

Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust (Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism)

By Dan Diner

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The major essays of Dan Diner, who is widely read and quoted in Germany and Israel, are finally collected in an English edition. They reflect the author’s belief that the Holocaust transcends traditional patterns of historical understanding and requires an epistemologically distinct approach. One can no longer assume that actors as well as historians are operating in the same conceptual universe, sharing the same criteria of rational discourse. This is particularly true of victims and perpetrators, whose memories shape the distortions of historical narrative in ways often diametrically opposed.

The essays are divided into three groups. The first group talks about anti-Semitism in the context of the 1930s and the ideologies that drove the Nazi regime. The second group concentrates on the almost unbelievably different perceptions of the "Final Solution," with particularly illuminating discussions of the Judenrat, or Jewish council. The third group considers the Holocaust as the subject of narrative and historical memory. Diner focuses above all on perspectives: the very notions of rationality and irrationality are seen to be changeable, depending on who is applying them. And because neither rational nor irrational motives can be universally assigned to participants in the Holocaust, Diner proposes, from the perspective of the victims, the idea of the counterrational. His work is directed toward developing a theory of Holocaust historiography and offers, clearly and coherently, the highest level of reflection on these problems.

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Editorial Review

Review
"These essays demonstrate Diner's talents as an insightful and shrewd historian able to integrate intellectual history and international history."--"New Republic

From the Inside Flap

“The brilliance of Diner’s essays stems in good part from the astonishingly wide perspectives in which he sets his inquiries and from the interdisciplinary synthesis he is able to master. Publication in English is of extreme importance in enriching the debates on Nazism and the Holocaust in this country.”—Saul Friedlander, author of *Nazi Germany and the Jews*

"One of the most probing and intellectually sophisticated historians of the German Jewish conundrum, Dan Diner has a quality of mind and an intellectual depth and precision that are altogether unique.”—Anson Rabinbach, author of *In the Shadow of Catastrophe*

From the Back Cover
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