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Jesus Christ Holocaust: Fabulation of the Jews in Christian and Nazi History

Peter Canning

"You're misunderstanding the facts of the situation", said the priest, "the judgement does not happen all at once, the proceedings gradually turn into the judgement."

-- The Trial (the Process)

"I go the way that Providence dictates with all the assurance of a sleepwalker."

--Hitler, Munich, 1936

Niemand zeugt für den Zeugen (No one bears witness for the witness)

--Paul Celan

It once seemed obvious to everyone concerned that the script of history had been written by God. The chronicle of events and persons of this world had significance only in figural relation with the ideal Biblical types they reflected. The Book in turn was organized such that Old Testament types of the fallen world were sublimated into New Testament anti-types of the world saved and consummated in the risen Christ. To Bossuet in the seventeenth century this schema was still compelling and evident, though he perhaps had to work harder for his faith than his medieval fathers. But in the following century, the rationalist critique of religion relegated Bossuet's ideal Biblical history to the status of a quaint and obscurantist fable.¹

5. Scientific rationalism has only tightened its grip since the eighteenth century, until today the rationalist technocracy has nothing but contempt for (and mostly ignorance of) religious leftovers, "superstition". And yet we are becoming increasingly uneasy. Why, if the Bible is all made of nonsense and phantasy, at best grounded in an idiosyncratic, perspectival (European) history—why does it seem that the more rational and probabilistic our epistemology becomes, the closer the actual current of historical events comes to approximating or converging with exactly what was predicted in the New Testament Apocalypse?
6. Bossuet knew Providence was overseeing the course of universal history and guiding it in profound if cryptic ways. Voltaire was equally certain that Divine Providence was a load of priestly baggage and mystification. But the reason Voltaire was so unimaginatively wrong and Bossuet so unimaginably right could not have occurred to either of them. God and Providence, for being fabulous creations, were no less really effective agents in the production of historical events. Sacred narrative—its prescriptions, interpellations, commands, suggestions, characterizations, prophecies—was precisely their mode of efficacious agency, as well as the substance of their being. Such an alternative ontology is only recently finding definition. Nietzsche remarked in a late aphorism "how the true world became a fable". But, conversely, does the fabula not have the potential to make itself into a world? Not true or false but a real

¹Cf. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 104-144. The present chapter owes very much, in its concern with the cause of the Holocaust, to the work and encouragement of Shoshana Felman and Claude Lanzmann.

world because a world-event enacting fabulation in reality. This is the world of “perversion”, of turning phantasm or its delirium-transform (discourse) through and out into the world.²

7. God and Providence, kept in mind, miraculated into imaginary being, were also embodied in institutions which acted out ritual representations, symbolic incarnations. Rituals fuse content and expression forms into a programmed set of actions. Now anti-Judaism is explicit in Christian doctrine—which negates the calling of Israel to be God’s chosen people, substituting faith in Christ for the Law and “this” life, individual salvation for the preservation and continuity of collective identity across death and passing generations.³ Christianity, it seems, is focused on the moment of transcendence, transfiguration and consummation of the world (apocalypse). How does it act, consciously or unconsciously, to effect the fulfillment of its prophecies?
8. Christian European history comprises supplementary, unofficial rituals which re-enact the Crucifixion, but unconsciously, as current and spontaneous event. These are the so-called “ritual murders” of which Jews have been periodically accused throughout Christian history (and even since 1945),⁴ and which serve as prototype of the Holocaust, their final episode. Here is a typical scenario. The Jews are accused of ritually murdering a Christian child (standing in for Christ) and using his blood to perform black magic. The Christian community, outraged, turns on the Jewish community, attacks and murders its people, or takes them to the river to be “baptized” (or drowned). The scene is played for real, without its actors ever hesitating in their roles or doubting the truth of the charge, which would be tantamount to questioning its Biblical source and archetype. This intermittently repeated event is a stereotype of both the Passion and the Holocaust, double end-points of the event-series. The subject of compulsion, says Freud, “does not *remember* anything of what has been forgotten and repressed, but *acts it out*.”⁵
9. Neither sneering at sacred history with Voltaire nor believing with Bossuet in the God-sent while piously lowering one’s gaze before the mystery (“*il faut s’abêtir*”: Pascal), one begins to sense the quasi-causal efficacy in phantasy, and its narrative fabulation, continued by their enactment on the emerging edge of our historical being manifesting in the event. “Will is a kind of causality belonging to living beings so far as they are rational”, said Kant;⁶ but phantasy is the (necessarily) intervening representation which occupies the will’s attention,

²On the event-phantasm complex, see Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969).

³Of the analyses of Judeo-Christian theological relations I have read, the best are Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: the Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Minneapolis: Seabury Press, 1974), and the remarkable deconstructive detective work by Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986). The groundbreaking move by a Christian was James Parkes’ *The Conflict of Church and Synagogue: a Study in the Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Atheneum, 1979; first ed. 1934); the classic of post-Holocaust Jewish protest is Jules Isaacs’ *Jésus et Israël* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1948).

⁴Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Columbia, 1977), pp. 295f.

⁵Freud, “Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten” in *Studienausgabe*, vol. 11, *Ergänzungsband: Schriften zur Behandlungstechnik* (Frankfurt a/M: Fisher, 1975), p. 209. On ritual murder see S. M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), pp. 56ff., 100ff., 162, 172, etc. And on its continuation into the present, cf. the previous note; also William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: an Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938*, p. 28; and esp. Jacob Katz’s standard work on modern anti-Semitism, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1908), pp. 19f., 39f. (Voltaire, the Deists: Jews anciently practiced human sacrifice), 96-97 (secularization of the blood libel in 19th. c. Germany), 228, 275ff. (Tiszaeszlár, Hungary, 1882), 95 (Drumont), *passim*.

⁶Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, Tr. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper, 1964), p. 114.

thus inflecting its intention. The moment of voluntary—but also involuntary, demonic, and fabulatory—agency occurs in the neuronal interval of thought and imagination leading into speech and action. The phantasy is neither lie nor truth but guides the will toward conversion of the fabula into “fact”, *factum*, the thing done (*res gestae*), a kind of veri-fiction.⁷

10. The question whether the Gospel story is a lie which slanders the Jews could never be admitted by the Church into debate. To question the Truth of the Story was itself to “Judaize”, to doubt in Christ and to accuse Him again (of being a simulacrum, a mere image of God), to “crucify” Him over again with scepticism. The Jews’ role and function is suspended there forever in the fabulous interval, crucifixion scene, inciting popular will to exact revenge.
11. The present instant occupies this fantastic space enduring between past and future action-passion, repeating or altering our story, now attempting to debate, now taking dictation about what is real and what to do. This gap “is” the neuronal interval of the human chronotope—apparition and disparition of what exists and affects and moves, mediated through phantasy, uttered in fabula, enacted in history.
12. Freud is so much concerned to invent a discourse of this intervallic space-time, that he opens and closes his *Interpretation of Dreams* in somewhat cryptic but decided approach to the theme of a phantasm-event continuum or consecutivity. Dreams, he begins, “can be inserted at an assignable position in the mental activities (*Treiben*) of waking life”. The importance of dreaming is that it is not isolated, it continues in the cs./ucs. differential of waking phantasy (and “life”). Freud repeats his elusive and astonishing hypothesis at the beginning of three consecutive chapters; and concludes: “By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, dreams are after all leading us into the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as the present, has been moulded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past.”⁸ In other words, the dream not only refers to the past, but in transferring it, the “indestructible wish” also pre-fers its own future, looking out ahead, it is always also directed toward the variable futures which it prefigures in desire and fear.
13. This conclusion anticipates the theory of transference “clichés”, the set of libidinal attitudes (*Einstellung*) which direct the subject’s acts and interpretations (of others’ acts and gestures, signs) in a repeating series of relationships it is one’s life-task to decipher, perhaps modify in the dialectic of “character and destiny”. The text of these basic attitudes is engraved in phantasy-narratives which are thus enacted according to varying potentials and circumstances.⁹
14. Freud is often thought to reduce the present to the past. The temporality of transference is more complicated, involving the linking up (*anknüpfen*) of a repeating past—that refuses to pass—into an emerging future in the interval of actuality. There the ongoing phantasy—a continuum of conscious and unconscious representations—induces acts whose logic eludes rationality. The text of the basic Christian attitude toward the Jews is “neither hidden nor visible”,¹⁰ though its interpretation is in doubt. But the compulsive ritual of accusing the Jews of murder (or betrayal, or well-poisoning, or desecration of the host) and attacking them is

⁷On the classical distinction between history as referent, *res gestae*, and account, *historia rerum gestarum*, see. Michael Allen Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger, and the Ground of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁸Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), pp. 35, 660, et passim.

⁹“Zur Dynamik der Übertragung”, [On (or Toward) the Dynamics of Transference] (1912) in *Gesammelte Werke VII* (London: Imago, 1941), pp. 364-374.

¹⁰Cf. Michel Foucault, *L’archéologie du savior* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), pp. 143ff.

inscribed with bodies in history; it is not prescribed but only implicitly suggested in the New Testament, which preaches love and forgiveness. In the Gospel it is “the Jews” who call down the wrath of God on themselves: “let his blood be on us and on our children” (Matt. 27: 25). Reciting this text, the Polish villagers whom Claude Lanzmann interviewed (in *Shoah*) excuse themselves, the Germans, and God—all are absolved of responsibility for the Holocaust. Once again, “the Jews brought it on themselves”. The Crucifixion was their crime. The Holocaust was the punishment which they called down on their own heads, and on their children.

15. The Biblical myth functions as an attractor, not only of other narratives but of ongoing events which it assimilates. What I must risk calling the Holomyth of Christianity—divine incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection—is not the one source or cause of the Holocaust, it “attracted” other causal factors to it (the war, the inflation, political-ideological crisis, socio-economic convulsions), absorbed them and over-determined their resolution, just as it had pre-determined the historical construction of the Jews as visible intermediary agent of class exploitation and oppression (as tax collectors, money lenders, etc., positions only fit for the “reprobate” Jews, excluded from other occupations).¹¹ Nevertheless, these other critical factors, and their resolution in a fascist syncretism, were not alone capable of turning anti-Semitism into systematic mass murder. Nazism re-activated the set of clichés and libretti it had inherited from the Christian Holomyth and its re-enactment in the event of ritual murder, but transformed them into a regular, mechanized destruction process.
16. Concerning the problem of reference, Kant resolved the dispute between empiricism and rationalist idealism in his manner, which was not linguistic philosophical but transcendental and “critical”. The referent exists and it is outside the mind, it is just not accessible, being separate, not knowable: the object is an “x”. The problem I am raising is different again, this time it concerns the “preferent”: the object of desire, drive, or phantasy—which Kant tried to eliminate from his ethics (the will must not be determined by an object of desire).
17. In his remarks on Kant, Lacan will take “elimination” literally: destruction of the object of desire. Kant’s ethical purification is a *sacrifice* of the pathological object.¹² Lacan is still somewhat under the influence of Saussure, for whom the “choice” of object (whether concept or referent) of the signifier is arbitrary. That is, he well maps the general structure of pathological elimination, but does not specify the historical relation between Jews and Christians (since his remarks concern Nazis and Jews—the Holocaust—but not, or apparently not, Christianity). As Benveniste reminded us, from a diachronic perspective (*parole*) the signified as *valeur* (value) is anything but arbitrary, the double-articulated and dia-synchronic differential relation (signified/signifier) is inherited, traditional, inertial, resisting alteration.¹³ The choice of the Jews as object of the Nazi system of phantasm and fabulation was no more arbitrary than it was in the Christian system, which the Nazis inherited and secularized.¹⁴ The Christians, estab-

¹¹The question of the economic function of the Jews in medieval and modern Europe is extremely complex, and inseparable from the history of capitalism. On Central and Eastern Europe, see Dubnow, op. cit., and Salo Baron, *The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), and *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia, 1980). For a critique of the economic determinist theory of anti-Semitism, Guido Kisch, *The Jews in Medieval Germany: A Study of their Legal and Social Status* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1949), pp. 320-322. Summary of the Jewish position in the Middle Ages in Ruether, pp. 205-214. On modern Germany, see Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichroder, and the Building of the German Empire* (New York: Vintage, 1977).

¹²In “Kant avec Sade”, *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 765-790; cf. *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), pp. 246-248.

¹³“Nature du signe linguistique”, in *Problèmes de linguistique générale I*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 49-55.

¹⁴On secularization, see Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Cumming (New York: Continuum,

lishing their identity in differential opposition to the Jews, had to dispossess the Jews of their tradition, appropriate it, and eliminate them from God's further consideration. (The problem of elimination will come up again. It goes to the core of Nazi-and Christian-regression.)

18. Christianity surreptitiously re-introduced human sacrifice, which the Jews had renounced in the binding (*Akedah*) and unbinding of Isaac.¹⁵ Yet it could not even admit this to itself. Instead it accused the Jews of sacrificing Christ, thus forever dislocating them from within the Christian system. If they accept responsibility, they admit the Story is true (and become Christians). If they deny it, they merely expose their "perfidy" and repeat their crime. Thus the Christians do not admit their religion has regressed into paganism, they say it is the Jews who performed (or demanded) the sacrifice-of the Man God. In fact, what has occurred, now fixed in text forevermore, is a barely disguised provocation to sacrifice the Jews in revenge for their sacrifice of Christ.
19. The act of speech (fabulation), which exteriorizes phantasy, shapes the moving image which the object is called on to approximate, assimilate. The Christian group subject of a ritual murder takes the Jew-as historical construct of a thousand-year Judeo-Christian relation-as object of a now eventuated, realized phantasy. The story may be as much a lie as it ever was, in regard to referent, but it-the Holomyth-as pre-ferent now has the power to act itself out as current event: in the ritual murder accusation, compulsive reflex of the Bible Story; finally as secular Holocaust of those guilty of "betraying" and "murdering" the soldiers at the front, "selling out" the German nation, conspiring against it, etc., etc. It is still the same story, with the same result. What is repeatedly forgotten is the fabulation process itself, shaping events and characters, working itself out into histories.
20. The Christian fabula, like every sacred book, will not tolerate criticism and will not alter its formal message in response to actuality. Until it does, it will continue to attract events and narratives to it. As we approach the end of the second millenium (the Holomyth determines even the reckoning of time), we may well wonder: if the Passion repeated-reacted as Holocaust, how will Apocalypse play? Here the technological object is an artificial sun reconstituted on earth. "And the city had no need of sun or moon to shine upon it; for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb." (Rev. 21: 23) What will have been the meaning of this passage to and in the end?
21. Group phantasms (collective fabulations) are integrated cybernetically in complex feedback loopings back into reality, involving and revolving modes of action, affection, perception, passion, "drive", and reaction to and in the world, in history. The Bible is the most important European instance of a phantasm-fabulation system feeding into the ongoing historical process of production of European history. Unfortunately it never alters its own forms in response to the recordings of that history (the project of "realist" fabulation). It just keeps reiterating the same message. For two thousand years it has shaped imaginations and expectations, but some three hundred years ago it began to go partly unconscious, as we entered the "post"-Christian ratio-scientific period. Now it does its most effective work unconsciously-that is, with no memory (of the fabulative process) except as acted repetition-once having established a matrix for the generation of certain kinds of histories. The Book never displaces a tittle of its message in response to reality; it insists on making reality conform to its form. (Not

1988).

¹⁵Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: the Akedah* trans. Judah Goldin (New York: Behrman House, 1979).

only the Christian Bible: there are other peoples living by “the Book” which feeds them fanfabulations.) The ascendancy of secular atheistic, “diabolic” powers confirms Christian expectations of the end times. Together, the technocracy and its Christian (un-)conscience are collaborating in a strange, millenarian alliance of sacred and profane forces aiming (it seems) at total consummation of “this world”.

22. Enlightened scorn of the Bible and its “chosen people” continues (by denial-negation) Biblical efficacy into the post-Biblical phase—which is really still included in the Bible: as the period of unbelief signalling the beginning of the end. Voltaire’s ridicule was relayed and subverted by the nineteenth-century neo-Christian reaction, which reviled the “Jewish spirit”, the “materialism” of the age. So deeply was anti-Semitism ingrained in everyday language, that Toussenel, author of *Les Juifs rois de l’époque* (1845), “advised” his readers that the word “Jew” was to be “taken here in general in its popular meaning: *juif, banquier, marchand d’espèces*”. In the same way, Marx employs *Judentum* as a trope for “commerce”.¹⁶
23. Usage teaches us a truth, but it is a truth about the subject who uses. It is not the Jews who invented this identity of money-lender nor their exclusively commercial reputation in a secularizing Christian society. To get an idea of the inane dys-imagination that ordinarily invests these issues, consider the reputation Blacks have among Whites for being “lazy”. Is there any truth to this? It is like asking if there is “truth” to the notion that women are “passive”. The truth is in the making—and unmaking of the truth. To form a passive person requires passivizing from an early age and hoping for the best (i.e. that it does not backfire). To breed laziness, the prevailing method is to pay next to nothing for labor extracted—be it “slave” or “free”. And to form “the Jews” into “materialists” also needs time and certain attitudes. It does not mean, however—and this is what frightened post-liberal Europe into its sexist race-nationalist reaction—that unidentified and alarming potentials will not suddenly begin to release and manifest themselves in once carefully constructed groups as they emerge in liberation from that structuration process and demystify its naturalizing images. Unfortunately, “liberation” being co-extensive with immanent capitalist decodings of traditional structures and the re-axiomatizing, recoding of marketable ones for mass production, it does not occur without formidable complications and back-lashings (including re-Christianization). What puts the Jews in such peril in the nineteenth century, is that they are identified with the very essence of the capitalist process dismantling traditional social structures.
24. The OED is a repository of collective fabulations, fragments, “statements”. (One might have chosen Grimm’s *Wörterbuch*). Its first entry under “Jew” is a naive-racist identification: “a person of Hebrew race; an Israelite”. But the second is a characterization, figuratively “transferred” (as it says) and “applied to a grasping or extortionate money-lender or usurer, etc.”. “Jew” has become a universal signifier, by metaphoric transfer, signifying moneylenders. “Get the Jews” just means “get the moneylenders”. These definitions of “the Jew”, along with the verb “to jew”, “to cheat or overreach, etc.”, perform as they “reflect” in vulgar linguistic sedimentation the fabulative construction of Jewish stereotypes. Jews (Blacks, Women) struggle to extricate themselves not from an essential-natural reality but from a historical fabulation process regenerating lies, calumny, caricature, and internalized “self-hating” paradigms and self-mocking images.¹⁷

¹⁶On Toussenel, see Katz, *Prejudice*, pp. 123ff. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 50 and note.

¹⁷Cf. Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1986).

25. There is no essential “racial” or social reality but only results of the historical construction process effecting ideologies in history. In the case of event-repetition, I prefer to speak of fabulation instead of ideology, Althusser’s “representation of the imaginary relation of individuals to their real conditions of existence”. Fabulation is rather the narrative of an event considered in relation to its potential for (re-)enactment. More generally, it is a speech act considered in its historical effect. It is the compulsive self-fulfillment of prophecy, fore-telling, over time, emphasizing the performative function of representations, histories, rumors, lies, prayers, slanders, curses, benedictions, promises... The performance is not over when the vow is made, it has just begun. Every reference to the present or past also determines a preference for the future (we act on what we believe).
26. “Let his blood be on us and on our children”: a promise. It is not an accident nor by magic that exactly this (reported) promise was kept in history. Perhaps some day the significance, the full effect of that promise will have to be faced openly. Until then the Jews—and “this world”—stand “hostage...to a promise never made”.¹⁸
27. Second Coming, Armageddon, Judgement Day: these proper name-dates pro-fer us ahead to the end of the world by referring *back* to the beginning of the “Christian Era” which is just now about to end—that is, preparing (for) the end. It has always been preparing, pre-ferring, to end, for it has never, in its fundamental orientation, considered “this” life as anything but a preparation for the next, the eternal “after-life”. One great long phantasy of “life in death”, and deprecation of everything—flesh, birth, woman, Jew, death—that signifies “this” world.
28. It has no intention, of course, of ending *while the world goes on*. No Christ-minded one is prepared to see the Christian “era” complete itself without finishing the world as well. The two ends are synonymous: there can be no end to the era of Christianity which does not at the same time make an end of the world. We may wish to reflect on the consequences of living for almost two thousand years now in a world framed by an agency that has no “contingency plans” for the world’s continuation *after its hegemony* is ended. This world itself *in its passing*, as it slips and falls into the hands of “diabolical” forces, will have to be destroyed. Are we not thinking, living, and acting out the end precisely and forever according to the “divine” plan as encoded in the New Testament Apocalypse? “Of course”, the cynic smiles ingenuously, “it’s always been this way”. But has it always—been “this way”? Or has it for some time been *moving in this direction*, working toward “this” end?
29. A sober and open consideration of the Holocaust—phase one of the end, and which is *already done*--may help us to understand how the Christian program was not in the slightest degree abrogated by its “going unconscious”. On the contrary, that was just the condition it needed to execute part of its program, by *transferring* the task to “atheists” unaware of how their image of the Jews had been constructed and inherited, their play rehearsed for a thousand years. By studying and confronting the Holocaust, in which the most advanced destructive technology co-operated with the most archaic phantasies in the hands of supposed “post-Christians”, we may also learn something about how the end of our own day, some half-century later, is elaborating itself on outlines so vast and deep-rutted they have become invisible.
30. The systematic mass-murder of the Jews proposes itself to the European conscience as a symptom, calling for interpretation, a bizarre behavior which cannot be justified or rationalized by the “ego”—i.e., from within the recognized system of reason and purpose—of the historical

¹⁸Emmanuel Lévinas, cited by Maurice Blanchot, *L’écriture du désastre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 35.

agency which enacted it. It is as though a murder had been performed in a trance. Afterward no one doubts who wielded the knife, but everyone senses the agent was an instrument of some other power. Who was really “responsible” for the act? What was the motive? Were the Nazis under remote control of some “Mabuse” or “Caligari”?

31. The word “holocaust” means “whole-burnt” (sacrifice), implying ritual repetition and integration into a collective experience. In so naming the events of 1933-45, our language has obscurely and hesitantly begun to recognize what our rational selves refuse—because it will not integrate, will not compute. *The Holocaust* is marked as a singularity, dated and extraordinary: an aberration.¹⁹ By making it sacred and placing it outside the thinkable, we only collaborate in its cover-up. The Church does not even accept partial responsibility, and historians without a conception of unconscious narrative enactment are embarrassed to speculate. The situation is so absurd, the level of *méconnaissance* so high, that our leading theorist of the “sacred” and “mimetic violence” can offer Christian love as a *solution* to the crisis, without even discussing the Holocaust or (apparently) wondering if there could be any connection, any problem with this love, in its narrative articulation, any underside.²⁰
32. The fascist “epidemic” has forced us to rethink the standard theorems of economic determinism—notably that which derives ideological position from class interest as determining “in the last instance”. As is generally recognized today,²¹ such ultimate determination of political action is precisely what failed to occur, and that lapsus invited a fascist racism—with which we are far from finished—to slip into the power and ideological vacuum which ensued and to piece together an ideological narrative out of incompatible and contradictory elements. Strung together with the debris of nationalism and socialism was that supplementary subjective element that sutured the whole by addressing (“interpellating”) “the people” (*das Volk*) at another, mystical level: that of race.²²
33. The specificity of Nazism within the array of fascistic variations exposes the further dimension of anti-Semitism, which becomes the axis of the Nazi wheel—defining Aryan supremacy negatively by differential polar opposition. Betraying itself finally to be the prime mover of the entire program, the motif of Jew-hatred demands re-evaluation of the dia-synchronic European historical guidance system. It is as though an “insignificant” (invisible) astral body had revealed itself to be the gravitational center of the planetary-solar system. For the death camps turned out—into—infinite vortices, “black holes” attracting and perturbing the orbits of large political bodies, sucking in and disappearing illegitimated *humans* without any place left in that system. It had defined them out of existence. Only after the war did these gravitating holes even come to be recognized, when it became increasingly clear that they had been the “heart” of the entire Nazi—and Central European—system. Or, to shift the analogy onto earth and the plane of civilization, the “system” progressively simulated a

¹⁹Jacques Derrida has meditatively interrogated the singularity, propriety, and repeatability of the name-date (with constant unnamable reference to the Holocaust) in his seminar on Paul Celan in Paris, 1984-85. See also *Schibboleth pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 1986).

²⁰René Girard, *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1986). Girard’s work, while focusing acutely on the function of ritual violence, suffers from the fallacy of the “arbitrary” victim—as if there were not a precise motive and history to the choice of Jews by Christians.

²¹See Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* (London: Verso, 1979), 81-142; and Laclau’s brief, condensed articulation of “Psychoanalysis and Marxism”, trans. Reiter-McIntosh, *Critical Inquiry* 13 (1987), pp. 330-333.

²²See Jean-Pierre Faye’s excellent and full account of the stitching and patching of Nazi narrative, *Langages Totalitaires* (Paris: Hermann, 1972).

sewer system, the “refused” humans were “treated” by it as raw sewage, whose disposal presented an unprecedented problem in sanitary engineering. The camp is the nihilizer which by incinerating bodies accomplishes their disappearance (almost) without a trace. Jacques Lacan once qualified humans as the animals that don’t know what to do with their shit. We also have great pain, especially in periods of “identity crisis”, deciding just what and who is of value and what is so much “worthless shit”. The Jews were continually accused of poisoning Christian minds and bodies; finally they were identified as the poison, the shit polluting the system—which had thus to discipline and mold itself into the Anal State.

34. Humans are the only animal that becomes obsessed with its own anticipated disappearance. We imagine ourselves after life as “nothing” but waste, post-vital leftover. We are the animal that can be reminded of death by the sight of our own remains and remainder—which must be why excrement and corpses are so disturbing and are taboo. The Holocaust is, I believe, a symptom, complementary to “Hiroshima”, of an incapacity of certain humans to face one’s own end, to experience one’s future identity as corpse. Under conditions of the epochal disintegration of traditional forms of transindividual identity and continuity (family, tribe, religion), one cannot bear to be alone “before death” in an isolated ego awaiting radical interruption. (Gnosticism and Jewish-Christian apocalyptic appeared under similar stress.) The phantasm of “race” provides a way out, a way of being more than one by absorbing oneself in a group of “identical” others, “my people”, a “national family”, race-mystical collective self. All the other others, all the *rest*, are all the same, just so much trouble and “waste” to eliminate.
35. (There is life after death, only it isn’t mine. It goes on without me and within. It’s all I have, I am not all it has. Is it—machines? It is—desire. What?)
36. The SS, which improvised the Holocaust as its core and secret, was organized as an anal disciplinary system. It was obsessed with duty and “decency”, purification and elimination of “filth”. Himmler tried to shape his corps on the model of Jesuit discipline. “The Jews” functioned within the phantasms of the corps as the filth to be eliminated. This is not my interpretation, it is an inherited phantasy image. The association of the Jews with the devil and his anus derives from popular medieval fabulation, which Nazi propaganda reactivated and recirculated. All the Christian stereotypes were re-deployed: Jewish odor, pollution, poison, filth, disease (contamination).²³
37. In thinking about the Holocaust, which calls for thinking more than anything happening in Europe since the Crucifixion, we must try to acknowledge its singularity while at the same time researching its unthinkable logic, which is the patho-logic and theo-logic of Christian European teleology. Christians and Jews have often cooperated, traded, shared their civilization—but inevitably this contact was undermined by Church doctrine and policy, official and unofficial, encouraging contempt, hatred, degradation, expropriation, and murder of Jews. This is the recorded and re-acted pre-history of the Holocaust.
38. Auschwitz was a death factory. This phrase, combining the unthinkable (death, the “unthought”) with the most banal (the factory, industry), cannot convey the unspeakable every-

²³See Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: the Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (New Haven: Yale, 1943). On the SS, see Robert Lewis Koehl, *The Black Corps: The Structure and Power Struggle of the Nazi SS* (Madison: Wisconsin, 1983); Heinz Hohne, *The Order of the Death’s Head: The Story of Hitler’s SS*, trans. Richard Barry (London: Pan Books, 1969).

day horror of a thousand-year reich of mass murder, which is the underbelly of Christian love and its millenium translated into practical terms of twentieth-century mechanical efficiency.²⁴

39. What if “the Holocaust” were precisely an epiphany of the entire cryptic devolution of European history—urging analysis in terms of fabulative process. Look at the evidence: two thousand years of Christian history recaps itself in murdering the people its subject of enunciation (the Church) has perpetually execrated as the “race” guilty of murdering the “God made man” who “died for us”. Christian crusaders practiced and rehearsed—modeled for—the Nazis by attacking and destroying European Jewish communities during the Middle Ages, beginning in 1096 with the First Crusade.²⁵ This exposes the pulsation of an unconscious behavioral cliché transferred to the secular religion of Nazism—which re-enacted it systematically.
40. Christian history sustained its “Jewish problem” (i.e., the problem of the continued existence of the Jews). The difference between the practice of the Christians toward the Jews and that of the Nazis was at once minimal and decisive. Both regimes mass-murdered Jews when it suited their purposes, and for similar opportunities (to divert attention, to channel and focus popular hatred, to serve economic interests, to acquire property, etc.). Christians would slaughter Jews in an outburst of “passion”, then go to confession to wash their sins away. The confessional thus served the repetition-compulsional structure of pogrom and atrocity alternating with contrition, just as the strict discipline and “decency” of the SS (as Himmler solemnly reminded his men) sustained them in execution of their “duty”. How could they be amoral criminals when it cost them so much in “morale” to do their duty in “cleaning up” the “pestilence” and “disease” of Europe, etc.? Similarly it was understandable that Christian mobs should momentarily forget their loving mercy and avenge their Lord, outraged at the indignities He suffered at the hands of these children of the devil. The very words of Christ were present in mind to reassure them; they were not really killing human beings, for had Christ himself not said to the Jews, “Your father is the devil” (I John 8: 44)? Did “the Jews” not call for His crucifixion?
41. To return then to the distinction, nevertheless decisive, between Christian and Nazi policies, it is that death for the first time became a mass-produced commodity. It is a decisive moment in the history of industrial capitalism, for the Nazis invented the automated destruction technique of wasting of surplus humans as negative capital, anti-value, thus moving us into a new era, the age of the mechanical state anus apparatus. War has been interiorized within Capital as human waste production. In the phantasm they must be eliminated before they clog or contaminate the system. The Jews are first to be treated, but Christian phantasy encourages us to look to the eventual elimination of the material human body-world, sublimated into “light”. With the further evolution of technobiology this may come within range. Christian fabulation here again acts as an attractor of mythic-historical process. As the capitalist phantasm becomes increasingly fixated on waste and surplus humans, it meanwhile continues to evolve a post-human technobody geared to “survive” atmospheric and environmental poisoning—which the chemico-machine technocracy refuses to evaluate in human terms. It is not a coincidence that the Holocaust factory system used engine exhaust and pesticide to kill humans.
42. “Under the Nazis the moment came when we virtually reversed Clausewitz’s maxim and

²⁴The best reconstruction of the Holocaust as destruction process is Raul Hilberg’s *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985).

²⁵Léon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism, vol. I: From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vanguard, 1965), pp. 41-72.

came to the point of considering policy as a continuation of war.”²⁶ This turning point is generally judged to be the moment when the state became “absolutely” destructive—so that total war as policy no longer had any purpose except destruction, which ultimately implied suicide.²⁷ Christianity and Nazism concur remarkably in being suicidal doctrines, as Nietzsche (fore)saw. Nazism completes the transition to nihilism which he predicted with the collapse of Christianity. Or rather, anti-Semitism stands in for “humanity” as object of the phantasm of elimination, and plugs the hole to nowhere (it is the “*point de capiton*” which saves the meaning).

43. The production and consumption of actual death was now integrated into the war industry right alongside the production of the means to produce death. The military-industrial economy had acquired a new dimension. Death was an abstract quantity with its own time-table and production schedule, so that war and the war industry were no longer distinguishable as “in the field” and “in the factory”. The Holocaust took Jewish workers straight off the production lines and fed them straight into the destruction lines. It is perhaps in recognition of the absolute decision implied that Lanzmann ends the first film of *Shoah*, in dead center, with a factory order detailing “spec” modifications for death vans in Chelmno, in which we read: “Since December 1941, ninety-seven thousand have been processed”. Lanzmann assembles at the center of his film a Christian fabulation scene (also in Chelmno) performing the Holomyth, and this memo in bureaucratese ordering mechanical parts. Together these documents reveal the *mind of the Holocaust*. Between them, Simon Srebnik, who survived by singing and jumping (entertaining the Germans), was finally executed with a bullet to the head, and came back to life, talks of bodies not yet asphyxiated by exhaust. “They were all moving, they were coming back to life, and when they were thrown into the ovens, they were all conscious. Alive. They could feel the fire burn them.”
44. The factory has not migrated to the front so much as the battlefield has been interiorized and routinized in the industrial process. Never has it been more evident that capitalism will integrate, rationalize, and market anything that can be produced or reduced. At the same time it demonstrates its own ultimate reference to and preference for the “machine”—as the realized, materialized form of its reproduction automatism (it is the true “god” of capital). As it evolves in mechanomorphism and mechanology, it must increasingly discover the living mortal body obsolete and unpredictable.
45. The apparent paradox of the commodification of death as anti-value actually reveals the logic of production in every post-Holocaust militarist state, where the economy creates demand by managing its own partial self-destructions. Mainly through war and bureaucracy, it effects the internal colonization and depression of the civilian population by surplus-wasting of energies and resources (antiproduction). The defense budget or “war effort” seems to be protecting from an outside enemy, but the real enemy is the entrenched, quasi-suicidal militarist state itself. It wastes in order to maintain scarcity during high employment and production, which would otherwise saturate markets and lower prices, thus congesting the system. The United States, like Nazi Germany, has fabricated and constructed, “real-ized” an imaginary enemy in order to terrorize and effectively to dominate itself, its own citizenry. Since Hiroshima the war

²⁶Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, trans. Christine Booker and Norman Stone (New York: Touchstone, 1986).

²⁷On the Suicide State, see Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer, *Pure War*, trans. Mark Polizotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983; and the excellent descriptive-conceptual classification of signifying regimes and war machines by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Mille plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980).

industry has been purified of even the need to expend its prodestructions in actual war—which heats up the economy too fast anyway (Vietnam). But the German economy was so hot for conventional war and geared up by the late 1930's that it would have collapsed had the war machine not begun to produce actual exterior destruction.²⁸ Yet Nazi foreign policy was governed by a logic which gradually superseded that of imperial expansion: extermination of the imaginary *internal* “national-racial” (*völkish*) enemy, the all-infiltrating “international Jew”. Finally the impulse to total destruction manifested toward the end; destruction of the Jews merged with self-destruction.

46. It is the eco-logic of this production of, by, and for death which unites the modern anti-communist states, Nazi or “liberal democratic”, in their struggle against the demonic forces projected from phantasy, fabulated and structured into reality. It remains to be seen whether the Hiroshima State is any less inclined to *self*-annihilation than the Holocaust State. In both cases, aggression toward the earth and “natural” life seems to be the underlying motivation, denied in reaction-formation by a rhetoric of naturalness. Noisy pseudo-debates cover the advance of the machine as it evolves into life-simulation. (While a sub-apocalyptic post-modernism fascinates itself with mindlessness, playing narcissistic re-capture in the masturbatory delectation of the “kitsch of death”).²⁹
47. Just as the “communists” are the metaphysical enemy of “freedom and democracy”, so the “Jew-Bolsheviks” are the enemy of the “Aryan” people. Each serves as *point de capiton* of its respective system, that is, the point where the circle of signification stops its perpetual slide-roll and crosses over to its happy home in the signified.³⁰ Behind every particular evil stands the hidden communist, or Jew, or “Jew-communist”—but also “finance Jewry” responsible for the “interest slavery” oppressing the “workers”. The Nazi system of narration succeeded in biologizing both terms of the vulgar dialectic engendered by popular ad hominem denunciations of advanced industrial capitalism. Actually, as Moishe Postone argues, this amounts to the most fantastic bio-concretization of abstraction itself, a metaphysical slight-of-hand whereby the Jewish “race” comes to embody the very essence of abstraction as against “concrete” industrial capital thus exempted from the critique mounted by what Lenin called a “socialism of fools”.³¹
48. The *point de capiton* pins down the virtually unhinged signifier to a signified ground. The point can be anywhere, in fact it must be virtually everywhere, like God(-fearing) or freedom(-loving), source of all meaning and true emotion. But precisely in order to give *differential-oppositional* significance to the word god, the Christian requires a “devil” who arouses righteous anger by the evil he works; the freedom-fighter killing communists for democracy detects “totalitarian communism” lurking potentially behind every social upheaval; and German Race-Nationalism fixes on the “International Jew”. Thus Hitler’s last political testament before his suicide: “It is untrue that I or anyone else in Germany wanted war in 1939. It was desired and instigated entirely by those international statesmen who were either of Jewish descent or worked for Jewish interests... Centuries will pass away, but out of the ruins of our towns and

²⁸Summary and discussion of Nazi war economy in: John Hiden and John Farquharson, *Explaining Hitler's Germany: Historians and the Third Reich* (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1983).

²⁹Cf. Saul Friedländer, *Reflections on Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* trans. Thomas Weyr (New York: Avon, 1986).

³⁰See *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan III: les psychoses*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1981), pp. 293-306. Cf. Slavoi Zizek, “Sur le pouvoir politique et les mécanismes idéologiques”, *Ornicar?* 34 (July-September 1985), pp. 41-60.

³¹Moishe Postone, “Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to ‘Holocaust’”, *New German Critique*, No. 19, 1980, pp. 97-115.

monuments the hatred against those finally responsible, *whom we have to thank for everything*, international Jewry and its helpers, will grow..."³² Responsible for "everything"—that is the signal of the discourse of the *point de capiton*. But it is crucial to note that in this political delirium—pinned to reality only through a traditional phantasy—as in the current discourse of "freedom", it is not at all a matter of a *false* doctrine which could simply be rectified with reference to "the truth" and "the facts". We are dealing here with political ideologies of very powerful men and movements, institutions, governments, mobilizing enormous military and propaganda machinery. They have the power to *enact their fabulations in the real world*, to create and produce their "lies", *fabulae, as truth*, in and as the political and economic reality.

49. Thus, for example, it is certainly no illusion that the Soviet Union is the enemy of the "free world"; it has been produced and shaped into an enemy over the course of the last seventy years. (Just as the Soviet "people" is programmed to repel or psychiatrize dissenters as "bourgeois individualists".) In the same way, "international Jewry" was certainly opposed to Nazism, just as an Afro-American must necessarily and by position be "opposed" to the Ku Klux Klan, whether or not one "believes" in race. It is not a question of belief, but of the historical production of phantasy as human reality being acted out according to symbolic programs and imaginary scenarios.
50. As the Nazi religion assimilated and adapted Christian anti-Semitism, Hitler assumed the identity of proxy "messiah" to the German people: "in defending myself against the Jew I am fighting for the work of the Lord".³³ "The Jew", as negative Lord, is the earthly referent to the abstraction of evil: "in his vileness he becomes so gigantic that...among our people the personification of the devil as the symbol of all evil assumes the living shape of the Jew." (MK 324) One is never sure in reading *Mein Kampf* whether one is witnessing a cynic expose his program of manipulation or a fanatic pounding on in his delirium. By Hitler, cynicism and fanaticism are fused into a synthetic phantasm. The content and structure of this cynico-fanatical racket is drawn from Christian fabulation. Nothing is altered of the traditional Jewish character, it is merely racialized in order to preclude conversion (the escape route of Jews, faced with "Christianity or death", who decide to live). Openly fabulating and advance-planning the Holocaust in 1924, Hitler is determined there shall be no way out this time, no "splash of baptismal water" (MK 120). Finally it is only by this determination to close all exits that Nazism "transcends" Christianity in the enactment of its resentment.
51. Hitler *knows* what the Lord requires in fulfillment of his purpose because he has "read" German history with Bible in mind (Hitler, Goebbels, and Himmler, the three principle architects of the Holocaust, were all raised Catholic) and has figured out what the Lord must already be aware of—scilicet: that the incarnation of the devil on earth is "the Jew". Nothing has changed (in fabula) since the Middle Ages, when dramas were performed "showing how the Jewish demons would help Anti-Christ to conquer the world until, on the eve of the Second Coming and the beginning of the Millenium, Anti-Christ and the Jews would be annihilated together amidst the rejoicings of the Christians. During the performances of such works armed force was needed to protect the Jewish quarter from the fury of the mob."³⁴ These scenes are early rehearsals for the genocide of the Jewish people, once that mob should become mobilized and mechanized, with one of its own in power. How deep such representations must have sunk

³²Quoted in Hilberg, *Destruction*, op. cit., p. 989. My Emphasis.

³³*Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), p. 65. Hereafter cited as MK.

³⁴Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford, 1970), p. 79.

into the political unconscious of the European Christian masses, such phantasms alternately lying dormant and then erupting in pogroms, re-emerging not as *memory* but as *act*. And indeed, “the Jews” did help “Anti-Christ” (Hitler) to power, for without the spectre—with which Germany was saturated by innumerable propaganda releases—of “world domination” by their “international Jew”-controlled “enemies”, how could the Nazis have justified so belligerent and paranoid a foreign policy? Hitler had to conquer the world, otherwise the Jews would (they already were); he had to exterminate them, otherwise they would exterminate all Germans, etc. This message was pounded daily into the conscience of the German people. During the showing of anti-Semitic propaganda films such as *Jud Süß*, mob violence would arise, exactly as during the Christian period.³⁵

52. Such is the *function of the fabula* in the Nazi and Christian systems of narration. Just as the Christian fathers announced the abandonment of the Jews by God and prophesied their eternal misery—that is, carried out the prophecy—so Hitler “prophesied” in 1939 that “if the international Jewish financiers...should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.” There existed a detailed blueprint for world domination by the “international Jewish conspiracy”, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, forged during the Dreyfus affair by Russian secret police (perhaps in collaboration with the French) in Paris. Hannah Arendt, Leon Poliakov, Hermann Rauschning, and Norman Cohn, all profound students of anti-Semitism and Nazism, agree that the *Protocols* served Hitler as a “primer” (*Rauschning*) for his own foreign and domestic program.³⁶ In other words, the Holocaust was “acted” according to a prescribed scenario or livret, the “fabulation of a phantasm”. The *Protocols* positions the “elders of Zion” at the hub (*point de capiton*) of a conspiracy of world domination. By appearing to *react* and defend against a deadly total world plot, Hitler was able to mold his own program around this re-activated millenarian phantasm, and by producing “the Jew” as real symbolic-imaginary (institutional) enemy, to veri-fy and real-ize the fabula of Jewish “hatred” of Germans. Historical events, being constantly produced by human agents acting out their moving self-images, always exceed truth and lying as simple opposition, in a realm where fiction turns faction into fact.
53. Hitler, in the Lacanian algorithm, is the S2, “signifier of knowledge”, representing the subject who “knows” what the “master signifier” (S1)—Lord vs. Jewish anti-Lord—means, intends, or deserves. He disciplines himself by identifying his own will and voice with that of a furious superego, provoking regression to oral-anal relation with a persecuting object which must be isolated, controlled, and eliminated before it contaminates the system. The Jews function as poison-shit, the Lord is the Other whose demand (as Hitler divines) is to quarantine (“concentrate”) and eliminate them—to turn all of Europe, in other words, into a digestive tube systemizing incorporation, concentration, control, and elimination (the Nazi movement as bowel movement). Above all avoid disorder and filth. And this disciplined action is Hitler’s *gift* to the Lord (the Other), just as he will demand rigorous discipline from “his men” in the exercise of their “duty”. They in turn must identify their will with that of their *Führer* and *Herr*. They do not need to understand in order to obey. But he, Hitler, must *know* that he is doing the will of the Lord, even if its ultimate meaning is obscure to him, even if he does not himself altogether understand *why* the Jews have been chosen to incarnate all the evil on earth. The evil

³⁵Erwin Leiser, *Nazi Cinema*, trans. Gertrud Mander and David Wilson (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 153.

³⁶See Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: the Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 190ff.v.

threatens to be inseparable from the very existence of the world (the problem of Gnosticism), identified with the Jews, who are “oriented to purely earthly affairs...without any admixture of world-denial”, according to the Nazi ideologist Rosenberg.³⁷ Jewish “materialism” is simply a modernization, translation—not effected until medieval times—of the fundamental Christian position that the Jews are all “of this world” (and death). Rosenberg has the “salvation” of “all mankind” coinciding not only with the final elimination of the Jews but with the end of the world, “the end of all time”.³⁸

54. The section of *Mein Kampf* introducing the “Jewish question” is organized rhetorically around a set of ironic discursive figures: it may *seem* that *x*..., but in reality *y*... The Jews seem to be ordinary human beings, but in reality... “In the course of the centuries their outward appearance had taken on a human look; I even took them for Germans. The absurdity of this idea did not dawn on me because I saw no distinguishing feature but the strange religion.” (MK 52) This is a move in transition from religious to racist categories—while preserving religious stereotypes. Once again, the basic paradox is adopted from Christianity: seemingly human, but really... (“your father is the devil”). The Jews figure in the Christian phantasm as the *simulacrum* of humanity. Their *essence* is all appearance, their truth falsehood and deception. But how to maintain this position and function of the Jews while “transcending” the religious categories on which it depends? The answer, as is well known, is to make a *religion of race* (cf. MK 114-116).
55. The next requirement is to dispossess the Jews of their German nationality (“I even took them for Germans”). The National Socialists must synthesize the racism, nationalism, and militant unificationism of the Pan-German Party with the “socialism” of the Christian Social Party. Hitler and his strategists were guided by the logic of these existing movements in composing their component vectors: the common denominator is anti-Semitism, which will find Jews *everywhere*. “It belongs to the genius of a great leader to make even adversaries far removed from one another seem to belong to a single category, because in weak and uncertain characters the knowledge of having different enemies can only too readily lead to the beginning of doubt in their own right” (MK 118). Is this a cynical exposition of mass manipulation? Perhaps, but Hitler is also his own dupe, for he claims for his own solution, “racial knowledge”, the status of “serious scientific treatment” lacking in earlier movements (MK 119-120). A fetishist and mythomaniac, he both exposes the lie and maintains it to *himself*.
56. How could this tiny minority (less than 1%) be a danger to the German population? Like an “invisible virus”, it insinuates itself into and contaminates everything with “Jewification” (*Verjudung*). When (apparently) assimilated, the Jew *appears* human, even German. Yet anti-Semites will simultaneously maintain that you can tell a Jew by his “physiognomy”, his nose, his eyes (“evil eye”). Furthermore, he may speak German but listen carefully for the trace of an accent (*Mauscheln*) to betray itself.³⁹ If all else fails, however, Hitler has taught himself to recognize *Jewish ideas*.
57. The position of the Social Democrats on “economic questions” has been giving him trouble, “this maze of reasoning...dung-heap of literary dadaism”. It is “incomprehensible”. But “by balancing the theoretical untruth and nonsense of this doctrine with the reality of the

³⁷Text in George Mosse, *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1966), pp. 75-78.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Cf. Gilman, *Self-hatred*, *passim*.

phenomenon", he has "gradually obtained a clear picture of its intrinsic will", which is nothing less than to "put an end to humanity" (MK 50-51). Now this connects them with the Jews, "a people of which, up to that time, I had known next to nothing." (MK 51) Two negatives multiplied make positive: Hitler crosses his ignorance of the Jews and of Social Democracy together: so they are identical. "Only a knowledge of the Jews provides the key with which to comprehend the inner, and consequently real, aims of Social Democracy." (MK 51) Anti-Semitism, socialism of fools, religion of racists, also provides for the capitalism (anti-Bolshevism) of national socialists. It is the suture for all hegemonic dislocations.⁴⁰ "When I recognized the Jew as the leader of Social Democracy, the scales dropped from my eyes. A long soul struggle had reached its conclusion." (MK 60)

58. Why all the struggle, "mein Kampf"? Because Young Hitler has been wracked by doubts and anxieties—which will continue for a time even after his revelation. He reads anti-Semitic pamphlets to gain the *knowledge* to steady his purpose, but relapses again into irresolution. "The whole thing seemed so monstrous, the accusations [against the Jews] so boundless, that, tormented by the fear of doing injustice, I again became anxious and uncertain." (MK 56) With this display of sensitivity to "justice", rhetorically aimed at others who might also have doubts, Hitler again exposes his practice of self-manipulation. Anti-Semitism will become his *faith* and reason for being, his faith beyond reason—not in spite of any doubts that the hidden presence of "the Jew" can explain world evil, but precisely because of them. Because it is all so "boundless" and absurd, it *must be true*. "*Credo quia insanium*". Thus is accomplished Hitler's conversion from "a weak-kneed cosmopolitan" into "an anti-Semite" (MK 64). He has an *identity* now and a purpose on earth. His will and power, his conviction, directly feed on that infinite nonsense and insanity. Anti-Semitism, basest common denominator, has hereby condensed the multiple variants of the Holomyth and essentialized (racialized) its object.
59. The Christian leader who commits adulteries while cynically milking his flock for Jesus, periodically repents and confesses his sins, but *for real*. The cycle begins again: cynicism thus engenders, through sentimental attachment to betrayed values, contrition and a renewable faith, a spiritual insurance policy. It is not that the cynic has no faith. He has exactly the faith that comes from knowledge of his own baseness and "evil"—which is the work of Satan. It is the devil in him which arouses his ire and catalyzes his reconversion and confession. He is not really to blame: Satan the "accuser" has possessed his soul and is responsible for "everything". Now God will repossess. The religious conscience is divided within itself, good vs. evil. It can never articulate the causal chain—it is too complicated—and its very inarticulateness gives it the awed conviction and authority to silence debate and bar discussion.
60. From being practically invisible and nowhere in particular ("I did not see them" [MK 52]), "Jews" (devils) are now everywhere, stealthily penetrating and controlling everything. "Wherever I went, I began to see Jews" (MK 56). "Gradually I began to hate them" (MK 63). Hitler has learned all about "Jews" from the anti-Semitic press and parties. Now he understands that the Jewish problem is "a vital question for all humanity, with the fate of all non-Jewish peoples depending on its solution." (MK 120)
61. The fascist mimes the evil of his devils as a defensive measure, cynico-paranoid. He is "defending the Lord", in the name of whom he objectifies his nightmares, then hunts them down and wastes them: "preventive detention", "pre-emptive first strike".

⁴⁰See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1984), passim.

62. Modern anti-Semitic movements, especially after 1870, which condensed into Nazism, “consisted of the overt reaction to Jewish emancipation”. Emancipation did of course have economic and social causes and consequences. It “meant the expansion of the living space of the Jews” and competition for “positions formerly the property of others”.⁴¹ In the same way, if the wealth of the United States were ever to be redistributed such that American Blacks gained a fair share of the territory, Whites would react (as they do anyway) and complain of the pressure of Blacks “moving in”. This would imply nothing about white racism’s being “economic in origin”, though it has economic motivation. In its “origin” it is, like anti-Semitism, a phantasmagoria and a phobia.
63. The concept of fabulation may help us to avoid specious formulae such as: “anti-Semitism chiefly of economic origin”. The “origin” of European anti-Semitism is anything but economic. Tacitus and other Romans were anti-Jewish, but it had nothing to do with usury (the Romans being themselves outrageous usurers). They were provoked by the “strange religion” and customs, “Jewish solidarity”.⁴²
64. Commodity fetishism denies that “the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations”,⁴³ and reifies (essentializes, naturalizes, racializes) these characters in their relations. Yet the position of Jews in Christian society—obviously not incidental to the development of capitalism—is in turn determined by theological phantasies. Of course the Church is establishing an “other-worldly” theocratic empire by dispossessing the “worldly” Jews, who—since they will not disappear—are to remain in the role of the damned and “reprobate”, taking economic roles fitting that characterization. This system operates until the Enlightenment critique of religion obviates the need for Jews to continue to exist “as Jews”.
65. The European theocratic system organized itself concentrically around the Jews as (negatively valued) fetish object. In a series of oppositions of light (Christ) vs. dark (Satan-Anti-Christ), good/ evil, god/demon, spirit/flesh, male/female, other world/this world, and finally, life/death, the Jew is essentialized at the minus pole as the material referent of each negative ideal signified (concept). As this system of oppositions translates itself into economic relations, it crystallizes into an economic reification. This implies in turn the fallacy of essentializing an existing situation which results from an historical construction. Racialization completes the fetshization process, giving it the closure (*point de capiton*) it lacked as long as it was possible to change status, to convert from Jew to non-Jew.
66. Fetishism consists in the synchronic system’s unawareness of its historical (diachronic) development; but historicism tends to fetishize its own recognized process of material development without realizing that the evolution of economic relations has itself been oriented by myth, fabulation, trans-historical narrative. The more that narrative performance is formally fixed, the less it responds to the historical recording process by changing its story, altering its fabulae in a cybernetic feedback relation with current actuality, the more inexorably it will push for realization, historicization of its message as event. Sacred narrative is of course the least alterable of all messages.
67. The Holocaust is continuous with its own cover-up; it is itself a continuation and finalization of the Christian cover-up of the Jewish message in its difference which cannot get through

⁴¹Katz, *Prejudice*, pp. 325, 320.

⁴²See Jules Isaacs, *Genèse de l’anti-sémitisme* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1956).

⁴³Marx, *Capital* trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1976), p. 179.

the Christian filter. What is that message except the demystification of the fetish? God is not man, not visible, not representable in icon, not “image”-inable. God does not kill his son, so Abraham you do not kill your son for God. God did not come to earth, the messiah is not god, he is a human leader. Marx himself fetishized the Jews (their god is Capital, Adorno’s “spirit of circulating capital”, etc.) in the process of demystifying theology and ideology, because he could not recognize the materiality and quasi-causal, quasi-independent effect of theocratic fabulation, which treats questions of life or death, being, nothingness, and is not reducible to another frame (economic) with which it resonates in mutual overdetermination.

68. In Freud’s parable of pre-history, his Ur-myth, the sons rise up and kill their castrating father, then inaugurate the rule of law out of their sense of guilt. Perhaps he was decoding not the diachronically originating proto-event but the *contemporary situation* crystallizing in phantasy and fabulation all around him, shaping its historical emergency: the father-people murdered by their sons (society of brothers). The “Oedipus complex” itself decondes (and is decoded by) the figural destruction of Jewish sacred history by Christian son-light.
69. Thanks to Foucault, I scarcely need to insist on the mechanization process crucial to the industrialization of European man. The “soldier machine”, microprocessed inside and out to move and obey automatically—this was the instrument to operate death production lines.⁴⁴ The content of that interior training in stories and images derived from another age. Together they composed an anal state machine, programmed for concentration and elimination: to squeeze the Jews out of Germany, into ghettos, from there into freight cars, into the camp, the gas chamber, last packed like sardines (head to toe) in mass graves. Still the cover-up was not complete. The decision to burn left us right where we are now, the earth, this world, ready to burn whole, conscious.

Notes

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⁴⁴Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. 135, 162 (soldier machine), 166 (blind obedience, cf. German *Kadavergehorsam*, the “obedience of corpses”), 147 (learning machine), 169 (machine-state), 221 (militarization of economy and industry), etc.