in which Mr. Shawcross wrote his book? If it is permissible to omit causal facts, to treat the absence of evidence as proof presumptive, to use deliberately misleading quotations, then it would be easy to show that it was Poland that attacked Germany in 1939, and that 1968 saw the Russian rescue of Czechoslovakia.
>
> Such an abandonment of academic standards obviously must have an explanation much more personal and much more intense than any mere political

> disagreement. This is clear from the reviewers' particular enthusiasm for the crude personalization of the book's attack upon American policy. (39)

Three things make this section of Luttwak's article interesting. First is the fact that he bases his criticism of Shawcross on his lack of modernity (although obviously not with that term.) Shawcross abuses the evidence. His writing is not up to academic standards. He omits "causal facts." He errs by arguing from the absence of evidence. Further, his attack on American policy is a "crude personalization," presumably rather than an objective review. Second is Luttwak's comparison of Shawcross' work with German propaganda, and his appeal to what he implies are universally recognizable and condemnable acts in order to similarly expose and condemn Shawcross' treatment of the United States' involvement in Cambodia. Finally, however, and telling concerning the overall cultural climate in which these works appeared, he criticizes Shawcross' irrationality by appealing to a higher standard of the same. He, along with most authors of the time, is sharply critical of modernity's abandonment, or at least lost ground, in American policy and activity in Southeast Asia, but not of modernity itself.

4.2.1.2 The categorized self

A clear aspect of identity present in literature particularly about My Lai is class. There is a distinction between subjects as soldiers and civilians, and as soldiers and officers. How ingrained these distinctions were in the thinking of Americans is difficult to determine. But that the distinctions are morally significant is plain. Further, that the distinctions are assumed, rather than argued, also seems clear. Explicitly stated, to most commentators, and presumably in their assumptions about their readers, soldiers are distinct from civilians as acceptable targets. "On another question, Americans split evenly in agreeing and disagreeing with the Nuremberg principle that 'a person was a war criminal who murdered innocent civilians, even if ordered to do so by his superiors'" (Steinfels, "Some Facts" 446). Somewhat of a moral reduction has been

performed on the humanity of soldiers. Two explanations resolve this reduction. First, since their ultimate purpose is in fighting, a part of the risk assumed in fighting is dying. But second, each enemy soldier is a threat, and therefore a target by virtue of self-defense. It is this threat by which many authors defending American troops at My Lai believe readers will be willing to lump even civilians cooperating with the Vietcong into that morally reduced state.

For instance, *The National Review*, among the publications reviewed easily the most supportive of American involvement in Vietnam generally and the most defensive of the soldiers at My Lai, distinguishes between civilians and soldiers, and the responsibility entailed in attacking each, from the very beginning of its series of commentaries on the massacre. "Every American serviceman arriving in Vietnam is instructed that 'war crimes' include the 'killing of spies, or other persons who have committed hostile acts, without trial,' and Article 118 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice does not distinguish in the definition of murder between killing an American and killing a non-American civilian or prisoner" ("Great Atrocity" 1252). There is in this passage even explicit statement that the distinction between soldier and civilian is more important than the distinction between nationalities. The author goes on, however, to contrast this assumption of identification (the distinction between soldier and civilian) with the now well-known ambiguities of Vietnam, including what was presented to Americans at the time as the Vietcong use of civilian shields by, for instance, planting bases of operation under civilian villages.

Critics of American policy reveal how fundamentally accepted was the distinction between soldier and civilian. Since bombing runs over North Vietnam had become common in 1965, critics had questioned the validity of an approach that would undoubtedly have a civilian toll. After My Lai, this criticism was magnified:

> Nothing could be more senseless than the distinctions we are now trying to make in order to justify our indifference to the consequences of our actions in Vietnam. It may be "more savage" to kill civilians by rifle or machine gun than to obliterate a village with a bomb from the air, but to the civilian victims the distinction is meaningless. ("War System" 651)

It is notable that this author, in typical fashion, contends that the distinction between methods of killing civilians is "meaningless," but apparently does not even entertain the possibility of extending that senselessness to the assumed distinctions between civilians and soldiers. The class-like distinction is accepted without question. Even the argument of distinction based on threat is hard to maintain when bombing runs against civilians and soldiers are executed offensively into North Vietnamese territories, and later over South Vietnamese villages (particularly in regions where, as in Quang Ngai Province, Vietcong sympathizers were common.) Valid or not, the point here is that distinctions between civilians and soldiers, unlike many other distinctions which were being profoundly questioned, were accepted untested.

There are however plenty of questions about whether civilians ought to be considered as only civilians. As American discourse about the massacre unfolds, authors increasingly consider the validity of the argument that the "civilians" in Vietnam, particularly in "Pinkville," were indistinguishable from soldiers—that is, from the enemy. Opton and Duckles point out this sentiment, although from a somewhat cynical viewpoint (16). So even when Americans diminish the distinction between civilians at My Lai and enemy Vietcong soldiers, there is no diminution of the fundamental difference between soldiers and civilians overall. It is only that those civilians were not really civilians.

Hersh's article mentions this compromise of the soldier-civilian distinction even while introducing another assumption of difference, that between officer and soldier:

> One former Americal Division colonel, talking later about the GIs in one of the division's task forces, said, "When you talk to a bunch of task-force nothings—

> you're talking about a bunch of guys who don't know anything. They're dumb dogfaces." Another Vietnam officer said, "We are at war with the ten-year-old children. It may not be humanitarian, but that's what it's like." (54)

Hersh's citations point to the typical commentator's claims about officers in Vietnam, and in typical form as well. Both officers express attitudes degrading the humanity of others. Hersh's point is to use that degradation to degrade the officers. Another example is found at the outset of comments on My Lai in *Nation*. "The one redeeming feature of the Song My mission, insofar as one can judge at this stage, is that American GIs have come forward with their accusations. Commissioned officers have been silent" ("The American Conscience" 620). And the distinction is not unique to My Lai. The author goes on to describe a similar dichotomy of behavior following the kidnapping, rape and murder of a Vietnamese girl, prior to My Lai. The claims are interesting because authors present the officers as arrogantly cloistered, while using their comments to promote the common soldier's morality. Soldiers are abused by officers. They do the work. They speak honestly. Officers think of soldiers as fodder. They justify their inhumanity. They lie to protect each other and their cause. The longer discourse developed about My Lai, the more effort went to raising responsibility from one class to the next—from soldier to officer, from one level of officer to another, and finally to policy makers and the commander-in-chief.

4.2.1.3 The civilized self

The meaning of civilization takes many different forms, several of which are apparent in discourse about Southeast Asia. And in any context where civilization is an issue, the self is identified by its place in civilization. In Gulag literature civilization often implied living beyond survival; so also in literature about Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. A young man who had been a student before the Khmer Rouge takeover then escaped in October 1975, records his observations under the Pol Pot regime in a

very early published account presenting the magnitude of the Khmer Rouge atrocity. His account focuses several times on circumstances in Cambodia beneath the threshold of civilization. He describes work camp circumstances. "At mealtimes they were like ravenous dogs. They were cursed, beaten, kicked, and whipped by the Khmer Rouge and driven away from the food" (Savannary 1351). Assumptions about civilization often include two of the ideas in Savannary's remarks. Barely surviving starvation is not living in civilization. And treating other humans as less than humans is uncivilized, an indication of inhumanity on the part of the actor. The assumption is that no civilized society would treat people as less than human.

The accusation that regarding some people as less than human led to the My Lai massacre was leveled seven years earlier. In a *Saturday Review* article aimed at questioning whether the scope of a court-martial could be adequately inclusive, the author attributes responsibility for My Lai to several different influences on the soldiers, including the racism instilled in them by their superior officers. "Will it [a trial] ask whether these officers have ever understood the ease and rapidity with which people who are deprived of respect as humans tend to be regarded as sub-human?" (Cousins 18). The author argues that every officer who degraded a Vietnamese with the term "gook" played a part in the uncivilized behavior predictable when respect for other humans suffered.

A similar claim about civilization is that it is present where universal values are recognized. As in Holocaust literature, a certain mark that uncivilized behavior has taken place is that people everywhere would condemn it. "There is no mystery about what a nation does to its soul and the lives of its young men when it commands as a matter of course, then honors, deeds which decent men everywhere reject" ("Going Beyond Mylai 4" 325). After My Lai, authors challenged Americans to question the

civility of its own government. The fact that this article claims that the "soul" of the nation as well as the "lives of its young men" are endangered by the misplaced honors of the United States makes it even clearer that American civilization itself is being questioned. Of course, the value of civilization is not questioned—only the place of that civilization in American practices and policy.

The condemnation of American civilization goes beyond the people immediately related to My Lai. The *Saturday Review* article questions the civility of mainstream America, attacking even Saturday morning television. "Where did the desensitization to human pain and the preciousness of life begin? Did it begin at formal indoctrination sessions in Vietnam, or at point-blank range in front of an electronic tube, spurting its messages about the cheapness of life" (Cousins 18). Civilization values all humanity and human life. When that value is reduced, even the actors are not just uncivilized, but dehumanized. Both the significance of this entire strand of thinking about dehumanization and inhumanity as a measure of civilization, and the threatened status of that civility in America, are apparent in an article by Peter Steinfels. "Killing civilians under orders is opposed, in higher percentages, by those under 30, who presumably will outlive the rest. That would be a bright spot, were it not for the realization that many of those on whom this war is having its greatest brutalizing effect are also under 30" ("Some Facts" 446). In this one statement Steinfels questions both the civility of his contemporaries and prospects for any civility in the future.

But the most profound understanding of civilization present in different forms throughout the literature is Elias', that of internalized restraint. The self-restraint of civilized people sets them apart from savages and barbarians. When the Army adopted a new publicly stated policy that soldiers should disobey inhumane commands, the response was almost immediate. The *Saturday Review* posed its response by first

recognizing the Army's new policy: soldiers should disobey orders that lead to the slaughter of villages like My Lai because the orders are senseless and inhumane. The article continues: "What wellsprings of sense and humaneness are to be found in the orders to destroy *whole* villages from the air? Is a man in a plane exempt from wrongdoing solely because he does not see the faces of the women and children whose bodies will be shattered by the explosives he rains on them from the sky?" (Cousins 18). The author holds the "man in a plane" responsible, not just the source of the "senseless and inhumane" orders. The overall implication is that a self-restrained person would be restrained from obeying the edicts of this government's entire policy regarding the Vietnam War. There is a denunciation of American policy as uncivilized. But more importantly there is the assumption that individuals are capable of self-motivated activity above the government's orders.

This value of self-restraint as a measure of civilization shows itself in other forms as well. Condemning the Khmer Rouge, D. P. Chandler writes of pre-communist days:

> In the "old society" peasants placed a premium on individual freedom, and on leisure of an unsupervised kind. To make up for this they are now told that they own the land and factories where they work, and even the revolution itself. Collective self-reliance or autarky, as preached by the regime, contrasts sharply with what might be called the slave mentality that suffused pre-revolutionary Cambodia and made it so "peaceful" and "charming" to the elite and to most outsiders—for perhaps two thousand years. (210)

The old society espoused by Chandler, and other authors, was typified by "unsupervised" leisure and "individual freedom." In contrast, the Khmer Rouge practiced what could easily be described as the epitome of external restraint, "collective self-reliance." Descriptions of the Pol Pot regime are filled with forced labor and the dehumanization of the population. "Elsewhere a swarm of peasants, perhaps three thousand of them, are laboring to build a dam or dig a canal or clear a spot in the jungle,

also under the vigilant eyes of the guards who are few in number but heavily armed: a nation of prisoners convicted of no crime" (Groueff 989). Groueff's article, which portrays Cambodia as a prison-camp nation, reveals repeatedly what is typical of descriptions of Cambodian life under the Khmer Rouge: civilization had been replaced by the Pol Pot regime with tactics aimed at the dehumanization of the Khmer people.

4.2.1.4 The parochial self

What it meant to be an American self was tremendously important during the time when American discourse focused on Southeast Asia. The priority of this identification is especially true after the decade preceding Vietnam with its Cold War emphasis on America as, practically speaking, an end in itself. Southeast Asia obviously brings a crisis to that identity.

There are two telling elements concerning the crisis of American identity in discourse about Southeast Asia. There is a conflict between the newly developed sense of anti-racism and the inherently parochial sense of American morality. This conflict surfaces from several issues. For example, although publicly expressed sentiments almost universally opposed racism, it is obvious that many if not most Americans still struggled with this new moral claim. Also, the issue of parochialism becomes an issue defined more by nationality than by race, and identified as much by economic and cultural patterns as by the belief in some genetic difference. And these distinctions, however defined, come to a head with the comeuppance of American brutality as pictures from My Lai are published first in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* then in *Life*.

The second major element present in the discourse concerning the American parochial self is closely related, and centers around American responsibility. It is inevitable that the heightened sense of American identity would open the door to a sense of American corporate responsibility. This parochialism is often addressed in the

discourse in corporate psychological terms. The relationship with the first element is obvious. It is because Americans parochially identified themselves that they sensed moral responsibility for the events of My Lai, and even for Cambodia—a sort of paternalism. Yet parochialism itself (and therefore paternalism) had come under suspicion. In other words, if there was a national responsibility for My Lai and America's treatment of Cambodia, then there was still a moral superiority in America and among Americans (unlike the Vietnamese who were expected to abuse their countrymen and the Khmer Rouge whose barbarism was clear.) These conflicts stemmed from the desire to recognize other nations as peers, just as other (non-American) individuals were peers (or should be,) and yet cope with an American morality that could not shirk responsibility for events completely contained in another country.

Much of the writing about My Lai is spent explaining the surprise of Americans that their own "boys" could commit such an atrocity. Exposure to the pictures and subsequent reports about the assault produced reactions revelatory of many assumptions about American identity. Opton and Duckles provide several examples through their survey. For instance, "A man who felt that the US should, but cannot, get out of Vietnam, told us: 'Our boys wouldn't do this. Something else is behind it'" (15). There is a remarkable amount of information in these brief statements. There is the conflict between paternalism negatively viewed and international responsibility based on American superiority, not just militarily, but morally: the United States should not be involved in Vietnam, but they cannot leave it. There is a rational explanation for the behavior of Americans: "Something else is behind it." There is such an identification with American soldiers that there is greater doubt about whether such an event as My Lai could have occurred than about the relationship with each other as Americans: "Our

boys wouldn't do this." And there is in the same phrase the sense of corporate responsibility (and accompanying denial) that follows with that identification. During the first couple of months of discourse about My Lai, doubts were expressed about whether the things reported could actually be true. Most statements of condemnation were placed hypothetically. Later, when the hypothetical came to be universally accepted authors began to provide more justifications based on circumstance. It is as if only so much condemnation could be taken at a time. Strong condemnation requires the mitigation of factual certainty while the acceptance of the event as fact required a mitigation of condemnatory language. In comparable terms, when the images were most painful (using the corporate psychological terminology common at the time) the reality was hypothesized. When the images began to wane, then the circumstances were posed more categorically.

With an undeniable but unexamined American parochialism underlying many claims and assumptions about Southeast Asia, there is also an explicit, overall condemnation of parochialism which makes sense coming out of the most traumatic years of the civil rights movement in America. Language in the discourse makes it clear that authors felt safe assuming the value of racial and even national equality. The following paragraph makes such assumptions clear:

> The Koreans were gooks, the South Vietnamese are gooks, and that is all that really needs to be said to explain Pinkville. It needs especially to be said to President Nixon, who must have heard the term but who, from his experience as a privileged traveler in Asia, could not possible comprehend all that it signifies. It signifies that the American fighting men who use the term regard the people to whom they apply it as less than human—even though, as Nixon spokesmen are saying now, most of the Americans who say gook and think gook never knowingly shoot the gooks just because they are gooks. The problem is not racial, but national. Black Americans have said that they participated in the slaughter, comrades in horror with their white fellows. (Osborne 18)

Several of Osborne's statements stand out. He is not introducing the term "gook," already obviously common in American vocabulary about Asia and Asians. But he uses

it first as a statement of revelation about how commonly it is used in reference to Koreans and South Vietnamese (in this case). Then he blatantly condemns its ultimate meaning as evidence that those to whom it was applied were considered less than human, comparable to the heavy-handed truth of civil rights applications in America. Then he uses the term anyway to reveal that the problem that should have been resolved by the revelation of what the term really meant was still a problem. Finally, he identifies the issue as national, not racial (all the while still separating black Americans from whites.) Two things reveal something substantial about assumptions of identity at the time. First, he is so secure in his assumption that readers will disdain racism that he uses racist language sarcastically: "[. . .] Americans who say gook and think gook never knowingly shoot the gooks just because they are gooks." Second, it is a reasonable inference that his confidence in anti-racist sentiment is what he uses to appeal against national prejudices as well.

As authors described American soldiers in Vietnam they often revealed racism with the assumption of its immorality. Hersh's article provides an example. A substantial part of his article is spent describing Charlie Company's experiences before My Lai. "Occasionally the company, still new to Vietnam, was stunned by the evidence of the almost barbarous attitudes veterans displayed toward the Vietnamese people" (58). The particular example Hersh relates is that some soldiers displayed the ears of slain Vietnamese on the antenna of their troop carrier. The assumption is that soldiers regarded the Vietnamese as racially inferior. Because of their racial inferiority they were subhuman, and objects from which trophies could be obtained. Hersh makes the claims throughout his article. For instance, he quotes one soldier claiming that the company treated Vietnamese "like animals. A lot of guys didn't feel that they were

human beings" (60). That treatment merited the same kind of disdain for the humaneness of the barbarous soldiers.

Some authors are directly didactic, while still assuming that the issue of racial equality was foundational and unarguable. Paul Meadlo was one of the participants in the slaughter. "Long before Paul Meadlo ever saw a Vietnamese, he learned that people of yellow skin were undesirable and therefore inferior. He learned in his history class about the Oriental Exclusion Act, the meaning of which was that people from Asia were less acceptable in the United States than people from Europe" (Cousins 18). In reading the article it is apparent that while the value of racial equality could be safely assumed in general, its application to specific circumstances was still lacking.

Other authors extend the application of anti-racism to include cultural lessons. Soldiers were commanded in one instance to build housing for families, mostly women, in one area. When the houses were finished the women refused to move in. The GI's comment was, "you can't help these dinks. They like to live like pigs in hovels, and even when you build them new houses, they won't live in them. " The author goes on to reveal the ignorance underlying the soldier's racism by explaining why the women wouldn't move in. "What *he* didn't know, however, was that according to the custom in that area, married women had to live in houses with full, double-sloped roofs. The new GI-built units were attached, single-slope corrugated tin-roofed huts" (Hersh 54–55). In other words, racism rises from and promotes misunderstandings and cultural ignorance.

When attention turns to Cambodia a few years later, there is only frustration that inaction on the part of the United States may be motivated by "priority relationships." Buckley quotes Cherne, representing the UN. "No circumstances since the death camps of Germany more nearly describe the circumstances which presently exist in Cambodia. It is inconceivable that criteria expressive of degrees of compassion based on priority

relationships could, in conscience, have been applied to the survivors of the Nazi concentration camps any more than they can now in logic or honor be applied to the refugees from Cambodia" ("Report from Bangkok" 486). The priority relationships so disdained in Cherne's statement are apparently not simply a reference to economic or security ties, but a subtly placed euphemism for racism.

At the same time, however, there is no problem identifying "indigenous" peoples parochially. For example, as opinions were expressed about the difference between Sihanouk and Lon Nol it was Lon Nol's willingness to engage "indigenous Cambodian forces" as he opposed North Vietnamese Army and Khmer Rouge elements in Cambodia that made him strong (Schell 12–13). The point is that national identification was common and understood. So there is a persistent, unidentified conflict running throughout the discourse. It surfaces in every statement of shock that Americans would treat others badly. The distinction between presumably superior American morality, which includes the humane treatment of all people, and the non-American victims of these atrocities is profound. The conflict between universality's humaneness and these victims' dependence on America is deeper, remaining unresolved.

At the heart of commentary drawing on and exposing American parochialism is a pervasive description of corporate responsibility and guilt. There is in response to My Lai not only the consciences of the soldiers involved, and of Americans now exposed to it through print, but an American conscience. An early demand for congressional public hearings is made on the grounds that the American conscience will be on trial as much as the soldiers and the Army ("The American Conscience" 620). That conscience takes at least three forms in the discourse including emotional guilt, a confrontation with

practical involvement, and, of course, recovery through amelioration of corporate guilt and pain.

Two of those descriptions also find their way into literature about Cambodia. Two responsibilities stand out. First, as a matter of practical involvement, authors contend incessantly, with few dissenting voices, that American bombing missions over and troop sallies into Cambodia opened the door to the rise of the Khmer Rouge, a weakly supported movement before peasants were alienated from pro-American Lon Nol and drawn to Pol Pot. Second, as a matter of recovery, there are pleas for American intervention on behalf of the Khmer people. The appeal for intervention may seem obviously mandated by the catastrophic scope of the human suffering in Cambodia, but at the time it revealed a new emphasis. Americans were not the actors in the genocide, yet the discourse places responsibility in American hands. Further, no invading force acted on the Cambodian people. (When the Vietnamese did invade, it was in relief of the genocide there.) What happened in Cambodia is ultimately labeled "auto-genocide." Whether as a direct result of My Lai's impact on American culture or not, discourse about Cambodia focuses on American responsibility. But this parochial sense of responsibility begins in the late 1960s with My Lai. First there are descriptions of national emotional guilt. "At the moment we are luxuriating in the emotions aroused by the Song My massacre which, on the word of the Thieu government, never occurred" ("War System" 650). These words serve early in an article critical of the American war machine as a whole to create the image of a person who wallows in guilt but does nothing significant about it. In the same article the author describes two sides to the American personality. (Both of these descriptions, by the way, follow the typical pattern of phrasing the event and its moral implications hypothetically. By making the actuality of the event at My Lai conditional, authors are freer to pose their harshest judgments of

the alleged perpetrators and the culture that created them.) "The American public, on this premise [that My Lai occurred], has split into two camps. One holds that it is just another Communist plot, that those shot were all Vietcong and deserved their fate. The other seeks expiation by punishing the guilty" ("War System" 650). The "others" he mentions are not seeking expiation for the soldiers, but for themselves. Corporate expiation implies corporate guilt and psychology.

As the article continues responsibility for Vietnam expands and the practical side of responsibility is introduced:

> We would also include in the indictment all those American intellectuals who beat the anti-communist drums until they got what was implicit in their agitation, namely, the war in Vietnam, and then were horrified by their ideological handiwork only because the military could not manage to win the war. And the companies that have made money out of the war all these years, the labor leaders who supported and still support it, the legislators who have competed for military contracts. It is hard to know where to stop. ("War System" 651)

Intellectuals, industry, labor leaders, politicians—representatives from American life—are responsible in direct ways for the war in Vietnam and for the mentality that developed into My Lai. The point is that authors began to make concrete accusations about the consequences of otherwise banal activities. Opton and Duckles point the finger at American voters. "Germans, similarly, tended to blame the German war crimes on Hitler, their leaders, the National Socialist party, the SS, or on military fanatics. But the idea that Germans, as individuals, might have been responsible for selection and toleration of their leaders was steadfastly rejected" (15–16). Their argument is that the Germans were clearly wrong, and that Americans were taking the same deferral of responsibility. As chapter two points out, Americans did not accept the German's claim of deferred responsibility.

There are also repeated calls for steps to recovering as a nation from My Lai. "It is a long road back, not just for the soldiers who were there but for all of us who showed

them the way to Songmy" (Cousins 18). The steps go beyond finding a way out of Vietnam, or finding a way to win it. Recovery is about repairing the kind of culture that led to My Lai, and the terms of recovery are as unspecified as the previous quote indicates.

There is one more interesting note about American responsibility in the literature about Cambodia. There is what appears to be self-effacement for America following My Lai, including the examination of causes. When Cambodia's tragedy surfaces in the late 1970s, America again, in corporate terminology, examines its responsibility. But the examination is not quite complete. Counting deaths in Cambodia beginning in 1970, about one in three was caused by American military actions. This accepted fact is mentioned, but never fully confronted in its direct impact. That is, authors mention, for instance, American bombings of villages near the Vietnamese border as one cause, perhaps even the primary cause, of Pol Pot's rise to power. But they do not deal with the fact that Americans were directly responsible for the deaths of half as many people as a genocide described by many as the most intense of the century.

There is very little about passive responsibility in literature about Southeast Asia. Where responsibility is present, it is almost always active, and understandably so, since the United States was a direct participant in the Vietnam War. But there is one implication of passive responsibility for America taken corporately, related to the perceived need for intervention in Cambodia after the realization of genocide under the Khmer Rouge and before the successful invasion of Vietnam. The following statement is taken from Leo Cherne's International Rescue Committee's convention of political and other leaders. "What they found, and reported at a press conference in Bangkok, turns the blood cold. Cambodia leads the list of the criminal states, that is if you don't count the countries, the United States primarily, that have let it all happen" ("Report

from Bangkok" 486). Two comments stand out. The first is that states are criminal; not just individuals. That suggestion is consistent with the bulk of this section. The second, though, is that the United States let it all happen. Even the genocide is the responsibility of inaction in the United States. The obvious conundrum for Americans was the immorality of intervention in Vietnam, followed immediately by the immorality of non-intervention in Cambodia. Of course, some critics used Vietnam to argue against involvement in Cambodia, an easy argument to win once the last troops were humiliatingly airlifted from Saigon. Later, others used Cambodia's genocide as proof that the fighting in Vietnam was justified. What separate authors end up claiming is that America was irresponsibly active when it should have been more passive (in Vietnam,) and irresponsibly passive when it should have been active (in Cambodia.)

4.2.2 The psychological self

As important as identification with a certain moral space is to the self so is the perception of personal psychology. Kondracke's article illustrates how discussion of corporate psychology often slips back into a recognition of individual psyches. "Indochina has been a repressed trauma since 1975, affecting our behavior in unacknowledged and generally harmful ways. We have treated our veterans shabbily at home. Some of us flinch at any suggestion of new involvement abroad, while others reflexively demand it as proof that America, after all, has a will" (21). He adds that Americans practiced avoidance of guilt and blame after Vietnam. In this simple statement Kondracke illustrates how closely knit in the literature are Vietnam and Cambodia, corporate and personal responsibility, autonomy and determinism.

4.2.2.1 The responsible self

In an interview conducted with the president just after My Lai's public disclosure, Nixon clarifies the distinction between the already somewhat muddled language of corporate and personal responsibility. A reporter asked in a press conference if Nixon considered My Lai a massacre, or an alleged massacre. "Now, when you use the word 'alleged,' that is only proper in terms of the individuals involved" (617). Nixon's answer addresses a significant means by which journalists had been hypothesizing the event by separating the American rights of the individuals to the presumption of innocence from the factuality of the event itself. It is a simple but important step only typified by Nixon's answer as journalists began to address the more personal and psychological side of My Lai. The examination of personal guilt did not come easily. The conservative Buckley summarizes as well as anyone else the initial limits of expression about the possibilities of responsibility related to My Lai. "We have available to us two explanations. The first, which is infinitely preferable, is that the guilty company relapsed, as the result of a confluence of extraordinary pressures, into a kind of catatonic frenzy, a sort of collective fury, as unreasonable as a rogue sea" ("My Lai: Whose Fault?" 1339). Buckley's first option implies a lack of personal responsibility through at least one of a couple of mechanisms: a relapse from civilization's restraints due to extraordinary circumstances or the loss of psychological self-hood through a "catatonic frenzy" also, by the way brought on through circumstances. His use of "unreasonable" even implies a reversion from modern circumstances and expectations. Buckley's other option (among the "two explanations" available) is that America "bred" young men in some way inherently capable of these acts. During the opening couple of months even such a conservative advocate of personal responsibility had a hard time adjusting the responsibility to the individuals.

But it did not take long after that time for the literature to swing from its starting point, where American culture was guilty, rather than the individuals, to the personal responsibility of the actors at My Lai. Steinfels makes this point after addressing the good reasons for examining a hierarchy of responsibility. "But the reverse side of this understandable reaction [that relieves the soldiers of responsibility, focusing suspicion on a hierarchy or culture] is its 'good German' aspect—blame the men at the top, and abjure personal responsibility" ("Some Facts" 446). Steinfels next makes the point that the responsibility that does lie on political leaders and upper level military brass does not in any way diminish the responsibility that lies on, in his article, Lieutenant Calley. (It is worth noting that after Lieutenant Calley's conviction and imprisonment, Captain Medina was acquitted almost without deliberation—less than one hour. And Calley's sentence was repeatedly reduced until he was released after only about three years of incarceration. It is a reasonable inference that by the time the war was over, sentiment veered away from personal responsibility again.)

In the context of personal responsibility, authors do attempt to broaden its scope. The conclusion of the article by Opton and Duckles addresses the manner in which both hawks and doves in their survey excused the individuals at My Lai and questioned the veracity of the event itself. "Whether it is Vietnamese peasants or one's next-door neighbor, emotional detachment makes it possible to keep one's attention and concern focused on Number One. No evil intent is necessary for men to tolerate, or even reluctantly to applaud war crimes, all that is required is self-centeredness" (16). In their article, the evil perpetrated at My Lai pervades every person who would rather deny or ignore its factuality than confront it.

In the full revelation of Cambodia's genocide, authors take every opportunity to lay responsibility on individuals who opposed the "war against communism" in

Vietnam, and therefore undermined the effort to oppose the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Edward Luttwak responds to one former protestor's defense. "Thus Hoffman writes, in true pathos, '...those who condemned the war have an obligation both to remember and defend the values on behalf of which they denounced it—the same values that are being crushed in Cambodia and Vietnam today—and to resist all attempts to make them feel guilty for the stand they took against the war.' But of course it is the cruelly unfolding facts that are inducing guilt" (40). Individual protestors are expected to carry guilt for their actions, and the consequences that are assumed to have risen from them.

Of course the ingredient that every author at the time assumes about responsibility is will. When will is removed, a "catatonic frenzy," for example, explains behavior. But where will is present, responsibility is present. As Edward Luttwak reviewed *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, Shawcross' diatribe chiefly against Kissinger's policy toward Southeast Asia, he reveals the assumption of the relationship between will and responsibility. "Was Kissinger involved in the decisions? Of course. Could he among others thus be guilty of error or amorality if those decisions were proven to reflect either of those things? Of course. But the book labels Kissinger as the chief actor in decisions not his, while in fact containing all the evidence that one would need to disprove that contention" (Luttwak 40). Such a relationship explains the importance of autonomy in literature about Southeast Asia.

4.2.2.2 The autonomous self

A fundamental assumption about the self in moralistic public literature about Southeast Asia is psychological autonomy. At the confluence of external pressures is a psychological being capable of processing and manipulating the rejection and acceptance of various influences into an autonomous act. When the *Saturday Review* reports that the "Army now says soldiers should not obey commands that are senseless

and inhuman," the article assumes the ability of soldiers to react to that allowance, and it is presented in the context of exceptional soldiers at My Lai who not only refused to participate in the massacre, but actively intervened on behalf of the civilians, even at personal risk (Cousins 18). Views of morality based in either deontology or virtue assume the same autonomy. That is, whether it is a soldier's duty to disobey senseless orders, or if it derives from an internal compunction, it is still the ability of the individual to act independently of immediate, and even potentially long-term pressure that makes the expectation possible.

To reiterate a point mentioned briefly above, there is a struggle about whether to hold the soldiers individually responsible for their actions at My Lai. But attempts to divert attention from the actors themselves are short-lived, with authors ultimately joining cultural, psychological influences with personal autonomy. Influences are not determinative, but do have an influence in shaping the psychological person. The *Saturday Review* article continues as a good example of literature just after My Lai:

> Where did the journey to Songmy begin? Did it begin only after Paul David Meadlo arrived in Vietnam? Or did it start far, far back—back to the first time Paul Meadlo played the game of killing Indians, or cheered when Western movies showed Indians being driven off cliffs? Even in some schoolbooks, the Indians were fit subjects for humiliation and sudden death. They were something less than fully human, and their pain levied no claim on the compassion of children—or even adults. (Cousins 18)

The article's criticism of American culture is only matched by the assumption of psychological influence apparent as the author continues. "But the act of growing up is an enlargement of, and not a retreat from, the games that children play. And so the subconscious is smudged at an early age by bloody stains that never fully disappear" (Cousins 18). The article does not excuse the soldiers, but does call into question the rationale of trying them (in courts-martial) without trying their cultural influences.

Autonomy in the literature (although not described with that word) does not mean isolation from causative factors, or influences. But in the discourse the causes that influence decisions are ideological. The Khmer Rouge used terms translated as "self-reliance" and "autarky" to describe their method of control in the nation. Both terms are used collectively. Cambodia was to govern itself, free from international influences (with the exception, of course, of the French educated elite who excluded—meaning executed—all other foreign-influenced nationals.) Chandler's article illustrates the ideological nature of the assumed causes of Cambodia's governance under the Khmer Rouge. "The theme of self-reliance is stressed in Cambodia's constitution, promulgated in January of last year, and derives in part from the dissertation that one of Cambodia's leaders, Khieu Samphan, wrote in France in 1959. [. . .] Autarky is the keynote of Cambodia's ideology today" (210). For American authors, Cambodia's woes were ideologically motivated. Material causes were insufficient as explanations of behavior. In criticism of Shawcross' book, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia*, Luttwak presents a revealing distinction between Shawcross' claims of material causes of the deaths under the Khmer Rouge and ideological causes:

> Thus Shawcross would have us understand that the Khmer Rouge policy of forced deportation from the cities and slave labor in the countryside were objective necessities, as explained by the AID report. But there is full evidence in the book itself that the devastation of Cambodia's agriculture was not forced on the Khmer Rouge, but rather forced on them as a great opportunity. Their leader, Khieu Samphan, had advocated the destruction of the cities as a social and political goal in his Paris thesis, presented in 1969, when Cambodia had plenty of rice. (39)

Material causes could serve as no more than cover for ideologically motivated practices. Commentary at the level of public discourse consistently holds this position.

There is still the difficulty of wedding independent individuals with cultural responsibility, both ideals authors seemed unwilling to release. There were several points at which authors found junctures, including juvenile psychclogical influences

mentioned above. Commentators also found room for both issues (personal autonomy and corporate responsibility) through the desensitization of exposure to war itself. Desensitization provides a place of passage between autonomous humanity and the determined inhuman. (As seen in the second chapter, on WW II Germany, there is a conflict in describing immoral actors as subhuman and holding them responsible as humans.) "The revelation should not have come as a complete surprise. Indications have abounded for a long time of the erosion of human sensibilities among Americans in Vietnam" ("Going Beyond Mylai 4" 325). In this article the author couples the erosion of human sensibilities with the terms, "bestial automaton," "brutalizing," and "dehumanized."

Descriptions of Cambodia's plight reveal similar, if not identical assumptions. First, there is the explicit value of autonomy. One interesting way of recognizing that autonomy appears in *Commonweal* as Chandler reviews what is implied as a distorted view of government, and therefore a partial explanation of Cambodia's vulnerability to governmental abuses. "In isolated villages—especially after the abandonment of Cambodia's great capital, at Angkor, in the fifteenth century—Cambodian peasant-slaves, harassed at will by people in authority, developed little sense of community or strength. The word for 'to govern' an area was the same as the word 'to consume.'" (207–208). It is not a stretch to infer from Chandler's linguistic claim that for Cambodians being ruled implied being dehumanized, in one term or another. The forfeiture of personal autonomy was consumption. Whether true or not under Khmer historical circumstances, this claim reveals the assumptions of authors in the 1970s about autonomy.

As in Vietnam, so in Cambodia there are material influences to be sure. But they are not discussed as causes of the genocide without being attached to ideological

influences. "To understand why so many Cambodians chose revolution in the 1970s, we need to know more about patterns of land ownership, malnutrition and indebtedness in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the growth of personal fortunes, and corruption, among the Phnom Penh elite; U.S. bombing patterns after 1969; and the ideology of Cambodia's students, including those who went abroad" (Chandler 208) It is not Chandler's purpose to undermine the significance of material causes, but his unwillingness to discuss them without an ideological motivation is an example of the importance of ideological influences in the discourse.

In Groueff's article, the fundamental importance of the autonomous individual is perfectly clear:

> Many revolutions have tried to efface the past as a necessary condition for the building of a new order. But none has succeeded, as this one has, in obliterating, in less than two years, the old social structure, the economy, the customs and culture of a country, and in extirpating every germ of liberal thought, every manifestation of a difference of opinion. Books and archives have been burned. (989)

The great tragedy for Groueff, as an example in the discourse, in Cambodia was the loss of a culture in which influences which had come to the "germ of liberal thought" and allowed for differences of opinion were now gone.

In literature about My Lai there is practically no discussion or implication of passive responsibility as it has been identified in the second and third chapters, regarding WW II Germany and the Soviet Gulag. There are a few suggestions regarding passive responsibility for Cambodians and Americans regarding the Khmer Rouge, however. Americans apparently were assumed by authors to have the same expectations of Cambodians under Khmer Rouge control that they had of Soviet citizens during the Gulag years. "A friend became insane. He was so affected by the abominable crimes he had witnessed that he spoke out openly and condemned them. He was taken away for execution" (Yathay 1589). It is interesting that just as authors about the Gulag credited

prisoners' emotional and psychological stability to their ability to tolerate patiently the irrationalities of the Soviet regime, so one of very few descriptions of direct personal resistance to Khmer Rouge authority is associated with mental and psychological instability. He is insane. The ability for individuals to persevere and survive is far more valuable than their willingness to interfere with a power that was not theirs in the making.

4.3 The teleology in discourse about My Lai and the Khmer Rouge

4.3.1 America as telos

The third chapter (about the Soviet Gulag) argues that during the 1950s America developed as a telos in and of itself. Late 1960s and 1970s discourse reveals that assumption while raising now obvious questions about its validity in the light of involvement and later detachment from Southeast Asian crises.

It is as likely as not that the chasm between American expectations and reports of My Lai gave rise both to new questions about America's intrinsic goodness and to an intensified verbal assault on that telos from those already doubting it. There are many forms of direct attacks on America as an ideal system immediately following My Lai, some of which question goods as absolute as Allied and American objectives in WW II. "What about the senseless bombing of Dresden in which 150,000 were killed or the atom bombing of Hiroshima? The war system itself would be the focus of our indignation, not its incidental variations and degrees of hellishness. There is evil enough in this system to keep our moralists preoccupied for the balance of the century if they will but concentrate their attention on it" ("War System" 651). The article's implication is that My Lai is not the problem, only a manifestation of the problem which is rooted in

everything American including the military, political leaders, the economic system, and labor itself (which presumably profited from war involvement.)

Even Buckley questions America's goodness (that is, as long as My Lai's factuality is still hypothesized.) "The second alternative—the horrifying alternative—is that America, in A. D. 1969, has bred young Americans who can insouciantly murder grandmothers and little children" ("My Lai: Whose Fault?" 1339). (The first alternative, cited above, is temporary insanity on the part of the participants brought on by extreme circumstances.) Buckley's phrasing does several things to question America's position. First, it is not just 1969, but "A. D. 1969," something which must be specified since the place of America in progressive modernity is no longer clear. Second, America breeds the kind of people who commit atrocities. And third, perhaps most significantly among his rhetoric, they are the kind of people who commit such atrocities without even a tinge of moral repugnance.

One of Steinfels' *Commonweal* articles exemplifies how permanently the implications of this fall from goodness were taken. "When President Nixon pronounces on the State of the Union, I doubt if he will comment on the fact that Americans except themselves from the standards of behavior by which we once judged Nazi war criminals; but future historians may find this a harsh fact by which to evaluate the worth of our civilization" ("Some Facts" 446). The worth of American civilization itself in the light of historical examination yet to come is called into question.

Not all commentary is so absolute in its condemnation, however. There are, throughout most of the material, conflicts between assumptions of America as a good in the world the evidence that the American ideal was foundering. One issue that rises during this period of discourse is an unresolved conflict between the kind of American morality and modernity that demanded an explanation and response for the massacre at

My Lai, and the explanation itself which included the suggestion that America was not so moral and modern after all. President Nixon himself addresses this issue in his press conference from December 8, 1969. "One of the goals we are fighting for in Viet-Nam is to keep the people from South Viet-Nam from having imposed upon them a government which has atrocity against civilians as one of its policies. We cannot ever condone or use atrocities against civilians in order to accomplish that goal" (617). In other words: America condemns all atrocities, and can never use atrocities while maintaining its purpose of good. Yet My Lai happened. America's morality is called into question by its own moral standard. Buckley's journal reiterates this conflict, emphasizing the presumed hypocrisy of the critics:

> The assassinations [of the two Kennedy's and Martin Luther King, Jr], like the alleged atrocities at Songmy, permitted the expression of a deep animosity against America, gave such feeling a seeming legitimacy. These emotions are strange and involuted, for those expressing them are, mutatis mutandi, Americans themselves and their vilification of America is therefore a form of self-abasement; yet the very abasement informs an implicit claim to superiority: *they*, in contrast to ordinary Americans, are sensitive enough and moral enough to feel outraged. As an opportunity to indulge in this dark process, Songmy was seized upon almost gleefully. ("Great Atrocity" 1254)

In Buckley's reasoning, the critics of America's actions, being Americans, claim a superiority to the very thing that informs their morality.

A different (although related) statement of the conflict of America as telos is the divergence between the American sense of morality that advocates universalism and condemns atrocities as evidence of racism or some other form of parochialism. American involvement in international events not specifically motivated by self-defense have a root in competing moral claims. America's superior position in the world obliges intervention on behalf of deprived or backwards nations and peoples while America's love of universalism (itself evidence of a transcendently developed morality) demands a respect for the independent development of those nations. In literature in the 1960s and

1970s there is still more emphasis on the former than the latter, but commentators are forced to deal with the conflict, if in no other way, by responding to foreign authors such as William Shawcross.

Anthony Lewis complimentarily reviewed William Shawcross' book, *Sideshow—Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, in which Shawcross blames American intervention of all kinds (military, political, and economic) for Cambodia's crisis. Commentators in all of the literature unintentionally revealed confusion about American involvement in foreign crises, apparently based as much in whether America had anything moral to offer the world as whether intervention was really helpful. Buckley attacks that review in an article entitled "Kissinger as Frankenstein," an obviously sarcastic title from Buckley's perspective. Complaining of liberal (Buckley's political term) errors, Buckley claims, "The stark outcome of it all is boat people. They are not fleeing the bombs. They are fleeing the men to whom Congress and the critics of Kissinger and Nixon committed them" ("Kissinger as Frankenstein" 937). One of the interesting aspects of the article is how universally these opposite sides of the American political spectrum agree on the responsibility of America for, in this case, Southeast Asia and, in Buckley's illustrations about Hitler, Europe. The disagreements are political and specific. Should America have intervened? Was the intervention appropriate? The agreement is a revelation of American moral assumptions, including American responsibility for events even in other nations. The responsibility is good when considered in the light of America's intrinsic goodness, and bad when that telos is questioned.

One more quote clarifies how deeply authors questioned the idea of America as telos from the outset of the 1970s. "Like the legions of empires before them, American troops are subject to native racism and a general distance from the customs and

character of the 'aborigines'—with the result that the humanity of the population is easily disregarded or entirely forgotten" (Steinfels, "Stiff Upper Lip" 350). Steinfels' implicit comparison between America in Vietnam and nineteenth century Great Britain in Australia puts America in a position no greater morally than other nations, particularly other nations that relinquished their claims to moral superiority over nations whose humanity was underestimated while under the influence of their authority.

4.3.2 Humaneness as telos

Humaneness as a telos is not hard to find in theory. It is possible to infer that for Rorty's liberal ironist, it is one of only two teloi (the other being personal fulfillment, exemplified by literature about the Soviet Gulag.) "For liberal ironists, there is no answer to the question 'Why not be cruel?' – no noncircular theoretical backup for the belief that cruelty is horrible" (xv). It is an assumed value, beyond the scope of examination. In literature about Southeast Asia during the 1960s and 1970s that assumption is often prized over every other consideration.

When Cambodia's plight was described, it was the inhumanity—the cruelty—that was singled out. Three examples demonstrate this constant value. The argument about responsibility for Cambodia's fate was waged between former hawks and doves (regarding Vietnam,) with the conclusion of most authors that neither group ultimately represented the causative error. The rationale behind their conclusion lay in Vietnam, where American influences were similar, but the consequences were obviously and profoundly different. "Clearly, Cambodia has fallen into the hands of monsters" (Kondracke 22). Kondracke's statement summarizes both the ultimate responsibility (in Pol Pot's regime) and the nature of individuals who could practice such inhumanity.

Buckley does not agree with Kondracke's implication that the Vietnamese fate was not horrendous, but he does agree with the assumption of the value of humaneness.

Buckley excuses even typically immoral behavior when entertained as opposition to the potential for new or continued inhumanity. "Lies and secrecy and lawlessness were the ways by which Franklin Delano Roosevelt evaded restraints on his power, and most Americans are nowadays grateful that he did as he did in order to prevent Hitler from becoming the master of Europe" ("Kissinger as Frankenstein" 936–937). Buckley adds that Shawcross' criticism of Kissinger and Nixon is misdirected, that it should be targeted at the "Hitlers" who ascended to power in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Kissinger and Nixon my have lied and broken the law. But those lapses are understandable in defense of the ultimate moral and in prevention of the ultimate immorality, embodied by the inhumanity of Hitler's Europe as well as the Southeast Asia inhabited by Pol Pot.

Further, not even communism itself, a huge part of the apotheosis of evil previously, carried the moral weight of inhumanity. The condemnation of Khmer Rouge activities clearly emphasized the evil of inhumanity over any inherent evil in communism:

> Some of the reporters also have seen with their own eyes the bodies of women and children butchered by Khmer Rouge troops in a Thai border village on January 28, and they are convinced that the *Angka Loeu* ('organization on high') that runs Kampuchea is capable of virtually any brutality it deems useful to erase Cambodia's past and build a collectivized new order." (Kondracke 22)

It is not the erasure of Cambodia's past or the building of a collectivized new order that highlights Kondracke's criticism, but the use of "virtually any brutality. " Stéphane Groueff's article, printed in Buckley's *National Review*, makes the same point with a question. "What is the nature of this revolution which, to judge from the reports of refugees, has undertaken to change Cambodians from a people who knew how to live into a joyless nation driven by a pitiless tyranny that makes the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Soviet Communist regimes seem benign by contrast?" (988). Authors politically

left and right divergent at every other intersection, agreed on the evil of cruelty, or inhumanity.

On the other side of the coin, there are no suitable substitutes for humanity (as there are no substitutes for inhumanity above.) It might seem that coming out of the 1960s and the anti-war protests peace would take on a role in literature as the ultimate good. But it does not. A *Commonweal* article refers to a speech in which Vice President Agnew defines a man of peace as a soldier willing to win it in war. With My Lai's revelation comes the questioning not of Agnew's argument about peace, but about whether the American soldier is really moral. The article points to the media "exploding the conclusive evidence that the alleged hero could also be bestial automaton, brutalizing friend as well as foe, killing civilian aged and infant, male and female, in the style of the worst tyrants of history" ("Going Beyond Mylai 4" 325). It is not his participation in war that makes him evil. It is his bestiality, inhumanity, and brutalization. The *New Yorker* is even clearer. "But if war is hell, Man has made it so. Or, to be more precise, if a particular war is waged particularly hellishly, it is not man but particular men who are responsible, and in this case *we* are those men" ("Notes and Comment" 28). Even war itself is not the evil, but inhumanity. Peace is not the ultimate good, but humaneness.

Discussing My Lai, but revealing the importance of the value of humaneness typical in literature throughout the 1970s, the *New Yorker* article positions the responsibility imposed on Americans in response to My Lai at the pinnacle of moral responsibility:

> The massacre calls for self-examination and for action, but if we deny the call and try to go on as before, as though nothing had happened, our knowledge, which can never leave us once we have acquired it, will bring about an unnoticed but crucial alteration in us, numbing our most precious faculties and withering our souls. For if we learn to accept this, there is nothing we will not accept. ("Notes and Comment" 29)

Its demands address the identity and psychology of Americans, requiring a response that will prevent every other kind of evil.

As self and goodness sought form in American public discourse in the late 1960s and 1970s, the My Lai massacre and the Khmer Rouge provided foils of the highest magnitude, expressly comparable to the discursive occasion produced by reports of Holocaust Europe. In that literature's response to events in Southeast Asia, the self was identified as modern, classified, civilized, and highly parochial, especially nationally. It was held psychologically, particularly as autonomous and therefore morally accountable. At the same time, America waned as a telos, humaneness emphasized in its place.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Certain significant assumptions about self and humanity persist throughout the discourse. In all three periods examined humanity is construed in the context of incremental improvement—modernity. In all three periods, a whole self is essentially psychological in nature and civilized in practice. These assumptions work together to reveal a teleologically based fabric from and into which the self is woven in public discourse. While no single telos is manifested, it is unmistakably clear that the human subject is almost universally described in the context of an end, or a good, whether explicitly or not. Teleological assumptions inevitably imply moral assumptions as authors compare, in MacIntyre's terms, "man-as-he-happens-to-be" with "man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature" (MacIntyre 52). As is mentioned in more detail below, there is no explicit, single, over-arching telos in the material researched. Nonetheless, the teleological assumptions that are present do imply moral assumptions, although not necessarily harmoniously. In fact, the discovery of moral consistency in material defined by a variety of teloi and a correlated variety of responsible subjects would be nothing short of miraculous. So it comes as no surprise that the different strands of self and of teloi produce conflicts, sometimes between rationally incompatible perspectives on the self, other times between moral conclusions based on ways of understanding the self and its end.

5.1 Self throughout the literature

5.1.1 The modern self

First, it is important to clarify and summarize the views of the subject and subjectivity that dominate the literature. There is the modern self. Despite consistent scholarly challenge over the last century, and occasional public disappointments, modernity manages a remarkably persistent presence in public discourse. Even during the depraved heart of what is described in varied ways as a depraved century, optimistic and incremental visions of history and man's development persist, sometimes proving resilient while at other times without even the wavering that would require recovery. Bauman recognizes this consistent adherence to modernity and its claims in *Modernity and the Holocaust*. In his introduction, Bauman mentions Elias' *The Civilizing Process*, along with its association of civilization with the development of internalized restraint. Of course, both the internalization of restraints and the incrementalism inherent in Elias' arguments favor a view of history in which the passage of time corresponds with improvement—only one aspect of modernity, but an important one. Bauman also recognizes competing views of civilization, not so complimentary in their views of modernity:

> Contrary opinions of contemporary social theorists (see, for instance, the thorough analyses of multifarious civilizing processes: historical and comparative by Michael Mann, synthetic and theoretical by Anthony Giddens), which emphasize the growth of military violence and untrammeled use of coercion as the most crucial attributes of the emergence and entrenchment of great civilizations, have a long way to go before they succeed in displacing the etiological myth from public consciousness, or even from the diffuse folklore of the profession. By and large, lay opinion resents all challenge to the myth. Its resistance is backed, moreover, by a broad coalition of respectable learned opinions which contains such powerful authorities as the 'Whig view' of history as the victorious struggle between reason and superstition. (Bauman 12)

The mentioned etiological myth, supported in Bauman's line of thinking by books like Elias', is "the morally elevating story of humanity emerging from pre-social barbarity." It is the incrementalism of modernity. Hand in hand with this incrementalism goes the

assumption that humanity grasps (charts, comprehends, explains, and controls) more and more of its circumstance as time progresses, eventually and ultimately leaving no aporetic space. The significance of modernity's claims in relation to the self is apparent when the vocabulary of authors opposes, for example, madness not only with psychological soundness, but with the modern and therefore rational. Such usage appears regularly and repeatedly in the discourse when the mad are barbaric and sanity is preserved by the drive of rationalism. (In such passages sanity is not preserved simply by rationality, but by rationalism in the individual and its continuing effort to comprehend causes and effects, in contrast to the insane who make no attempt at comprehending what is happening.) All of these assumptions of modernity are not without occasional public disputation. On the one hand, there are sometimes questions of whether modernistic development is taking place at all. Such questions follow immediately in the wake of Buchenwald's discovery, for example, where the vocabulary describing German practices is filled with reference to the primitive, the primeval, the dark, and the barbaric, with juxtaposed acknowledgement of Germany's position in the heart of what had been previously presumed as Western European development. Others question whether the development taking place is good in any way—that is, whether modernity is something to be valued. In other words, some authors assume modernity is a good, while doubting its success, while others assume its success while questioning its value. But both attacks on modernity are incredibly short-lived in public discourse, lasting not even years, but only months at a time.

It is curious to say the least that after a century of devastating moral lapses there is in much public discourse the same kind of utopian optimism for the next century that characterized the beginning of the last. The question that remains after public discourse openly attacks modernity through the confrontation and verbal frustration of Germany,

the Soviet Union, and Southeast Asia is why it has been so difficult for that same public discourse to discard with ultimately modernistic vocabulary and language. There is a common framework for expressing the conundrum, a framework with little to no support in the discourse following on the heels of each event. After the Holocaust Americans could blame Germans, Nazis, or even the Jews themselves without confronting the American self. Communism and non-American ways of being explained the Gulag. But at My Lai Americans themselves were at fault. Surely the modern self faced its last stand in America once My Lai was revealed and accepted. But it did not. One explanation may lie in the nature of assumptions about the self revealed in that discourse. Specifically, teleological assumptions of self give at least one way of understanding why apparently overwhelming large-scale defeats of incrementalism and improvement quickly accede again to the view of a human narrative in which development toward a goal is an essential element.

5.1.2 The civilized self

There is also the civilized self. As mentioned in the introduction, there is not a single standard of civilization apparent in the body of literature researched. It is not necessary, however, to assume that there is no common way of describing civilization which can comprehend its diversity. Elias' statement of civilization provides a starting point. The question is whether that view holds up under the variety of descriptions studied between the consequences of WW II and the Khmer Rouge. The answer is yes. There is a sensible way of accepting Elias' definition of civility and understanding its use in public discourse during the middle of the last century.

Two aspects of Elias' perspective on civilization bear mentioning here. First, civilization is, depending on the starting point, either an aspect of or particular perspective on modernity. It is clear that civilization is not the product of a rational

plan—not the consequence of man's increasing control over the cosmos, as Elias explains (Elias 443–444). But it is, again in Elias' explanation, a part of the progress of humanity. Bauman's reference to Elias cited above and Elias' own statements indicate so (Elias 444). This aspect of civilization is critical in understanding American responses to moral crises in the world, and is presented, although with a different vocabulary, by Mircea Eliade. Of course, for Eliade there is a significant step in relating cosmogony with theophany—a step unnecessary here and not essential to the important (for here) distinction he makes between sacred space which has been inhabited, known and determined, and the profane which is chaotic and unorganized (Eliade 29). Eliade provides a framework in which the profane threatens the space of the sacred. As mentioned below, it is this perception of threat to civilization that makes sense of the extreme vocabulary of authors particularly during the Gulag period.

Before that examination, however, it is important to recognize another significant aspect of civilization present in the literature and consistent with Elias. Civilization is framed in the context of a psychological self. By defining civilization through the internalization of restraints Elias circumscribes the self psychologically. Rose certainly recognizes this aspect of Elias' civilization. "Elias, for example, did not doubt that human beings were the type of creatures inhabited by a psychoanalytic psychodynamics, and that this provided the material basis for the inscription of civility into the soul of the social subject" (Rose 36). The ability to discuss the subject as internal and in contrast to the physically circumstantial is basic to Elias, and important in public discourse. This aspect of civilization is discussed in more detail below, with the psychological self.

Now the question is how and whether this understanding of civilization is consistent with public commentary. The pattern of usage and development from one

period to the next (from the end of WW II to the end of the 1970s) is interesting. In discourse about Nazi practices all of civilization is questioned and doubted. The ideal of civilization still apparently contained a picture of the universal convergence of humanity's end. Germany was, of course, at or near the core of civilization from the outset. Germany's failure was the threatened failure of all civilization. The order civilization was to bring to the entire world came under doubt. As quickly as the rebound of optimism in American discourse also came the threat intrinsic to the Cold War, a threat made sensible by Eliade's vocabulary. It may be that the universalistic optimism of civilization was brought under doubt by the close of WW II. But however it came about, the threat to civilization from communism was not described in terms of its moral impact on all of humanity, but only its impact in opposition to the West. Commentators were consistent. The Soviets were oriental rather than occidental. They were not recipients of the Western Enlightenment. And their barbarism toward their own people was comprehensible precisely because of their exclusion from Western Civilization. The only element of civilization consistently present in the Soviet Union in American public discourse is the internal autonomy of individual citizens, and even it (the potential of civility) remains unrealized through the totalitarianism of the Soviet regime. The significance of this autonomy also surfaces when civilization is defined circumstantially in the discourse about the Soviets as an environment in which mere survival is no longer the concern of subjects. Such an understanding is consistent with the view above since the provision of a survival-secure environment allows the individual to develop psychologically, not inconsistent with Maslow's hierarchy. But more importantly, the most competent among the civilized and imprisoned, of which John Noble is a perfect example, were those whose internality and autonomy were unconquered by the imposing threat of Soviet external domination. More broadly, while

modernity generally maintains its untouchable status in public discourse, and while descriptions of civilization and civility persist, the point of convergence between the two is somewhat displaced between the end of WW II and the commencement of the Cold War. Elements covered in the discourse, (the barbarism of the Soviet government, the animalistic conditions of imprisoned Soviet citizens, the totalitarian state represented by Stalin,) as well as elements not examined, (the perceived threat of Soviet invasion, the impending doom of nuclear war, and the long-term relationship later defined by détente,) are consistent both with a continued optimistic aspiration for humans in civilization and a limitation of that civilization's reach. It is this limited demarcation of civilization's extent, and the complementary threat of that which is outside civilization that apparently provokes typical rants in American public discourse against incivility, particularly about the Soviet Union and Vietnam. Authors repeatedly condemn Soviet practices as contrary to all civilized nations, and associate the most desperate aspects of the fighting in Vietnam with its jungle nature, the jungle of course typifying that which threatens civilization. Even discursive protests against American involvement in Vietnam hinge on the assumption of civilization's value, particularly in its psychological aspect of internal restraint. A civilized pilot would disobey the command to bomb Vietnamese villages. With the pressure to comprehend greater and greater portions of the world typical of modernity and the perception of underdeveloped nations ruled by over-reaching governments as incomprehensibly uncivilized it is no surprise that vocabulary about these threats to civilization is so extreme.

5.1.3 The psychological self

The one inevitable characteristic of the psychological self throughout the discourse is autonomy. Because the psychological self is also posed in modern terms of explanation through, for instance, developmental influences, the autonomy of the

psychological self is contrasted consistently, although sometimes not deliberately, with different forms of deterministic and often psychical causes. The more psychologically the self is construed, the more ethics are attached to assumptions of autonomy. Rose recognizes this relationship, although in a different context. "It is also that a psychological ethics is intimately tied to the liberal aspirations of freedom, choice, and identity. Therapeutic ethics promises a system of values freed from the moral judgment of social authorities" (Rose 97). Rose's context is the development of a regime capable of leading people while maintaining the integrity of their autonomy. It is this relationship, between the autonomy of the psychological self and the causes of external influences, that surfaces constantly in the discourse.

5.1.3.1 Autonomy and determinism

The relationship between determinism and autonomy is nowhere more apparent than in postwar literature. Authors commonly search for causes of otherwise inexplicable human behavior only to retort unheard critics who question how an individual Nazi soldier can be held responsible, for example, for acts he committed only because he was successfully coerced by governmental propaganda. Despite the underlying recognition of this conflict (implied by such otherwise unnecessary retorts) autonomy loses no ground. Germans are held accountable for their actions regardless of governmental propaganda, manipulation, and even commands. Civilians face responsibility even when all they choose is to mind their own business—that is, to be passive.

Commentary on the Soviet Union could not be more opposite in its approach. Authors do everything in their power to completely absolve responsibility on the part of all but the highest government leaders. The importance of psychological autonomy in public discourse becomes even more apparent through this divergence of approaches

since autonomy is still valued almost fundamentally during the Gulag years. Autonomy takes on a far more internalized representation during the Gulag years. That is to say, where German citizens are condemned for not stepping in to intervene on behalf of their neighbors, even at great personal risk, Soviet citizens are often praised for their ability to remain stoical in the face of their totalitarian government, even when that stoicism means turning a blind eye to the sacking and arrest of obviously innocent neighbors in the middle of the night. They are not just excused, but praised for their internal strength demonstrated externally as indifference. There is, of course, a slightly disturbing parallel between the descriptions of personal Soviet strength and autonomy and the position of the United States in the Cold War. The United States could not intervene in the Soviet Union as it presented its intervention in Europe, where the morality of intervention in Europe (and retribution on the Japanese) served as the ultimate moral justification for war. When moral discourse turned its attention to the Soviet Union drawing on the vocabulary of the Holocaust it makes sense that one of two things had to happen. The United States either had to intervene or have a moral reason for not doing so. Without the need for recognition at the time, it seems likely that it is more than coincidental that a public faced with a consummately evil opponent and the inability to do anything about that enemy held stoicism among the oppressed people as evidence of their autonomy rather than passivity as evidence of their dehumanization. These claims of autonomy come forward into issues of Southeast Asia as well, including the condemnation of the Khmer Rouge regime principally for destroying the liberal individual in Cambodia. The result of My Lai was a new moral guide for soldiers allowing them to disobey immoral orders. There is a similarity between this new edict and the attitude typical of commentary on the Soviet Union. The Soviet citizen and the American soldier have an internal autonomy. But the distinction is more interesting.

With the United States fighting unsuccessfully (a lack of success publicly manifested since the Tet Offensive) in Vietnam there comes a way of dealing with soldiers that allows them to be autonomous and responsible. Unlike its inability to respond to the Soviet Union directly, the United States did intervene in Vietnam. Unlike its victory in Europe, the United States was not winning in Vietnam. Americans found a way to be autonomous and responsible—capable of acting according to internal conviction, and therefore being morally responsible, but without being able to control the circumstances, or outcome of the war. However ultimately interpreted, American views of the self appear to be correlated with American corporate views of responsibility.

5.2 Teleology throughout the literature

Modern, civilized, and psychological, the self is presented in a teleological context throughout the literature. When the emphasis is on modernity—on, for instance, identity in a progressive environment—it almost goes without saying that the self will be progressing toward an end as well. Civilization sets itself as a telos toward which the subject moves. And it is difficult to conceive of a psychologically oriented perspective of self without categories, classifications, and therefore standards, or without a therapeutic response to the psyche's needs. But there is a more significant teleological implication to be drawn about the self.

5.2.1 The teleological self

Rorty's *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* soundly and directly dismisses the presumption of a single telos for man. "The drama of an individual human life, or of the history of humanity as a whole, is not one in which a preexistent goal is triumphantly reached or tragically not reached" (Rorty 29). There is no single goal toward which all humans should progress. Yet he concludes the same chapter, "The Contingency of

Selfhood," with the statement that everyone has a need "to come to terms with the blind impress which chance has given him, to make a self for himself by redescribing that impress in terms which are, if only marginally, his own" (Rorty 43). It is true that the telos which might be inferred from a statement like Rorty's is not as simple as the Thomistic beatific vision or as systematic as MacIntyre's three contexts for virtue. But it can be inferred nonetheless. It is possible to summarize such a telos as, for instance, personal fulfillment. The point here is not that every moral claim needs to be teleological, or that every context must be defined teleologically, but that even in the most unintentional ways, the self appears to be described consistently teleologically. This claim is arguably true among scholarly treatments of self, as in Rorty above. But, more significantly here, it is blatantly true in public discourse. Examples in the literature examined include the goal of healing the psychological self in Holocaust literature, the good of humaneness in discourse about Southeast Asia, and most obviously the telos of personal fulfillment in literature about the Soviet Gulag. Such examples only add to a case already established by the teleological contexts of modernity, civilization, and the psychological self. In each of these descriptions, the self is a project, and project implies teleology.

5.2.2 The teleological context of self

In a broader and less overtly value-laden context but with the same result, the self can be described as a narrative. One of the things that makes this narrative of the human life or of the subject interesting is its context in a broader narrative. For example, the context of self in modernity is a narrative of the self in the narrative of history. In the material examined from the postwar years through the end of the 1970s the narrative context provides an insight into assumptions regarding modernity as a description of historical context and morality as a description of subjective context.

Immediately following WW II the most dominant historical telos in public discourse is civilization, not simply as a quality of some cultures opposed to others, but as the ultimate direction and purpose of all of humanity. Its assumed value is nowhere more apparent than in the literature decrying its violation by Nazi Germany. With the transition of attention from Germany to the Soviet Union, however, comes a transformation of modernity's standard in the historical narrative. America itself becomes the standard of moral, economic, and personal development. The communist world, particularly the Soviet Union, is uncivilized and barbaric precisely because it has rejected elements of the American way from the Bill of Rights to capitalism. In American public discourse there is more than simply the use of America as an example of civilization's accomplishment. References to America and American ways do not need to draw on any prior moral standard. Of course, this claim in no way doubts that the American standard developed from such an approach. That is, while authors most likely began to use America as a reference to the best example of civilization and moral modernity, as the discourse unfolds references to prior moral causes are less substantial, leaving America itself as the telos, a convenient moral standard in response to the communist threat and during the McCarthy era. By the time the discontentment with American involvement in Southeast Asia firmly settles into public discourse (and obviously most likely as a part of the fallout of the civil rights movement in America) that American standard no longer goes unquestioned. It is no wonder then that there is such a tumult over American atrocities in Southeast Asia. Protests and revelations of American atrocities called into question a basic assumption of moral virtue. Since that American standard had been the ultimate standard of modernity and civilization in much public discourse, the decline of America as a telos would explain much of the perception of the decline of modernity and civilization as a telos. This association is

understandable, even predictable. But it is not necessarily appropriate, since there are regular appeals to modernity and civility underlying moral criticism of American behavior. Put more broadly, it seems reasonable to infer that in public discourse some of what is taken as an abandonment of modernity is actually only an abandonment of specific instances of modernity.

5.3 Conflicts

The modern, civilized, and psychological self present throughout the discourse is consistent from one perspective. That is, each standard can be consistent with the others. For instance, civilization is at least an instance of modernity. And the psychological self is a prerequisite to civilization's expectation of internalized restraint. The comprehension of the psychological self is the reward of scientific development. These relationships and others are obvious. But there are other ways in which these views of self, all of which are pervasive in public discourse, are not consistent—are, in fact, in conflict with one another either at a primary level, or in their sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit ramifications. Two such conflicts stand out. Each is interesting not because of the need or search for resolution, (a project more likely if the objects of examination were philosophical theories rather than views expressed in public discourse,) but for its revelation of unresolved issues which can be expected to surface overtly as contradictions or irreconcilable views, or more subtly as points of vagueness or frustration in discourse.

5.3.1 Ambivalent modernity

Before those two conflicts comes one pitting one perspective of the self, modernity, against perceptions of evil associated with modernity. Since the self is perceived teleologically, to describe a modern self is to define a good associated with a

self realizing its modernity. In other words, a modern self presumes the good of modernity. Such a rational, examining, explaining self is idealized in literature from all three periods. A quote from the literature about the Soviet Gulag is particularly poignant in its revelation of this assumption and as an indicator of the unresolved conflict that rises from the perception of its evil consequences:

> No cry of anguish, no word of personal suffering escapes their lips. With the detachment of scientist or historian they questioned cellmates, elicited stories from former NKVD men and examining magistrates, recorded the mechanism of confession, gathered reports at second hand and third from men transferred from other prisons and veterans of more than one arrest and sentencing. The result of their involuntary and voluntary investigations is the first scientific treatise on this weird phenomenon. (Wolfe, "Dance" 10)

Wolfe's high opinion of modernity is even more apparent as he contrasts what he asserts is the praiseworthy scientific method of the authors (prisoners) with the inexplicable behavior of the Soviets. However, a quick second reading of his laudatory comments with the background of commentary on Nazi dehumanization through technologization reveals the difficulty. Nazi scientists and doctors have been soundly condemned with the same vocabulary. Even juxtapositions within Wolfe's context reveal the conflict. The prisoners he describes are scientifically recording the "mechanism of confession." He implies a dehumanized process of extracting confession with terms that are similar to the objectivity and "detachment" of the prisoners. It would be missing the point to claim that he seems to be lauding their dehumanization. There is no reason to believe that Wolfe is even aware of the conflict. Coming at a time when technology is notably excepted from the value of modernity the objectivity and detached rationality on which technology depends as a part of modernity is still assumed as a good. It appears to be the case that objectivity and detachment are goods of the modern self while at the same time typifying the evil of dehumanization. It might be possible to argue that a case like Wolfe's is simply a matter of accepting certain

attributes of modernity, while rejecting others. But it seems more likely that such conflicts rise from an admiration on one hand and distrust on the other of modernity's all-encompassing goal, as the first conflict between conceptions of the self reveals.

5.3.2 Conflicting perceptions of self

5.3.2.1 Modernity versus autonomy

The first conflict between publicly melded perspectives of the self is between the modern self and the psychological self. Modernity expects to progressively comprehend. To its adherents, things unknown as yet are evidence not of modernity's failure but of its temporarily incomplete state. Anything claiming to be unknowable flies in the face of modernity. This aspect is only one of modernity's many facets. But it is an important one, and one that is frequently implied in public discourse. In many ways the psychological self is an object of modern knowledge. On the other hand, a significant aspect of the psychological self in public discourse is autonomy—the very point at which explanation and causal influences lose their power. There is a temptation to describe psychology (Rose's "psy disciplines") as a technological expression of modernity's comprehension of the self, and therefore in conflict with autonomy. But psychology's function does not have to be taken exactly so. In fact Rose spends his section on "Expertise and the *techne* of psychology" correlating the calculability of individuals possible through psychology with "judgments of human difference." Rose argues that psychology provides a means through which human difference can be described without the ladings of "values, prejudices, or rule of thumb" (90). This form of the technologization of the self does not, in Rose's argument, diminish autonomy, but instead allows it to flourish, which is why seven pages later he makes the explicit association between psychological ethics and liberal aspirations of freedom and choice (97). Rose's statements help avoid an oversimplified statement of conflict between a

regime dominated by psy disciplines and the autonomous self. But the conflict that still surfaces in public discourse is between the presumed good of rationally conceiving human motivations and maintaining an aporetic will in the same human. For instance, authors in the postwar years recognize the mechanism in humanity that preserves sanity by blocking out painful perceptions. Sometimes it is taken positively as a sign of the indomitable human spirit resisting persecution. Other times it is condemned as proof of inherent selfishness and too quick desensitization to the pain of others. The modernist finds a survival mechanism when victims block out the suffering of others and manage to outlive the crisis. Such an approach has explanatory power and makes sense. The same mechanism is condemned however (sometimes by the same author) in the face of the requirement for personal responsibility among bystanders and observers. Such is the case in William Lynch's article against the use of atrocity stories following WW II. In his reasoning it is a universal human mechanism that provides desensitization. He is obviously using a vocabulary consistent with the psychological self in which psychical causes have naturalistic effects. The human is defined by these causes and effects, so it is a universal human condition. Yet his accusation is that those who become desensitized to the suffering of others (through a universal human mechanism) become dehumanized. As obviously contradictory as his approach is, it is not obvious to him, or to other authors at the time. Even his antagonist (Richard Strout, who wrote why the atrocity stories should be used) does not comment on this conflict. Strout leans on the autonomy of the human to draw his conclusion. For Strout it is not that the German citizen could not see—was blinded by a natural psychical mechanism—but that he would not see. He is able to make a choice and chooses wrongly. He is therefore autonomous and responsible. What is interesting is not that Lynch chooses an explanatorily powerful mechanism while Strout clings to autonomy, but that Lynch

himself sees the very mechanism typical of humanity as a dehumanizing force. When the literature describes individuals as having failed (as is the case in Nazi Germany) the failure is credited to autonomy. The tendency is to describe the individual in terms of autonomy rather than determinative psychical causes. Government pressure and propaganda notwithstanding, German citizens should have chosen to do the right thing by their Jewish neighbors. When the discourse describes individuals as successful, as having overcome a challenge or having accomplished a meaningful purpose, their success is also credited to autonomy. The Russian citizen stands strong and stoical against the Stalinist regime. The successful American soldier withstands his company's insanity and rescues Vietnamese citizens or chooses to disobey direct orders. Perhaps the only substantial comeuppance for the American self obvious in literature following the My Lai massacre is the realization that personal autonomy under the United States government faced the same difficulties as personal autonomy under the Soviet or even Khmer regimes. Where America stood as a teleological mainstay during the 1950s it is abandoned during the My Lai and Khmer Rouge period. America modeled and even embodied both modernity and autonomy before My Lai. Human development had swelled into the United States. And the liberal individual was nowhere more fully realized. In repeated conflicts of modernity and autonomy, however, neither assumption of the self was abandoned as quickly as their archetype, the United States (not a nation of people, but a state represented by its government.) The point is that the conflict between autonomy and modernity is insoluble (actually not even directly and publicly addressed at the time) unless one or the other perspective of self gives way, which does not happen.

5.3.2.2 The parochial and the universal

The second conflict among conceptions of self is between the parochially identified self and the universalized claims associated with the civilized self and the telos of humaneness. During the postwar years universalism was the order of the day. This emphasis is evidenced by the very title of the UN's proclamation in response to the Holocaust, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights." The awareness of atrocities against Jews was an awareness of atrocities against mankind. Raphael Lemkin's arguments for understanding genocide as a crime against humanity rather than against a nation also support this view of the postwar years. But as the Cold War took center stage in moral discourse and the Soviet empire became the caricatured center of evil, universalism found itself replaced by a parochialism fueled in part by the nationalism of Americans and in part by their racism. Stevens' article in the *Atlantic Monthly* typifies this pattern. "We don't expect a Chinese to act like anything other than a Chinese. But the Russian, who has great charm when he is frankly Russian, is at his worst when he is trying to be European" ("The Russian People" 27). As mentioned above, the lack of ability to intervene in Soviet affairs seems as likely an explanation as any of the tendency in American discourse throughout the 1950s to magnify the differences between Soviet and American expectations and therefore minimize the application of universal moral claims that would have demanded either much more aggressive action from America about Soviet atrocities or the admission of national impotence. As always, social context influenced and was influenced by expectations and perceptions of self. There was no need and no cause promoting a sense of universalized responsibility, an interpretation that also allowed for the reinstitution of universality's importance as the United States did intervene in Southeast Asia. Similar issues of universality and identity constantly run head on. All moral claims for international intervention appeal to

the universal nature of humanity. At the same time, however, intervention is specifically requested with blame, retribution, and even compensation requiring strongly marked identities, as in the case of Jewish redress against Germany from WW II to the present.

5.3.3 The tension of modernity in parochialism and universalism

Modernity actually insinuates itself into this conflict as well. There is an unavoidable relationship between parochialism, modernity, and universalism. On the one hand, modernity and parochialism go hand in hand. Stevens' provides an example of this relationship as well by describing the Russian as someone lacking the historical narrative that provided Americans with one of the most important aspects of their developmental level, the liberal individual. "He has never known the sort of organized safeguards of the individual against government and authority which developed through the centuries in the Magna Carta, the Anglo-Saxon common law, and the American Bill of Rights, and his sort of freedom is comparatively more primitive" ("The Russian People" 31). In this statement, one that typifies other arguments of the time, Stevens makes obvious just how strongly both modernity and parochialism are assumed in the nature of the self, and how closely related they are. On the other hand, modernity's perfectibility and optimism are inherently universal in aspiration. Universalism ends up being promoted (with humaneness as its central expression) but in the context of a highly parochial self. As a result, Americans need to respond to the plight of the suffering in other nations while at the same time avoiding the degradation of the perpetrators' and victims' humanity, a degradation built in to the act of intervening in their affairs. The one demands that a certain view of the world is True. The other expects every culture, even those not in the Truth, to be respected. Put even more specifically, respect for non-Western and non-American humanity provokes American

action on their behalf while such action assumes a parochial superiority and comprehension of aims more compatible with modernity than with pluralism. It is hard to conceive of a reconciliation between these two demands of modernity, and hard to find an aspect of public discourse from the end of WW II through the 1970s not affected by modernity. Practically stated two options seem valid. One is to continue intervening in the affairs of other nations with the simple acknowledgment that the intervention is rooted in universalistic claims about humanity. The other is to stop intervening and do more than artificially genuflect to toleration and multiculturalism. The current state of intervention speaks volumes about which aspect of modernity actually prevails—that is, the universal. But this modern universalism presumes a human valued for his least explicable and therefore least modern values. The self plays into this general conflict very specifically. The assumption that respect for other human beings can be greatest when value-laden descriptions of persons are set aside for a universal acceptance of all homo sapiens as of equal worth crumbles when compared with the experiences of the last century. Michael Ignatieff makes this point through a reference to Hannah Arendt:

> As Hannah Arendt argued in her *Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951, when Jewish citizens of Europe were deprived of their national or civic rights, when, finally, they had been stripped naked and could only appeal to their captors as plain, bare human beings, they found that their nakedness did not even give them the claim of common human pity on their tormentors. "It seems," Arendt wrote, "that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow man." The Universal Declaration set out to reestablish the idea of human rights at the precise historical moment in which they had been shown to have no moral purchase whatever. (Ignatieff 59)

Universalism as a telos is weakest at modernity's most scientific, universal claim about humanity. The discourse material examined supports the interesting claim that the more varied are the descriptions of self and corresponding teloi the more apparent it is that the one characteristic most common to every self is the yet unachieved completion of his particular telos. That is to say, the more varied, inconsistent, conflicted, and

irreconcilable the teleology described by different aspects and perspectives of self, the more evident is the inescapably teleological and therefore moral context of the self.

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