

Afterword

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This text, published here for the first time in its entirety, is Paul Martin Neurath's doctoral dissertation, which he successfully defended in June 1943 at Columbia University in New York. In this Afterword, we would like to introduce the author, elucidate the circumstances of the dissertation's unusual genesis, place the work in the context of the literature on concentration camps, and finally outline Neurath's further life, which led him again and again back to his native city of Vienna.

Paul Martin Neurath was born on September 12, 1911. His father was Otto Neurath, then twenty-nine years old. His mother Anna Schapire died at the age of thirty-four, two months after the birth of her son. As a result, Paul grew up in a children's home, which he was not to leave until the age of ten. His stepmother, whom his father married in 1912, had gone blind, and according to prevailing opinion, was in no position to take on raising the little child. For many years, Paul believed his father's second wife, Olga Hahn, to be his natural mother.

The Neuraths belonged to the assimilated Jewish Viennese middle class. Paul's grandfather Wilhelm taught economics as a professor at the

Hochschule für Bodenkultur (College of Agricultural Sciences). Wilhelm's eldest son Otto, after successfully completing his studies at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin in 1906 and fulfilling his obligatory military service, took up teaching at the *Wiener Handelsakademie* (Vienna High School for Commerce), a secondary school. Paul's mother Anna Schapire, faced with restrictions that prevented women from studying at Austrian universities at the time, had studied at the University of Zurich. She entered public life as a translator, suffragist, and poet, not hesitating to engage in polemic exchanges with the academic mandarins of the time. At the age of twenty-four, she had challenged Werner Sombart, who objected to university education for women on the grounds that "a woman between her twentieth and fortieth year must be ready, willing, and able to take up the burden of pregnancy at twelve-month intervals." Hahn explained to the esteemed professor that the eleven pregnancies he thus calculated were pure fiction.¹ Although she had already gone blind, Olga Hahn graduated in mathematics from the University of Vienna and published several scholarly papers on logic together with Otto Neurath. The latter made his name both as a teacher and as an author of studies on national economy, and surrounded himself with a group of scientists and philosophers who later became known as the first Viennese Circle.² Otto Neurath played a role on a wide variety of stages. During the First World War he qualified for a lectureship (*Privatdozent*) in Heidelberg, published articles on war economics, and was summoned to Bavaria during the period of the *Räterepublik* as an expert on socializing industry. After the suppression of the short-lived experiment in direct democracy, the latter activity earned him imprisonment, conviction, deportation, and the loss of his Heidelberg lectureship. Max Weber appeared in court as a witness for the defense, and Otto Bauer, then foreign minister in the first government of the young Austrian Republic, intervened in writing on Neurath's behalf. During the 1920s Otto Neurath managed the *Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsmuseum* (social and economic museum) he had founded in Vienna, in which framework pictorial statistics also came to be developed.³ In addition, he was the tireless organizer of the logical empiricists' philosophical circle. His attempts to gain a position at a university failed re-

1. Schapire 1902.

2. Haller 1985; Haller 1993.

3. Stadler 1982; Hartmann and Bauer 2002.

peatedly. He was also politically active in the Austrian Social Democratic Worker's Party.⁴

It was in the milieu of "Red Vienna" that Paul Neurath, too, experienced his political socialization—first as a participant in the so-called "summer colonies"⁵ as a member of the Red Falcons, and later as a member of Social Democratic front organizations. At no point, however, did he ever take a leading role. On his father's urgent advice, after his high school graduation from Vienna's Humanistic Gymnasium No. 5, he decided to study law.⁶ In the winter semester of 1931/32, Neurath began his studies at the University of Vienna. He completed the required studies in eight semesters, as anticipated, and registered for the last time in the summer semester of 1935. Like others in the small group of left-wing students, in addition to the normal legal curriculum he also registered for lectures in sociology, psychology, economics, and history. Even in his first semester, he signed up for both "Political Problems of Marxism" under the Austro-Marxist Max Adler and four hours per week of "Psychology" with Karl Bühler. In the second semester, he took "History of Socialism since 1889" taught by Adler, and in the third and fourth semesters he completed "Sociological Seminars," also with Adler. The Austro-Marxist position, already marginalized at the University of Vienna, had indeed been completely suppressed by 1933. Many left-wing students now attended the lectures of the Austro-Liberals. In his fifth semester, Neurath attended lectures in economics by Hans Mayer, and in his seventh semester a seminar led by Richard Strigl and Oskar Morgenstern. Neurath's future career as a specialist in statistics was foreshadowed by his attendance in Wilhelm Winkler's "General Comparative and Austrian Statistics." Classes in art history and economic history demonstrate the student's broad interests, as does his attendance in "History of the United States" and a course on "Russian for Beginners."⁷

In 1935 Neurath received the *Absolutorium*, a graduation without academic degree. As he himself later described it, he saw little chance of a career in jurisprudence and was working hard to acquire additional credentials. Under the prevailing conditions of Austrofascism, this strategy was unquestionably justified. In 1937, however, after he had spent

4. Cartwright et al. 1996.

5. Scheu 1985.

6. Neurath 1987.

7. These data were assembled from the certificates of registration, the "nationals," preserved in the archives of the University of Vienna.

about two years "struggling" in various activities, he nonetheless applied for a doctorate in law and sat the three required oral examinations. The theorist of the authoritarian state, Othmar Spann, was unimpressed by Neurath, to whom he gave an "unsatisfactory." The majority of the professors, however, voted for a positive outcome to the examination in political science.⁸

The list of additional qualifications that Paul Neurath acquired during this period is astonishing. Besides completing the high school equivalency course at the Vienna Business Academy, which gave him a basic education in business, he also graduated from a two-year foreman's course in electrical engineering and mechanical engineering at the Arsenal Technical College. During the summer holidays, Neurath spent many weeks as an itinerant. Setting out on the traditional wanderings of the journeyman was a common strategy for unemployed young men in the 1930s who wanted to escape forced inactivity. His travels led Neurath through Germany, Switzerland, and northern Italy. In his letters Neurath repeatedly mentioned that he would have liked to work these experiences into a sociological book. In the last week of February 1938, he began a year-long practicum at the Vienna *Gewerbegericht* (Commerical Court), which was required to complete his law training. After only three weeks, the invasion by German troops and the surrender of government power to the Nazis ended his work as a trainee. Two days after the *Anschluss* the Gestapo was at his door, looking for an alleged propagandist—"Neuman's the name, or some such." Neurath was able to escape arrest only with difficulty. "They say he's a doctor," a helpful neighbor woman told the Gestapo.⁹

In the next few days, he attempted to cross illegally into Czechoslovakia. He was arrested only a few miles short of the border. After several days in solitary confinement outside Vienna, he was transferred to the Rossauerlände police prison in Vienna. On April 1, 1938, he arrived with the first transport of 150 Austrians at the Dachau concentration camp, where he received the prisoner number 13,868. The city magistrate of Vienna terminated Neurath's residency in his Vienna apartment in the Penzingerstrasse on July 1, 1939.

In this so-called *Prominententransport* were to be found leading representatives of the authoritarian state, and those Social Democrats who

8. University of Vienna Archives, Jur. Fak. (Faculty of Law), Rigorosenprotokoll (oral examination report) 1937.

9. Neurath 1987, p. 515. Also see "Prelude," above.

had not managed to escape the clutches of the Gestapo. To this number were added nonpolitical but wealthy Jews, whose relatives were to be blackmailed into ransoming them. The fact that Paul Neurath was included in this transport is somewhat surprising. He was by no means prominent, which leads to the conjecture that both his arrest and his early transfer to a concentration camp resulted either from his having been mistaken for his father, or from a desire to take him into custody as a kind of hostage in his father's place. (Otto Neurath had been living in exile in the Hague since 1934.) From the moment of arrival in Dachau, to be sure, it hardly mattered anyway why someone had been sent there.

Concentration camp Dachau, in the vicinity of Munich, had been established in early 1933. In April 1933, SS units replaced the Munich police as guards. At the end of March there were 151 prisoners, and the number grew continually. By the end of July 1933 there were 2,038 prisoners. The SS-imposed camp system in Dachau rapidly set the example for other early camps, and has been designated "the Dachau model" in the literature.¹⁰ The camp was considerably enlarged and expanded in 1937 and 1938 by means of the prisoners' labor. Altogether, more than two hundred thousand people were incarcerated in Dachau.¹¹ In the course of a temporary evacuation of the Dachau camp (probably in preparation for the planned seizure of ten thousand Jews during the *Kristallnacht* pogrom six weeks later) and the associated transfer of its Jewish prisoners to Buchenwald, Paul Neurath arrived in Buchenwald on September 24, 1938, together with 1,082 other Dachau prisoners. His first prisoner number was 9506, the second 2086; category—political Jew.

The Buchenwald concentration camp, which at first bore the name "K. L. Ettersberg," had been opened near Weimar in July 1937 with 149 prisoners. During that month, protests from Weimar led to the camp being rechristened. The city's Nazi cultural authority took exception to the original name on the grounds that "Ettersberg had connections to the life of Goethe."¹² The first prisoner transports began arriving in mid-July. Between mid-1937 and 1945 about 240,000 people were admitted. Of these, some 34,000 are entered in the camp's death register. Thousands more of the Buchenwald prisoners died in other concentration camps and during evacuation marches. The camp was meant to hold between six thousand and eight thousand prisoners on average. On

10. Orth 1999, pp. 26–33; Tuchel 1994.

11. Marcuse 2001.

12. Drobisch and Wieland 1993, p. 269.

November 10, 1944, there were 59,267 inmates, including those in the peripheral camps; on April 10, 1945, 80,900 prisoners were counted.¹³

The history of the Buchenwald camp can be subdivided into two periods. Paul Neurath's memoirs relate to one part of the first phase of Buchenwald's development from 1937 to 1942. From 1942 on, the function of the camps was expanded. Now the prisoners' economic usefulness as forced labor for war-related industry became significant, for example in the production of "V-weapons" (the V1 and V2 rockets) in the infamous Mittelbau-Dora camp, and the establishment of a multitude of further peripheral camps. Moreover, both the composition and the number of the prisoners changed.¹⁴

Neurath belonged to the group of political Jewish prisoners in the camp who were finding life particularly difficult at the time of the transfer. This was not because they had been labeled political Jews, however, but because of the huge number of new arrivals. If anything played a role in Neurath's survival, it was the fact that he was still young, not yet twenty-seven, in good physical condition, and having few material needs—thanks to having been on the road and a manual laborer. Moreover, Neurath was "lucky," for he was released from Buchenwald on May 27, 1939—before the outbreak of war—probably because he was in possession of an exit visa. His girlfriend Lucie had done all she could in Vienna to effect his release.

After only a few days in Vienna, Neurath set out in mid-June 1939 for Sweden. In the next two years, he completed a one-year retraining period as a metalworker in Stockholm, and then worked operating a boring and turning mill in a shipyard in Göteborg. His emigration to the United States was the result of chance and a sudden change in the manner in which the Americans determined their national immigration quotas. After the German Reich attacked Denmark and Norway, the American immigration authorities transferred the now useless immigration contingent from those countries to Sweden, and Neurath was suddenly given the green light for entry to the United States. Aboard the Swedish merchant ship, Neurath was in good company. Among his few fellow passengers were the philosopher Ernst Cassirer and the linguist Roman Jakobson. The ship docked on June 3, 1941 in New York Harbor. Half a year later, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States entered the Second World War.

13. Schwarz 1990.

14. See the comprehensive documentation in Stein 1998.

working his observations and experiences into a book after his release. "I had the concept of this book in my head when I was still in camp. I always knew that it had to be written, because I know what people usually write about. In most of the books, we get transmitted only the high spots, like when they hanged a man on Dec. 21, 1938 on a gallows, and twenty thousand prisoners looked at it at attention."¹⁸

In New York, Neurath was now offered the opportunity to earn a further doctorate with this project. In October 1942, he informed Rudolf Pass that he "already [had] two hundred typed pages" of the dissertation finished. "It is a sociological study of my experiences in the camps.... I'm writing as, what they describe here with the technical term, 'participant observer.'"¹⁹ This last remark is likely only partly correct, because before his arrival in the United States, Neurath had surely not been acquainted with this method of social scientific data-gathering. Moreover, he would hardly have been in a position to act as a participant observer in the concentration camp. For want of a better designation, however, it was probably acceptable for Neurath, or one of his teachers, to furnish his approach with this label. However, the participant-observer method enjoyed less respect among Columbia's sociologists than it did in other sociology departments in the United States.

In Chicago, which was considered the home of the open, qualitative approach, a recent immigrant with a thesis based almost exclusively on his own experiences would probably have met with a much friendlier reception and more stimulating reactions. For example, William F. Whyte did not submit his *Street Corner Society*,²⁰ which was quite comparable in its methodology to Neurath's dissertation project, as a dissertation at the university where it was written and financially supported—namely Harvard University—but rather transferred pro forma to Chicago, where he was able to obtain his diploma without difficulties. The band of young sociologists who had written dissertations under Robert Park's supervision, often making use of their own life histories, had by this time already produced several journeyman studies. These had met with such a strong response that the Social Science Research Council felt obligated to initiate a methodological debate over this type of social research.²¹ In 1937, this umbrella group of professional organizations in the social

18. Neurath to Robert MacIver, Mar. 29, 1942.

19. Neurath to Pass, Oct. 30, 1942.

20. Whyte 1943.

21. Cf. Dollard 1935.

sciences authorized Herbert Blumer to produce a critical assessment of the classic example of the use of personal documents—William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's monumental investigation, *The Polish Peasant in Poland and America*, first published in 1918. Blumer, who was later to become famous as the patron saint of symbolic interactionism,²² was extremely critical of Thomas and Znaniecki's methodology in his report, but he did not go so far as to reject outright the use of personal documents such as letters, diaries, or personally composed life stories. Blumer's central objection was based on the view, which had then only recently become respectable, of a "scientific" social science modeled on the natural sciences. This view prioritized causal explanation and the ability to produce prognoses. This high hurdle could be surmounted neither by *The Polish Peasant* nor by the many Chicago dissertations that had been written under Park's direction and published by Chicago University Press in a series of their own. Nels Anderson had based his 1923 study, *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man*,²³ on his own experiences as an itinerant laborer, and Clifford R. Shaw had graduated with a thesis that consisted largely of reproductions of a pickpocket's autobiographical notes.²⁴ These and other Chicago dissertations met with a critical reception in further methodological studies initiated by the Social Science Research Council on the use of personal documents in the social sciences.²⁵ Neurath's claim that he at least did not have to read any books for his dissertation, is thus only a half-truth. In fact, there already existed a series of texts about life in German concentration camps. These publications, whose authors included such social scientists as Karl August Wittfogel,²⁶ were written in the style of eyewitness reports and not as attempts at social scientific analysis. Moreover, there were methodological essays on the problems connected with eyewitness reports, autobiographies, and personal documents in general, which played such a prominent role in the contemporary debate in the American social sciences that many interpreters came to the view that the criticism leveled by Blumer and others at what was later to be called "qualitative" social research had caused lasting harm to its further development.²⁷

22. Blumer 1969.

23. Anderson 1923.

24. Shaw 1930.

25. Gottschalk, Kluckhohn, and Angell 1945.

26. Under the pseudonym Hinrichs 1936.

27. Paul 1979; Platt 1996.

Neurath's interpretations of his experiences in the camps fully satisfy the criterion of communicative validation, which was only later to be formulated as such. What is even more astonishing is the fact that in the original text of the dissertation, there is absolutely no explanation of the methodology. This lack would later oblige him, after the official submission of the manuscript as a dissertation, to write an addendum, which is the text printed here. In this appendix, Neurath counters all of the objections that he might well have foreseen, had he studied the methodological publications of the time.

The members of the Sociology Department at Columbia University, where Neurath finally submitted the report on his life as an inmate of two German concentration camps, were nonetheless friendly and obliging to the newcomer; several seem to have been interested in his report. An intellectually nurturing micro environment, however, in which his work on the dissertation might have enjoyed specific stimuli, was not offered to Neurath. The faculty was too much interested in other topics and concerned with studies to which Neurath's project bore little resemblance. But even he himself was not exclusively interested in the topic of his dissertation. Neurath had very quickly developed a liking for statistics, where he soon made his name as an expert and from which he was increasingly able to make his living. This aspect of his abilities no doubt met with unanimous approval and open acceptance; the work on the dissertation certainly aroused less interest.

Of the two senior members of the department, Robert MacIver and Robert Lynd—who were indeed continually at loggerheads—it was MacIver who, for reasons now unknown, took Neurath on. This alone may well have been sufficient to motivate MacIver's antipode Lynd to cast a particularly critical eye on the work of the other's pupil. In terms of length of tenure, third place among the faculty was held by Theodore Abel, but he was being increasingly pushed aside by the newcomers Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, both hired in 1940, and Abel eventually decided to leave Columbia.²⁸ The Polish-born Abel, however, was the researcher whose work on the early following of the Nazis, published in 1938 under the title, *Why Hitler Came Into Power: An Answer Based on the Original Life Stories of Six Hundred of His Followers*, showed the strongest affinity to Neurath's project in terms of content.²⁹ Abel's multi-volume diary, to which he gave the title *Journal of*

28. Abel 2001.

29. Abel 1938.

Thoughts and Events,³⁰ showed that as the war in Europe wore on, his interest in esoteric sociological questions receded into the background. From 1940 on, sociological questions were only occasionally discussed in the diary, while Abel tormented himself for months with thoughts of how he himself could contribute to the defeat of the Nazis. On the other hand, during the time when Neurath was at work on his dissertation, the future titans of the Columbia sociological tradition, Lazarsfeld and Merton, were likely too occupied with their own work to offer further support to someone who was somewhat older than the usual students.

In March 1942 Neurath finished a provisional chapter, which he submitted to his supervisor MacIver to determine whether he could be accepted as a doctoral candidate. In addition to this chapter, he had already written two more. At the same time, he began to discuss these texts with former camp prisoners, as well as with others from outside this group. From the beginning, Neurath wanted to be certain of two things—the precision of his description and the acceptance of his explanations and elucidations by a wider, not necessarily scientific, audience.³¹ To this end, he imposed upon himself the criterion of general comprehensibility (possibly a legacy of the educational politics in Red Vienna). “I write as ‘simple’ [in English in the original] and straightforwardly as possible, and express all of the sociological considerations in completely nonacademic language, for the very purpose of possibly bringing the topic to a larger readership.”³²

In early 1943, in addition to his studies and his job, Neurath had completed a first draft of his thesis. But even before he submitted this to his dissertation supervisor, he sought to make systematic contact with people who had been incarcerated in the camps with him and who were available in the United States. Among the first of these was Felix Reichmann, an art historian and bookseller from Vienna, like Neurath a prisoner in Dachau and Buchenwald, and after 1945 professor and library director at Cornell University. Reichmann treated Neurath with a mixture of benevolence and skepticism; he indeed considered the work to be important, but did not think it was a sociological study. In his formulations, Reichmann addressed the most basic dilemma of Neurath’s thesis—the attempt to strike a balance between personal analysis and the desired academic acknowledgement. “From a sober and pedantic standpoint,

30. Excerpted in Abel 2001.

31. Neurath to Whiteman, 1942.

32. Neurath to Willy Ernst, Jan. 23, 1943.

your thesis has one major flaw, though an inevitable one. It is based on personal experience (including some personal experiences of your companions). Even if hundreds of former Dachau prisoners were to offer you critical material, it would never become reliable sociological data. The patient can never describe his condition as well as the physician. Not merely because he fails to see the connections, which wouldn't be true in your case, but rather simply because the physician suffers no pain."³³ The possibility that a patient could become a physician seems never to have occurred to Reichmann.

At about the same time, Neurath made contact with Willy Ernst, who was then living in San Francisco. Ernst, like Neurath, had been a member of the Red Falcons. In Ernst, Paul Neurath found approbation for his project, and on a factual level, Ernst was able to contribute corroborative details and correct minor errors. Moreover, he was in a position to provide the addresses of other former prisoners then living in the United States. Ernst read Neurath's first draft exactly from the standpoint of a representative of the prisoners' community. "For *us* [emphasis added] it is extremely important to have such a strictly scientific, almost dispassionate factual report."³⁴

Paul Neurath also found an 'editor' for his text, with whom he carried on an intense correspondence. With great precision, Vienna-born Trautl Aull, who lived outside of New York, not only reviewed the work's content, but also corrected all kinds of linguistic lapses and errors. Neurath repeatedly demanded sharp criticism from Aull, specifically in written form. "If someone attacks me in conversation, I defend *myself*, if he attacks me with the written word, I defend the *topic*." On this psychologically very interesting premise, an involved debate over the text ensued. A close and trusting relationship developed between Neurath and Aull, and the correspondence increasingly developed into a kind of background conversation about his text. He disclosed his main intentions; he wanted to give the political prisoners priority over the others, to give the Austrians priority over the Prussians, and to ascribe a special, positive role to the Viennese Jews (in Dachau). For example, in his portrayal of the Austrians saying, "*Bittschön Herr Kapo: A leicht's Tragerl*" ("Please, Herr Kapo, give me a light little handbarrow"), he shows how, by means of such unreasonable requests, the Austrians/Viennese/Jews were able to demoralize the "*Piefkes*"—the German senior prisoner functionaries who were accustomed to the camps—at every turn.

33. Felix Reichmann to Neurath, Apr. 12, 1943.

34. Willy Ernst to Neurath, Feb. 12, 1943.

In this correspondence we find reflected a central problem of many immigrant intellectuals—the necessity of expressing oneself adequately in a still unfamiliar language. Neurath described this as follows: “My command of the German language is not bad for a layman’s use, by which I mean I can handle it, play with it, speak in nuances, draw allegories, construct complicated phrases, and nonetheless keep it clear. A German sentence that I’ve stretched out over ten lines can still easily be read, simply because it’s built so that the three different clauses hidden in it can still be distinguished from each other. In English, I can’t do all that. In English, for the time being, I’ve let every imaginable cook spoil the broth and force a curt, clipped style on me that principally consists of primitive, uncomplicated direct sentences, without the slightest intellectual demands on the reader.” Neurath’s way out of the dilemma of having attained only a low level of complexity in the new language consisted of “making these clipped sentences into something like a personal style.”³⁵

These discussions of the text took place while Neurath was under a great deal of pressure to complete the work. On April 15, 1943, he wrote that he had finished 270 pages, with about 150 more pages to come; but the thesis would soon be due.

While Neurath’s informal supervisors were either acclaiming or criticizing his thesis, however, there arose problems with the gatekeepers of academia shortly before the completion of his Ph.D. studies. On May 3, 1943, Lynd sent a memorandum to MacIver, beginning with the sentence, “I do not think Neurath’s dissertation should be accepted in its present form.” For a doctoral student in the last stages of his studies, and shortly before the final examinations, there can hardly have been a worse judgment. Lynd had no difficulty with the text itself: “It is a fascinating book for *popular* consumption.” That, however, was exactly what gave rise to the reproach that the work was unscientific and lacked systematic analysis. Lynd stressed twice in his memorandum that it would not suffice, as far as he was concerned, merely to add a further chapter to the text; rather, he insistently demanded that the text be rewritten in its entirety in order to be acceptable as a dissertation. In four pages, Lynd set out a detailed structure for the new version of the thesis that he envisioned. Since it was impossible to provide an overview of the entire camp, he demanded that the dissertation writer—following the sociology of Jacob L. Moreno—describe and analyze group processes as exemplified by his barracks, or a portion of his barracks. The tone in

35. Neurath to Trautl Aull, Apr. 19, 1943.

which the memorandum is couched seems perfectly benevolent; Lynd evidently wanted to help, even if his suggestions were by no means appropriate. Although some of his criticisms seem to be based on a misunderstanding—a later handwritten comment of Neurath's explains that Lynd knew only the first part of the manuscript, not the second, "The Society"—he raised a point that Neurath had already discussed previously with several of his correspondents. The thesis was not a sociological study in the academic sense, and Neurath knew this, in any case. As late as 1946 he wrote to Rudolf Pass, "Actually it can't be called a sociological report at all; it is simply a report on certain phenomena that someone with sociological interests sees better and describes better than someone without them."

There was one further irritation, however. Neurath felt that his work would satisfy the demands of scientific originality. In late October 1942 he reported of his dissertation project: "It is meeting with uncommonly good support, it seems that something like this has never been attempted."³⁶ In October 1943, Bruno Bettelheim's study, "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations," completed a year previously, was published in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*.³⁷ Bettelheim was a former camp prisoner whose life had been extremely similar to Neurath's. A native of Vienna, he was first transported to Dachau and later transferred to Buchenwald. Bettelheim's publication seemed to encroach upon the exclusivity of Neurath's dissertation topic. In Neurath's circle, some believed that he himself had submitted an article on Dachau and Buchenwald under the pseudonym Bruno Bettelheim. Neurath much later reported, "I was working on my doctoral dissertation on the concentration camps at Columbia, and one evening I came to an event put on by the Graduate Sociology Club. Professor Abel was there, and as I come in the door he calls to me across the whole, quite large, room: 'Hello Mister Bettelheim, hello Mister Bettelheim!' and I look at him stupidly, no idea what he's talking about.... Yes, I say, I really don't understand—until it finally comes out that this article of Bettelheim's ... had appeared.... [They] thought, because it was well known that I was writing my dissertation on the concentration camp and that chiefly on Abel's orders, ... that it was an article I had written under the pseudonym Bettelheim. [I just said,] listen, that's kind of a funny pseudonym in America, if I was looking to use one."³⁸ Bettelheim's and Neurath's

36. Neurath to Rudolf Pass, Oct. 30, 1942.

37. Bettelheim 1943.

38. Neurath 1989.

interpretations, however, were markedly different. While Neurath attempted throughout to describe the differentiation between patterns of behavior and to explain significant differences simply by means of group membership and group background, Bettelheim aimed at psychoanalytically inspired generalizations and assumed that there was an identification with the aggressor. Neurath noticed these differences immediately. However, as he explained in retrospect, he was still too little socialized in the academic system to compose an appropriate rejoinder. Moreover, he wanted to avoid a situation in which two former concentration camp prisoners came to trading verbal blows in public.³⁹

Because American universities keep only rudimentary notes on the dissertation process, Neurath's difficulties in having the report of his experiences accepted as a thesis for a sociological degree can only be approximately reconstructed. In the unpublished records left behind by Abel, Lazarsfeld, Lynd, MacIver, and Merton, there is as little information to be found on this point as in Abel's diaries and MacIver's autobiography.⁴⁰ However, Neurath's "Addendum" to the dissertation, his "Statement on the Validity of the Observations that Form the Basis of the Dissertation," discusses the points that were raised in criticism of his thesis—and what points could have been raised, purely in the interest of maintaining the disciplinary identity of the still young field of "sociology."

Neurath's explanation that it was impossible to smuggle notes of any kind out of the camp, though it may sound strange today, was no doubt in response to a criticism in just this regard—a criticism that he indeed was not alone in facing. Bruno Bettelheim reported that he, too, had been confronted with such objections.⁴¹

In the Dissertation and Defense and Deposit Office of Columbia University, there remains a register of names of those who belonged to Neurath's examination committee. Unusually, this board comprised ten examiners; the normal number was three to five. The list of examiners included practically the entire sociology department, with the exception of Paul Lazarsfeld. Under the chairmanship of Lynd, the examination committee included, among others, the sociologists Abel, MacIver, Merton, and Associate Professor Willard W. Waller, as well as William S. Robinson (lecturer in statistics and sociology), Nathaniel Pfeffer (professor

39. Cf. Fleck and Müller 1997.

40. MacIver 1968.

41. Bettelheim 1960, p. 118; Bettelheim 1979, pp. 14f.

in international relations) and Abraham Wald (assistant professor in economics).⁴²

The size of the examination committee could well be explained by the fact that the final oral examination and the dissertation defense took place simultaneously. However, it could also indicate a rather conflict-laden event. In any case, Neurath later described his final examination as follows: "And one fine day in the month of May 1943, between 9:00 and 11:00, I passed my 'orals,' immediately afterward defended my dissertation before the same committee, and at 12:00 noon I was finished with my doctorate—not quite two years after I had arrived in New York."⁴³

Thus Paul Neurath had indeed completed his higher studies in only two years; but he as yet had no right to the title of Ph.D. At that time, the Faculty of Political Science of Columbia University demanded of every candidate the submission of seventy-five copies of his thesis.⁴⁴ At a time when photocopiers were a thing of the future, this meant either having the dissertation accepted by a publisher who would print the thesis as a regular book—and as late as January, Neurath still had hopes of an acceptance from Columbia University Press—or paying the high cost of printing the copies out of one's own pocket.

In a letter, Neurath summarized, in ironic fashion, the enormous workload of completing his thesis: "I'll put some statistics on the record. On about March 15 I began the present version of the book. It has 465 pages (without the foreword, which I've got in the typewriter just now). That means that in fifty-five days, rain or shine, I've produced eight pages a day. This is a distorted picture, however, since at the beginning I frittered a way a lot of the time. The second part, that is, the sociological part, has 190 pages.... These 190 pages I produced in the period from April 28 to May 9, that is, in twelve days. That's about sixteen pages a day, rain or shine. And that's not quite right either. Because the truth is that I frittered away those first few days as well. Of this second part, at least one hundred pages are first draft, which means never previously written. And they're still the best thing in the whole book."⁴⁵

As the work was taking shape, it was not easy for Neurath to situate his dissertation project unequivocally. It had at least four dimensions—as a political project; as a project of assimilating both a group history

42. The names of two further examiners could not be deciphered.

43. Neurath 1987, p. 524.

44. In his correspondence, Neurath repeatedly gives the number erroneously as 125.

45. Neurath to Aull, May 20, 1943.

and Neurath's own; as a project with which he desired to become famous as an author; and finally as a project meant to satisfy the standards of the academic culture of which he had become a member. This tetralemma, with its divergent demands, was beyond Neurath's ability to solve. He himself was in any case well aware of the inconsistencies of his project, for he began to develop strategies to justify them. Thus he explained to his former fellow prisoner Willy Ernst the book project's distance from politics: "I'd like to forestall criticism of a couple of things. When you read the thing, please don't forget that it's a doctoral dissertation planned for Columbia University, which certainly isn't one of the most reactionary American universities, but one of the most distinguished, and so has to be somewhat cautious with political statements coming out in print under its name. What's more, it seems to me that there's little gained if the thing is written with more political bite and then nobody reads it because it's classified as 'red stuff.'"⁴⁶ Neurath also expressed himself in similar terms to his former fellow prisoner Ponger. After listing "a couple of main theses" of his study, he gave the following hint: "Besides, the whole thing is written in thoroughly nonacademic language, because I want it to be read. I consider it a political responsibility to write the book so that the reader clearly understands the attitude and function of the political prisoners. To be sure, this has to be done in as general a form as possible, so it can be widely accepted and not immediately taken for red propaganda."⁴⁷ Not being considered "red stuff" and "red propaganda" had to be associated with a political goal, the representation of Neurath's own group. This problem was also raised, at least indirectly, to the dissertation's supervisor, MacIver, as Neurath reported on his reading of Georg Karst's book: "Karst, for example, writes that he as a Catholic is a sworn enemy of the Communists, but still has to admit that they were the most comrade-like and helpful men he met in the camps. I think it might be worthwhile to bring in a few quotations like that in order to prove that my high esteem for the political prisoners is not an unjustified bias. Because I am expecting criticism in that direction."⁴⁸

A further problem was the sociological status of the study. Neurath went into particular detail on this matter to Reichmann, who had repeatedly referred to the dissertation's lack of sociological character, for in-

46. Neurath to Ernst, Jan. 23, 1943.

47. Neurath to Ponger, Mar. 2, 1943.

48. Neurath to MacIver, Jan. 15, 1943.

stance, "Repeating 'society' ten times over and saying 'rule of the game' once doesn't yet make you a sociologist. You'll forgive me for being malicious."⁴⁹ Neurath gave reasons for not having written his thesis on the basis of sociological literature: "I had ... very much disregarded the sociological side, that is to say, I wrote a book from sociological viewpoints without laying stress on the method. Just as I've always hesitated to recommend books on the materialist view of history to people, because I've always thought that instead they should just read historical works written from that viewpoint ([e.g.,] Franz Mehring).⁵⁰ ... I not only promise to derive the behavior of people and groups of people in the new society from their earlier milieu, background etc., as for example, Donal[d] Clemmer in *Prison Community*,⁵¹ promises. Rather, I carry it through, quite consistently, as far as I can judge. This seems to be rare. I'd be happy if I could find out where I've got this from. I'm afraid I can't quote any great sociologist who said it should be done this way, or did it this way himself—and I can't quote any minor one from whom I might have stolen it behind his back.... The reason I can't cite any of the patriarchs I've robbed, plundered, or observed or followed seems to me to be that the great masters, including the anthropologists, concern themselves with original cultures, while I concern myself with a derivative culture. Apparently there aren't many reports, maybe even almost none, on derivative cultures written by sociologists. Children's homes, boarding schools, monasteries, army units, would likely offer a rich field, but apparently the sociologists who write books are neither children nor students nor nuns nor soldiers. At the moment there must surely be a couple of sociologists serving as soldiers, and I hope that the books that come out of that will show how the soldiers' society functions. I'd probably write something like that, but I'm not a soldier either—for the time being, at least not yet."⁵²

The passage cited is very revealing, insofar as Neurath here displays a general skepticism toward sociological research, a skepticism toward the sociological tradition and its "classics," and a skepticism toward its methods. At the same time, he nonetheless insists that he has written an original sociological study, which indeed can have as its only basis the fact that he had "been there"—just as, in his opinion, any good study

49. Reichmann to Neurath, Apr. 21, 1942.

50. Editors note: Franz Mehring (1846–1919) was a leading German Marxist historian.

51. Clemmer 1940.

52. Neurath to Reichmann, Mar. 22, 1943.

could only take as its basis the fact that someone had "been there." Sociologists would literally have to become nuns—this is one ironic inference from Neurath's explanation.

In the discussions with his "editor," his distance from sociology became even more apparent. "At the moment I'm working on the foreword. At first I thought of writing only a very short one for the department, but somehow that won't work. Twice already all my rage from ten years of political silence has spilled forth, and there's nothing left for it but either not to submit a foreword for the examination ... or else to write the actual foreword that goes with the book. And you can count on it, if the actual foreword is there, then the afterword will have to be there too, the one that's been stuck in my throat for years. I already knew why I threw myself into statistics and didn't want to teach sociology. I myself often find it disturbing how much social satire I've smuggled into the book.... But how I'm supposed to teach sociology at an American college with this lack of political self-control is an utter riddle to me. It will be a catastrophe."⁵³

Nonetheless, Paul Neurath remained unsatisfied with the results of all the effort he had put into the writing. For the summer of 1943 he planned further revisions and abridgements, which, due to his professional career, were only partially completed. In 1946, Neurath finally summed up, "I'm afraid I'm bogged down with the dissertation. I should have had it published in '43, after its acceptance by the faculty. But I'd got it into my head to rewrite it one more time for literary reasons, and that wasn't done until spring 1945. By then it was already too late for commercial publication. Publishers didn't want to print any more about concentration camps without gas chambers. Who wants to hear that? The audience is spoiled. The fact that our people were hanged by their wrists from the trees during a snowstorm, crying for their fathers and mothers, who cares about that in the age of crematorium ovens and millions murdered.... Yes, yes, 'we greatly appreciate your objectivity and the clarity of your analysis, but the readers want to have more sensational accounts.'"⁵⁴

Neurath's self-diagnosis carries some plausibility. Certainly, the development of the camps itself had to some extent "outpaced" his description. The establishment of the extermination camps did not occur until after Neurath's release. By the end of the war, however, the main

53. Neurath to Aull, May 10, 1943.

54. Neurath to Pass, Sept. 26, 1946.

impression received by the public was of gas chambers and crematorium chimneys, based on images of the mountains of victims' corpses, eyeglasses, suitcases, and meager possessions. The version of the dissertation that finally bore the date 1951 does indeed refer at some points to the Shoah; these additions, however, seem oddly extraneous and artificial. Neurath did succeed in describing, analyzing and assimilating his own experiences, and those of his reference group; the other, later developments elude description. This is not very surprising, however. Other authors as well, such as Benedikt Kautsky, for example, who experienced all the phases of the camps' development—including the mass annihilation by means of poison gas—had great difficulties integrating these various phases into one description.

The ambivalent feelings to which Neurath was subject during the composition of his dissertation have already been pointed out; so, too, the difficulties he encountered in terms of the work's linguistic realization. These difficulties must be seen in the context of Neurath's high expectations for the linguistic presentation of his observations. Contemporary dissertations were usually not particularly demanding in this regard. The description and rationale of a research problem would be given, followed by the empirical investigation of the topic at hand, concluding with a brief summary. Neurath's thesis differed profoundly from this simple model; it followed another dramaturgy altogether, consistently marked by something like creative deviance. A reader who looks at no more than the table of contents outlining the architecture of the work will notice the clear division into two sections. In the first part the author introduces his actors—the prisoners and their oppressors—on the forestage (the title "The Scene" is significant here). In the second, he illuminates the backstage of functioning methods, balances and imbalances in the social life ("The Society") of the camps.⁵⁵ The actual arrangement of the text itself, however, goes well beyond this basic architecture.

Let us begin with the "paratexts," a term that has become current since the work of Gérard Genette,⁵⁶ for the description of a book's literary "accessories" or liminal features, with whose aid an author explicitly or implicitly labels the intentions of his or her work and "situates" it in various regards. The introductory quotation of Neurath's book di-

55. Cf. the original title of Neurath's dissertation: *Social Life in the German Concentration Camps Dachau and Buchenwald*.

56. Genette 1997.

rectly addresses the object—the concentration camps. The quoted speaker, the former commandant of Dachau, refers to the difference between prison and penitentiary on the one hand and concentration camp on the other. “There is a difference. You will soon see what the difference is.” This information is not only for the prisoners arriving in the camp, but also for the intended readers of Neurath’s text. With this quotation, the author emphasizes not only the peculiarity of the camps and of his experiences as their inmate, but also the peculiarity of the text. The structural analysis of the text reveals a semantic homology; with these sentences the prisoners are initiated into the camp, the readers into the book.

The dedication page also emphasizes the text’s peculiarity. The author dedicates his work to three people. The first person is a woman, Lucie; her family name goes unmentioned. The author thanks Lucie for his release from the camp and describes her as accompanying him “through and out of hell.” He probably owes her his life. Lucie was Neurath’s girlfriend; their relationship, however, fell apart after his release, and they broke off contact due to a quarrel. Neurath mentioned in his letters that he intended this dedication not only to express his debt of gratitude, but also to re-establish communication.

Both of the other dedicatees are men; they are given their family names and they are both already dead. The attorney Oswald Richter, a friend of the Neurath family, could not take living in the camp and died; the author wanted to clear Richter’s name. Franz Steinberg was a camp acquaintance of Neurath’s. The dialogue reproduced in the dedication, from the day before Steinberg’s death, speaks to the author’s intentions: justice, remembrance, and—vengeance.

Neurath’s text itself by no means begins with the usual academic rationale for his topic. His “Prelude” is rather the dramatic story of his arrest. Although the actors are described—the Gestapo men, the neighbors in the Vienna municipal apartment block, the treacherous farmers at the border, the author himself as antifascist—the situation into which the reader is immediately plunged nonetheless remains virtually unexplained. No motivation is offered for the situation, even though the course of the action seems to possess a plausibility all its own. The situation at hand is one that might well be described as “Kafkaesque.”

The section entitled “The Scene” begins (as do many other depictions of the camps) by portraying “standard situations” in the concentration camps. To this end, Neurath’s text makes use of a rhetoric of description. To be sure, here too the narrator remains part of the narrated

events, part of the situations presented; the characteristic style, however, moves within the territory of conventional eyewitness testimony, meant to signal "objectivity" above all. The direct speech woven into the depiction here emphasizes the element of authenticity, often additionally stressed in the English original by the use of the German language. In the final section of "The Scene," which bears the heading "Kaleidoscope," the dramaturgy of the text changes. With the aid of a technique of "montage" borrowed from cinematography, scenes of completely different significance are strung together. The individual "cuts" are each introduced by a heading giving the location and date: "Buchenwald, Winter 1938," "Buchenwald, January 4, 1939," "Dachau, Summer 1938," "Buchenwald, Spring 1939," "Buchenwald, April 20, 1939," "Dachau, April 1938" ... the series goes on. It is clear that neither a chronological principle nor a principle of spatial or thematic unity is being maintained here. What matters are the brief "flashes." The last entry under "Kaleidoscope" bears the title "Buchenwald, December 21, 1938," and offers something like a climactic intensification of what has gone before. Here Neurath describes the execution of Peter Forster, an event that numbers among the *lieux de mémoire* of the historiography of the camps. Forster had fled from the camp and fallen again into the Nazis' hands. He was hanged in front of twenty thousand Buchenwald prisoners. With this episode, Part One, "The Scene," abruptly ends. The function of this last section obviously consists of a kind of counterpoint to the previous sections containing typology and structural analysis. The reader should not fall victim to the illusion that the topic presented here deals with an object that can be grasped by means of simple, disciplined description.

Part Two, "The Society," returns again to the text's characteristic descriptive style. But here, too, the narrator once again takes up his testimony. With the sentence, "In the winter of 1938–39 my hand was frost-bitten," Neurath introduces the story of the legendary Buchenwald prisoner Rudi Arndt. In the second section, the sociological analyses already implemented in the first section are intensified. Under headings such as "Power," "Cooperation," or "Conflict," central social "elements" are analyzed. The section on the "Moor Express," with its social peculiarities and its significance for the formation of an elite, becomes a "classic" case study involving the interpreting observer himself.

Many reports on concentration camps written by prisoners end with the camp being liberated or the narrator released, and the description of the concentration camps usually ends there as well. As a result, reports on the concentration camps become part of the tradition of the "descent

into hell," a central literary genre in the West, exemplified by such representatives as the Orpheus myth or Dante's *Divina Comedia*.

Neurath's text refuses to adapt itself to this literary tradition, a fact that can be interpreted to mean that the author considered the discussion of the concentration camps unfinished, or unfinishable. At the end of the text, the question is posed, "Why don't they hit back?"—notice the use of the present tense. The text explores this question, which is both politically and morally explosive, in minute detail. It is here—not in questions of the camps' immeasurable anti-humanity or in the supposedly concomitant "breakdown of civilization"—that the text's central research interest lies. And the attempt is made to answer this question. During their transport into the camps, as a kind of "proto-initiation," the future prisoners are "broken," as it were, by means of methods of absolute terror. To bolster this argument, the text returns to an episode that was not described earlier in the transition from "The Prelude," the story of the arrest, to "The Scene," the structural description of the camp as such—whose absence at first formed an empty slot, a "minus device." Now Neurath describes the episode of the transport in all its drama. Completely without any claim to analysis or any attempt at sociological classification, what befell Neurath and his companions on April 1, 1938, and the following night is recounted with extreme urgency. Immediately after the description of what the author himself experienced, we are told that other groups and individuals suffered directly comparable experiences. The coda, which echoes the section's title ("Why Don't They Hit Back?"), yet again highlights the central (and unsolved) problem: "Why They Don't Hit Back." The text summarizes the arguments already put forward—and adds a new one: In those (rare) cases where the prisoners succeeded to some degree in making the conflict between themselves and the SS guards a personal conflict, there was some possibility of defense and resistance. The SS guards knew this as well, and therefore they systematically resisted personal involvement: "Don't you dare look at me!" ("*Schau mich ja nicht an!*") The text posits this imperative as the general maxim of the SS.

* * *

The offer of a temporary position as a statistics lecturer at the Business School of the City College of New York finally decided Neurath's further career—but also, however, the fate of his book. Anyone whose intellectual portfolio demonstrates more than one specialty is in a fortunate

position; for a long time, he does not have to decide what he would actually like to do. When someone like this is offered a job, other interests retreat into the background. Something similar may have taken place with Neurath in the years after 1943. While he probably continued to work on his book in the beginning, during the following years he seems to have become less and less interested in it. In 1946, when he was offered a position at Queens College, he accepted it, and for the next three decades, he taught statistics and sociology there. After Columbia University changed its requirements for submitting author's copies, Neurath officially handed in his dissertation once more in 1951 and received his Ph.D. He abandoned his plans to make his name as an author and sociologist with a book on his experiences in the camps. In later years he repeatedly and steadfastly declined all offers to publish his dissertation; he did so, however, in a laconic fashion that was otherwise untypical of him. During Neurath's lifetime, only Jack Kamerman succeeded in gaining permission to publish the dissertation's concluding chapter, which had been so important to Neurath himself, in an anthology of criminological studies.⁵⁷

* * *

This is also an opportunity to offer a brief sketch of Neurath's further career as a sociologist. In 1946 Neurath was granted American citizenship, and in that same year, as mentioned above, he became a professor at Queens College, New York. In 1949 his position became a tenured one, and he carried out his duties until he became professor emeritus in 1977. During this period, Neurath also worked for a decade carrying out statistical analyses for an economic consulting firm. In addition, from 1949 until the end of the 1960s, he held the position of visiting professor in the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research; here, too, he taught statistics and social scientific methods.

In spring 1946, Neurath succeeded in re-establishing contact with his uncle, who had survived the Nazi era in Graz. After his uncle's death, he maintained contact with his uncle's daughter, to whom he regularly sent reports on his life in the United States. A visit to Austria which Neurath had planned for 1947 had to be postponed briefly, but in the summer of 1949, he returned to Austria for the first time.

Neurath used his first sabbatical in 1955 to travel to India, not only to teach there as a Fulbright Professor, but also to carry out a large-scale

57. Kamerman 1998.

radio study in Bombay on behalf of UNESCO, which he then reported on in American journals. In the 1960s, he worked on two similar media research projects in India. In 1959 Neurath was given the opportunity to study for a year as a Fulbright Professor in Cologne, where he made the acquaintance of René König, who was working persistently to establish empirical social research in the Federal Republic of Germany. König invited Neurath to write an article for a handbook of empirical social research that he was editing. This article, which first appeared in 1962, was to make Neurath's name a lasting influence in German-language sociology. A short time later, Neurath brought out an expanded version as a book, which was published only in German. In 1961 he taught in Vienna for the first time, and he was of considerable help in establishing empirical social research and statistics there. At the same time, the foundation was laid for a long-term collaboration with Viennese sociology. During the 1960s, Neurath taught during several one- to two-month visiting professorships at the University of Vienna, and also at the newly founded Institute for Advanced Studies in 1965. In 1971–72 he took up another visiting professorship, and a decree of April 13, 1973 named him Honorary Professor of Sociology at the University of Vienna. In that same year Neurath was also negotiating for a regular professorship in Vienna. The negotiations, which had been going positively, "finally ran aground on a complication that lay beyond the influence of all of us [i.e. the faculty, the ministry, and Neurath]."⁵⁸ It has been impossible to trace exactly what these complications, which Neurath does not describe in more detail, might have been. His typically reserved description of his failure to obtain a regular appointment at Vienna, however, did nothing to hinder all manner of interpretations of the reasons and causes from circulating later on, although most of these do not stand up to closer scrutiny. The main topics of Neurath's lectures during his series of visiting professorships, which continued without a break into the 1990s, were statistical methods and problems in demographics. From 1978 on, Neurath set up the Paul Lazarsfeld Archive at the Department of Sociology at the University of Vienna, with which he not only honored this pioneer of social scientific methods—to whom he had also devoted a biographical study—but also raised the profile of the history of the social sciences in general.

Paul Neurath died on Sept. 3, 2001. To the end of his life he remained associated with the University of Vienna Department of

58. Neurath 1987, p. 536.

Sociology, maintaining his New York contacts at the same time. He left his papers to the Vienna Department.

* * *

The history of the examination of the German concentration camp system began even before the end of the Nazi system. Reports appeared before 1945, written above all by individual prisoners who had been released, offering eyewitness testimony.⁵⁹ Immediately after the end of the Nazi dictatorship, the documentary films of the camps' liberation shocked the audiences of the victorious nations; they probably also shocked those in the successor states of the German Reich.⁶⁰ In Vienna, an exhibition mounted in the city hall at the behest of former Dachau prisoner Viktor Matejka drew an immense number of visitors. Around the world, journalists reported on the camps, newspapers printed reports of survivors' experiences, and immediately the first analytical investigations of the Nazi terror appeared—for example, from the pen of Neurath's dissertation supervisor Theodore Abel.⁶¹ In the journal *Jewish Social Studies* there appeared a series of articles on the concentration camps and the Shoah, among them Hannah Arendt's methodological article, "Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps."⁶² Jewish groups such as the Conference on Jewish Relations financed mass screenings of camp prisoners, although their results would be published only much later.⁶³ Among the early authors who wrote about the camps not merely as eyewitnesses, but also as researchers, there were a remarkably large number of Austrians. Eugen Kogon, who had been active in Vienna until his internment, undertook the first attempt to portray the camps immediately after his liberation from Buchenwald, doing so on behalf of the American occupation forces. His *Der SS-Staat (The Theory and Practice of Hell)*⁶⁴ quickly became a standard work. Kogon's report was based on his own experiences in Dachau and Buchenwald, and on reports from approximately 150 fellow prisoners who had been questioned after the liberation in 1945.⁶⁵ From his own experience, Viktor

59. See, however, Koestler ([1945] 1985).

60. *Die Todesmühlen/ Death Mills*, Dir. Hanuš Burger, Germany / USA, 1945.

61. Abel 1945 and Abel 1951.

62. Arendt 1950.

63. Goldstein, Lukoff and Strauss 1991.

64. Kogon ([1946] 1950).

65. Hackett 1995.

Frankl attempted to write as a psychologist about his internment in Auschwitz.⁶⁶ Benedikt Kautsky, who had survived Dachau, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz, wrote his sociological study *Teufel und Verdammte* (*Devils and Damned*) during his recuperation in Switzerland.⁶⁷ In the first trials of war criminals, eyewitness statements regarding the camps played a prominent role. Very soon, however, interest in the camps was to subside; the new geopolitical configuration of the Cold War was not least responsible for this development.⁶⁸ From the end of the 1940s until the prosecution of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem and the German Auschwitz trials of the early 1960s, it seemed that reports and descriptions from the concentration camps provoked the German public to deliberate obliviousness, skepticism, incredulous head-shaking, relativizing calculations of other alleged victims, and even determined resistance. People wanted to be left in peace, and policy and public opinion did nothing to oppose this. Reinforced and underpinned by the Cold War, in subsequent years hardly any aspect of these attitudes changed.⁶⁹

On the other hand, as a locus of oppression, tragedy, forced labor, and annihilation from the very beginning of the Nazi system of rule, the concentration camps were not only a consistent component of the exercise of power, but they were also in many respects completely visible to the public.⁷⁰ The borders of the terror society did not end at the gates and barbed-wire barriers of the concentration camps.⁷¹ As Hannah Arendt emphasized in an early essay on the terror society, however, "there are no parallels to life in concentration camps."⁷²

Just as the regimes, the structures, and the functions of the individual camps changed in the course of the Nazi government, so too the historical analysis of the camps has gone through cycles of varying interest. This development, and the forms of remembering the concentration camps, will be briefly sketched in the following section. This description can by no means replace a systematic, detailed, and theoretically comprehensive definition of the preliminary stages, the history, the various time periods, and the variations in the willingness to reflect on the

66. Frankl ([1946] 1959).

67. Kautsky 1946, cf. also: Poller ([1946] 1961); Rousset 1946.

68. Cf. Novick 1999.

69. Klüger ([1992] 2001).

70. Milton 1998.

71. Sofsky 1996, p. 7.

72. Arendt 1948, p. 314.

Nazi concentration camps.⁷³ The references given to the still growing literature can only indicate a general direction.

Neurath's insider views of Dachau and Buchenwald in the years 1938 and 1939 make the social reality of the camps comprehensible to us from the prisoners' perspective. The *Society of Terror* allows us a look into the suffering of the prisoners, into their reduced social cosmos, into the social stratification of the prisoners' society, and also into the brutal behavior of the culprits and their apparatus of power and oppression.

Neurath's dissertation was written before the gruesome photos taken during the liberation of the camps in 1945, for example in Bergen-Belsen, had become public knowledge. Neurath's view is therefore not yet marked by those images that later established the apparently immutable structures of memories of fellow prisoners and of historians. The images of the Nazi regime's concentration camps in the consciousness of those who have come after are strongly stylized; they are particularly and quite rightly permeated by the horror of the extermination camps.⁷⁴

There are remarkable differences, however, in the work of remembrance.⁷⁵ Thus, in the German Democratic Republic there was less interest in mountains of corpses than there was in (Communist) resistance. The subjective experiences of the camps' inmates were disregarded. Their place was taken by the "antifascist legend [of resistance], which [in contradistinction to the Federal Republic] became the founding myth of the GDR."⁷⁶ Buchenwald became in the GDR a central locus and symbolic nucleus of the heroizing strategy for coming to terms with the past.⁷⁷

The concentration camp system developed through a series of intermediate steps to the extermination camps. The prisoners' camp experiences were formed and decisively molded by the time and the circumstances of their arrest, by their own personalities, by the various prisoner groups to which they belonged, by the conditions in the respective camps, by the functions of the various camps, and by the political developments outside, to which the prisoners could react, and had to react, differently each time. For example in the beginning, Dachau was above all a place for the internment of political opponents, whom the Nazis attempted to debilitate and then annihilate by means of pointless work. Later prisoners were annihilated, for instance in Mauthausen or Mittelbau-Dora, by

73. Cf. e.g. Pollak 1988; Pollak 1990; Novick 1999.

74. Brink 1998; Knoch 2001.

75. See Herf 1997.

76. Niethammer 1994, p. 16.

77. See also Apitz ([1958] 1960).

means of “productive” labor. Both forms of camp, however, had in common the fact that work was a crucial instrument of the society of terror.

The first camps were established in March 1933, immediately after the Reichstag fire; they formed part of a brutal terrorizing strategy for seizing and maintaining power. At first it was almost exclusively political opponents who were incarcerated. The years 1936 and 1937 were a turning point in the development of the concentration camps. The Nuremberg race laws came into effect in mid-September 1935. In addition to the terrorizing strategy aimed at opponents, there was now a strategy of racial terror. New enemies were identified, for example the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Even more momentous were the *categorical* classifications, which from this point on were systematically enforced. In this development, one can read the transition from a political preventive measure to a racist “general preventive measure” by the Nazi regime.⁷⁸ This period also saw the decision to implement a camp system ruled by the SS alone.⁷⁹ In 1938 and 1939 additional political prisoners from Austria and the Sudetenland arrived. In November 1938, immediately following the pogrom, thirty-thousand Jews were taken into the concentration camps. Neurath handles this phase of the concentration camps’ development with a keen eye for detail. At the beginning of the war, there were twenty-one thousand prisoners in the newly established and/or expanded concentration camps Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Flossenbürg, Mauthausen, and Ravensbrück. In 1941 and 1942 came the establishment of the actual death camps, particularly Birkenau, Majdanek and Auschwitz; several of these camps “functioned” until they were liberated by the Red Army.

Despite the development of the concentration camps as outlined here, it is possible to presume a certain continuity in the camps’ structure that justifies speaking generally of a system of terror in the camps. The precursors of the concentration camps Dachau and Buchenwald were camps for prisoners under “preventive detention,” a concept that appears for the first time in Germany in a Prussian law of 1848. Thus, one could say that the Nazis could “fall back on the considerable experience that previous governments had accumulated with preventive detention and concentration camps.”⁸⁰

78. Herbert 1998.

79. See Tuchel 1998; Orth 1999.

80. Drobisch and Weiland 1993, p. 21. See also Tuchel 1991, Tuchel 1998, and Drobisch 1996.

Roughly subdivided, two *written* genres of concentration camp descriptions can be distinguished: the pure memoirs of former prisoners, and observations on a scientific basis of the system of terror in the camps. This categorical division, however, does not rule out the existence of especially valuable, sensitive, and harrowing observations, that unite the elements of both memoirs and scientifically oriented perspectives. Among these above all are Paul Neurath's study presented here, along with Kogon's *SS-Staat*, Ernst Federn's essay "Terror as a System," Viktor Frankl's *Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (*A Psychologist Survives the Concentration Camp*), Bettelheim's above-mentioned study "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations," and *Prisoners of Fear* by the Viennese physician Ella Lingens, who had been educated in the social sciences.⁸¹ The survivors' memoirs are among the most important testimonies.⁸²

In the last few decades, the scope of all sorts of written memoirs of concentration camp internment during the various phases of development of the Nazi terror has continued to grow. Kogon calls his work not a history of the German concentration camps, but rather "mainly a sociological work."⁸³ Thus it is justifiable to understand Kogon's and Neurath's work as both eyewitness reports and "factual reports," taking no notice of the boundaries between memoir and scientifically oriented description.

A further phase in the memoir literature began around the time of the Eichmann trial, with the notes of Primo Levi, Jean Améry, and later the memoirs—particularly significant as regards Buchenwald—of Jorge Semprun.⁸⁴ The scientific investigation of the concentration camps made little progress over decades. The "Dilemma of Emotionality and Objectivity" in dealing with the Nazi past, and particularly the Holocaust,⁸⁵ is also a feature of the scientific studies of the concentration camps in the postwar period, which will be discussed briefly here. Only in the most recent period is it no longer a question of researchers whose foreknowledge and scientific attitude are decisively marked by immediate experiences with and involvement in the Nazi regime.

Among the most influential of the scientifically oriented memoirs of the Nazis' exercise of power are those of Bruno Bettelheim. Bettelheim

81. Kogon 1946; Federn 1946; Frankl ([1946] 1959); Bettelheim 1943; Lingens 1948.

82. See also Levi ([1986] 1989); Young 1988; however, cf. also Hilberg 2001.

83. Kogon ([1946] 1950).

84. Levi ([1958] 1959); Améry ([1980] 1966); Semprun 1982 and 1997.

85. See Arendt 1948.

justifies his approach and perspective for explicating his own experiences of concentration camp internment by emphasizing that the camps' total "order" can not be understood if one only reports on the atrocities and the fate of individual prisoners. "It is the sociological significance of the camps that makes them an important example of the essence of the despotic and mass state."⁸⁶ Bettelheim's general conclusions about the prisoners' way of life in concentration camps was particularly poignantly expressed in his formulation that the prisoners' adjustment to the exceptional situation of the camp frequently created a personality structure that "was ready and willing to assimilate the values and behavior of the SS."⁸⁷ This interpretation found a wide audience.⁸⁸

The scientifically oriented perspective makes the atrocities' and the terror's uniqueness an exemplar of the function and consequences of the rule of oppressive mass society by means of a massive intervention in the personality of the individual. The prisoners themselves were to become part of an obedient mass. To the outside world, the prisoners' humiliation was meant to serve as a deterrent and suppress any resistance. The camps themselves, from this viewpoint, became a kind of experimental apparatus, a laboratory "in which one researched by what means the . . . specified goals could best be reached."⁸⁹ Or more generally formulated, the camp system is treated as a scientific investigation of how to organize a politically successful regime by altering the personalities of individuals so that they become "useful subjects of the total state."⁹⁰

The fate of the prisoners thus becomes raw data.⁹¹ The force of the terror fades, as does the suffering occasioned by the extreme exceptional situation. Statistics regarding the number of prisoners, or of the dead, tell us little about the practice of everyday terror, suffering, humiliation, and torment, or about the manner of killing and dying in the concentration camps. To be sure, Bettelheim self-reflexively tells us that it was not distanced curiosity that induced him to observe and question his fellow prisoners, but rather his instinct for self-preservation.⁹² Among the early scientific studies on the society of terror must also be counted

86. Bettelheim 1960, p. 119. Cf. Bettelheim 1943 and 1979.

87. Bettelheim 1960, p. 186.

88. See Fleck and Müller 1997, pp. 22–28.

89. Bettelheim 1960, p. 121.

90. Bettelheim 1960, p. 122; cf. Sutton 1996, pp. 133–182.

91. See Klüger 1996, pp. 35–36.

92. Bettelheim 1960, p. 123.

the American researchers who, as soldiers, had experience with the concentration camp prisoners in the immediate post-war period.⁹³

Among the first important systematic scientific studies to deal with the Nazi reign of terror from a biographical distance, apart from contemporary essays and books, were the research studies of the sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky in the 1990s, as well as the more recent work of the historian Karin Orth on the political history of the concentration camps' organization. An anthology by Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth, and Christoph Dieckmann contains studies by a large number of German researchers who concern themselves with various problems in concentration camp research.⁹⁴

* * *

Paul Neurath's dissertation remained unpublished, was long unknown to researchers, and was rediscovered only recently.⁹⁵ Since then, however, it has been cited with increasing frequency,⁹⁶ and lately it has been utilized extensively.⁹⁷ With the present belated publication, we hope to make Neurath's significant contribution to the history of the camps even more widely known.

In conclusion, we would like to draw attention to the principles of this edition. The basis of the text is the 1943 dissertation, in the version submitted in 1951 (to which Neurath had made minor corrections up to at least 1945). We added the "Addendum" prepared by Neurath in the course of his examinations in 1943; this was not originally a part of the dissertation. The text was essentially left unaltered, except for errors regarding minor details such as isolated misspellings of names, which, if we were able to recognize them, were silently corrected.

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93. E.g., Bloch 1947.

94. Sofsky 1990, 1993, and 1997; Orth 1999; Herbert, Orth, and Dieckmann 1998.

95. Pingel 1978; Fleck and Müller 1997.

96. E.g., Daxelmüller 1998.

97. Kuschey 2003.

genesis of the present volume. Without his help the present Afterword would have been somewhat poorer in content, since it is due to him that documents hidden among Paul Neurath's personal effects were found and files in the possession of the University of Vienna were brought to light. We wish to thank Anton Amann of the Department of Sociology at the University of Vienna for generously granting us access to Paul Neurath's still unorganized unpublished documents; Thomas Maisel for his support of our research in the Archives of the University of Vienna; and Heinz Achtsnit, Director of the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Economics and Computer Science of the university, for his support in finding Paul Neurath's personnel file and other materials. Our further thanks to Harriet Zuckerman for access to the unpublished documents of Robert K. Merton, Jack Kamerman for his assistance with the research in New York, Bernard R. Crystal of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University, and Abby M. Lester of the Columbia University Archives-Columbiana Library.

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