



BLOOMSBURY

# VICTOR KLEMPERER

THE LANGUAGE  
OF THE  
THIRD REICH

BLOOMSBURY

# **The Language of the Third Reich**

TITLES IN THE BLOOMSBURY REVELATIONS SERIES

*Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor W. Adorno

*Being and Event*, Alain Badiou

*On Religion*, Karl Barth

*The Language of Fashion*, Roland Barthes

*The Intelligence of Evil*, Jean Baudrillard

*I and Thou*, Martin Buber

*Never Give In!*, Winston Churchill

*The Boer War*, Winston Churchill

*The Second World War*, Winston Churchill

*In Defence of Politics*, Bernard Crick

*Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, Manuel DeLanda

*A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

*Anti-Oedipus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

*Cinema I*, Gilles Deleuze

*Cinema II*, Gilles Deleuze

*Taking Rights Seriously*, Ronald Dworkin

*Discourse on Free Will*, Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther

*Education for Critical Consciousness*, Paulo Freire

*Marx's Concept of Man*, Erich Fromm and Karl Marx

*To Have or To Be?*, Erich Fromm

*Truth and Method*, Hans Georg Gadamer

*All Men Are Brothers*, Mohandas K. Gandhi

*Violence and the Sacred*, Rene Girard

*The Essence of Truth*, Martin Heidegger

*The Eclipse of Reason*, Max Horkheimer

*The Language of the Third Reich*, Victor Klemperer

*Rhythmanalysis*, Henri Lefebvre

*After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre

*Time for Revolution*, Antonio Negri

*Politics of Aesthetics*, Jacques Ranciere

*Course in General Linguistics*, Ferdinand de Saussure

*An Actor Prepares*, Constantin Stanislavski

*Building A Character*, Constantin Stanislavski

*Creating A Role*, Constantin Stanislavski

*Interrogating the Real*, Slavoj Žižek

Some titles are not available in North America



# **The Language of the Third Reich**

LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii  
A Philologist's Notebook

**Victor Klemperer**

Translated by Martin Brady

B L O O M S B U R Y  
LONDON • NEW DELHI • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

**Bloomsbury Academic**

An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square  
London  
WC1B 3DP  
UK

1385 Broadway  
New York  
NY 10018  
USA

[www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com)

**Bloomsbury is a registered trade mark of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc**

Translated from *LT1 Notizbuch eines Philologen*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition  
Published in Germany 1957 by Max Niemeyer Verlag, Halle (Saale)  
© Reclam Verlag Leipzig 1975

This English Translation © The Athlone Press 2000

Bloomsbury Revelations edition first published in 2013 by  
Bloomsbury Academic

The publishers wish to record their thanks to Inter Nationes for a grant towards the cost of translation

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Bloomsbury Academic or the author.

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: PB: 978-1-4725-0721-1

**Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

Klemperer, Victor, 1881–1960.

[*LT1*, *Notizbuch eines Philologen*. English]

Language of the Third Reich: *LT1*: *Lingua Tertii Imperii*/Victor Klemperer;

Translated by Martin Brady. – Bloomsbury Revelations edition.

pages cm

Originally published in English: London; New Brunswick, N.J.: Athlone Press, 2000.

Published in German in Germany 1957 by Max Niemeyer Verlag, Halle (Saale)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4725-0721-1 (pbk.)

1. German language.
  2. National socialism.
  3. German language—Political aspects.
  4. German language—20th century.
  5. German language—Semantics.
  6. Propaganda, German.
- I. Brady, Martin, 1962– translator. II. Title.

PF3074.K613 2013

430'.9043—dc23

2013020244

# **Translator's Note**

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Helen Hughes and Sigmund Laufer, without whose energetic support this translation would not have been possible.





# Contents

- Heroism (Instead of an Introduction) 1
- 1** LTI 9
- 2** Prelude 17
- 3** Distinguishing Feature: Poverty 19
- 4** Partenau 25
- 5** From the Diary of the First Year 29
- 6** The First Three Words of the Nazi Language 41
- 7** *Aufziehen* 47
- 8** Ten Years of Fascism 51
- 9** Fanatical 59
- 10** Autochthonous Writing 65
- 11** Blurring Boundaries 69
- 12** Punctuation 75
- 13** Names 77
- 14** *Kohlenklau* 87
- 15** *Knif* 91
- 16** On a Single Working Day 97

- 17** 'System' and 'Organisation' 101
- 18** I Believe in Him 107
- 19** Personal Announcements as an  
LTI Revision Book 123
- 20** What Remains? 129
- 21** German Roots 133
- 22** A Sunny *Weltanschauung*  
(Chance Discoveries Whilst Reading) 145
- 23** If Two People do the Same Thing . . . 153
- 24** Café Europa 163
- 25** The Star 171
- 26** The Jewish War 177
- 27** The Jewish Spectacles 187
- 28** The Language of the Victor 195
- 29** Zion 207
- 30** The Curse of the Superlative 221
- 31** From the Great Movement Forward . . . 231
- 32** Boxing 237
- 33** *Gefolgschaft* 243
- 34** The One Syllable 253
- 35** Running Hot and Cold 259
- 36** Putting the Theory to the Test 267
- ' 'Cos of Certain Expressions' (An Afterword) 291

# **To my wife Eva Klemperer**

As long as twenty years ago, my dear Eva, I prefaced the dedication of a collection of essays with the remark that a dedication from me to you in the conventional sense of a present was out of the question, given that you were already co-owner of my books, since they were in every way the product of an intellectual community of property. This is still the same today.

But in this case things are rather different than with all my previous publications, this time I am even less entitled to present you with a dedication, and incomparably more compelled to do so than during those peaceful days in which we engaged in philology. But for you this book would not exist today, and its author, too, would have ceased to exist long ago. If I were to explain this in detail it would require copious, intimate pages. In place of this, please take the general observations of the philologist and pedagogue which open these sketches. You know, and even a blind man would be able to divine with his stick, to whom I am referring, when I speak to my audience of heroism.

VICTOR KLEMPERER  
Dresden, Christmas 1946

## **Chapter 6**

# **The First Three Words of the Nazi Language**

The very first word which struck me as specifically Nazi – not in its formation but in its usage – is associated in my mind with the bitterness surrounding the first loss of a friend brought about by the Third Reich. Thirteen years previously, we and T. had all moved to Dresden and the Institute of Science and Technology at the same time, I as a professor, he as a new student. He was almost what you would call a child prodigy. Child prodigies often go on to disappoint, but he seemed already to have passed through the perilous years of juvenile prodigiousness unscathed. From the most petty bourgeois background imaginable and very poor, he had been discovered during the war in a manner worthy of a novel. A famous visiting professor wanted to have a new machine demonstrated to him in the test bay of a Leipzig factory; as a result of conscription to military service there was a severe shortage of engineers, the only mechanic on duty at the time knew nothing about it, the professor got annoyed – at that moment a greasy young apprentice crawled out from under the machine and provided the necessary explanation. He had acquired the relevant information by paying attention to things that were none of his business and through independent studies at night. The professor promptly stepped in with a helping hand, the boy's remarkable energy was reinforced by his success, and a short time later, almost on one and the same day, this young man, whose formal education had not proceeded beyond elementary school level, passed both his exam as a journeyman fitter and his university entrance qualification. As a result the opportunity of earning a living through a

career in technology whilst studying at the same time offered itself to him. His mathematical and technological gifts stood the test of time: at a very young age, and without having taken the normal examination to qualify as an engineer, he was appointed to a high-ranking post.

But what I found attractive about him – despite the fact that I am unfortunately someone for whom nothing could be more alien than the mysteries of mathematics and technology – was the all-round character of his educational aspirations and reflections. He came and stayed in our house, and from being a lodger he became almost a foster son, calling us, half jokingly but also very much in earnest, mother and father; we also contributed to some extent to his education. He married young and the warm, close relationship between us remained unaffected. That it could be destroyed by differences of political opinion never entered the mind of any of the four of us.

And then National Socialism penetrated Saxony. I noticed in T. the first signs of a change in attitude. I asked him how he could sympathize with these people. ‘They don’t want anything different from the Socialists,’ he said, ‘they are also a workers’ party after all.’ – ‘Can’t you see that they have set their sights on war?’ – ‘At most a war of liberation which would benefit the entire national community, thereby helping the workers and the ordinary people as well. . .’

I began to have serious doubts about the extent and strength of his common sense. I tried a different tack in my attempt to make him more sceptical. ‘You have lived in my house for a number of years, you know the way I think, and you have often said yourself that you have learned something from us and that your moral values accord with ours – how, in the light of all this, can you possibly support a party which, on account of my origin, denies me any right to be a German or even a human being?’ – ‘You’re taking it all much too seriously, Babba.’ – (The Saxon term of address was presumably meant to give his remark, and indeed the whole discussion, a lighter tone.) – ‘The fuss and bother about the Jews is only there for propaganda purposes. You wait, when Hitler is at the helm he’ll be far too busy to insult the Jews . . .’

But the fuss and bother did have an effect – on our foster son as well. Some time later I asked him about a young man he knew. He shrugged his shoulders: ‘He’s working at AEG, you know what that means? . . . You don’t? . . . “*Alles echte Germanen* {All Teutons through and through}?’” ‘And he laughed and was surprised that I didn’t join in.

And then, when we hadn't seen one another for some time, he rang us up and invited us out for a meal, it was shortly after Hitler came to power. 'How are things with you at work?' I asked. 'Very good!' he answered. 'Yesterday we had a great day. There were a few shameless communists in Okrilla, so we organized a punitive expedition.' – 'What did you do?' – 'You know, we made them run the gauntlet of rubber truncheons, a mild dose of castor-oil, no bloodshed but very effective all the same, a proper punitive expedition in fact.'

*Strafexpedition* {punitive expedition} is the first term which I recognized as being specifically National Socialist, it was the very first of my LTI and is the very last word I heard from T.; I hung up without even bothering to refuse the invitation.

For me the word *Strafexpedition* was the embodiment of brutal arrogance and contempt for people who are in any way different, it sounded so colonial, you could see the encircled Negro village, you could hear the cracking of the hippopotamus whip. Later, but unfortunately not for very long, this memory had something comforting about it despite all the bitterness. 'A mild dose of castor-oil': it was so obvious that this operation was imitating the fascist customs of the Italians: the whole of Nazism seemed to me to be nothing more than an Italian infection. This comforting thought dissolved into thin air like early morning mist when confronted with the increasingly inescapable truth: the fundamental, mortal sin of Nazism was German and not Italian.

In fact the memory of the National Socialist (or fascist) term *Strafexpedition* itself would have faded for me as it did for millions of others had it not had the personal association, because it was only used in the early stage of the Third Reich, indeed it was overtaken by the very founding of the regime, made obsolete like the flechette by the aerial bomb. The semi-private, recreational sport of the punitive expedition was immediately replaced by the routine, official police operation, and castor-oil by the concentration camp. And six years after the beginning of the Third Reich the domestic expedition-turned-police-operation was drowned out by the pandemonium of world war, conceived by those who unleashed it as a kind of punitive expedition against all kinds of despised peoples. That's how words fade away. – With the other two, which signified the very opposite, it is an entirely different matter – You are naught, but I am everything! – they require no personal reminiscence in order to remain firmly in the memory, they will be there until the very

last and will not be left out of any history of the LTI. The next linguistic note in my diary reads: *Staatsakt* {state occasion}. Goebbels staged it, the first in an almost incalculably long series, on 21 March 1933 in the Garrison Church in Potsdam. (A strange insensitivity of the Nazis to the potential for satirical comedy to which they lay themselves open; one is almost tempted at times to believe in their subjective innocence! They used the glockenspiel of the Garrison Church, 'Be Forever Honest and True', as the jingle for Berlin Radio, and installed their farcical, non-existent parliamentary sessions in a theatre, the auditorium of the Krolloper.)

If the LTI verb *aufziehen* {to mount, set up} can legitimately be applied anywhere, then it is undoubtedly here; the fabric of these state occasions was always set up according to the same pattern, albeit in two different manifestations – one with and one without a coffin in the middle. The splendour of the banners, parades, garlands, fanfares and choruses, the all-embracing framework of speeches, these all remained constant features and were undoubtedly modelled on the example of Mussolini. During the war the coffin increasingly took centre stage and the already somewhat diminished impact of this advertising ploy was revitalized by the whiff of scandal. Whenever a state funeral was held for a general who had died in action or had had a fatal accident, the rumour went round that he had fallen out of grace with the Führer and had been removed on his orders. The fact that rumours of this kind could spread is – regardless of whether they corresponded to the truth or not – valid evidence both for the truth content attributed to the LTI and for the fact that people believed it could spread lies. The greatest lie which any state occasion ever voiced, however, and a lie which has since been proved as such, was the funeral ceremony for the Sixth Army and its Field Marshal. Ammunition for future acts of heroism was to be beaten out of defeat by claiming that many had loyally stuck it out until the bitter end, when in fact they had given themselves up in order not to be slaughtered like thousands of their comrades for a pointless and criminal cause. In his Stalingrad book Plievier contrived to make much shocking satirical mileage out of this state occasion.

In purely linguistic terms this word is doubly conceited. On the one hand it indicates that honours bestowed by National Socialism amount to recognition by the state, which indeed corresponds with the facts. It thus embodies the *L'Etat c'est moi* of absolutism. But to this statement it



immediately adds a demand. A state ceremony is an integral part of the history of the state, consequently something that must be continually kept alive in the minds of the people. A state ceremony has a particularly grand historical significance.

Which brings us to the word that National Socialism used from beginning to end with inordinate profligacy. It takes itself so seriously, it is so convinced of the permanence of its institutions, or at least is so keen to persuade others of that permanence, that every trifle, however insignificant, and everything that it comes into contact with, has a historical significance. Every speech delivered by the Führer is historical *{historisch}*, even if he says the same thing a hundred times over, every meeting the Führer has with the Duce is historical, even if it doesn't make the slightest difference to the existing state of things; the victory of a German racing car is historical, as is the official opening of a new motorway, and every single road, and every single section of every single road, is officially inaugurated; every harvest festival is historical, every Party Rally, every feast day of any kind; and since the Third Reich seems to know nothing but feast days – you could say that it suffered, indeed was mortally ill, from a lack of the everyday, just as the human body can be mortally ill from a lack of salt – it views every single day of its life as historical.

Over and over again the word was used in headlines, editorials and speeches and robbed of its venerable ring! If it is to recover it will have to be afforded infinite protection.

It is not necessary, however, to deliver a similar warning against the excessive use of the word *Staatsakt*, given that we don't have a state any more.



# Chapter 7

## *Aufziehen*

I wind up a clock {*aufziehen*}, I mount the warp on a loom {*aufziehen*}, I wind up a mechanical toy {*aufziehen*}: what we are dealing with in each case is a mechanical activity executed on an inanimate object which offers no resistance.

The automaton, the humming top, the walking, nodding animal all point towards the metaphorical use of the term: I wind someone up {*aufziehen*}. Which means that I tease him, I make a fool of him, I walk all over him; Bergson's definition of comedy as the process whereby something living is turned into something inanimate is here reinforced by common usage.

The term '*Aufziehen* {a wind-up}' is undoubtedly harmless in this context, but nevertheless a pejorative. (This is the word used by philologists to designate an 'impaired' or diminished meaning; from the Imperial name Augustus, the Exalted One, derives the pejorative 'stupid old Auguste' the circus clown.)<sup>1</sup>

In the modern age '*aufziehen*' acquired a well-defined new meaning, both positive and, at the same time, decidedly pejorative. It was said of an advert that it had been impressively set up {*aufgezogen*}. This constituted an acknowledgement of the commercial efficacy of the advertising campaign, but it also indicated that there was an element of excess, of sales patter which did not precisely match the real value of the thing on offer. The verb cropped up as an unequivocal and

---

<sup>1</sup>'*Der dumme August*' is proverbial in German for someone who plays the fool.

nmistakable pejorative when a theatre critic judged that an author had carried off this or that scene on a grand scale *{großaufgezogen}*. This meant that the man was more an unscrupulous technician (and seducer of the audience) than a genuine writer.

Right at the beginning of the Third Reich it looked for a moment as if the LTI would adopt this metaphorical connotation of censure. The Nazi newspapers celebrated as an act of patriotism the fact that 'decent students' had 'destroyed Professor Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Research that paraded as science *{wissenschaftlich aufgezogen}*'. Hirschfeld was a Jew and thus his Institute 'paraded as science' and was not truly scientific.

But a few days later it became apparent that the verb *per se* no longer had any pejorative associations. On 30 June 1933 Goebbels stated in the University of Political Science that the NSDAP had 'set up *{aufgezogen}* a massive organization involving millions of people and bringing together all kinds of activities including folk theatre, popular games, tourism and sport, hiking, singing and all supported financially by the state'. Here '*aufziehen* {to set up}' is nothing but honest, and when the government renders account for the success of the propaganda leading up to the vote in the Saarland it talks of 'an action set up *{aufgezogen}* on a grand scale'. It doesn't enter anyone's mind to associate the word with advertising. In 1935 Holle & Co. publishes a translation from the English of *The Autobiography of a Japanese Publisher. Seiji Noma*. In it appears the highly appreciative statement: 'I now decided to construct *{aufziehen}* an exemplary organization for the training of student orators.'

The total indifference towards the mechanistic meaning of the verb has its origins in the fact that it is repeatedly uttered by an organization. This reveals one of the foremost tensions within the LTI: whilst stressing the organic and natural growth it is at the same time swamped by mechanistic expressions and insensitive to the stylistic incongruities and lack of dignity in such combinations as 'a constructed organization *{aufgezogene Organisation}*'.

'The only question is whether the Nazis can actually be held responsible for '*aufziehen*'', F. interjected. We were working at the same mixing drum for German teas during a nightshift in Summer 1943, it was extremely exhausting work, especially given the heat, as we had to keep our heads and faces covered like surgeons because of the terrible dust;

during the breaks we took off our glasses, protective handkerchiefs and caps – F. wore an old judge's biretta, he had been a senior official at a district court – sat on a box and debated national psychology, if we weren't discussing the progress of the war, that is. Like everyone else who lived in the Jews' House in the narrow Sporergerasse, he perished during the night of 13 to 14 February 1945.

He claimed to have heard and read the word '*aufziehen*' in an entirely neutral sense in around 1920. 'Contemporary with and similar to the verb *plakatieren* {to placard or broadcast}', he said. I replied that I had no knowledge of '*aufziehen*' being used in a neutral sense at that time, and that the combination he remembered with '*plakatieren*' must inevitably imply a pejorative tone. Above all, however – and this is a principle I adhere to in relation to all significant observations of this kind – I never try to ascertain the first occurrence of an expression or a particular connotation of a given word, not only because this is completely impossible in most cases, but also because every time you believe you have found the first person who used the word there will always be some antecedent or other. F. need look no further than in Büchmann under '*Übermensch* {Superman}': the word can be traced right back to antiquity.

And I too have recently discovered an '*Untermensch* {subhuman}' in our old friend Fontane, in *Der Stechlin*, and that despite the fact that the Nazis are so proud of their Jewish and communist subhumans and all the associated notions of inferior humanity.

Let them be proud of it, just as Nietzsche was proud of his Superman despite his famous predecessors. For a word, or the particular nuance or connotation of a word, only takes on a linguistic life of its own and becomes truly alive within a language, where it enters into common usage within a particular group, or the public at large, and is able to assert its presence over a period of time. Seen this way, the '*Übermensch*' is undoubtedly Nietzsche's creation, whilst the '*Untermensch*' and non-derisory, neutral use of '*aufziehen*' can be laid solely to the credit of the Third Reich. –

Will their time run out with that of Nazism?

I am doing my best to see to it that it will, but I am doubtful.

I elaborated on this note in January 1946. On the day after I had finished it we had a meeting of the Dresden Cultural Association. A dozen people, whose special cultural credentials have been

established by the very fact of their having been voted into office, and who thus now have to set an example to others. The matter in hand was the organization of one of those weeks of culture that are held everywhere these days, and in particular the arrangements for an art exhibition. One of the gentlemen said that quite a few of the pictures donated to the cause of '*Volkssolidarität* {people's solidarity}', and now intended for the exhibition, were daubs. The reply came without delay: 'Impossible! If we organize an art exhibition here in Dresden then we must set it up {*aufziehen*} on a grand scale, and in such a way that it is unimpeachable.'

# Chapter 17

## ***‘System’ and ‘Organisation’***

There is the Copernican system, there are various philosophical and various political systems. But when a National Socialist refers to *‘das System {the system}’* he invariably means the system of the Weimar Constitution. In this special LTI meaning – or rather expanded to denote the entire period from 1918 to 1933 – the word became popular very quickly, considerably more popular than, for example, the historical term Renaissance. As early as summer 1935 a carpenter who was mending our garden gate said to me: ‘Am I sweating! In the days of the system there used to be those nice Byron collars *{Schillerkragen}* which left your neck free. You can’t get anything like that any more, everything is close-fitting and wherever possible also stiff.’ The man obviously didn’t realize that in one single sentence he had figuratively mourned the lost freedom of the Weimar era and also figuratively poured scorn over the very same period. That the Byron collar was a symbol for freedom is self-explanatory, what is not so obvious is that the term *‘System’* should harbour a metaphorical indictment.

For the Nazis the system of government in the Weimar Republic was the system *per se* because they had been in direct conflict with it, because they held it to be the worst form of government, and because they felt more antagonistic towards it than, for example, towards the monarchy. They condemned it for the paralysing effect of the splintering of the political parties. Following the first farcical sitting of the Reichstag under Hitler’s tyrannical control – nothing was discussed and every government demand was accepted unanimously by a well-trained group of supernumeraries – the Party newspapers reported triumphantly

that the new Reichstag had achieved more in half an hour than the old system's parliamentarianism in six months.

But linguistically – in the term itself, I mean, despite the fact that in this case it simply stands for 'Weimar parliamentarianism' – there is much more to the rejection of the system than this. A system is something which is 'assembled [*Zusammengestelltes*]', a construction, a structure built by hands and tools according to the dictates of reason. We still refer today to a railway or canal system, meaning something that is concrete and constructive. More commonly however (we do, after all, often like to refer to 'a railway network') the word is used to refer almost exclusively to abstractions. The Kantian system is a logically structured network of ideas to grasp the world in its entirety; for Kant – for the professional, trained philosopher as it were – to philosophize means to think systematically. And it is this very way of thinking which the National Socialist rejects from the innermost core of his being, which he despises out of a desire for self-preservation.

Someone who thinks does not want to be persuaded but rather convinced; someone who thinks systematically is doubly hard to convince. That is why the LTI is, if anything, less fond of the word 'philosophy' than of the word 'system'. It approaches the system with antipathy, refers to it with disdain, but does so frequently. Philosophy on the other hand is hushed up and universally replaced with '*Weltanschauung* {worldview}'.

*Anschauen* {viewing something} has never been an intellectual activity, the thinker does the exact opposite, he divorces his senses from the object in question, he abstracts; *Anschauen* is also never just a matter of simply looking at something with the eye as a sensory organ. The eye only sees. The word '*anschauen*' is reserved in German for a finer, more portentous and mysteriously significant – I don't know which – activity or condition: it denotes a way of seeing which involves the observer's inner being and his emotions, and it denotes a way of seeing which discerns more than simply the surface of a given object, which in a strange way also grasps its essence, its soul. As a substitute for philosophy, the word '*Weltanschauung*', already prevalent before National Socialism, lost its solemnity and acquired an everyday, business-like ring. '*Schau* {vision}', revered by the followers of Stefan George, also became a ceremonial word for the LTI – if I were writing this notebook in the form of a proper dictionary, and in the style of my beloved encyclopaedia,



I would doubtless refer to the entry on 'Barnum' – 'system' belongs in the list of abominations along with 'intelligence' and 'objectivity'.

But if 'system' is frowned upon, how does the Nazis system of government refer to itself? Because they have a system as well, after all, and are proud of the fact that absolutely every expression and situation in life is caught up in this network; that is why 'totality' (*Totalität*) is one of the foundations on which the LTI is built.

They don't have a *System*, they have an *Organisation*, they don't think systematically with the power of reason, they cull secrets from all that is organic.

I must start with the adjective which, alone amongst this family of words – and unlike the nouns '*Organ* {organ}' and '*Organisation*', and the verb '*organisieren* {to organize}' – has maintained the splendour and the aura that it had from day one. (When was day one? Without question at the dawn of Romanticism. But, of course, one always says 'without question' when questions crop up, so this will have to be dealt with separately.)

By the time Clemens hammered on my head with the *Myth of the Twentieth Century* during a house search in the Caspar-David-Friedrich-Straße, and tore up the accompanying pages of notes (fortunately without deciphering them), I had already pondered Rosenberg's Delphic central idea of the 'organic truth' in my diary. And already at that point, before the invasion of Russia, I wrote: 'How ridiculous it would be in its jumble of hollow phrases if only it didn't have such frighteningly deadly consequences!'

Rosenberg informs us that the professional philosophers always make a double mistake. First, they set out 'to find the so-called single, eternal truth'. And second they search 'along a purely logical route, drawing conclusion after conclusion from axioms of reason'. If, on the other hand, one surrenders oneself to his, Alfred Rosenberg's, strictly non-philosophical insights derived from the profundity of an omniscient mystical vision, then the 'whole bloodless, intellectual rubble heap of exclusively schematic systems is done away with' once and for all. These quotations contain the most significant reason for the LTI's antipathy towards the word '*System*' and what it denotes.

Directly following on from this, the concluding few pages of the *Myth* finally enthrone the notion of the 'organic'; *orgao* (οργαώ) means to swell, to put out shoots, to be trained unconsciously like a plant,

'organic' is sometimes translated into German as '*wuchshaft* {sprouting}'. The single, universally valid truth which is meant to exist for an imaginary, universal humanity is replaced by the 'organic truth' which emerges from the blood of a particular race and is only valid for that race. This organic truth is not thought up and fostered by the intellect, it is not grounded in rational knowledge, but instead is to be found at the 'mysterious centre of the soul of a people and of a race {*geheimnisvollen Zentrum der Volks- und Rassenseele*}', present for the Teutons {*Germanen*} since time immemorial in the Nordic bloodstream: 'the ultimate "knowledge" of a particular race is already embodied in its earliest religious myth.' Things would not get any clearer if I assembled a mass of quotations; it is not Rosenberg's intention to make things clearer. Thought strives for clarity, magic takes place in semi-darkness.

The magic aura which surrounds the organic in these pythonic discourses, and the stupefying odour of blood in which it is shrouded, are to some extent lost linguistically if we move from the adjective to the noun and verb. The reason being that there had been 'party organs' and 'organizations' in the political sphere long before the NSDAP, and during the period in which I first heard people discussing political matters, which was in the 1890s, it would typically be said of a worker in Berlin that he was '*ein Organisierter* {an organized man}' or that he was '*organisiert* {organized}', which meant that he was a member of the Social Democratic Party. However, a party organ is not produced by the magical powers of the bloodstream, rather, it is edited with much care and attention, and an organization doesn't grow like a fruit, but is carefully built up, or, as the Nazis used to say, '*aufgezogen* {set up}'. I have definitely also come across certain writers, even before the First World War – in my diary there is a note in brackets: 'check where and when!', but even today, a year after our deliverance, it is very difficult to check such things – writers for whom an organization is a way of doing away with the organic, of taking out the soul and making a machine. Even amongst the National Socialists themselves, in Dwinger's novel on the Kapp putsch, *Auf halbem Wege* (Halfway) (1939), I found the 'miserable' bond sustained by an organization, despised for its artificiality, contrasted with the 'true', evolutionary bond of nature. But of course Dwinger only gradually descended into Nazism.

At any rate '*Organisation*' remained an honest and honoured word within the LTI, indeed it underwent a further refinement which had

not existed prior to 1933, except perhaps in occasional and isolated technical contexts.

The will to totality entailed an excess of organization, right down to the *Pimpfe*,<sup>1</sup> no, right down to the cats: I was not allowed to make any more contributions to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Cats because there was no room in *Das deutsche Katzenwesen* (The German Feline) – this really was the name of the society's newsletter, which had become a Party organ – for those mongrel creatures which resided with Jews. Later they took our pets away from us, cats, dogs, even canaries, and killed them, not just in isolated cases and out of individual malice, but officially and systematically; this is one of those acts of cruelty which will not be mentioned at any Nuremberg Trial and for which, if it was up to me, I would erect a towering gallows, even if it cost me eternal salvation.

I have not strayed as far from the subject of the LTI as it may at first appear, because it was precisely the 'German Feline' which provided the opportunity for this linguistic invention to become both popular and ridiculous. In their mania for organization and the greatest possible degree of centralization, the Nazis created collective 'umbrella organizations' over and above individual organizations; and because the *MünchenerNeueste Nachrichten* still felt it could be a little daring during the first Fasching season of the Third Reich – later it became tame and finally went completely silent after two or three years – it published in its first Fasching special edition, amongst other things, a note about the 'Umbrella Organization of the German Feline'.

Although this derisory remark remained an exception and was not afforded a particularly wide circulation, an unconscious critique of the National Socialist obsession with organization, and one, in intention at least, entirely devoid of irony, grew quite organically out of the people's soul (*Volkseele*); to put it unromantically, it appeared simultaneously and entirely naturally all over the place. The reason being once again, as I wrote at the beginning of my notebook, that language writes and thinks for us. I observed this unconscious critique in two distinct phases of its development.

As early as 1936 a young car mechanic who had managed to carry out a tricky emergency repair on my exhaust all by himself said to me,

---

<sup>1</sup>See note on p. 45.

'Didn't I organize that well!' The words '*Organisation*' and '*Organisieren* {to organize}' were ringing in his ears so insistently, and he was so saturated with the idea that every bit of work had first to be organized, i.e. had to be allocated to a disciplined group by its leader, that he couldn't even come up with an appropriate and simple expression like '*arbeiten* {to work}', '*erledigen* {to deal with}' or '*verrichten* {carry out}' or even just '*machen* {to do}' for a task which he himself undertook and completed.

I first encountered the second and decisive phase in the development of this critique during the Stalingrad days, and subsequently on numerous occasions. I asked whether it was still possible to buy good soap. The answer was 'You can't buy it, you have to organize it.' The word had fallen into ill repute, it smelled of wheelings and dealings, of black marketeering, it was tainted with exactly the same smell that the Nazi organizations themselves emitted. Which did not of course mean that the people who spoke of organizing things privately intended to admit to questionable activities. No, '*organisieren*' was a benign word which had become fashionable everywhere, it was the most commonplace expression to describe an activity which had itself become commonplace . . .

For some time now I have been writing: it was . . . it was. But who was it said only yesterday 'I must organize some tobacco for myself?' I fear it was me.