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Quo vadis, Germany?
or
Feeding the Flames of Identity

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Where to begin?

Goethe said:

He whose vision cannot cover
History's three thousand years,
Must in outer darkness hover,
Live within the days frontiers

West-Östlicher Diwan

A new book written by Ruth Sanders was commented on in the *Economist*: [Das Lied der Deutschen](#). (*German: Biography of a Language*). It's about the history of the German language, which Sanders traces back far before the year 1 A.D.

I want to focus on the last 300 years—and especially the 65 years since World War 2. These decades led to the massive brain drain from Germany after WW2. The rich common Jewish-German culture of the last centuries was destroyed. The connectivity to culture, literature, music and development of life conditions from the time before WW 2 was all of a sudden interrupted.

And right now, in the year 2010, what German writer Kurt Tucholsky said before WW2 is still true. “Nothing makes the Germans lose their composure as much as when trying to find themselves.” In 2008 a symposium took place in Berlin with the theme: National Culture Revisited. The opening quote of former German Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier was exactly the one from Tucholsky.

While integral perspectives, models and concepts of all kinds have been communicated quite increasingly during the last 10 years, values, identities and potentials, resources and rich streams of German culture in last 300 years were seldom discussed. Even the German word GEIST, which is difficult to translate into English, disappeared slowly. Tom Steininger from German *EnlightenNext* tried to make it understandable in an article with the title: “Geist Reloaded.”

So the country of former “poets and thinkers” created a new chapter in history after WW2, which was experienced differently in West and East, and with new enthusiasm and challenges after the fall of the wall in 1989. Then there was the challenge of reunification. Each portion of the divided nation had a national anthem; the one from the Federal Republic of Germany was chosen for the reconciled country. However, lots of Germans like to define themselves according to their regional identity, whether they come from Bavaria or North Rhine Westalia, while still others like to think in galactic dimensions. As the British ambassador joked in 2001, national identity within a changing world isn’t a theme. This is complicated even further when we include Austria, Switzerland and other German-speaking areas of Europe.

Even to speak about leadership is burdened with historic controversy,, as a recent study from Bertelsmann Stiftung within their leadership series confirmed. The challenges for leadership after the fall of the wall, the end of cold war within a new Europe and an emerging global mulipolar world increased rapidly with the beginning of a new century. Chancellor Angela Merkel especially had to lead in a tough time of historic transitions: integrating West and East, establishing German politics within the EU and starting to bring Germany to new global challenges. She has been doing it in her unique style, which was remarkably successful until recently when a leadership vaccum among the governing parties was recognized, criticized and adressed in German media. There was some trouble in Catholic and Protestant churches, as well, and an growing group of so called nonvoters.

I see this period as a possible inflection point within post war Germany. Pragmatism and consensual procederes, a forced rationality after the shipwreck of WW2, even fresh multi-cultural impulses in recent years, strongly felt during FIFA Worldcup 2006 in Germany and 2010 in South Africa, signify a new readiness, a positive “We” feeling and opening to a cosmopolitan world culture, But these are not enough, anymore.

New integral perspectives can bring together inner and outer worlds, the personal and collective life, mental horizons and a complex vertical richness of values—beyond mere diversity in horizontal consciousness. Through these we are experiencing new identities, new ways of thinking and acting, social innovation and the emergence of new ideas. We are discovering forms of self discovery and re-inventing life, soul shaping and uplifting of the human spirit, not only with cultural imports from Asia and the USA, but also with the rich streams of idealism, romanticism, diialectical thinking, philosophy, music and arts.

It is said that German culture tends towards inwardness. True. And drifting backwards in subjective feelings is potentially a pre-rational possibility.

However, the existing conditions can be the strong ground from which the passion and boldness to create the future can emerge. As 20th century German artist Josef Beuys said, “Creating landing strips for the future.”

The German Genius is no way exclusively directed inwards. It’s a power that has manifested in sports, medicine, engeneering, enterpreneurship, science, filmmaking and strategic and organiational inteligenge, as well. There is a hidden spirit that is alive and ready to go for the whole (Auf Deutsch: Aufs Ganze zu gehen). And this impulse has integral potential. It is an intellectual, creative, emotional and shaping drive with tremendous momentum to manifest. It’s a force that was described as magma by Swiss doctor Carl Gustav Jung, who observed the German psyche during his whole life. In his famous 1936 essay he even sspoke about the Wotan Complex. Quoting extensively from Nietzsche and from “Zarathustra,”

Germany is a land of spiritual catastrophes, where nature never makes more than a pretense of peace with world-ruling reason. The disturber of the peace is a wind that blows into Europe from Asia’s vastness, sweeping in on a wide front from Thrace to the Baltic, scattering the nations before it like dry leaves, or inspiring thoughts that shake the world to its foundations..

Indian pioneer of Integral Yoga Sri Aurobindo mentioned German subjectivity AND its ability to take action from that explicitly in his work “The Human Cycle.” So a new Germany—to use this term for a moment—is desperately needed. Not to be swept ahead softly and in a sensitive consensual manner. It should be shouted from the rooftops. It is needed as the biggest culture in the heart of Europe and and it is needed in the world, also.

While I was living and working for a time in Dubai, one of the first Leaders-in-Dubai conferences took place. I did not participate, but I read about it and heard Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum—then follower of Sheikh Zayed who had just died—ruler of United Arab Emirates speaking about the Germans.

I like you Germans. I like your awareness of quality. But you suffer from an invisible disease. I call it decision infarction. I ask you to make up your mind, decide and then come to UAE. Come within 3 months to work here, to live here, to invest here. I ask for a commitment, let's say, for three years. What you offer me is to do a feasibility study that takes three years. In this time the English and Americans have already done the project. Maybe with 10 percent less quality. However, they did it.

Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke in 2009 during the celebration of twenty years of German unity. For the first time, as far I know, she spoke as much about German unity as about European integration and our global impact in a multipolar world. The multiple timelines of integration within the German culture and Europe, and within globalization in the 21st Century is a tough challenge. In fact president Obama and chancellor Merkel seem to have in common a common style to deal with it. In a no drama disposition and being appreciated in the world more than within their countries.

Stephan Richter, publisher and editor-in-chief of The Globalist, writes in August, “Obama and Merkel: Unwanted at Home: <http://www.theglobalist.com/storyid.aspx?StoryId=8636>. While both are seeing poll results that are lacklustre,

The truly astounding point, though, is that Merkel and Obama are very popular outside their respective countries' borders. Outside the United States, President Obama is widely still seen as a beacon of hope—and a potent personification of whatever people elsewhere have appreciated or admired about the global supremo....

In Angela Merkel's case, her lack of clear-sighted leadership during the recent Greek crisis has tarnished her previous standing as the highly regarded go-to/get-things-done person at the top of the European table.

And while it is undoubtedly true that she has lost some luster in that regard, her reputation in the rest of the world — whether on the G-20 stage or in capitals that truly matter, such as Beijing — is better than ever.

So, any approach, practice and form of integral leadership in Germany that is sustainable, resilient and moving the cutting edge needs new superordinate goals, re-defined purpose and perspectives for and within the global multipolar world and is thereby severely challenged. Contemporary German intellectuals, like Peter Sloterdijk or Juergen Habermas, both of them contributing to integrated and integrating views, raise their voices when it comes to Germany and Europe. However, they remain rather vague when it comes to the global stratified realities. See the article by Alan Tonkin – Global Values Network—in this issue.

Some German expats, like Otto Laske, Otto Scharmer or Michael E. Zimmerman are contributing to integrational views in their own ways and in different areas. Yet a coherent look at the values and developmental dynamics of a nation within large scale systems change is widely ignored or neglected. Spiral Dynamics

integral, in the modification, extensions and further development of Graves approach offered by Dr. Don Beck and his colleagues, is an approach which is being field as indicated in several issues of *Integral Leadership Review* with some documentation of applications in various countries.

This German-Speaking Cultures Special Issue of *Integral leadership Review* is a very first attempt to ask some questions, convene different authors and integral views from engaged people who live and work here. We are focusing on the German culture this time. Knowing that about 100 million German speaking people in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg are living in the region. According to Wikipedia there are additionally 80 Million worldwide who speak and understand the German language. A census in the USA some years ago documented that about 20 percent of US Americans have a family history in Germany.

It wasn't possible here to cover the rich Jewish-German intellectual history—before and post Holocaust. This could only be a theme for a separate issue. Especially in light of integral thinking and lenses this would have considerable implications and rich potential for the future.

Truth Heals

I want to mention shortly an event in Berlin earlier this year: Truth Heals. It took place at Freie University in Berlin. I attended it for the second time. The first time was in 2008 and I was deeply moved, as 900 other Germans were, too.

With approximately 55 million dead people in addition to 6 million murdered Jews the Second World War has left innumerable scars for individuals and, also, in the collective subconscious. Thomas Hübl is convinced that large groups can amplify the process of becoming more conscious with the effect of integration. Therefore, for the fourth time, a “Healing Event” will take place in Berlin over the weekend 24th-25th April, 2011 under this same motto, “Truth Heals”.

A trauma does not just disappear when you want to get rid of it—there is no recourse without facing the facts and truly taking responsibility. Looking at the issue with dedication, we can integrate what needs to be learned from the Second World War, provided the emotional capacity is there to be truly touched by people's destinies.

Leading representatives from the integral spirituality movement such as Andrew Cohen, Ken Wilber (by video call) and Tom Steininger will be in Berlin to show the potential that can unfold when the German Culture continues to confront its darkest parts. When collective shadows integrate through healing meditation, profound empathy can arise. A humanity, which has found its essence and can open up to realization and creativity can be discovered. A sense of compassion, which can contribute to the questions of our global future can arise. In joint meditation the collective shadow becomes perceivable and the authentic power of the soul softens the pain.

A video clip about the event is available here: <http://vimeo.com/11910631>

New leadership in any form and any fresh perspective needs this place of hard truth first. Whenever collective shadow isn't inspected. dangerous blind spots are lurking in the underground and either trigger explosive developments or paralyze bold engagement. One wall was taken down in 1989. We have a unique window of opportunity for Germany to tear down lots more walls in culture and consciousness. It is also a time for Germany to show global leadership with a regained strength of collective transformation.

As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said: “Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.”