Rhythm of Extermination and Ambiguous Perception: Considering Hilberg's Explanation in Lanzmann's *Shoah*

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0. Introduction

This study examines the relationship between the Nazi extermination movement and our perception of it, considering Raul Hilberg's account in Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*. In the discussion, we will try to think of the extermination movement as a rhythm and our perception as an ambiguous perception.

Released in 1985, *Shoah* is a film about the Nazi genocide of the Jews during World War II. The main feature of the film is a compilation of testimonies, not only from Jews who survived the camps but also from people who had sided with the Nazis and Poles who lived near the camps. According to Simone de Beauvoir, "when, today, we see Claude Lanzmann's extraordinary film, we realize we have understood nothing. In spite of everything we knew, the ghastly experience remained remote from us. Now, for the first time, we live it in our minds, hearts and flesh. It becomes our experiences."[1]

First, we propose that the extermination of the Jews should be seen as a rhythm; then, we examine the initiation of the rhythm of the extermination camps. We then consider the relationship between Lanzmann and Hilberg and argue that Lanzmann tries to capture the rhythm of the Shoah through people's voices, places, and faces. We will see that Hilberg describes the Final Solution as both old and completely new: The newness is in the ambiguous language and bureaucratic processes by which we ourselves create the rhythm of the Shoah. Finally, we theorize that ambiguous perception has made the rhythm of the Shoah possible.

1. Shoah as Rhythm

This study hypothesizes that the Shoah is a rhythm. This rhythm has two characteristics. The first is that the rhythm of the Shoah involves us. Before we know it, we are all caught up in the process of extinction. Not only the victims but also the perpetrators and the bystanders watching the process are included in the extinction movement. The second characteristic is that we are caught up in the rhythm of the Shoah but, at the same time, create that rhythm ourselves. After all, we all support the activities of extinction: Not only the perpetrators but also the bystanders, maybe even the victims (without meaning to, of course), all produce the rhythm. Thus, a double movement occurs: The rhythm of extinction engulfs us while we also create that rhythm.

On the one hand, the war is already there:

War does not seem to be something that human intellect can control well. (...) And wars have always been repeated *despite* human efforts for peace. (...) So, if you want to think about war seriously, you should not think that you are above it, that you are exempt from it. War, of course, is sparked by human beings, and in a peaceful order, one can consider war as an object of consideration, and one can even plan for war, but when war breaks out, one is already in the midst of war, always thinking, "It wasn't supposed to be like

this."[2]

On the other hand, it is precisely we who construct the psychology that drives us to war:

> (…) what transformed the Germans into Nazis was certainly not madness but the passionate adherence to an ideology that gathered ideas and convictions familiar to the German mentality. It was not a mental illness but a mental construction whose many elements, like tributaries, flowed into the devastating river of Nazism.[3]

Before we know it, we are involved in wars, and we make them up. This is also true for the Jewish extermination movement. It is a double movement in which we find ourselves caught and that we have already remade. Is the extermination movement not that kind of flow, that kind of rhythm? This hypothesis is our starting point.

The Nazis called the extermination movement the "Final Solution," and this Final Solution is exactly extermination, Holocaust, Shoah. The Nazis did not use direct language; the words "killing" or "killing installations" were omitted even in the secret correspondence in which such operations had to be reported. The reader of these reports is immediately struck by their camouflaged vocabulary.[4] In the same way, the term "Final Solution" was replaced so that there would be no awareness of the crime. Hearing a direct expression such as "extermination of the Jews" would have forced an SS officer to acknowledge that what he was doing was mass murder and admit the criminality of his act. To prevent such awareness, the vague term "Final Solution" was used.

Hitler propagated the idea that Jews were bad people. The logic was "The Jews are evil; we must defend ourselves; we have no choice but to fight":

> The open propaganda campaign was fashioned to portray the Jew as evil, and that message was formulated for long-range effect. The allegation was repeated often enough so that it could be stored in the mind and drawn upon according to need. Thus the statement "The Jew is evil," taken from the storehouse, could be converted by a perpetrator into a complete rationalization: "I kill the Jew because the Jew is evil." To understand the function of such formulations is to realize why they were being constructed until the very end of the war. Propaganda was needed to combat doubts and guilt feelings wherever they arose, whether inside or outside the bureaucracy, and whenever they surfaced, before or after an event.[5]

The campaign was successful, and German anti-Semitism became increasingly radical and widespread. The fervor grew and became a huge rhythm. We are caught up in the rhythm, and we activate it anew. Of course, Hitler played a major role in the formation of this rhythm, but there was no linear connection between the orders of the mad Hitler and the execution of the genocide of the Jews at Auschwitz.[6]

2. The Rhythm of Extermination Camps

Let us examine this rhythm by listening to Filip Müller's words in *Shoah*. Müller was one of the "Jewish special details" at Auschwitz, where he observed the attitude of the SS members who welcomed the Jews to

the extermination camp. According to him, the arriving Jews seemed anxious; some said positive things and others negative things. The SS men tried to calm their anxiety and confusion:

> [Müller:] I caught some of the things they said. I heard *fachowitz*, meaning "skilled worker." And *Malach-ha-Mawis*, which means "the Angel of Death" in Yiddish. Also, *Harginnen*: "They're going to kill us." From what I could hear, I clearly understood the struggle going on inside them. Sometimes they spoke of work, probably hoping that they'd be put to work. Or they spoke of *Malach-ha-Mawis*, The Angel of Death. The conflicting words echoed the conflict in their feelings. Then a sudden silence fell over those gathered in the crematorium courtyard. All eyes converged on the flat roof of the crematorium. Who was standing there? Aumeyer, the SS man, Grabner, the head of the political section, and Hössler, the SS officer. Aumeyer addressed the crowd: "You're here to work for our soldiers fighting at the front. Those who can work will be all right." It was obvious that hope flared in those people. You could feel it clearly. The executioners had gotten past the first obstacle. He saw it was succeeding.[7]

At this moment, a major change took place in the situation: The Jews' behavior changed drastically, and their faces became less anxious. Both the SS men and Müller, one of the Jewish special details, could see it. Did the SS not control the rhythm? Did SS not seize an important opportunity to move the extermination camp? If you can catch the rhythm, it is not very difficult to move people in a certain direction.

> [Müller:] Then he [Hössler] questioned a woman: "What's your trade?" "Nurse," she replied. "Splendid! We need nurses in our hospitals, for our soldiers. We need all of you! But first, undress. You must be disinfected. We want you healthy." I could see the people were calmer, reassured by what they'd heard, and they began to undress. Even if they still had their doubts, if you want to live, you must hope.[8]

Of course, some Jews may have been skeptical. On the whole, however, they listened to the SS members meekly. They were so caught up in the rhythm that they started it anew themselves.

It is noteworthy that the SS made speeches from the rooftops, which changed the atmosphere of the place and the audience's thoughts. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler mentioned that speeches were very important for winning the hearts and minds of the masses.[9] Just as Hitler spoke to the masses and moved them, the speeches of the SS men reassured the Jews who had just arrived at the camp.

What is even more interesting is that Müller looks as if he is giving a speech in front of the camera. Anny Dayan-Rosenman focuses on the way he speaks and his voice. Müller voices all of the characters in his testimony, imitating them, including the speeches of the SS men, as the camera shows the roof of Auschwitz where the SS had stood.[10] Viewers of the film might think that they were watching the scene as if Müller were watching it. It is as if the speeches of the SS were being reenacted through Müller, who is speaking in the voices of the arriving Jews, expressing their anxiety or hope. Müller plays every role, which is why vivid images come to the viewer's mind. In this scene, Lanzmann's voice is absent; through Müller's enacting body, Lanzmann may have witnessed the Jewish voices and the speech of the SS.[11] When we see Müller's face and hear his voice, we feel that the rhythm of the Shoah begins to move.

3. Lanzmann and Hilberg

Historian Raul Hilberg appears after Müller. Where Müller spoke of his own experiences, Hilberg speaks from a historiographical perspective. However, just as Müller had a unique way of speaking, Hilberg brings us a unique voice and face. Again, Lanzmann says little. He seems to be listening and receiving, rather than speaking and directing. Hilberg begins his speech as follows:

> [Hilberg:] In all my work I have never begun by asking the big questions, because I was always afraid that I would come up with small answers; and I have preferred to address these things which are minutiae or details in order that I might then be able to put together in a gestalt a picture which, if not an explanation, is at least a description, a more full description, of what transpired.[12]

Hilberg does not set up a significant problem. He does not start with a big question, such as "Why did Hitler commit the massacre of the Jews?" or "Why did the Germans follow Hitler?" Rather, he begins his work by checking the details and accumulating small facts.

In *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Hilberg explains his research approach as follows:

> From the start I have wanted to know how the Jews of Europe were destroyed. I wanted to explore the sheer mechanism of destruction, and as I delved into the problem, I saw that I was studying an administrative process carried out by bureaucrats in a network of offices spanning a continent. Understanding the components of this apparatus, with all the facets of its activities, became the principal task of my life. The "how" of the event is a way of gaining insights into perpetrators, victims, and bystanders.[13]

In addressing the Holocaust, Hilberg asks "How?" For example, Hilberg examines how perpetrators created a framework for their extermination campaigns. To do this, he carefully reviews the records of the state and local governments, piecing together the details. It becomes clear how the Nazis enacted and revised laws and how they overcome the problems that arose. In this way, the whole picture of the Holocaust gradually emerges.

Thus, Hilberg does not ask "Why?" but "How?" This is also Lanzmann's approach; Lanzmann accumulates testimonies on the Holocaust from the perspective of "how it happened" rather than "why it happened." In one of his writings, Lanzmann says the following:

> There is indeed an absolute obscenity in the project of understanding. Not to understand was my ironclad rule during all the years *Shoah* was in the making (…) *Hier ist kein warum* ("Here there is no why"): Primo Levi recounts that an SS guard taught him the rule of Auschwitz the very moment of his arrival. "There is no why": this law also holds for whoever assumes the responsibility of such a transmission. For only the act of transmission matters, and no intelligibility, that is, no true knowledge, exists prior to transmission. Transmission is the knowledge in itself.[14]

For Lanzmann, the question to be considered is not "Why?" but "How?" How were the Jews gathered in the square? How were they transported? How were they killed? Such questions must be piled up gradually.

For example, if we assume that event C happened, we are tempted to look for the reason why C happened—that is, B. Then again, we are tempted to look for the reason why B happened, which is A. Thus, we obtain a straight line from A to B and from B to C. That is simple. By doing this, we think we understand the event C. However, Lanzmann thinks in terms of "how." Assuming that event C happened, there are many ways to look at it: C looks like C1 to some people, C2 to others, and C3 to those who are far away. Lanzmann builds them up like multiple layers, giving thickness to event C; he presents many different ways of looking at an event. Therefore, instead of explaining the event linearly, he finds the multifaceted nature of the event, its spiral structure.[15] When we juxtapose various views, C2 and C3 may be contradictory. Lanzmann is not looking for a single fact; he tries to consider that the Shoah has various meanings for different people.

In this scene, Lanzmann listens carefully to Hilberg's explanation. He often interrupts and asks questions in the middle of other people's interviews but rarely does so with Hilberg. He does not speak up when Hilberg seems to be talking but waits patiently as if he thinks he might still hear something important to say. For example, after Hilberg says, "the 'final solution,' you see, is really final, because people who are converted can yet be Jews in secret, people who are expelled can yet return. But people who are dead will not reappear."[16] He pauses for a long time and has a peculiar expression on his face. That look and the silence convey the weight of the meaning of "final," and Lanzmann seems to be examining its meaning without immediately asking questions. According to Noah Shenker, Lanzmann maintains a certain distance from the other witnesses, as if he were interrogating them, while he is always close to Hilberg—by his side or behind him as he sits at his desk or table in the historian's home in Vermont. Furthermore, in the film's outtakes, he often nods and smiles in agreement with Hilberg.[17] Shenker argues that Lanzmann is overidentifying with Hilberg.[18]

However, we must emphasize the difference between Lanzmann and Hilberg: Hilberg is a historian who examines documentary sources. For him, personal recollections are not objective because they become fuzzy over time and can lead to different answers depending on the question. Therefore, he analyzes written sources rather than personal memories and testimonies. On the other hand, Lanzmann focuses more on personal stories and rarely uses historical documents.[19] Of course, he conducts a great deal of research in the preparatory stages of making a film. However, he is interested not in objective history but, rather, in subjective memories. What he wants to know is how the people who witnessed the Shoah felt and thought about it. He collected many personal memories to depict the thickness and weight of the Shoah. What is important to him is, as Simone de Beauvoir points out, places, voices, faces.[20] Hilberg and Lanzmann ask the same question ("how?"), but they use completely different materials.[21]

Let us look at their difference from another angle. Lanzmann does not consider the Shoah as a historical event; for example, he describes it as "silence." One of the characters in his film, Jan Piwonski, a Pole who worked as an assistant switchman at Sobibor station, says that "First of all, when the camp was being built, there were orders shouted in German, there were screams, Jews were working at a run, there were shots, and here there was that silence, no work crews, a really total silence."[22] The absence of sound—of the dogs' barking, the crack of the whip, the crack of the gun—the complete silence, this is the Shoah. Does Lanzmann not use this testimony in order to understand the Final Solution not as a historical event but, rather, as a rhythm? For Lanzmann, what is important is not to find new sources or to determine the objective relationship between one fact and another; what he wants to do is to start from the words and faces of the witnesses, to

recognize the shifts in what was heard and seen at the time, and thus to recognize the inherent rhythm of the Shoah.[23]

4. Final Solution, Old and Completely New

Hilberg reads the documents in detail and carefully organizes the facts. What we learn is that the persecution of the Jews had been going on for a long time:

[Hilberg:] And in that sense I look also at the bureaucratic destruction process—for this is what it was—as a series of minute steps taken in logical order and relying above all as much as possible on experience, past experience. And this goes not only, incidentally, for the administrative steps that were taken, but also the psychological arguments, even the propaganda.[24]

We will return to the "bureaucratic destruction process" later. The Nazis' Jewish policies were based on the past. Anti-Semitic ideas and laws had been around for a long time. The Nazis' Jewish policies represented the last step, and they were strongly connected to the previous steps:

[Hilberg:] For example, the barring of Jew from office, the prohibition of intermarriages and of the employment in Jewish homes of female persons under the age of forty-five, the various marking decrees especially the Jewish star—the compulsory ghetto, the voidance of any will executed by a Jew that might work in such a way as to prevent inheritance of his property by someone who was Christian. Many such measures had been worked out over the course of more than a thousand years by authorities of the Church and by secular governments that followed in those footsteps. And the experience gathered over that time became a reservoir that could be used, and which indeed was used to an amazing extent. (…) So even the propaganda, the realm of imagination and invention even there they were remarkably in the footsteps of those who preceded them, from Martin Luther to the nineteenth century. And here again they were not inventive.[25]

It is true that the Nazis used new media, such as radio, to create mass propaganda on an unprecedented scale and win the hearts and minds of the masses. However, the Nazis still only continued the old anti-Semitism.[26] Lanzmann writes about this continuity as follows: "I consider the Holocaust an unqualifiedly historical event, the monstrous, yes, but legitimate product of the history of the Western World."[27] The Shoah happened through the taking on of history and the inheriting of the past. This leads us to ask: Was the Final Solution something that had always existed?

The answer is "No." The Final Solution was new. What the Nazis did was a continuation of the past, but the anti-Semitism of the past did not reach the point of extermination. Consider Hilberg's statements:

[Hilberg:] They had to be inventive with the "final solution." That was their great invention, and that is what made this entire process different from all others that had preceded that event. (…) from the earliest days, from the fourth century, the sixth century, the missionaries of Christianity had said in effect to the Jews: "You may not live among us as Jews." The secular rulers who followed them from the late Middle

Ages then decided: "You may not live among us," and the Nazis finally decreed: "You may not live." (…) Death. The "final solution." And the "final solution," you see, is really final, because people who are converted can yet be Jews in secret, people who are expelled can yet return. But people who are dead will not reappear.

[Lanzmann:] *And in such a respect—the last stage—they were really pioneers and inventors?*

[Hilberg:] This was something unprecedented, and this was something new.[28]

Anti-Semitism has existed for a long time, but there was no such thing as the extermination of the Jews. The Nazis invented a new idea of the Final Solution while reworking past examples. What is important is how the Final Solution was invented and how it was implemented:

[Hilberg:] (…) it was new, and I think for this reason one cannot find a specific document, a specific planned outline or blueprint which started: "Now the Jews will be killed." Everything is left to inference from general words.

[Lanzmann:] *General words?*

[Hilberg:] General wording—the very wording "final solution" or "total solution" or "territorial solution" leaves something to the bureaucrat that he must infer.[29]

Imagine for a moment that Hitler and the Nazi high command order their subordinates to "Execute the Final Solution and do whatever it takes to achieve it." The subordinate, not knowing any better, says to himself, "What is the Final Solution? We have already barred Jews from public office, restricted Jewish economic activity, and segregated Jews into ghettos. Now we must implement the Final Solution. What should we do? Perhaps we should kill the Jews. However, how do we kill them? How can we keep their murder a secret?" People in each department frantically came up with ideas. The important thing is that "extinction" was not indicated but implied. This is why subordinates could infer and invent new ideas.[30] What was new was involving people in a movement of extinction, to make them guess and invent, to get them to create that movement themselves.

5. We Create the Rhythm Ourselves

Hilberg emphasizes the words "bureaucrat" and "bureaucratic destruction process." The "bureaucrat" in this context was a person who would infer the meaning of a vaguely worded order from a superior. They tried to find a way to solve the problem and find a solution. That is why they created an extinction system by themselves, without a direct order from Hitler. They were able to devise new methods because they were told to do so indirectly.

The Final Solution was thus a process accomplished by many people. Hitler's intentions and the inventions of those who guessed them were equally important:

Not surprisingly, written directives would give way to oral ones. Hitler himself may never have signed an order to kill the Jews. On the other hand, there are records of his utterances in the form of comments, questions, or "wishes." What he actually meant, or whether he really meant it, might have been a matter of

tone as well as of language. When he spoke "coldly" and in a "low voice" about "horrifying" decisions "also at the dinner table," then his audience knew that he was "serious."[31]

Those who heard Hitler's voice and saw his face reasoned out what he wanted to do and tackled the problem. They invented ways to gather the Jews, transport them, and kill them efficiently. It was a bureaucratic process that resulted in an extermination camp system. The important thing is that the people created the rhythm of extermination by themselves, separate from Hitler.[32]

An ambiguous word appears here. If the Nazis had emphasized the word "extermination," the Germans might not have supported them as strongly as they did. The Nazis created the ambiguous term "Final Solution" and engaged the public gradually through that expression. Since the people had not heard the word "extermination," they were not aware that they were involved in one, but they were.

Therefore, many people were working together for one movement, the Shoah. Those who had to be informed of the details of the extermination plan included senior civil servants and police officers; those in charge of German transport, particularly the railways; financial authorities; and the bankers whose bank vaults were to receive the assets of the deported Jews.[33] Perhaps they did not think that they were part of the Holocaust apparatus; they would have said, "I was just doing my job."

However, people may have wondered a little. The station attendant may have thought, "Why do we need so many people on one train, and why is no one on the return train?" However, his boss would have told him that there would be more trains; he would have seen more trains. The banker would have wondered, "Why are so many Jewish properties being kept in the bank?" or "What fate befell the Jews whose property was confiscated?" However, his superiors would have told him that another Jewish property should have come into that bank; he would have taken control of the other Jewish property. We can assume that there were many such people.

If you were that station attendant or bank clerk, what would you think? Would you try to resolve your doubts, or would you continue to do your job as instructed by your boss without addressing the question? Not a few people would think, "I am doing my job. That is all. Yes, the Jews may be suffering, but my work itself is not directly related to that. I have nothing to do with the harm done to the Jews." Perhaps I would expect to be involved in something bad, but I would not want to think hard about it. I would go on with my work and even more ingeniously meet the expectations of my boss. Thus, I would move, even if only a little, to implement the Final Solution. I would not have done anything atrocious, but I would have set in motion the rhythm of extinction.

Thus, the horror of the Final Solution was that it allowed people to contribute to the extermination campaign, quite apart from Hitler. The Nazis did not use the word "extermination" directly but indicated it vaguely through the term "Final Solution," which seemed to have no definition because it meant different things, different aspects, and different methods to different people. In this sense, we cannot construct the concept of the term "Final Solution."[34] That is why each of us has inferred and implemented it and moved unconsciously toward the completion of extinction. To be more precise, people knew something about it, but they did not try to know it properly. The horror of the Final Solution is that people created the rhythm of the Holocaust by themselves, starting from vague words.

It is important to note that bureaucratic "inference" is not the same as "thinking." When Hilberg says "the

bureaucrat must infer," the inference here is simply obeying the orders of superiors, not thinking for oneself. "Thinking" means to stop and reflect about what an order means and what its result will be; it means that, when you have a question, you do not avoid looking at it, but you stay in front of it and talk about it with yourself. Thinking is what stops the rhythm of extinction for a while. From the opposite point of view, thinking is extremely dangerous for the Nazi regime because "thinking" means thinking for oneself before following orders. As Hannah Arendt says, totalitarianism does not encourage thinking but rather imposes a "compulsory process of deduction" on people.[35] This allowed them to get caught up in the rhythm of the Shoah and move it anew.

6. Ambiguous Perception

People were slightly aware that the Jewish extermination movement had begun, but they did not pay close attention to it:

The great riddle is not how the Final Solution could have been kept secret for such a long time (it was not), but why there was such resistance on the part of Jews and non-Jews alike to acknowledge that systematic mass murder was taking place. (…) The people saw and heard, but what they perceived was not always clear. And when the message was unambiguous, it left no room for hope and was therefore unacceptable. The reaction of Dutch or Hungarian Jews can be compared to that of people facing a flood or a fire who, in contradiction to all experience, believe that they will not be affected.[36]

Germans, Jews, and bystanders all knew something about it. They saw and heard but they did not perceive clearly. They did not notice the extermination movement near them, or they did notice but did not pay attention. It is not that they did not see the killing process but that they saw it in a way that they did not see it. We can call this "ambiguous perception." It "does not want to know about them [its objects] (which does not know about them to the extent that it knows about them, and knows about them to the extent that it does not know about them)."[37] It is because of this type of perception that the rhythm of extermination, the rhythm of the Shoah, was created. The Germans, the Jews, and the Poles living near the camps saw the genocide dimly; that is, they saw it, but they did not see it. Therefore, the genocide went on. Nevertheless, the Nazis encountered many problems:

The implementation of Hitler's prophecy was a vast administrative undertaking. To start with, the preliminary process of defining the victims, attaching their property, and restricting their movements had to be extended to all the areas from which deportations were to be conducted. (…) Even a segregated community could still be tied in countless social and economic relationships to its neighbors. (…) Wherever Germans did not exercise plenary power, they had to employ foreign machinery for the accomplishment of their aims, and they had to deal with foreign conceptions of the ramifications and consequences of the operation. Only then could transports begin to roll. Finally, the very departure of the Jews generated new tasks. Lost production had to be replaced, unpaid Jewish debts had to be regulated, and—after the fate of Jewish deportees could no longer be hidden—the psychological repercussions on the non-Jewish population had to be smoothed and eliminated.[38]

The Nazis set in motion a huge rhythm of Jewish genocide; they encountered many challenges and overcame them to create a much bigger and more powerful rhythm. As the scale of the killing grew, so did the number of people who noticed it. It is not that people did not see it, but that they saw it in a way that they did not. The following words of a Jewish survivor featured in *Shoah*, Inge Deutschkron, indicate that perceptions of the Germans were ambiguous:

> [Deutschkron:] This is no longer home, you see. And especially it's no longer home when they start telling me that they didn't know, they didn't know. They say they didn't see. "Yes, there were Jews living in our house, and one day they were no longer there. We didn't know what happened." They couldn't help seeing it. It wasn't a matter of one action. These were actions that were taking place over almost two years. Every fortnight people were thrown out of the houses. How could they escape it? How could they not see it?[39]

That they were seeing and not seeing at the same time is exactly how ambiguous perception works. While they were vaguely watching, Jews were being transported in large numbers and murdered in the camps. People's ambiguous perceptions made the rhythm of the Shoah possible. We can thus say that the massacre of the Jews started with Hitler, but ordinary people also supported it.

Hilberg draws attention to this fact. According to him, in thinking about the Holocaust, we should not make too great a distinction between the Germans who killed and ordinary Germans. Of course, their views about whether they were involved in the extermination differed but, by going about their respective work, they created one big rhythm of the Holocaust. What made this rhythm possible was ambiguous perception, which was common to almost everyone.

Hilberg's theory was not attractive to Germans after the war[40] because, if the Holocaust was a crime committed by many ordinary people, then West Germans, who emphasized that they had nothing to do with the Nazi regime, had also committed crimes. For this reason, Hilberg's ideas were difficult for Germans to accept, and his book was not translated into German until much later. Nevertheless, Hilberg's ideas are becoming increasingly accepted.[41]

7. Conclusion

We have conceptualized the Shoah as a rhythm and proposed that it engages us, who recreate it. As Filip Müller's speech shows, the rhythm of the Shoah was created by the SS in the extermination camps, but also by the Jews. Hilberg claims that the Final Solution had both old and new aspects; its newness lay in the fact that it allowed people to participate in the extermination movement and renew the rhythm of the Holocaust without requiring a direct order from Hitler. This was made possible by ambiguous perception, the strange perception of seeing but not seeing—of seeing in a way that is not seeing. The above clarifies the relationship between extinction rhythm and ambiguous perception. However, a question remains: Does ambiguous perception have only a negative effect? It seems that we need to ask ourselves more questions about this mysterious perception.

Notes

[1] Simone de Beauvoir, "Preface", in Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah* (1985), translated by A. Whitelaw and W. Byron, New York, Da Capo Press, 1995, p. iii.

[2] Osamu Nishitani, *Yoru no Kodô ni Fureru* (1995), Tokyo, Chikuma Shobô, 2015, pp. 47-48.

[3] Eryck de Rubercy, "Les racines intellectuelles de Hitler et du nazisme," in *Revue des deux mondes*, December 2019—January 2020, p. 68.

[4] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), Vol. 3, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 1090-1091.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 1092.

[6] Kensuke Shiba, *Holocaust*, Tokyo, Chûô Kôron Shin Sha, 2008, p. 267.

[7] Lanzmann, *Shoah*, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 58.

[9] See Adolf Hitler, *My Struggle*, Ch. 3.

[10] Anny Dayan-Rosenman, "*Shoah*: l'écho du silence", in *Au sujet de* Shoah (1990), Belin, 2011, pp. 265-266. "He changes his voice, his expression. There is something fierce in the conviction he puts into reviving the scene, into staging it."

[11] Lanzmann says that, in a certain way, the protagonists of the film had to be transformed into actors. Marc Chevrie and Hervé Le Roux, "Site and Speech: An Interview with Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*" (1985), translated by Stuart Liebman, in *Claude Lanzmann's* Shoah, edited by Stuart Liebman, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 44. Dominick LaCapra refers to Müller as "a bard of ultimate disaster." Dominick LaCapra, "Lanzmann's *Shoah*" (1997), in *Claude Lanzmann's* Shoah, op. cit., p. 199.

[12] Lanzmann, *Shoah*, op. cit., p. 59.

[13] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), Vol. 1, New York, Holmes & Meier, 1985, p. ix.

[14] Claude Lanzmann, "Hier ist kein Warum" (1988), translated by Claude Lanzmann, in *Claude Lanzmann's* Shoah, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

[15] The abolition of dates, of chronological markers, makes the experience of the film not a linear trajectory that would address an intellectual memory but "a slow and implacable spiral" that goes towards the gas chambers and the knowledge irradiated by an individual and actual pain. Dayan-Rosenman, "*Shoah*: l'écho du silence", in *Au sujet de* Shoah, op. cit., p. 262.

[16] Lanzmann, *Shoah*, op. cit., p. 61.

[17] Noah Shenker, ""The dead are not around": Raul Hilberg as Historical Revenant in *Shoah*", in *The Construction of Testimony*, edited by Erin McGlothlin, Brad Prager, and Markus Zisselsberger, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2020, p. 123.

[18] *Ibid*., p. 118.

[19] *Ibid*., pp. 120-122.

[20] Beauvoir, "Preface", in Lanzmann, *Shoah*, op. cit., p. iii. "Neither fiction nor documentary, *Shoah* succeeds in recreating the past with an amazing economy of means—places, voices, faces. The greatness of Claude Lanzmann's art is in making places speak, in reviving them through voices and, over and above words, conveying the unspeakable through people's expressions."

[21] Chevrie and Le Roux, "Site and Speech: An Interview with Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*", in *Claude Lanzmann's* Shoah, op. cit., p. 40. "The structure of a film must itself determine its own intelligibility. That is why I knew and decided very early on that there would be no archival documents in the film."

[22] Lanzmann, *Shoah*, op. cit., p. 56.

[23] Patrice Maniglier says that Hilberg, as a historian, is interested in events, while Lanzmann, as a cineaste and philosopher, is interested in the Shoah as a thing. Patrice Maniglier, "Lanzmann philosophe", in *Claude Lanzmann, un voyant dans le siècle*, sous la direction de Juliette Simont, Paris, Gallimard, 2017, p. 108.

[24] Lanzmann, *Shoah*, op. cit., p. 59.

[25] *Ibid*., pp, 59-60.

[26] Martin Luther considered Jews to be "disgusting vermin." Raymond P. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 154.

[27] Claude Lanzmann, "From the Holocaust to 'Holocaust'" (1981), in *Claude Lanzmann's* Shoah, op. cit., p. 28.

[28] Lanzmann, *Shoah*, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

[29] *Ibid*., p. 61.

[30] Reinhard Heydrich sent invitations to several Staatssekretäre and chiefs of SS main offices for a "Final Solution" conference. According to Hilberg, "The recipients of the letter were familiar with the phrase "final solution," but they had to ponder how the idea would be transformed into an act and how they themselves would be involved. They could surmise that all the Jews would be deported, and they could sense the fundamental nature of what was to follow. As yet, however, they had not met to verbalize and discuss the details among themselves. It was a historic moment and their interest was intense." (Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* [1961], Vol. 2, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 420). Heydrich did not use the word "kill" or "murder" in the meeting: "Heydrich explained what was to happen to the evacuees: they were to be organized into huge labor columns. In the course of this labor utilization, a majority would undoubtedly "fall away through natural decline *[wobei zweifellos ein Grossteil durch natürliche Verminderung ausfallen wird]*." The survivors *(Ristbestand)* of this "natural selection" process, who represented the tenacious hard core of Jewry, would have to be "treated accordingly" *(wird entsprechend behandelt werden müssen)*, since these Jews had been shown in the light of history to be the dangerous Jews, the people who could rebuild Jewish life. Heydrich did not elaborate on the phrase "treated accordingly," although we know from the language of the Einsatzgruppen reports that he meant killing." (*Ibid*., p. 422). The conference attendees needed to analogize the meaning of the Final Solution and invent a way to implement it.

[31] Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 1062.

[32] The process of executing the Final Solution was not unified: "Rather than a simple execution of a detailed, preconceived blueprint, the Final Solution was a general framework for genocide carried out in accordance with many different decisions under a variety of circumstances. There was no uniform process." (Shlomo Aronson and Peter Longerich, "Final Solution: Preparation and Implementation", in *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, edited by Walter Laqueur, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 193). The Final Solution resulted from many interrelated actions taken by different authorities and coordinated over a long period. For example, the percentage of the Jewish population murdered varied greatly depending on the degree of Germany's control and the attitude of the government and bureaucracy (*Ibid*., p. 198).

[33] Walter Laqueur, "Final Solution: Public Knowledge", in *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, op. cit., p. 199.

[34] Sami Naïr, "*Shoah*, une leçon d'humanité" (1985), in *Au sujet de* Shoah, op. cit., p. 230.

[35] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Part 3, London, Penguin Classics, 2017, p. 622. "As terror is needed lest with the birth of each new human being a new beginning arise and raise its voice in the world, so the self-coercive force of logicality is mobilized lest anybody ever start thinking—which as the freest and purest of all human activities is the very opposite of the compulsory process of deduction."

[36] Laqueur, "Final Solution: Public Knowledge", in *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, op. cit., pp. 201-202.

[37] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Man and Adversity" (1951), in *Signs*, translated by Richard C. McCleary, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1964, pp. 229-230. Merleau-Ponty describes Freud's unconscious this way: "(…) it is the unconscious which chooses what aspect of us will be admitted to official existence, which avoids the thoughts or situation we are resisting, and which is therefore not *un-knowing* but rather an un-recognized and unformulated knowing that we do not want to assume. In an approximative language, Freud is on the point of discovering what other thinkers have more appropriately named *ambiguous perception*."

[38] Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 424-425.

[39] Lanzmann, *Shoah*, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

[40] Shiba, *Holocaust*, op. cit., pp. 254-255.

[41] Hilberg's education was not in history but political science. The history of World War II is too serious a matter to be left solely to historians. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "L'épreuve de l'historien : réflexions d'un généraliste" (1988), in *Au sujet de* Shoah, op. cit., p. 275. By the way, Vidal-Naquet says this of Landsmann's film: "I would say that the only great French historical work on the massacre, a work sure to last and to remain, is not a book but a film, *Shoah*" (*Ibid*., p. 276).