

**The Journal of Value Inquiry**

**CONTENTS Vol. 26, No. 3, 1992**

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## **National Socialism and the disintegration of values: Reflections on Nietzsche, Rosenberg, and Broch**

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My topic is the disintegration of values, the idea that there are no first principles, that everything is relative – a topic as much an issue today as it was in Weimar and Nazi Germany. After spelling out Nietzsche's assertion of the relativism of all truth-claims, I suggest the self-refuting nature of Nietzsche's claims (section 1). I then sketch the position of Alfred Rosenberg, the foremost National Socialist philosopher (section 2); here I argue that the National Socialism of Rosenberg originates out of the Nietzschean affirmation of relativism and suspension of the law of non-contradiction, that is, Nietzsche's claim that an internal contradiction is no argument against a position. After refuting the relativistic claim philosophically and addressing its historical consequences, I turn to Hermann Broch, who offers in his trilogy *The Sleepwalkers* (1931-1932) a penetrating study of the disintegration of cultural values at the turn of the last century (section 3). In this novel Broch casts an ironic glance toward those heroes who try to escape relativism by returning, blindly, to outdated and philosophically weakened institutions of order; those who assert the relativism of all values and are thus led to a nihilistic worldview; and those who follow relativism with power positivism, that is, the claim that whoever establishes the most powerful position will (and should) determine justice. Finally, I suggest that transcendental arguments exist for ultimate moral principles, but that we, like our Weimar counterparts, have not fully grasped this important insight or worked hard enough at developing its implications (section 4).

### **1.**

Whatever Nietzsche's assertive stances may have been, his most fundamental claim – in the sense that it undermines all others – is that our positions are ultimately illusory, untenable, and ungrounded. Nietzsche insists on the impossibility of a first principle. All truth is perspectival, all knowledge is

hypothetical, and all categories are historically conditioned. For Nietzsche there are no transcendent norms, “no eternal horizons and perspectives” (2:135).<sup>1</sup> He writes: “There is no ‘truth’ ” (3:497; cf. 3:314 and 3:751–52). In a well-known passage the philosopher redefines truth as a form of error that serves life: “Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value for *life* is ultimately decisive” (3:844). All evaluations are based on the preservation of a particular entity, be it an individual, a community, or a race (3:441). Values are measured by the strength and richness they give a particular valuing will. Nietzsche assumes the stance that the falseness of a judgment is no argument against it; indeed, false judgments that promote a particular life or species are to be privileged (2:569; cf. 2:589 and 3:919). Contradictions are to be endured, not overcome (2:175; cf. 3:441).

Followers of Nietzsche – for example, Nehamas (see esp. 36, 49, 72–73) – tend to separate perspectivism, the idea that no position can be ultimately grounded but that one can argue for the validity of one position over another, from relativism, the idea that all positions are equally valid. The distinction may be heuristically useful, but it is philosophically unsound. If, as in perspectivism, no position can be grounded, then my defense of a position leads to an infinite regress and is ultimately arbitrary and invalid; relativism is the consequence. If, as in relativism, all positions are equally valid, then I am free to assert the validity of my position at the expense of another. My exclusion of the other position is necessarily valid; relativism passes over into perspectivism. I use the terms, therefore, interchangeably.

Nietzsche’s perspectivism may at first glance appear liberating: because our own truth is not final, we are free to listen to other positions, to develop “antennae” for other perspectives (3:441).<sup>2</sup> This is a possible consequence, and it is surely the position of the mild Nietzsche and that of many attracted to the Nietzschean worldview. We must ask, however, not what may be a contingent response to perspectivism, but what is its *logical* consequence. A tolerance for other positions – without a transcendent measure by which to judge them – means that we have no valid argument against that position which itself denies tolerance. If there is no absolute, my own particular interests or those of another gain a stature they could not possibly have in a philosophy where the particular is subordinate to the universal. If “nothing is true” and “everything is permitted” (2:889), then one individual’s assertion of power over others is legitimated. Values, not derived from transcendental logic, have no basis other than the contingencies of historical convention and the arbitrariness of individual preference.

Nietzsche’s personal notion of will to power may have little to do with the concepts of power and injustice developed by Thrasymachus and Callicles in Plato’s dialogues *Republic*, I, and *Gorgias*, but that is not

enough to counter the fact that power positivism is the ultimate consequence of Nietzschean perspectivism. Relativism cannot argue against power positivism; indeed, it passes over into it. This transition is related to Nietzsche’s view of the shift from passive nihilism (there is no truth, everything is equal) to active nihilism (there is no truth, therefore I am free to assert my position at the expense of others).<sup>3</sup> Because the values of the power positivist do not stem from any rational principles, they become whatever serves the power of the individual or group, secondary virtues such as discipline or sacrifice. Whatever goals these secondary virtues themselves serve remain ungrounded, and since reason has been abandoned – it makes universal claims that are untenable – the power positivist, not surprisingly, turns to nature, blood, instinct, and race. The question of highest values becomes a purely decisionistic matter in which reason gives way to nature.

Both relativism and power positivism are philosophically untenable positions. The statement “there is no truth” involves a contradiction between the statement made and what is presupposed in the act of making the statement. We cannot, without refuting ourselves, assert as true the claim that nothing is true. Not all Nietzsche scholars are blind to this quandary. Consider, for example, the question Bernd Magnus raises: “If all theories are perspectives, is not the theory which states that all theories are perspectives also (merely) a perspective?” (196–97). Unfortunately, Magnus and others fail to pursue Nietzsche’s claim to its logical conclusion, that is, to its self-refutation. The critic who comes closest is Nehamas, who admits that “it is *possible* that some views are not interpretations” (66). The claim, however, that there *may* be non-hypothetical or absolute knowledge is a contradiction in terms: if absolute knowledge is possible, it is not only possible but *necessary*. An absolute position is either apodictically negative, that is, impossible, or apodictically positive, that is, necessary.<sup>4</sup>

Since Nietzsche’s measure of evaluation is itself without foundation and since he can affirm it only insofar as he abandons the law of non-contradiction, philosophy becomes for him a matter not of reason and rational debate but of likes and dislikes. Injustice (or the advantage of the more powerful) becomes a principle of justice. We are free to choose and implement whatever position advances our power.

Power positivism, however, as I have argued elsewhere, is just as self-cancelling as relativism;<sup>5</sup> first, it is internally destructive (we cannot act unjustly as a group or an individual without acting at one and the same time justly); second, its defense involves a pragmatic contradiction (we cannot argue for injustice unless we accept the just conditions of discourse); and third, it is destructive from an external point of view (we cannot attempt to

persuade others of the validity of injustice without threatening our own position).

## 2.

We do not refute a position philosophically by drawing attention to its historical consequences; nonetheless, an understanding of the historical – not merely the logical – proximity of Nietzschean perspectivism and National Socialism can serve heuristic purposes. Though National Socialism is often viewed as an absolute system, we must recognize that it is an *arbitrary* absolute and therefore arises not from an absolute philosophy (there are universal truths) but from a relativistic position that has passed over into power positivism (because there are no universal truths, one subject or group of subjects has the right to assert its irrational truths over others).<sup>6</sup> If we relativize the absolute, we are free to absolutize the relative, and that, not absolute philosophy, is what National Socialism was, an absolutization of the relative, namely power and race, as a result of the undermining of the absolute.

This is clearly demonstrated in the writings of Alfred Rosenberg, the foremost National Socialist philosopher. On Rosenberg's impact, consider the words of Goebbels, speaking in the presence of Hitler, in January 1943: "In his works Alfred Rosenberg has helped to an extraordinary degree to found and consolidate, scientifically and intuitively, the worldview of National Socialism ... Only a later age will fully appreciate how deep the influence of this man has been on the spiritual and ideological formation of the National Socialist state" (Härtle 45).<sup>7</sup> In his *Myth of the Twentieth Century* (1930), which sold over a million copies by 1943, Rosenberg rebukes those systematic thinkers who assert the viability of *a priori* or absolute truths and base values on logic and the law of non-contradiction. Rosenberg mocks the philosophical search for absolute truth: "Like the hopeful thinkers of antiquity, all of today's practicing philosophers are seriously and eagerly searching or hunting for the so-called one, eternal truth. They seek this truth in a purely logical manner by continually making inferences from axioms of the intellect" (681–82). Any philosophy that teaches absolute or logically deduced transcendent values errs. (22, 119, 127). Values are to be created by the individual race or will; they cannot be discovered – nor can they be refuted – by logical analysis.

Rosenberg the National Socialist philosopher opposes knowledge of race to all universal philosophies: "This knowledge ... places us ... in the sharpest opposition to all 'absolute' and 'universal' systems, which, from the standpoint of an alleged humanity, once again desire a unification of all

souls in the future" (136).<sup>8</sup> Rosenberg contrasts empty, universal, logical truth with the organic truths of blood and race: "Thereby, however, an entirely different conception of 'the truth' is alluded to: that for us truth does not mean a *logical* right or wrong, but rather that an *organic* answer be demanded of the question: fruitful or unfruitful, autonomous or constrained?" (690). In another passage he asserts: "That is the other – 'truer' – current of genuine (organic) truth-seeking as opposed to the scholastic-logical-mechanical struggle for 'absolute knowledge'" (691). Humanity, dissolved of racial origins and considerations, is a meaningless fiction (22), yet humanity must be countered insofar as the concept dissolves racial identities and leads to valuelessness: "raceless valuelessness" (120). Rosenberg's fear of this raceless universality is softened by his claim that no real communication occurs among races. Rosenberg likens race to Leibniz's monads: "the monad opposite a personality of entirely alien blood again becomes 'windowless'" (694). Having abandoned universal, coherent, and positive categories, Rosenberg absolutizes the negative figures of difference and otherness.

If values are not derived from reason, then surely they spring from nature: "Today ... an entire race is beginning to sense that values are created and preserved only where the law of blood still determines man's thought and action, whether it be conscious or unconscious" (22). For Nietzsche, the historical genesis of an idea proves its invalidity – that is, since all ideas are historically conditioned, all claims to ahistorical truth are invalid. Rosenberg draws the consequences of Nietzsche's position.<sup>9</sup> If all positions are historically conditioned and thus universally invalid, the better conditions must generate better truths: race usurps reason, history transcends philosophy. Nietzschean in spirit is Rosenberg's assertion that ideas are determined by the body: "'science' is a result of blood" (120). Also based on perspectival philosophy is Rosenberg's justification for asserting that values should be affirmed in order to ennoble "German nationality ... to strengthen the race" (545). Because reason is no measure, Rosenberg asks not whether the goals of the Nordic race are legitimate, but how the Nordic race can achieve power.

Even if organic truth is erroneous, errors may still serve life (685–86), and life is higher than reason, organic truth higher than the law of non-contradiction (683): Rosenberg cites Nietzsche's argument: "only what creates life has virtue and a value" (691). In this spirit Rosenberg can affirm any 'truth' that serves the Germanic race (684). Each culture, each race has its "highest value" (116), but if the highest value of one race calls for the elimination of another race, any protest is conditioned by the inferiority of the race to be eradicated. Without external restraints, the Germanic race has the right to assert its superior path over others (694–95, 700). The myth of

blood must assert itself, and in so doing it need recognize no other highest values: "it demands a world revolution and tolerates no other highest values next to itself" (699). As no universal standards for determining justice exist, it is subordinate to the practical goals of race (571). "Right ... is ... eternally bound to a certain blood ... with which it surfaces and with which it submerges" (572). Since reason is not supreme, no argument against the Germanic worldview is valid: "The new myth and the new power of creating prototypes ... can in no way be 'refuted'" (700).<sup>10</sup>

Within academic circles Rosenberg's critique of reason and of universals found great resonance.<sup>11</sup> Ernst Krieck, for example, includes as a recurring theme in his three-volume *Racial-Political Anthropology* an attack on logic as artificial, abstract, and opposed to intuition. (See esp. 1:38–39; 2:7–10; and 3:11–12.) He speaks disparagingly of the "dogma of reason," which teaches that all human beings – independently of race, nation, and history – have in principle a common faculty which enables them to reach universally valid insights and norms (2:8; cf. 3:14 and 3:123). Truth derives from character as well as social and historical factors, not the so-called laws of reason (3:125). For Krieck, as for Rosenberg, truth is always culturally relative; "natural" right exists only insofar as we are willing to reinterpret "natural" as racial, rather than rational (2:42).

Friedrich Alfred Beck, in his *Deutsche Vollendung* or *German Consummation*, shares this elevation of contingency. He reaffirms Rosenberg's argument that no first principles exist, that every philosophical and scientific endeavor contains presuppositions. For Beck, not unlike Rosenberg, this presupposition or moment of faith is "none other than that power which rises out of the racial, spiritual, and intellectual foundation of the respective volkish humanity" (574). Morality, too, is historically conditioned. "Values do not originate from recognition of, and adherence to, universal and binding regulations and laws" (510). "An exclusively philosophically grounded and established morality rests on that presumptuous and stupid view that the moral idea can be realized only with the help of philosophical support" (527). Moral value, having no universal anchor, is what serves the *Volk*.

The early twentieth-century failure to recognize and ground absolute values was not restricted to academic philosophy. A judicial corollary to perspectival morality and power positivism is the positive law theory of justice, a theory dominant in the Weimar era.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the Weimar Constitution, as has been noted by thinkers as diverse as Carl Schmitt and Hermann Broch,<sup>13</sup> lacked any absolute foundation. It was a document dependent on legal positivism and a relativistic, consensus theory of truth. A two-thirds majority in parliament could change not just ordinary legislation but the most fundamental elements of the Constitution; thus, minorities

were susceptible to majority rule. Still worse, a two-thirds majority could make arbitrary changes, and then conclude that the Constitution could never again be changed.<sup>14</sup> It was not merely Article 48, which allowed for the emergency suspension of civil rights, that gave Hitler a legal map to power; the Enabling Act of 24 March 1933, based on Article 76, the clause which allowed for the Constitution's own self-cancellation, guaranteed the lawful passage from Weimar to Nazism. A formal democracy not bound by substantive norms stems from a relativistic, rather than absolute, philosophy, and, as history has shown, such a democracy inevitably destroys its own foundations. Either there are normative values that transcend democratic consensus, or it is illegitimate to protect, constitutionally, any position from possible shifts in consensus. Only a political structure based on logically coherent transcendent norms can guarantee individual rights when majority opinion opposes this or when historical changes occur.

### 3.

Many modern novels help us understand the roots of National Socialism. Heinrich Mann's *Untertan* (1916) comes to mind as one of the most detailed and successful on the level of psychological portrayal, and Hermann Broch's *Sleepwalkers* on the level of philosophical reflection.<sup>15</sup> Broch's novel analyzes what he elsewhere calls "the problem of relativism, for which there is no absolute truth, no absolute value, and therefore no absolute ethic" (10/2:195). The term "the disintegration of values" comes from *The Sleepwalkers*. Broch contrasts the medieval worldview, in which all values were interrelated and subordinate to the one overarching framework of Christianity, with the modern worldview, in which the universal has been splintered into particular, often conflicting, ideologies, whence the disintegration of values. Broch's novel introduces four main characters: Pasenow, a romantic who – according to Broch's definition of the term – desires to hold on to an outdated order that lacks a solid foundation; Esch, also a romantic yet one lost in an increasingly anarchic world, a world whose order is visibly crumbling; Bertrand, a philosopher of sorts who recognizes that the contemporary order lacks foundations and who addresses this point – he sees, however, no answer to the crisis; finally, Huguenau, the matter-of-fact character who draws the consequences of relativism by acting without regard for ethical norms. The narrator intersperses his story with philosophical reflections on the disintegration of values. The world in which values were immediately apparent and mutually linked in an overarching wholistic framework is past; yet we long for

meaning, indeed can't live without it, so we embrace what Broch calls partial value systems. These have their own restricted logic. We identify with a nation, a race, a particular worldview. Phrases such as "business is business," "war is war," "love for love's sake," or "orders are orders" all belong here. Logic is reduced, as it was in National Socialism, to consistent action in accordance with an arbitrarily selected and restrictive starting point.

When overarching value structures begin to dissolve, the security of our life is threatened. Pasenow and Esch, the heroes of the first and second parts of Broch's trilogy, experience disorientation of this kind; social rupture and intellectual crisis have called into question their stable view of reality and belief in the justice of existing institutions. The two characters desperately seek identity and order. Though Pasenow recognizes that his ideals are illusory, he does his best to suppress this insight. Esch confusedly searches for a simplistic solution, be it sacrifice, be it a Messiah, and his thought patterns become almost purely associative. These moments bring home the irrationalism of the romantic position. Not by chance does a religious framework of belief increasingly predominate for Pasenow and Esch. The desire for order, even if ungrounded, and for scapegoats illuminates not only the counter-enlightenment tendencies of romanticism but also its political dangers. Nonetheless, Pasenow's denial of destabilizing reflection and Esch's obsessions reflect legitimate desires for objectively recognized and emotionally binding social institutions. The weakness of romantics lies in their fearful unwillingness to think through their critique of the decaying system and their consequent inability to ground the structures on which they would base the system's strength and stability. Ultimately, their position must cancel itself and pass over into another.

Bertrand terrorizes Pasenow by undermining his stable beliefs, yet Bertrand also fascinates Pasenow. Huguenau usurps Esch's role both at the newspaper and in his marriage. These attitudes and actions reflect that Pasenow's and Esch's romantic positions find their truth in the rationalism of Bertrand and Huguenau. In contrast to the romantics, Bertrand recognizes no social conventions or institutions. Though his insight into the falsity of institutions frees him from social obligations, it also makes his relations meaningless. His abandonment of values encompasses even the value of his own existence. Bertrand consequently commits suicide. His position is no less self-cancelling than that of Pasenow or Esch.

Huguenau is characterized by his freedom and pragmatic rationality. Like Naphta in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* (1924), Bertrand and Huguenau are figures of negativity cleverer than competing characters who naively affirm traditional positions. Huguenau, with his manipulative rationalism and freedom from social restraints, fails, however, just like

Bertrand, to provide a legitimate answer to the romanticism of Pasenow and Esch, even if his actions are consequential. The consequence of a content-free, ungrounded absolute is ultimately its passage to an arbitrary and potentially more ruthless absolute. Huguenau, recognizing only the arbitrary claims of his own subjectivity, becomes a murderer.

If the absolute is without content, if the formal structures of society become impotent, assertive individuals are free to assume power. Their partial value system becomes law. If the truth of Esch is Huguenau, then the truth of Huguenau is Esch; that is, the romantic worldview may crumble into anarchy and relativism, but relativism allows for the resurrection of new partial value systems. To use the Nietzschean phrases, passive nihilism always passes over into active nihilism, and the content of active nihilism knows no guidelines: it can range from humanism to barbarism. The only way out of this cycle (or hidden identity) of relativism and partial value systems is reflection on the grounds of the assertion that no grounds exist, that there is in principle no *a priori* truth. This negative assertion is one and the same with the claim: only arbitrarily founded partial value systems exist, each with an equal right to existence or, more precisely, an equal right to assert itself at the expense of others. Any solution to the problem of relativism and partial value systems must originate with the argument for unavoidable and uncircumventible structures on which the relativist and romantic depend even as they deny them. The only way to evaluate partial value systems, perhaps even to allow for communication among them, is through immanent critique: the refutation of an alternative position on its own terms and on the basis of internal inconsistencies. If it can be shown that a proposition cannot be refuted without self-contradiction and without also necessarily presupposing the proposition to be refuted, then that proposition is necessarily true. Transcendental reflections of this kind represent the first step toward establishing a legitimate and coherent totality rather than the totalitarianism of an arbitrary standpoint. An immanent critique would not rest with the negativity of Bertrand or Huguenau; it would reestablish the validity of intersubjective values and institutions by sublating not only the unfounded objectivity of Pasenow and Esch but also the merely subjective rationality of Bertrand and Huguenau.

Broch's novel seems to move in this direction. By way of its double negation of ungrounded objectivity and instrumental subjectivity, it calls for objective social structures that are not only asserted but grounded as an authority (or necessity) that is one and the same with autonomy because it is none other than adherence to *a priori* principles. The legitimacy and realization of this vision are to be obtained outside the realm of the novel; this may explain the narrator's doubts about the ultimate value of art, but it does not conflict with art's inherently proleptic function.

## 4.

The disintegration of values Broch analyzes is related to an ongoing intellectual crisis. Readers will likely have noticed resemblances between Nietzsche and Rosenberg and diverse tendencies in contemporary culture: the denial of universal norms, the suspension of the law of non-contradiction, the increasing elevation of difference, and the affirmation of the body at the expense of spirit. Readers will also have noticed that Broch's analysis of the disintegration of values has lost little of its relevance today. Indeed, in the past several years with crises on Wall Street, in the White House and in Congress, with Allan Bloom's best-selling critique of the academy, and with the recent confusion, both philosophically and legally, over the newest issues in bioethics, Broch's analysis is as strong as it was during the Weimar era. The pluralist and perspectival tendencies of contemporary culture may evoke images of tolerance, but they are no safeguard against the arbitrary absolutes of power positivists. Indeed, they do much to dissolve the values that make their own positions possible. The American intellectual's fear of religious fanaticism in his/her own country is clearly justified, but his or her lack of grounded values is precisely what gives these irrational movements fuel.

We must distinguish between absolutists who make their claims blindly and irrationally and refuse to acknowledge the validity of immanent critique and those who arrive at their positions by exhibiting the self-cancellation of alternative positions. Through this negation of untenable positions it is possible to ground universal values and apply *a priori* principles to shed light on complex political and judicial issues. In conjunction with the project of German Idealism could be seen increased reflection on the philosophy of right, the creation of a coherent university system, the abolition of torture, arguments against the death penalty, and the development of new freedoms.<sup>16</sup> Within a Nietzschean framework, on the other hand, we cannot ground our arguments against injustice; particular interests are no longer subordinate to *a priori* truths, and justice is reduced to law or power. Relativists fail to realize that it is precisely their negation of first principles that gives irrational absolutists the *right* to assert whatever position they want. It should not surprise the observer of Weimar and Nazism that the United States is being increasingly polarized intellectually by cultural skeptics, ready to dismantle any hierarchy of intellectual positions, and extremists, who assert – like Broch's romantic – the absolute rightness of their position in such a way that they are incapable of considering alternatives.

An absolute philosophy, that is, a philosophy that grounds *a priori* values, is the only tenable counterstance, both philosophically and in the

long run historically, against arbitrary value systems. Moreover, since the only philosophically valid philosophy does not dogmatically assert its own values but develops them by exhibiting contradictions in alternative positions, such a philosophy is tolerant in a truer sense than is a perspectival philosophy, for it is willing to weigh counterpositions; it takes their claims to truth seriously and recognizes only immanent critique. Such a philosophy could, I think, answer a crisis in American thought that has led Bloom to suggest parallels between the United States and Weimar.<sup>17</sup> The solution is not a furthering of our ultimately ungrounded critique of traditional value structures (that is, more Nietzsche, and as a consequence more Rosenberg), but a grounding of the measures of critique and with that the legitimacy of values and institutions, be they old or new (that is, a philosophical and practical response to the questions raised by Hermann Broch's analysis of the disintegration of values).<sup>18</sup>

## Notes

1. The translations of Nietzsche are those of Walter Kaufmann. The translations of Rosenberg stem from Ann Blackler and Mark Roche. Vivian Bird's recent translation of Rosenberg's *Myth* is linguistically unreliable; moreover, it omits selected passages. The remaining translations are my own.
2. Nietzsche's immediate tolerance exhibits itself in statements such as the following from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "This is *my* way; where is yours?" – thus I answered those who asked me 'the way.' For *the* way – that does not exist" (2:443). Cf. 2:697. The self-cancellation of this position is sometimes hinted at, but the consequences are never drawn. See 2:36 and 2:586.
3. See 3:557–58. Cf. 2:645–47.
4. Similarly, Nehamas admits that Nietzsche cannot, without contradicting himself, abandon unconditional values unconditionally (224), yet conditional unconditional values are again contradictory. If unconditional values are possible, they are necessary. For a development of this line of thinking, with specific reference to the Münchhausen trilemma, see Höslé's essay on "Begründungsfragen."
5. See Roche, "Plato and the Structures of Injustice."
6. By focusing on the ideas that contributed to National Socialism, I do not mean to minimize complementary accounts that focus on politics, economics, sociology, or psychology. I am dealing here with merely one aspect of a highly complex configuration.
7. For a thorough evaluation of Rosenberg's – sometimes contested – influence, see Baumgärtner, esp. 106–37; and Hutchinson, esp. 35–62 and 314–42.
8. The most recent account of Rosenberg is Nova, who justly includes a chapter on Rosenberg's "Nonuniversalism" (169–78). However, Nova does not delve into the philosophical import of Rosenberg's non-universalism, and he states: "Any objective, logical refutation of the *Myth* is impossible" (xv). Such a position not only fails to counter Rosenberg, it confirms, as we will see, the metaposition from which Rosenberg derives the legitimacy of his claims.

9. Walter Kaufmann has long since disproved the picture of the proto-Nazi Nietzsche as it was promoted through the unethical editorial and exegetical work of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche and Alfred Bäuml. See Kaufmann esp. 4–18, 40–46, 78, 225–27, 284–306, and 417. Nonetheless, a connection does exist between Nietzsche and National Socialism: it relates to the broad consequences of Nietzsche's theory of truth.
10. For additional, salient attacks on logic, philosophy, and universal truth, see 117–18, 127, 137, 390, 539, and esp. 681–701. The themes are present throughout the book in the form of Rosenberg's affirmation of their negation.
11. If Rauschnig is to be believed, not only other philosophers, but Hitler himself shared Rosenberg's relativism. Rauschnig reports Hitler as saying: "There is no truth, neither in a moral nor a scientific sense" (210).
12. See the influential studies by Jellinek and Kelsen.
13. For further analysis see Höhle and Vitzthum.
14. The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany avoids this self-cancelling structure with its declaration that the elimination of articles 1 and 20 is inadmissible. See Art. 79, par. 3.
15. For a fuller (and parallel) analysis of the novel, with references to the secondary literature, see Roche, "Formalism and the Figure of Self-Cancellation in *The Sleepwalkers*."
16. The resistance movement against Hitler was in part informed by the categories of transcendental idealism. One thinks, for example, of Adam von Trott zu Solz, a member of the Stauffenberg circle, whose dissertation of 1932 explored international justice from the perspective of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*; or of Hans Scholl and Kurt Huber, central figures in the resistance group known as "The White Rose" – the former was a careful reader of Plato, the latter a consequent Kantian. See Scholl 16 and Gollwitzer 159–61.
17. The major weakness of Bloom's book may be that despite selected application of the figure of self-cancellation (e.g., 36, 204, and 218), the study fails to offer a sustained, immanent critique of relativism and with this a *grounding* of first principles. For a more adequate development of the – originally Socratic – figure of self-cancellation, as it pertains to the refutation of various forms of relativism and the grounding of *a priori* truth, see Höhle, *Wahrheit und Geschichte*, esp. 19–62.
18. Short passages from this essay will also appear in my book *Gottfried Benn's Static Poetry: Aesthetic and Intellectual-Historical Interpretations* (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). This material is used here with the gracious permission of the University of North Carolina Press.

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