MICHAEL LACKEY

THE MODERNIST GOD STATE

A LITERARY STUDY OF THE NAZIS' CHRISTIAN REICH

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To my mother,
Janice Lackey

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PART ONE

Debunking the Secularization Hypothesis

1

Short-circuiting aesthetics: a novel theory about the origins of Hitler and the Nazis

More than the philosopher, the psychologist, the physicist, and the sociologist, the novelist can articulate the complex conditions of human living. This is not to say that the works of philosophers, psychologists, physicists, and sociologists lack significance or value. To the contrary, novelists rely upon the findings and insights of these intellectual professionals to craft a work of art that can signify the human and the world in all their horror, richness, and complexity. But it is only the novelist who has the capacity to bring the ideas of all of these disciplines (and others) together in order to formulate a comprehensive vision of life. Such is the argument of D. H. Lawrence, who claims in his essay, "Why the Novel Matters": "being a novelist, I consider myself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet, who are all great masters

of different bits of man alive, but never get the whole hog."[1] While most discipline-specific studies examine and explicate one facet of existence, the "novel is the book of life,"[2] so if people want a full-bodied understanding of being-in-the-world, they must begin with a careful study of the novel, which is why Lawrence admonishes his reader: "Turn truly, honourably to the novel, and see wherein you are man alive, and wherein you are dead man in life."[3]

Hyperbolic as these assertions might seem, Lawrence was not the only person to make such grandiose claims on behalf of the novel. For twentieth-century writers in particular there was a growing sense that novelists have the capacity to illuminate human action and historical events in a way that no other professional intellectual could, and what distinguishes novelists is their ability to make coherent and systematic sense of character, as Virginia Woolf argues in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." Prior to 1910, novelists, for the most part, "laid an enormous stress upon the fabric of things," giving readers the material house that characters inhabited with the hope that readers would "be able to deduce the human beings who live there."[4] In this essay, Woolf outlines the limitations of the Edwardian and Georgian novelists, who focus on superficial externals rather than essential internals in their construction of character, an idea that she developed in much more detail in her 1919 essay, "Modern Novels," which would eventually come to be known as "Modern Fiction." Put simply, pre-modernists made use of "simple tools and primitive materials," which is why their novels "have a strange air of simplicity"[5] about them. By contrast, modernists, given their obsession with and focus on "the dark places of psychology,"[6] have advanced the art of the novel

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[1] Lawrence (1936), "Why the Novel Matters," in E. D. McDonald ed. *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*. New York: The Viking Press: 535.
[2] Lawrence (1936): 535.
[3] Lawrence (1936): 537.
[4] Woolf (1978), "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: 112.
[5] Woolf (1984), "Modern Fiction," in *The Common Reader: First Series*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company: 146.
[6] Woolf (1984): 152.

considerably, enabling writers "to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain."[7]

Indeed, for many twentieth-century novelists, the "sole *raison d'être* of a novel is," as Milan Kundera claims, "to discover what only the novel can discover."[8] To illustrate the novel's unique power and function, Kundera contrasts its evolution with "philosophy and science," which "have forgotten about man's being."[9] Here Kundera is using the language of Martin Heidegger to make his point, but he ultimately faults the German philosopher, for "all the great existential themes Heidegger analyzes in *Being and Time* […] had been unveiled, displayed, illuminated by four centuries of the novel."[10] If Kundera sounds frustrated with philosophy here, he is not alone. In "Why the Novel Matters," Lawrence curses the "damned philosophers," who "talk as if they suddenly went off in steam, and were then much more important than they are when they're in their shirts."[11] Equally critical depictions of philosophy can be found in Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow*, which portrays "'philosophers'" as appealing "'to what is superficial and supererogatory—reason'"[12] and philosophy as a world-disfiguring machine that is arbitrarily "'bored through the universe'";[13] E. M. Forster's *The Longest Journey*, which treats philosophers as delusional ("'I think I'm a great philosopher, but then all philosophers think that, though they don't dare to say so'"[14]) buffoons ("But as a philosopher he really was a joy for ever, an inexhaustible buffoon"[15]); and Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, which traces the harrowing journey of a University of St Petersburg philosophy student, a journey that culminates with the death of philosophy: "The *appartement* of the Boulevard des Philosophes

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[7] For an excellent discussion of the rise of psychology during the modernist period, see Martin Jay (1996), "Modernism and the Specter of Psychologism," *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 3, No. 2: 93–111. Woolf (1984): 151.

[8] Milan Kundera (1988), *The Art of the Novel*. Translated by Linda Asher. New York: Harper & Row: 5.

[9] Kundera (1988): 4–5.

[10] Kundera (1988): 5.

[11] Lawrence (1936): 534.

[12] Huxley (2001), *Crome Yellow*. Chicago: Dalkey Archive Press: 111.

[13] Huxley (2001): 118.

[14] Forster (1993), *The Longest Journey*. New York: Vintage International: 33.

[15] Forster (1993): 97.

presented the dreary signs of impending abandonment. It looked desolate and as if already empty."[16]

What frustrates so many twentieth-century novelists is their conviction that philosophy's theories of knowledge and instruments of analysis are obsolete, and yet, scholars continue to privilege philosophers and the philosophical method in their depiction of the intellectual, political, and cultural history of the West. It is precisely this privileging of the philosopher to which Kundera objects when he claims that the "eighteenth century is not only the century of Rousseau, of Voltaire, of Holbach; it is also (perhaps above all!) the age of Fielding, Sterne, Goethe, Laclos."[17] Note how Kundera suggests that novelists have made a contribution that surpasses that of the canonized Enlightenment *philosophes* ("perhaps above all!"). There are two separate questions to answer at this point: 1) Why is philosophy (as well as those disciplines that make use of the philosophical method of analysis) so limited, according to the novelists? And, 2) Why is the novel superior to philosophy (as well as other disciplines) as an instrument for understanding the intellectual, political, and cultural history of the West?

For many modernists, Darwin's findings and methods have both undermined and supplanted philosophy's dominant theory of knowledge, something that Huxley comically suggests in the "First Philosopher's Song," a poem from the 1920 volume *Leda*. Aware of his physical inferiority to the ape, the philosopher-narrator notes that humans can only assert their superiority with their "mind." Based on this logic, the more humans valorize the mind, the more they can justify their dominance over animals. Therefore, using the "Mind fabulous, mind sublime and free," the philosopher, who is "Greedy of luscious truth," wends his way "through the mangrove maze/ Of metaphysics," and thereby intellectually "Outruns the hare, outhops the goat." But since mind, instead of being a detached faculty of an objective knower, is actually just "a nimbler beast," Huxley implicitly exposes the philosopher's theory of mind as a Darwinian creation, a human-invented tool to ensure the survival of the fittest. In other words, the mind is not an ontological fact of being, but rather, it is

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[16] Conrad (2001), *Under Western Eyes*. New York: The Modern Library: 275. Conrad's emphasis.

[17] Kundera (1988): 160.

an instrumental fiction that philosophers have constructed to secure power and dominion over brute beasts. To conclude the poem Huxley's narrator puts the philosopher in his rightful place:

> But oh, the sound of simian mirth!
> Mind, issued from the monkey's womb,
> Is still umbilical to earth,
> Earth its home and earth its tomb.[18]

The joke is ultimately on the philosopher, for whatever pretence he once had to superiority over animals, whatever belief he once held of the ascending ladder of Knowledge into a metaphysical Heaven of Ideas, the secular truth has now been revealed through the smirk of a mindful monkey.

Having exposed the philosopher's approach to knowledge as misguided and naive, many twentieth-century novelists subsequently turned against the philosophical approach to freedom, which Hannah Arendt intelligently defines in her 1961 essay titled "What is Freedom?" After doing a brief historical survey from the pre-Socratics to the mid-twentieth century, Arendt concludes:

> Our philosophical tradition is almost unanimous in holding that freedom begins where men have left the realm of political life inhabited by the many, and that it is not experienced in association with others but in intercourse with one's self—whether in the form of an inner dialogue which, since Socrates, we call thinking, or in a conflict within myself, the inner strife between what I would and what I do, whose murderous dialectics disclosed first to Paul and then to Augustine the equivocalities and impotence of the human heart.[19]

Philosophical freedom presupposes self-transparency and self-mastery, which enables the autonomous subject to make informed intellectual and/or moral judgments. This is not to

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[18] Huxley (1920), "First Philosopher's Song," in *Leda*. New York: George H. Doran Company.

[19] Hannah Arendt (1993), "What is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. New York: Penguin Books: 157.

say that philosophical freedom is without conflict. Arendt acknowledges that there are intellectual conflicts, as portrayed in Plato's dialogues, as well as moral conflicts, as depicted in the writings of Paul and Augustine. But she does suggest that the conflicts are epistemologically accessible to the philosophical subject. More specifically, the epistemic contents of the self are ultimately accessible to the individual's conscious and rational intellect, which is why the individual can act as a free agent.

In a 1935 essay ("The Menace to Freedom") that anachronistically reads as if it were a direct refutation of Arendt's "What is Freedom?" Forster explains why the philosophical concept of freedom is incoherent and even obsolete. When discussing the topics of freedom and solitude, Forster bewails the pathetic condition of the then-contemporary human. After making this claim, he then speculates how pathetic the contemporary human must appear specifically to philosophers, were philosophers still in existence:

> As things are, the poor creature presents a sorry spectacle to the philosopher—or, rather, he would do so if philosophers existed, but we have realized since the days of Voltaire and Rousseau that they do not exist. There is no such person as a philosopher; no one is detached; the observer, like the observed, is in chains.[20]

In this passage, Forster is not bemoaning a particular intellectual situation, which has for the moment assailed that otherwise "detached" band of perceivers known as the philosophers. Were this the case, philosophers would be able to shuffle off the mortal coils of interested knowledge, thereby recovering their "detached" epistemological bearings and their capacity to produce unbiased knowledge. Rather, for Forster, a shift in our understanding of knowledge has unseated the philosophers, rendering the axioms and methods of the discipline obsolete.

To explain why this is the case, Forster discusses history and psychology, two disciplines that have radically undermined the traditional theory of "detached" knowledge, given us a more

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[20] Forster (1977), "The Menace to Freedom," in *Two Cheers for Democracy*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich: 10.

complicated understanding of freedom, and displaced philosophy on the socio-intellectual chain of being. What philosophers never really understood, according to Forster, is that the human is in epistemological bondage, shackled by the "ghosts of chains, the chains of ghosts." At this point, Forster does not mean the chains of the body or the mind, but the chains of history. Given their superficial understanding of history and psychology and their ahistorical approach to the world, many philosophers developed an extremely naive model of human and political freedom, one based on the belief "that a little energy and intelligence would" liberate humanity. We no longer accept such a model, Forster claims, because "[t]he twentieth century knows more history than that and more psychology."[21] In his essay, "What I Believe," Forster insightfully describes how psychology, in particular, has effectively deconstructed philosophy's self-enthroned ego:

> Psychology has split and shattered the idea of a "Person," and has shown that there is something incalculable in each of us, which may at any moment rise to the surface and destroy our normal balance. We don't know what we are like. We can't know what other people are like.[22]

This "something incalculable in each of us" is the subconscious, that indefinable and amorphous entity which is oftentimes epistemologically inaccessible to one's self but also that which frequently contradicts and/or undermines the rational ego's conception of self. And it is this subconscious something that the philosopher of Forster's age will not and cannot acknowledge or understand. As Sigmund Freud claims: "To most people who have been educated in philosophy the idea of anything psychical which is not also conscious is so inconceivable that it seems to them absurd and refutable simply by logic."[23] Specifically, the non-rational contents of the subconscious have no true existence for those educated in philosophy and are therefore not worth considering.

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[21] Forster (1977): 10.

[22] Forster (1977), *Two Cheers for Democracy*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace & Company: 68.

[23] Freud (1960), *The Ego and the Id*. Translated by James Strachey. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company: 3.

Given the radical distinctions between philosophers and novelists, Kundera concludes: "The novel's wisdom is different from that of philosophy."[24] Kundera's claim is not simply that both offer different but equally valuable insights. Actually, he argues that novelists put forth ideas that undermine contributions of numerous well-established intellectual professionals, including philosophers, for the art of the novel "undoes each night the tapestry that the theologians, philosophers, and learned men have woven the day before."[25] The problem with philosophical approaches to intellectual, political, and cultural history, Kundera asserts, is that "[p]hilosophy develops its thought in an abstract realm, without characters, without situations."[26]

Ironically, it is a contemporary philosopher who has produced one of the most searing indictments of philosophy. Charles Mills, a prominent race theorist, faults philosophy for privileging "the ideal abstract" over "historical reality"[27] in its analysis of the human and the world. To illustrate his point, Mills does a brief analysis of Descartes' radical interrogation of the philosophical Cogito, which gave birth to "modern philosophy" and its attendant intellectual dilemmas: "the challenges of skepticism, the danger of degeneration into solipsism, the idea of being enclosed in our own possibly unreliable perceptions, the question whether we can be certain other minds exist, the scenario of brains in a vat, and so forth."[28] Mills notes that these philosophical debates strike many blacks as extremely limited if not totally irrelevant, and the reason why is that the Western philosophical tradition has failed to understand the degree to which it has established a "relationship to the world that is founded on racial privilege," which has become "simply *the* relationship to the world."[29] For instance, Kant's theories about moral autonomy may be relevant to white Western males, but they have virtually no explanatory power for the situation of the enslaved blacks of Kant's day. Therefore, Mills draws a damning

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[24] Kundera (1988): 160.
[25] Kundera (1988): 160.
[26] Kundera (1988): 29.
[27] Mills (1998), *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press: 7.
[28] Mills (1998): 8.
[29] Mills (1998): 10.

conclusion about Western philosophy: "The universalizing pretensions of Western philosophy, which by its very abstractness and distance from vulgar reality seemed to be all-inclusive of human experience, are thereby shown to be illusory."[30]

To shed more insightful light on human subjectivities, Mills invites readers to consider "Ralph Ellison's classic novel of the black experience, *Invisible Man*."[31] Instead of treating the experience of one abstract individual (the Cartesian subject) as universally applicable, Ellison's novel pictures the subjectivities of oppressors and oppressed, and given the situation of the oppressed, Cartesian questions regarding the reality of one's subjectivity are absurdly irrelevant, a mere "perk of social privilege."[32] Ellison's strength, according to Mills, is his ability to picture multiple subjectivities in relation to one another, the subjectivity of those who are considered full-fledged humans as well as those who are considered subhuman. In sum, there is a striking difference between philosophy and the novel. Taking the "ideal abstract" as universally applicable, "White (male) philosophy's confrontation of Man and Universe, or even Person and Universe, is really predicated on taking personhood for granted and thus excludes the differential experience of those who have ceaselessly had to fight to have their personhood recognized in the first place."[33] By focusing on vulgar and historical reality, the novelist skillfully pictures multiple subjects jockeying for personhood in relation to each other, which forces the novel *not* to take personhood for granted and thus enables novelists to understand and represent the very individuals that philosophers have ignored and/or overlooked.

Of course, it is important to note that Mills does not use Ellison's novel to debunk philosophy—he refers to his own work as "African-American philosophy."[34] But Mills' work does clarify and support Kundera's central claim that to get an accurate picture of the human-constructed world, we must begin with specific actions and particular situations rather than with abstract theories or bulky concepts. Therefore, any attempt to examine the ethos of

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[30] Mills (1998): 9.
[31] Mills (1998): 8.
[32] Mills (1998): 8.
[33] Mills (1998): 9.
[34] Mills (1998): 9.

a particular age would be limited if it does not take into account the contributions of its most gifted novelists.[35] While Mills does not explicitly or formally adopt Kundera's view that the novel is superior to philosophy in articulating the spirit of an age, his method of analysis tacitly indicates that he considers this to be the case.

In the recent study *The Political Novel*, Stuart Scheingold intelligently clarifies the logic that leads writers such as Kundera to consider the novel superior to work from other disciplines when it comes to defining a specific age. "Whereas social scientists and historians tend to gaze down from *above* on the twentieth century," Scheingold claims, political "novelists peer into the shattered lives, the moral dilemmas and the emotional chaos of the century—thus viewing a collective catastrophe through the everyday lives of victims, victimizers, temporizers, opportunists, true believers and those who simply averted their eyes." Given their capacity to imaginatively enter the inner lives of victims and perpetrators, political "novelists reveal, sometimes prophetically, the etiology and the aftermath of catastrophe." [36] Put differently, through their skillful depiction of the individual and the particular, political novelists disclose the complex inner workings of people, politics, and society.

While Forster would certainly agree with Scheingold's approach, he would claim that there is one other thing that makes the political novel totally different from and even superior to other approaches to intellectual and political history. As he argues in *Aspects of the Novel* (delivered as the Clark lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1927), the "philosopher" and the "scholar" are similar in that they "can contemplate the river of time."[37] The problem, however, is that they cannot contemplate that river "as a whole." Forster admits that both see "facts" and "personalities," and that they can "estimate the relations between" the facts and the personalities. But, ultimately, Forster concludes that both have "failed," and as a consequence, they have not contributed anything of substance to

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[35] Kundera (1988): 162.

[36] Scheingold (2010), *The Political Novel: Re-Imagining the Twentieth Century*. London and New York: Continuum: 2.

[37] Forster (1955), *Aspects of the Novel*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace & Company: 10.

the progression of the "human race."[38] Specifically, Forster targets Aristotle, who develops an aesthetic theory that focuses on a character's "'actions—what we do.'"[39] Such an approach Forster considers misguided and even flawed, which is why he claims "that Aristotle is wrong."[40]

In stark contrast to Aristotle's philosophical approach, Forster argues that the novel depicts the "secret life, which each of us leads privately and to which (in his characters) the novelist has access."[41] Indeed, the "specialty of the novel," according to Forster, "is that the writer can talk about his characters as well as through them or can arrange for us to listen when they talk to themselves. He has access to self-communings, and from that level he can descend even deeper and peer into the subconscious."[42] The novelist's most important contribution to an understanding of humans and culture is the ability to "show the subconscious short-circuiting straight into action."[43] It is hard to say exactly how Forster is using the word *short-circuiting* here, but it appears that the *OED*'s medical definition best applies, which is "to make a direct passage from (an organ) *into* some other part when the normal passage is obstructed." According to the logic of this definition, there is a direct passage from the subconscious to not the conscious intellect, but human action. This occurs, however, only when normal passage is obstructed. According to many twentieth-century novelists, philosophers have adopted the normal-passage model, which holds that action is the logical product of a conscious and/or rational choice. Forster would certainly acknowledge that the philosophical model does have some value when depicting human action, but he would insist that most human action and, more significantly, the most important human action can only be understood through a psychological model, which charts the subconscious short-circuiting into human action. Indeed, it is the reality of psychology's subconscious that has led Forster to claim that the traditional (philosophical) idea of a person has been split and shattered, for when "something

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[38] Forster (1955): 10.
[39] Forster (1955): 83.
[40] Forster (1955): 83.
[41] Forster (1955): 83.
[42] Forster (1955): 84.
[43] Forster (1955): 84.

incalculable in each of us" rises to the surface, it inevitably destroys the rational subject's "normal balance."

Forster was certainly not the only twentieth-century novelist to become obsessed with the subconscious or the unconscious. Woolf credits Fyodor Dostoevsky for providing modernist writers with an aesthetic model that not only follows "the vivid streak of achieved thought," but also suggests "the dim and populous underworld of the mind's consciousness where desires and impulses are moving blindly beneath the sod."[44] This two-tiered model of character is the basis for Forster's iceberg theory of aesthetics, which focuses on the "shadowy and intractable," that which is "three-quarters hidden like an iceberg,"[45] and it is also the basis for Ernest Hemingway's iceberg theory of the novel, in which the skillful novelist produces a narrative that is like an iceberg, with one-eighth standing above water and seven-eighths remaining below. According to the logic of Hemingway's model, a capable writer has the capacity to "omit things," because he or she realizes that effective writing will instill within the reader "a feeling of those [submerged] things as strongly as though the writer had stated them."[46] In essence, novelists skillfully portray the mysterious and ambiguous life of the subconscious as it makes its way into human action. As the narrator in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* claims: "the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life," which is defined as "the *passional* secret places of life."[47] Toni Morrison is more direct in *The Bluest Eye* when her narrator makes the following claim about a main character: "His subconscious knew what his conscious mind did not guess."[48] For many twentieth-century novelists, to understand the nature of human action, one must have knowledge not only of an individual's conscious and rational conception of self and the world, but also the subconscious desires and ideologies, which oftentimes contradict what the individual

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[44] Woolf (1987), "More Dostoevksy," in Andrew McNeillie ed. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume II: 1912–1918*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: 85.

[45] Forster (1955): 85.

[46] Hemingway (1960), *Death in the Afternoon*. New York: Scribner: 192.

[47] Lawrence (2006), *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications: 81. Lawrence's emphasis.

[48] Morrison (1993), *The Bluest Eye*. New York: A Plume Book: 150–1.

consciously and rationally understands him or herself to be. This unique ability to picture the subconscious puts the novelist in a privileged position as a social and cultural critic, which is one reason why Woolf felt qualified "to criticise the social system, & to show it at work, at its most intense"[49] in her novel *The Hours*, which would eventually become *Mrs. Dalloway*.

At this point, let me briefly discuss Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in order to illuminate the way the subconscious short-circuits straight into action. Tomas is the novel's reckless philanderer, who consistently disappoints his insecure wife, Tereza, by sleeping with other women. Tereza cannot understand Tomas's insatiable need for other women, and for most of the novel, neither can Tomas. But in a dream, Tomas makes a crucial discovery, for he feels "unutterable bliss at the thought that he had [finally] found"[50] his ideal woman. Even though Tomas is married to Tereza, "[f]eminine calm had eluded him all his life,"[51] but in this woman of his dream, he has found what he has always been looking for. The moment, however, is cut short when he suddenly awakens. Dazed and unnerved, Tomas struggles to remember the name of the woman. To jar his memory, he tries to recall if he slept with her in Prague or in Switzerland, but to no avail. Finally, he realizes "that she inhabited his dream and nowhere else."[52] This brutal realization hits him with unimaginable force. His whole life, he has been in hot pursuit of a phantom of his subconscious:

> The woman in the dream, he thought, was unlike any he had ever met. The woman he felt he knew most intimately of all had turned out to be a woman he did not even know. And yet she was the one he had always longed for. If a personal paradise were ever to exist for him, then in that paradise he would have to live by her side. The woman from his dream was the "*Es muss sein!*" of his love.[53]

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[49] Woolf (1980), in Anne Olivier Bell ed. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company: 2:248.
[50] Kundera (1999), *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Translated by Michael Henry Heim. New York: Perennial Classics: 237.
[51] Kundera (1999): 238.
[52] Kundera (1999): 238.
[53] Kundera (1999): 238.

In a sense, the woman of his dream is his own personal "Platonic ideal of a woman,"[54] the philosophical Ideal he has been brainwashed into believing that exists, that will ultimately fulfill him, and that he knows most intimately and surely. Until he finds and marries this Ideal Woman, this soul mate, his life will be incomplete. Moreover, all other women are nothing more than pale imitations of this Ideal Woman, so Tomas feels no compunction for having betrayed or violated them.

Reflecting on his dream, Tomas finally realizes that he, the logical product of the philosophical West, has internalized, at the level of the subconscious, Aristophanes's soul-mate philosophy: "He suddenly recalled the famous myth from Plato's *Symposium*: People were hermaphrodites until God split them in two, and now all the halves wander the world over seeking one another. Love is the longing for the half of ourselves we have lost."[55] According to this myth, which is narrated by Aristophanes, each human can only become complete and whole when he or she finds his or her destined soul mate. Until the person locates the Ideal Other, life itself is incomplete and unfulfilled.

Having identified the degree to which this soul-mate myth has dictated his behavior, Tomas begins to critically interrogate the deadly consequences of his obsession with the Ideal Woman, and what he finally understands is that his subconscious belief in the Ideal has led him to overlook Tereza, a woman whom he deeply loves. To understand the nature of Tomas's conflict, let me quote a wonderful passage from Friedrich Nietzsche, who articulates one of the central ideas at the core of the twentieth-century novel. In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche explains why humans can never actually experience self-transparency or individual authenticity: "all of us have, unconsciously, involuntarily in our bodies values, words, formulas, moralities of *opposite* descent—we are, physiologically considered, *false*."[56] There exist in our bodies words, values, formulas, and moralities that frequently conflict with our rational conception of ourselves. For instance, on a conscious

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[54] Kundera (1999): 90.

[55] Kundera (1999): 238–9.

[56] Friedrich Nietzsche (1967), *The Case of Wagner*, in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books: 192. Nietzsche's emphasis.

level, we might say to ourselves and others: I am not a racist. But at the level of the subconscious, many of us have absorbed and internalized certain racist words and values, which make many of us "racist" despite our intentions to the contrary. Given the way words, values, moralities, and formulas of opposite descent invade our bodies without our consent ("unconsciously, involuntarily"), it is impossible for us to be physiologically true. However, if we can identify some of the subconscious words and values that inhabit our bodies, we can become less false. Based on this view of the subconscious, novelists such as Forster, Woolf, and Kundera suggest that, to understand human action, it is more important to identify and define the subconscious values, words, moralities, and formulas than the conscious and rational views that people hold about themselves and the world. Indeed, they would go so far as to say that any attempt to explain human action that does not take into account the power of the subconscious to determine human action would be incomplete and even misleading, which is why most novelists would consider traditional analyses of culture and the political of limited value.

This two-tiered model of the human sheds considerable light on Tomas's treatment of Tereza. On a conscious level, Tomas loves Tereza and, therefore, has no desire to harm her. And yet, having internalized the myth of the Ideal Woman at the level of the subconscious, he behaves in a way that deeply wounds her. Tomas cannot explain why he consistently behaves this way, that is, until he identifies how the subconscious Ideal short-circuits straight into harmful action:

> He tried to picture himself living in an ideal world with the young woman from the dream. He sees Tereza walking past the open windows of their ideal house. She is alone and stops to look in at him with an infinitely sad expression in her eyes. He cannot withstand her glance. Again, he feels her pain in his own heart.[57]

In his dream world, Tomas is with his Ideal Other. But he clearly loves Tereza, which is why her pain afflicts him so profoundly.

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[57] Kundera (1999): 239.

The problem is that he has allowed the soul-mate Ideal to dominate his subconscious "mind," which explains why he has never really seen Tereza or taken her pain so seriously before—Tereza's feelings, in relation to the more important Ideal of his "personal paradise," were ultimately not that important, so they could be sacrificed for the good of the more valuable Ideal. But now that he finally understands how the soul-mate philosophy is just the seething product of an overheated imagination that has dictated his behavior at the level of the subconscious, he can reject it. Not surprisingly, he remains faithful to Tereza after this dream. Moreover, he experiences "an ineffable love for"[58] her at this point.

As moving and insightful as Tomas's personal experience is, it is really a metaphor for something much larger. Within Kundera's novels, "characters fulfill not only their personal histories but also the suprapersonal history of the European experience."[59] Put differently, just as Tomas's subconscious belief in the Ideal has short-circuited straight into personal action that ultimately betrays and violates someone such as Tereza, so too does the larger political community's subconscious belief in the Ideal (whether that community is "Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Communist, Fascist, democratic, feminist, European, American, national, international"[60]) short-circuit straight into suprapersonal action that ultimately betrays and violates everyday people. Kundera's narrator makes this point powerfully by challenging the view that Communist leaders were criminals:

> Anyone who thinks that the Communist regimes of Central Europe are exclusively the work of criminals is overlooking a basic truth: the criminal regimes were made not by criminals but by enthusiasts convinced they had discovered the only road to paradise. They defended that road so valiantly that they were forced to execute many people. Later it became clear that there was no paradise, that the enthusiasts were therefore murderers.[61]

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[58] Kundera (1999): 239.
[59] Kundera (1988): 40.
[60] Kundera (1999): 257.
[61] Kundera (1999): 176.

Like Tomas, Communist leaders are enthusiasts, believers in a subconscious Ideal. Tomas believes that there is one ideal person out there who would complete and fulfill him (lead him to "a personal paradise"), while the Communists believe that there is one ideal political system out there ("the only road to paradise") that would fulfill citizens of the body politic. However, once the Communists discover that their Ideal is just but a dream, "that there was no paradise," they have to face the fact that they did not execute criminals in the name of a righteous Ideal, but that they murdered people in the name of a phantom "ideal." The discovery that there is no Ideal forces them to retrospectively reinterpret their former behavior. In like manner, once Tomas discovers that his Ideal Woman is just but a dream, that no such Woman exists, he has to face the fact that he did not betray an insignificant nobody, but that he violated the trust of the woman he loves in pursuit of a non-existent Ideal. What is destroying the personal and suprapersonal lives of everyday people of the twentieth century is not a band of evil politicians, but a subconscious commitment to a phantom Ideal, an Ideal that functions to blind enthusiasts to the fact that they are violating and even killing others in pursuit of something that doesn't exist ("an ideal is by definition something that can never be found"[62]). For Kundera, only through a clear understanding of the way the subconscious Ideal short-circuits into criminal action can we put a stop to political madness, and it is the novelists, more than anyone else, who can expose how this process functions in all its intricacy and complexity.

Despite the novelists' superior ability to picture the subconscious and thereby illuminate the personal and suprapersonal basis of human action, there are some major aesthetic dangers and difficulties. As Alice Walker claims, great writers "are like musicians: at one with their cultures and their historical subconscious."[63] But as a novelist, it is important not to let politics dictate the content or form of the novel, as Walker claims to have learned from prominent Russian writers. Indeed, from Tolstoy she learned "the

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[62] Kundera (1999): 201.

[63] Walker (1993), "Alice Walker: An Interview," in Henry Louis Gates, Jr and Kwame Anthony Appiah (eds), *Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present*. New York: Amistad: 337.

importance of diving through politics and social forecasts to dig into the essential spirit of individual persons—because otherwise, characters, no matter what political or current social issue they stand for, will not live."[64] The essential spirit of the individual character is more important than the political or social agenda. This explains Walker's frustration with protest literature, in which the "superficial becomes—for a time—the deepest reality, and replaces the still waters of the collective subconscious."[65] As a novelist, Walker insists that the most significant and profound realities are to be found in the historical and collective subconscious, which is why she favors a "book that exposes the *subconscious* of a people."[66] In essence, the novelist has the capacity to picture the deepest realities of the individual, which are located in the subconscious, and it is these realities, embodied in real characters and determinant of human action, that can best illuminate socio-political agendas.

Ellison provides an excellent way for understanding the novelists' two-tiered conception of character within a specific political context. At the conscious level, the American textual self is defined in terms of the God-given rights of human equality and personal freedom, which ensure that all citizens can pursue happiness. Indeed, the United States has been established in order to secure such rights, and "whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."[67] This textual representation of the American self is based on noble ideals. However, it is in deep conflict with the political reality of the United States, which limited the freedom of blacks, Indians, and women and treated them as inferiors from the time Thomas Jefferson defined the American ideals in the Declaration of Independence to the twentieth century. How were Americans able to maintain their ideal representation of themselves

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[64] Walker (1993): 335.
[65] Walker (1993): 339.
[66] Walker (1993): 339. Walker's emphasis.
[67] Thomas Jefferson (2010), "The Declaration of Independence," in George McMichael and James S. Leonard (eds), *Concise Anthology of American Literature: Seventh Edition*. Boston: Longman: 282.

and their country while simultaneously violating on a daily basis those very ideals through their treatment of state-designated inferiors?

This is the central conflict of the American novel. As Ellison claims, the United States came into being when the founders "put down, upon what we now recognize as being quite sacred papers, their conception of the nation which they intended to establish."[68] But American novelists have struggled to come to terms with "the contradiction between these noble ideals and the actualities of our conduct,"[69] "between his acceptance of the sacred democratic belief that all men are created equal and his treatment of every tenth man as though he were not,"[70] and it is this conflict that has "generated a guilt, an unease of spirit, from the very beginning, and that the American novel at its best has always been concerned with this basic moral predicament."[71] Based on Ellison's approach, to understand America and Americans, we should focus not so much on the textual representations (Declaration of Independence) that Americans have of themselves, but on the subconscious ideologies that enable Americans to interpret and define their textual selves and country as they do, for it is the sub-textual definitions and interpretations that allow Americans to violate black people with psychological, political, and legal impunity.

The major claim of this book, therefore, is that the development and refinement of short-circuiting aesthetics has enabled twentieth-century novelists to produce uniquely insightful theories about the origins of the oppressive nation state. When I say short-circuiting aesthetics, let me be clear about the nature of my claim. My notion of aesthetics I take from Addison Gayle, Jr, author of *The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America* and editor of *The Black Aesthetic*. When examining the work of black writers, Gayle argues that the reader needs to think of the "writer as combatant" and "literature as a weapon in the struggle for human freedom."[72] The writers in this study, though not primarily

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[68] Ellison (1995), *Shadow and Act*. New York: Vintage International: 163–4.
[69] Ellison (1995): 164.
[70] Ellison (1995): 28.
[71] Ellison (1995): 164.
[72] Gayle (1975), *The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press: xi.

concerned with issues related to the black community, are deeply concerned with political oppression, and they believe that the novel can play a crucial role not only in illuminating that which makes oppression possible, but also in preventing (writer as combatant) such oppression from occurring in the future, thereby creating the conditions for greater "human freedom." But they are also convinced that the traditional models for making systematic sense of human action have been seriously limited and even inaccurate, because they have failed to take into account the decisive role the subconscious plays in making oppression possible. Therefore, I foreground Forster's aesthetic model of the subconscious in this study, because I highly prize "how a novelist theorizes," as Kundera claims, for the novelist "holds jealously to his own language, flees learned jargon like the plague."[73] In my analysis, I will use the jargon-free language of each novelist, which poses some serious challenges, mainly because each writer has an idiosyncratic version of short-circuiting aesthetics. In other words, while I believe that Forster's aesthetic model of the subconscious short-circuiting into action applies in a general sense to all the novelists I discuss in this book, I also recognize that Conrad, Wright, Walker, Styron, David Mamet, and Louise Erdrich have radically different conceptions of the subconscious from Forster. Therefore, instead of providing a definition of the subconscious that applies to each novelist in this book, I will provide nuanced definitions in various chapters.

While I claim that the novelists have produced a more compelling model for making systematic sense of the origins of the oppressive modernist nation, it is important to note that I do not consider the novelists' models to be authoritative or final. After all, Kundera's suggestion that the Platonic Ideal inhabits the subconscious of many in the West, and thereby explains personal and suprapersonal acts of cruelty and violence, is as much a theory as Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's claim that "[t]hinking objectifies itself to become an automatic, self-activating process."[74] But as I will demonstrate throughout this book, it is the novelists' attention

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[73] Kundera (2007), *The Curtain: An Essay in Seven Parts*. Translated by Linda Asher. New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: Harper Perennial: 6.

[74] Adorno and Horkheimer (1988), *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Translated by John Cumming. New York: Continuum: 25.

to significant detail (rather than abstract theories) and the structures of the subconscious (rather than formal political policies and empirical events) that enables them to chart more clearly and accurately the conditions under which an oppressive regime such as National Socialism succeeded and even flourished. In essence, I am claiming that certain novels are every bit as much theories about the origins of the totalitarian nation as those contained in Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, Carl J. Friedrich's and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski's *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*, and Pilippe Burrin's *Nazi Anti-Semitism: From Prejudice to the Holocaust*, but that the novelists' theories are more insightful, because the novelists have at their disposal more effective instruments to analyze and portray the subconscious structures of mind that translate into politically oppressive action.

Moreover, it is my contention that the twentieth-century novelists' focus on the subconscious led them to reject the secularization hypothesis and to conceive of modernism in theological terms. This was the case because they understood that religion in the modern age functions most powerfully and effectively at the level of the subconscious. While most theorists accept the surface claim that the West has been secularized or is undergoing secularization, the novelists start their analysis by examining the words, values, moralities, and formulas that function at the level of the subconscious, and what they discovered is that theological assumptions and precepts play a significant role in the formation of the modernist subject. Therefore, they arrive at the same conclusion as the mid-twentieth century novelist, J. Saunders Redding, who claims: "God, of course, is an implicit assumption in the thought of our age. He is one of those beliefs so spontaneous and ineluctable and taken so much as a matter of course that they operate with great effectiveness (though generally on a level of subconsciousness) in our society."[75]

Let me briefly discuss Woolf's work to clarify this notion that the God-concept exerts overwhelming influence over people at the level of the subconscious. In the posthumously published short story "A

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[75] Redding (1962), *On Being Negro in America*. Indianapolis and New York: Charter Books: 137–8.

Simple Melody," written in 1925, Woolf creates George Carslake, a character who mocks believers: "To believe in God indeed! When every rational power protested against the crazy and craven idiocy of such a saying!" Ironically, Carslake discovers that, despite his overt atheism, "he had been trapped into the words. 'To believe in God.'" As an atheist, Carslake specifically resents how he is trapped into belief through language. Whatever phrase he uses, however mundane, tinkles "in his ear with a sham religious flavour," for the religious, according to Carslake, colonize discourse, appropriating and then fashioning it to serve their ends: "'Getting home'," for example, "the religious had appropriated that. It meant going to Heaven."[76] The word "appropriated" suggests a verbal entrapment, a linguistic imperialism that coerces language users into adopting the theist's discourse whether they are aware of it or not.

Carslake was a trial run for the character of Mrs. Ramsay from Woolf's 1927 novel, *To the Lighthouse*. Like Carslake, Mrs. Ramsay experiences the colonizing impulse of religious discourse. In a weak moment, she says: "We are in the hands of the Lord." But immediately questioning the validity of such a claim, she observes that she has been "trapped" into belief: "Who had said it? Not she; she had been trapped into saying something she did not mean."[77] Something inside her has compelled her to make a claim that she does not believe, so she searches "into her mind and her heart, purifying out of existence that lie, any lie."[78] The subtle but coercive discourse of belief entraps Mrs. Ramsay, and to liberate herself, she must probe her inner life and scrutinize the degree to which she has been *subjected* into being as a religious person. Once she identifies how the theist's "lie" has taken possession of her at the level of the subconscious, she can then begin the process of "purifying" herself.

Significantly, Woolf clearly indicates that Mr. Ramsay, who is not coincidentally a philosopher, is incapable of identifying the contents of the subconscious, and consequently, remains in thrall to its dictates. For instance, just after Mrs. Ramsay identifies the subconscious religious discourse and subsequently exorcises that

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[76] Woolf (1989), "A Simple Melody" in Susan Dick ed. *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*. New York: Harcourt Brace: 203.
[77] Woolf (1981), *To The Lighthouse*, New York: Harcourt Brace: 63.
[78] Woolf (1981): 63.

discourse from her mind, Mr. Ramsay enters the scene laughing to himself as he reflects on the philosopher David Hume, who had "grown enormously fat" and was "stuck in a bog."[79] This interjection would seem misplaced were the reader unaware of Mr. Ramsay's thoughts about the eighteenth-century philosopher, but consistent with the theme of being trapped into belief, Woolf's narrator informs the reader nine pages later what specifically causes Mr. Ramsay to laugh: an old woman rescued Hume from the bog "on condition he said the Lord's prayer."[80] Both Mrs. and Mr. Ramsay are confronted with situations in which a person is "trapped" into belief, but while Mrs. Ramsay uses the occasion to interrogate the way such knowledge has taken possession of her at the level of the subconscious and then to purge herself of this discourse, Mr. Ramsay dismisses the experience with a laugh. The implication, of course, is that Mr. Ramsay will, at the subconscious level, remain in thrall to religious discourse, while Mrs. Ramsay has liberated herself.

For Woolf, religious discourse is not just something that impacts the private realm, for in *Mrs. Dalloway* she examines the degree to which religion shapes England's political agenda. In the novel, Woolf documents England's dominant religious psychology through the character of Miss Kilman, who is driven by "God's will" and thinks of the world in terms of a "religious victory."[81] Kilman's actions might seem to be the overbearing gestures of a single fanatic, but Woolf's narrator clearly invites her reader to see Kilman as representative of a larger socio-political reality, when she notes the degree to which religious Conversion works in tandem with England's political objectives. As the narrator observes, Conversion is alive and well "in the heat and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa, the purlieus of London, wherever in short the climate or the devil tempts men to fall from the true belief which is her own."[82] Woolf's point is not simply that religion is a powerful force within the culture; it is that England's political agenda

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[79] Woolf (1981): 64.
[80] Woolf (1981): 73.
[81] Woolf (1981), *Mrs. Dalloway*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace & Company: 125.
[82] Woolf (1981), 100.

presupposes a religiously committed citizenry, though its religiosity functions most forcefully at the level of the subconscious.

William Faulkner's *Light in August* usefully brings into sharp focus one of my main points about the modernist political novel. Although set in the United States, *Light in August* is nonetheless an excellent narrative for depicting the theological orientation of the Nazis, something that Faulkner confirms in 1957 when he refers to the character of Percy Grimm, who brutally murders Joe Christmas in the name of God and the state, as "a Nazi Storm Trooper." Significantly, Faulkner admits that he had not "heard of Hitler's Storm Troopers"[83] in 1932 when he wrote the novel. But this merely confirms my major point. Modernist political novelists were conscious of the mounting menace of totalitarianism, and it was a certain structure of the subconscious mind that made such a menace possible. What all of the writers in *The Modernist God State* have in common, therefore, is their attempt to depict the structures of the subconscious mind that made totalitarian action possible and even inevitable, which is why Faulkner claims that Grimm "exists everywhere." In other words, you can find Grimm "in all countries, in all people."[84] This tendency to universalize the structures of political oppression and violence is at the core of the novels in this study, but it is important to keep in mind that the novelists in *The Modernist God State* do not subscribe to traditional conceptions of the universal.

Like Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, who formulate their distinctive approaches to the universal in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, the novelists in this book "maintain that universality is not a static presumption, not an a priori given, and that it ought instead to be understood as a process or condition irreducible to any of its determinate modes of appearance."[85] Not all people are political oppressors. However, there are some discernible similarities between political oppressors from one country to the next, and the novelists I examine provide

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[83] Faulkner (1958), in Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (eds), *Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia, 1957–1958*. New York: Vintage Books: 41.

[84] Faulkner (1958): 41.

[85] Laclau (2000), "Introduction," in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London and New York: Verso: 3.

a coherent way of understanding the universal conditions that make political oppression function. Such was the reason why Richard Wright's work underwent a radical transformation after he emigrated to France in the 1940s. As Paul Gilroy so insightfully argues, Wright's move to France, which marked a significant decline in his writing according to many scholars, actually broadened Wright's perspective and improved the quality of his writing and thinking. For Gilroy, if Wright's early writings focus on "the Negro as 'America's metaphor'"[86] of oppression, his later writings shift to the global and universal structures of oppression, which led Wright to make the following claim in a letter to the Prime Minister of India: "'The situation of oppressed people the world over is universally the same and their solidarity is essential, not only in opposing oppression but also in fighting for human progress.'"[87] Ellison, who was a friend of Wright's, qualifies the nature of the novelist's focus on the universal by saying: "The universal in the novel [...] is reached only through the depiction of the specific man in a specific circumstance."[88] In an interview about the American novel, Styron indicates his qualified support of the universal by saying, "if anything, the quality of the novel, it seems to me, in its depth and perception, and—to use a sort of tenuous word—universality, is greater now than it ever was."[89]

The novelists in *The Modernist God State* seek to understand and picture the universal conditions that made Hitler and the Nazis possible, but they also work vigorously to debunk those theories that ultimately distort our understanding of the root causes of twentieth-century political oppression. Note, for instance, how Wright brilliantly exposes the absurdity of laying the blame for twentieth-century totalitarianism on Marx and Nietzsche in his novel, *The Outsider*. In the novel, an American Communist and an American Fascist get into a vicious fight. Cross Damon, the

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[86] Gilroy (1993), *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 149.

[87] Quoted in Gilroy (1993): 148.

[88] Ellison (1995), "The Art of Fiction: An Interview," in Maryemma Graham and Amritjit Singh (eds), *Conversations with Ralph Ellison*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi: 9.

[89] Quoted in Ralph Ellison (1995), "What's Wrong with the American Novel," in *Conversations with Ralph Ellison*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi: 39.

novel's protagonist, kills both men, but the police unwittingly rule that the Communist and Fascist killed each other. Later, when reading about the "DOUBLE TOTALITARIAN MURDER"[90] in the newspaper, Cross notices a caricature of the two men, which pictures them as drunken sex fiends who take sadistic pleasure in their blood bath. As a man obsessed with "'the psychological origins of tyranny,'"[91] Cross is furious, for this depiction of totalitarianism, he claims, "'is a kind of inverted pro-communist and pro-nazi propaganda. They've so distorted these men that no one could ever recognize their psychological types.'"[92] What irritates Cross even more are the theories being used to explain the men's behavior. As the newspaper article reports: "it was learned that these men's diseased brains had been poisoned by the dangerously esoteric doctrines of communal property advocated in the decadent writings of the notorious German author Karl Marx, and the Superman ideas sponsored by the syphilis-infected German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who died in an insane asylum. These two rowdy agitators, Gilbert Blount and Langlely Herndon, clashed bloodily in a quarrel regarding racial amalgamation theories and both died of their mutually inflicted wounds."[93] For Cross, such theories about totalitarianism do more than just distort; they actually make totalitarianism flourish, for "'[t]here couldn't be a better way of disguising totalitarian aims'"[94] than to depict people in such simplistic and misleading terms.

As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, Cross produces a two-tiered model of human action in order to illuminate the theological origins of twentieth-century totalitarianism, and central to his model is the conviction that the words, values, moralities, and formulas that inhabit our bodies at the level of the subconscious are a more potent determinant of human action than our rational and conscious formulations about ourselves. Therefore, the only way to get a semi-accurate picture of ourselves is through knowledge of our subconscious selves. Indeed, in an essay about his novel, *Native Son*, Wright clarifies his distinctive approach to the human

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[90] Wright (1993), *The Outsider*. San Francisco: HarperCollins*Publishers*: 436.
[91] Wright (1993): 378.
[92] Wright (1993): 436–7.
[93] Wright (1993): 437.
[94] Wright (1993): 437.

and the state when he articulates his understanding of "the Fascist movement in Germany."[95] After doing extensive reading about Nazi Germany, Wright claims that he was struck with particular force by "the Nazi preoccupation with the construction of a society in which there would exist among all people (*German* people, of course!) *one* solidarity of ideals, *one* continuous circulation of fundamental beliefs, notions, and assumptions."[96] Wright goes on to qualify his claim by saying that he is "not now speaking of the popular idea of regimenting people's thought"[97] at a conscious and rational level. Rather, his focus is on "the implicit, almost unconscious, or pre-conscious, assumptions and ideals upon which whole nations and races act and live."[98] In essence, Wright realizes that the only way to make systematic sense of Hitler and the Nazis is to identify and understand the nation's and its people's sub-textual ideology rather than the nation's textual representations of itself and its people. To put this in Forster's terminology, it is the novelist who allows us to "peer into the [nation's and people's] subconscious," thus enabling us to see "the [state's] subconscious short-circuiting straight into [specific political] action."

It is the novelists' two-tiered conception of the human that explains why they consistently reject the secularization hypothesis. While standard theorists develop models based on the rational and conscious claims major intellectual figures make about the West and themselves, novelists develop models to peer into the subconscious, which oftentimes leads them to draw the opposite conclusion from canonized theorists. Implicitly, those who deploy a philosophical method of analysis hold that the most revealing truths about the human are to be discovered in the conscious and rational formulations that prominent intellectuals make about the world and themselves, while the novelists hold that the most revealing truths about the human are to be discovered in the words, values, formulas, and moralities that humans have subconsciously and involuntarily in their bodies. The aesthetic task for the novelists, therefore, is to picture and define those subconscious

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[95] Wright (1998), "How 'Bigger' was Born," in *Native Son*. New York: Perennial Classics: 444.
[96] Wright (1998): 444–5. Wright's emphasis.
[97] Wright (1998): 445.
[98] Wright (1998): 445.

"realities," and they believe that they, above all others, can do exactly that.

Therefore, what distinguishes the novel approach to the origins of Hitler and the Nazis is the rejection of the secularization hypothesis, and it is the fact that the novelists start with the personal subconscious in order to illuminate the suprapersonal political that accounts for their conclusions. Put starkly, most scholars and theorists of secularization develop abstract theories about the separation of the church and the state, the shift in epistemic authority from the universal church to the individual conscience, or the way science and reason supplant religion and faith. They then impose those theories upon the culture in order to justify their claims that society is undergoing secularization or has already been secularized. By contrast, novelists consistently consider most people to be trapped into religious belief at the level of the subconscious, and they therefore conclude that the suprapersonal is ultimately religious. So a novelist such as James Baldwin claims that the major struggle for twentieth-century writers is to examine "the historical role of Christianity in the realm of power—that is, politics."[99] To be expected, Baldwin suggests that Christianity informed the Nazis' political agenda, which is why he claims that "the fact of the Third Reich alone makes obsolete forever any question of Christian superiority."[100] Aimé Césaire makes a similar claim when he calls for a study that would reveal to the "very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler *inhabits* him."[101] How different is Adorno's and Horkheimer's approach in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* when they reference the "historical neutralization of religion,"[102] a seemingly necessary development for Nazi ideology to flourish. Given this interpretation, when examining the Nazis' anti-Semitism, Adorno and Horkheimer rule out religion as a potential explanation: "The nationalist brand of anti-Semitism ignores religious considerations and asserts that the purity of the race and the nation is at stake. The nationalists realize that men

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[99] Baldwin (1991), *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Vintage Books: 45.
[100] Baldwin (1991): 52.
[101] Césaire (2000), *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press: 36. Césaire's emphasis.
[102] Adorno and Horkheimer (1988): 166.

have long since ceased to bother about their eternal salvation."[103] But here is what Hitler claims in *Mein Kampf*: "the Jew cannot possess a religious institution," because "belief in a hereafter is absolutely foreign to him. And a religion in the Aryan sense cannot be imagined which lacks the conviction of survival after death in some form."[104]

Of course, it would be irresponsible of me to say that Baldwin and Césaire are right and Adorno and Horkheimer are wrong on the basis of this single example, but what I want to demonstrate is that novelists consistently offered a very different interpretation about the origins of twentieth-century totalitarianism from most canonized theorists, and they did so because they made use of radically different instruments of cultural analysis. My claim here does not imply that the work of canonized theorists is useless. Indeed, Wright and Styron explicitly use the findings of prominent theorists as they formulated their own views about Hitler and the Nazis. But as Lawrence suggests, novelists consider their theories most telling because they deploy an interdisciplinary approach as they chart the subconscious short-circuiting into action. Moreover, the evolution and refinement of the art of illuminating the subconscious enabled novelists to formulate a coherent theory about the origins of the totalitarian nation. The inability of intellectual professionals to understand that novelists are legitimate scholars in their own right, who have made incremental contributions to specific fields of study, has resulted in an unfortunate marginalization. As Kundera claims: "One of Europe's major failures is that it never understood the most European of the arts—the novel; neither its spirit, nor its great knowledge and discoveries, nor the autonomy of its history."[105] The reason why this marginalization has been so unfortunate, according to Kundera, is that the novel itself is the most effective instrument for combating totalitarianism: "The world of one single Truth and the relative, ambiguous world of the novel are molded of entirely different substances. Totalitarian Truth excludes relativity, doubt, questioning; it can never accommodate

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[103] Adorno and Horkheimer (1988): 176.
[104] Hitler (1971), *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin: 306.
[105] Kundera (1988): 160.

what I would call the *spirit of the novel*."[106] The world ignores the novel at its own peril.

There are three separate scholarly trends that have made it possible for us to better understand and appreciate the contributions of novelists to an understanding of twentieth-century intellectual and political history, and specifically the origins of Hitler and the Nazis, which is why the ideas in this study are now possible and extremely relevant. First, this project is timely because scholars are finally starting to recognize the powerful role the subconscious plays in determining human behavior. Shaun Nichols's *Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgment* (2007) and John Doris's *Lack of Character* (2002) are books written from the perspective of analytic philosophers and confirm what many novelists have been saying for nearly a hundred years about the power of the subconscious to determine human behavior. Indeed, one wonders if Conrad, Woolf, Forster, Huxley, and Lawrence would have been less critical of philosophy had they read Nichols and/or Doris, or even Butler, Derrida, and Žižek. Put simply, it is important to historicize the critique of philosophy in this book. More specifically, if we know the condition of philosophy when these novelists were writing and we know how they understood philosophy, then the novelists' uncharitable remarks about philosophy and philosophers should make much more sense. And yet, when we realize that the idea about the subconscious short-circuiting into action is only now being taken seriously because some analytic philosophers are starting to adopt it, one can better appreciate the novelists' frustration with philosophy and the philosophical method. It would not be an exaggeration to say that most novelists I discuss would claim that Nichols's and Doris's work is old news, which is not to minimize their contributions—their work is rigorous, insightful, and refreshing. It is just to say that there has been an internal prejudice within the intellectual community against the novelists (what novelists produce is entertainment, but certainly neither a valuable nor a noteworthy contribution to our understanding of something so complicated as the origins of Hitler and the Nazis) and in favor of philosophers and theorists (which is why they get credit for originating ideas that novelists have been

[106] Kundera (1988): 14. Kundera's emphasis.

articulating and refining for nearly a hundred years). But if some analytic philosophers today are prepared to admit that the subconscious plays a major role in determining human action, then we are now ready to take seriously the work of the novelists in *The Modernist God State*.

The second trend relates to secularization. William Connolly (1999), Vincent Pecora (2006), Tracy Fessenden (2007), Michael Allen Gillespie (2008), and Pericles Lewis (2010) have recently challenged the traditional secularization hypothesis, thus confirming Nietzsche's claim in *The Gay Science* that the God-concept and its attendant mentality will continue to haunt Western culture "for thousands of years,"[107] precisely because they will have their most active afterlife in the shadows of language, consciousness, and politics. Of the recent studies challenging the traditional secularization hypothesis, I find Gillespie's work to be the most insightful. Rejecting the idea "that modernity is in its origins and at its core atheistic, antireligious, or even agnostic," Gillespie rightly claims "that from the very beginning modernity sought not to eliminate religion but to support and develop a new view of religion and its place in human life, and that it did so not out of hostility to religion but in order to sustain certain religious beliefs."[108] To make his case, Gillespie develops an extremely sophisticated model of analysis that exposes how the West underwent a process not of secularization but of concealment, which has resulted in what Gillespie refers to as the concealed theology of late modernity.[109] The novelists I examine have a very different understanding from Gillespie of the concealed theological precepts within people and the political, because they have developed a specific theory about the subconscious, but Gillespie's impulse is identical to theirs.

Finally, this study is now only possible because of the recent scholarship focusing on religion and religious attitudes in Nazi Germany. In *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (1996), Doris Bergen does a superb analysis of the degree to which ordinary Germans considered their Christian faith

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[107] Nietzsche (1990), *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin: 167.
[108] Gillespie (2008), *The Theological Origins of Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: xii.
[109] Gillespie (2008): 270–87.

to be consistent with National Socialism and thus explains why so many Christians supported Hitler and the Nazis. James Carroll has written an outstanding book, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (2001), which draws a clear line of connection between Christian theology and the Nazi pogroms against Jews, though he stops short of concluding that Hitler and/or the Nazis were Christian. But in the dauntingly well-researched and insightful book *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (2003), Richard Steigmann-Gall convincingly demonstrates that Hitler and many Nazis believed that "Christianity is at the center of Nazi social thought."[110] More recently, Susannah Heschel has published *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (2008), which examines the degree to which many in Germany treated "Nazism as the very fulfillment of Christianity."[111]

So let me state clearly and succinctly what I intend to argue. Many prominent twentieth-century novelists produced theories about the origins of the oppressive modernist nation. While it is not possible or even desirable to say that their novels are only theories about the origins and structures of political oppression, their works can be read as such theories nonetheless. Moreover, their novels as theories are extremely insightful and accurate, because they start with the personal subconscious in order to illuminate the mundane human world and the suprapersonal polity instead of starting with an abstract theory which is then imposed upon cultures and individuals. Following Kundera, therefore, I privilege and foreground in this study the autonomous history of the novel in its articulation of the origins of the modernist God state, and specifically the Holy Reich. Of course, I will have occasion to discuss standard theories, but since I define a *novel* tradition of interpretation, I let the novelists dictate the terms and frameworks in this study. Finally, since these novelists focus on the personal subconscious, which they suggest is religiously configured, they reject the view that secularization has occurred or even begun

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[110] Steigmann-Gall (2003), *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 46.

[111] Heschel (2008), *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press: 17.

to occur. For the novelists in this study, what we witness in the twentieth century is not the emergence of the secular nation state, but the sacred imagined nation. *The Modernist God State*, therefore, will examine novels by Conrad, Forster, Wright, Styron, Walker, Erdrich, and Mamet in order to chart the formation of the sacred imagined nation as it took shape from the time of King Leopold II to Hitler. It would seem odd that a book that mentions the Nazis in its subtitle would only focus on National Socialism in the last two of its seven chapters. But there are two separate reasons why I do this. First, my objective is to demonstrate that there were major intellectual and political forces at work in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century that were of decisive importance in making the religio-political agenda of Hitler and the Nazis possible. The first five chapters identify and define those forces through an analysis of suitable novels. Second, the novelists I discuss have idiosyncratic strengths: Wright and Forster (Chapters 2 and 3) intelligently clarify how religion became extremely influential within the modern polity at the level of the subconscious; Erdrich, Walker, and Mamet (Chapter 4) examine how the rise of the sacred imagined nation worked in tandem with Christian supersessionist theology to justify the oppression and, sometimes, negation of Jews and non-whites; and Conrad (Chapter 5) provides a model for understanding how the subconscious short-circuits into genocidal action. These chapters set the stage for my analysis of Hitler and the Nazis (Chapter 6), and without them, my analysis of Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice* (Chapter 7) would not make sense. But if all these novelists are right, then we would have to conclude that, had modernist Western culture not been deeply committed, at the level of the subconscious, to a religious conception of the self and the political, the Nazis' totalitarian horror show could not have occurred.

2

The secularization hypothesis: an exercise in political blindness

To be expected, the governing assumption in many recent studies of secularization is, as Charles Taylor claims, "that we live in a secular age."[1] Such is the intellectual point of departure in Theodore Ziolkowski's book, *Modes of Faith: Secular Surrogates for Lost Religious Belief*, which characterizes contemporary culture as "our modern, widely secularized world."[2] Perhaps the most surprising and troubling example of this approach can be found in Vincent Pecora's *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, & Modernity*, who praises Michel Foucault for helping "to dismantle the received and uncritical story of Enlightenment progress," but

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[1] Taylor (2007), *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 1.

[2] Ziolkowski (2007), *Modes of Faith: Secular Surrogates for Lost Religious Belief*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: ix.

criticizes him for "obscuring the question of *secularization*."[3] I question Pecora's approach because he faults Foucault for failing to take into account something that he did not even think occurred. According to Pecora, developments within the Enlightenment function in tandem with secularization. Therefore, it is impossible for Foucault to accurately represent what really happened during and after the Enlightenment without simultaneously taking into account secularization, for the two are inextricably linked. But a careful analysis of Foucault's work indicates that he did not believe that secularization had occurred, as I will discuss in much more detail in the next two chapters. As Foucault claims in a 1975 lecture, instead of marking the beginning of "dechristianization," the sixteenth century is the beginning of "in-depth Christianization." Therefore, in direct opposition to intellectual historians and critical theorists such as Erich Auerbach, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Hannah Arendt, and Benedict Anderson, Foucault claims that "modern states begin to take shape while Christian structures tighten their grip on individual existence."[4]

In this chapter, I discuss the many writers who have argued that Western culture has never become secularized. To the contrary, these writers have argued that the West, by the twentieth century, has become compulsively and fanatically religious, but in ways that differ significantly from pre-Enlightenment models of religion. I find Michael Allen Gillespie's recent work in *The Theological Origins of Modernity* most informative. Gillespie argues that modernity represents not so much "the erasure or disappearance of God but the transference of his attributes, essential powers, and capacities to other entities or realms of being."[5] Prominent twentieth-century writers drew the same conclusion as Gillespie. Take, for instance, a claim that E. M. Forster made in an unpublished letter to Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson dated April 13, 1918. Discussing the end of World War I with an unnamed man, Forster became livid

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[3] Pecora (2006), *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, & Modernity*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press: 28. Pecora's emphasis.

[4] Foucault (2003), *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France: 1974–1975*. New York: Picador: 177.

[5] Gillespie (2008), *The Theological Origins of Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 274.

when his comrade suggested that Great Britain will be gracious and kind to Germany after the War, because "'Christianity—the Church of England that's to say—will see that the peace terms are generous.'" While listening to this man, "[s]omething snapped" in Forster, which compelled him to flare "out against the God-State."[6]

This reference to the "God-State," which is the basis for the title of this book, should strike Forster scholars as odd, for as P. N. Furbank rightly notes, Forster rejected Christianity sometime in 1898 or 1899, which led him to treat religion as a charming but increasingly obsolete fiction in his early works.[7] For instance, in the 1908 novel *A Room with a View*, the narrator says that "the thing one never talked about—religion—was fading like all the other things."[8] Given this situation, religion is of marginal importance in the novels from 1907 until 1910, a fluffy subject for fluffy characters (such as Mr. Beebe in *A Room with a View*) or a twisted subject for twisted characters (such as Mr. Pembroke and his sister, Agnes, in the 1907 novel, *The Longest Journey*). But by 1913 and 1914, when Forster was penning his overtly homosexual novel, *Maurice*, religion became an extremely ominous presence, a socio-cultural power that enforces strict gender and sex roles (as with Mr. Ducie's sand diagrams depicting the God-mandated heterosexual Ideal[9]) and identifies and defines "sexual irregularities" in order to monitor and control human sexuality (as with Mr. Borenius, who claims that "when the nations went a whoring they invariably ended by denying God"[10]). By 1924, with the publication of *A Passage to India*, Forster suggests that it is impossible to understand the colonizing politics of the British Empire without taking into account its religious justification, which is best expressed in Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is borne, unto us a Sonne is given, and the government shalbe upon his shoulder."[11] As

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[6] The letter is unpublished and housed at the King's College Library at Cambridge. I thank The Society of Authors as agent for the Provost and Scholars of King's College Cambridge for giving me permission to publish this material.

[7] Furbank (1978), *E. M. Forster: A Life*. San Diego, New York, and London: A Harvest Book: 49–80.

[8] Forster (2000), *A Room with a View*. New York: Penguin Books: 183.

[9] Forster (1971), *Maurice*. New York: W. W. Norton: 13–15.

[10] Forster (1971): 237.

[11] *Holy Bible: The New American Bible* (1971). Nashville, Camden, and New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

chosen people, who take their cue from God, the British are divinely ordained to rule and govern (the government shall be upon Christ's shoulder, and since the British are the imperial ministers of Christ, the government falls upon their shoulders), which explains why the British have been authorized to control India. Mrs. Moore, who turns against "poor little talkative Christianity"[12] in *A Passage to India*, does so because she finally realizes how it has justified Britain's invasive and intrusive politics, a point she makes when she specifically alludes to the Isaiah passage.[13] Given the overwhelming power of religion to structure social forms and to determine the political agenda, Forster claims in 1939 that "this is an age of faith."[14]

Forster was not alone in his gradual but eventual rejection of the traditional secularization hypothesis. For instance, in 1882, Friedrich Nietzsche's madman from *The Gay Science* boldly proclaimed God's death, and a close reading of Nietzsche's writings from 1882 through 1885 indicates that he would have probably accepted the central premise at the heart of traditional secularization theory, that with the passage of time, science would eventually supplant religion. But in 1886, there was a palpable shift in the German philologist's writings. First, they became more intensely political, thus leading him to do an extensive analysis of "the secret black art of [the] truly *grand* politics of revenge"[15] and to prophesy the coming of the twentieth century's political horror show: "The time for petty politics is over: the very next century will bring the fight for the dominion of the earth—the *compulsion* to large-scale politics."[16] The second shift relates to Nietzsche's critique of God and religion. While Nietzsche continued to argue in the years 1886 through January of 1889 that God is both an incoherent and dangerous idea, he started to realize that the God-concept is not

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[12] Forster (1984), *A Passage to India*. San Diego, New York, and London: A Harvest Book: 166.

[13] Forster (1984): 228.

[14] Forster (1977), *Two Cheers for Democracy*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace & Company: 67.

[15] Nietzsche (1989), *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House: 35. Nietzsche's emphasis.

[16] Nietzsche (1966), *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books: 131. Nietzsche's emphasis.

disappearing from the culture as he had formerly thought: "I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar …"[17] Gone is the cocksure atheist of 1882, who boldly claimed that the God-idea is on the wane. Indeed, for Nietzsche, not only is the God-concept not disappearing, but it is also assuming a more prominent role in the political sphere, which is why he warns his reader in *The Anti-Christ* "not [to] underestimate the fatality that has crept out of Christianity even into politics."[18]

We see a similar pattern in Mark Twain's writings. In his 1890 essay, "Bible Teaching and Religious Practice," Twain clearly adopts the traditional Enlightenment view, which holds that science and reason are slowly but surely supplanting religion and faith. For Twain, religion has always played and continues to play a dominant role in the formation of "the national character" and in the "history of the human race."[19] But starting in the eighteenth century, he claims, evolution and enlightenment captivated the imagination of many people in the West, which had the salutary effect of limiting the damage that religion does to people and the culture. Therefore, Twain argues that each generation exposes the previous generation's fallacious assumptions, which are derived from the Bible. Slavery, witch persecution, infant damnation, overzealous death penalties—these are just a few biblical ideas that have fallen into desuetude with the evolution of modern consciousness and the development of enlightenment reason. Despite these advances, Twain does not conclude that religion will disappear. Rather, he argues that, given the "direction of enlightenment," religion might eventually "attain some semblance of human decency."[20]

As an heir of Enlightenment rationalism, Twain claims that late nineteenth-century anti-Semitism is more secular than religious. Indeed, in the year 1899, we could say that Twain would have agreed with Arendt, who claims in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that twentieth-century anti-Semitism is based on "a secular

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[17] Nietzsche (1989), *Twilight of the Idols*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House: 48.

[18] Nietzsche (1989), *The Anti-Christ*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House: 168.

[19] Twain (2000), "Bible Teaching and Religious Practice," in Charles Neider ed. *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain*. New York: De Capo Press: 568.

[20] Twain (2000): 572.

nineteenth-century ideology" that is distinct from traditional "religious Jew-hatred."[21] For instance, in "Concerning the Jews," an essay published in the September 1899 issue of *Harper's Monthly*, Twain explains the origins of Western anti-Semitism. Throughout this essay, Twain says that he is "convinced that the persecution of the Jew is not due in any large degree to religious prejudice."[22] Twain does not totally exonerate religion, for he claims that if religion plays a role in justifying the culture's anti-Semitism, it is only a minor one. In fact, Twain offers a tentative quantification of religion's role: "Religious prejudices may account for one part of it, but not for the other nine."[23] What really accounts for rampant anti-Semitism is the Jewish superiority in making money, which is why Twain concludes that "Jewish persecution is not a religious passion, it is a business passion."[24]

Now let us consider a passage Twain penned on June 22, 1906. Discussing the many pogroms against Jews in Russia, Twain says:

> For two years now Christianity has been repeating in Russia the sort of industries in the way of massacre and mutilation with which it has been successfully persuading Christendom in every century for nineteen hundred years that it is the only right and true religion—the one and only religion of peace and love. For two years now the ultra-Christian Government of Russia has been officially ordering and conducting massacres of its Jewish subjects.[25]

Striking in this passage is not just Twain's reversal regarding the causes of "Jewish persecution," but his contention that the early twentieth-century pogroms are part of a long line of massacres Christendom has been committing "in every century for nineteen hundred years." Between the years 1899 and 1906, Twain revised his view about the role religion was playing within the culture.

Finally, let me briefly examine the evolution of Sigmund Freud's view of religion and secularization. In 1921, Freud published *Group*

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[21] Hannah Arendt (1976), *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt, Inc.: xi.
[22] Twain (2000): 243.
[23] Twain (2000): 242.
[24] Twain (2000): 249.
[25] Twain (1963), "Reflections on Religion," *Hudson Review*, Vol. 16: 338.

Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, a work that documents the role religion has played in the justification of violence. For Freud, religion is based on a Chosen People mentality that leads believers to form a libidinal tie with fellow believers. Within Freud's work, the tie is essential to the formation of healthy human relationships. But within religious communities, it becomes extremely dangerous, because it is so intense that it leads fellow believers to demonize and eventually violate non-believers:

> But even during the kingdom of Christ those people who do not belong to the community of believers, who do not love him, and whom he does not love, stand outside this tie. Therefore a religion, even if it calls itself the religion of love, must be hard and unloving to those who do not belong to it. Fundamentally indeed every religion is in this same way a religion of love for all those whom it embraces; while cruelty and intolerance towards those who do not belong to it are natural to every religion.

Freud goes on to argue that such religious cruelty and intolerance are diminishing, and the reason for this is the gradual secularization of Western culture, what he refers to as "the undeniable weakening of religious feelings and the libidinal ties which depend upon them." [26] In 1927, with the publication of *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud does a more extensive analysis of religion, specifically "European Christian civilization,"[27] and again, he indicates that secularization is effectively supplanting religion, for scientific and rational "[c]riticism has whittled away the evidential value of religious documents, natural science has shown up the errors in them, and comparative research has been struck by the fatal resemblance between the religious ideas which we revere and the mental products of primitive peoples and times."[28]

Now let us consider the 1930 book, *Civilization and its Discontents*. Freud's tone is significantly different here. In the earlier works, he was the detached rationalist, who treated religion

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[26] Freud (1959), *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Translated by James Strachey. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company: 39.
[27] Freud (1961), *The Future of an Illusion*. Translated by James Strachey. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company: 48.
[28] Freud (1961): 49.

as a charming but dying fiction, and his tone was as measured as it was professional. But here is how he refers to religion in the opening pages of Chapter 2:

> The common man cannot imagine this Providence otherwise than in the figure of an enormously exalted father. […] The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life. It is still more humiliating to discover how large a number of people living to-day, who cannot but see that this religion is not tenable, nevertheless try to defend it piece by piece in a series of pitiful rearguard actions.[29]

Freud the scientist is so frustrated that, instead of maintaining a rational tone, he resorts to a mean-spirited form of insult, referring to belief as "patently infantile." The problem is this: in his 1921 work, he saw religion as something that was slowly but surely disappearing, but by 1930, he is stunned by how widespread ("the great majority of mortals" and "how large a number of people living today") belief is.

An English novelist, a German philologist, an American satirist, and an Austrian psychoanalyst all undergo a similar experience. Initially, they all accept the traditional view that the West is becoming secular, but they all ultimately reject that view. Since they all draw the same conclusion but at different historical moments and in different countries, it would make more sense to say that something changed not so much in the culture as in the way that they conceptualized historical and political events. Put differently, they significantly raised the bar for what constitutes secularization, which led them to shift their view about the religious orientation of the culture at large. This is most obvious when we think about Twain's example. In 1906, Twain does not say that a religious resurgence occurred within the culture, thus justifying the claim that religion has been the cause of the 1903 through 1906 pogroms against Jews in Russia; rather, he revises his earlier view by claiming

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[29] Freud (1961), *Civilization and its Discontents*. Translated by James Strachey. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company: 22.

that Christendom has been consistently justifying the persecution of Jews for the last nineteen hundred years. In other words, Twain makes use of a new model in 1906 that enabled him to see the religious causes of persecution that he did not see when he penned his 1899 essay, "Concerning the Jews." As I intend to argue in this chapter, it was a newly emerging understanding of the subconscious structures of knowledge systems that led so many prominent twentieth-century thinkers to revise their view of secularization.

I

How can we explain this consistent pattern of rejecting the traditional secularization hypothesis among so many prominent thinkers? At this point, I offer one answer, though I will be offering others later in this book. Consistent among many intellectuals who eventually rejected the traditional secularization hypothesis was their discovery that secularization theory blinded them to the role religion played within the present. Specifically, they rejected the temporal trajectory of the secularization hypothesis, which Max Weber articulates most clearly. For Weber, "[s]cientific progress"[30] and "intellectualist rationalization"[31] are the things that have made secularization both a reality and an inevitability in the West. According to this framework, the primary tools of science have been developing for thousands of years. But contrary to the view that these tools have made everyday European citizens of the twentieth century more intelligent about the conditions of life than "an American Indian or a Hottentot,"[32] Weber draws a very different conclusion, which he articulates through an analogy about the inner workings of a streetcar. Generally speaking, the average European citizen does not understand what makes a streetcar work. "The savage," by contrast, actually has a more commanding grasp of the instruments that facilitate his or her living than everyday European citizens, but the two differ in their

[30] Weber (1946), "Science as a Vocation," in *Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press: 138.
[31] Weber (1946): 139.
[32] Weber (1946): 139.

orientation toward knowledge. In developed European countries, there is "the knowledge and belief that if one but wished one *could* learn it [the law or condition under which one lives] at any time."[33]

This belief in "intellectualist rationalization," the scientific and rationalist tool that Europeans use to "master all things by calculation," distinguishes the Enlightened European from the un-Enlightened savage. Savages, Weber argues, appeal to "magical means"[34] or supernatural beings in order to make sense of the inexplicable. Enlightened Europeans, by contrast, do not rely on such means or beings, because they believe that, with the refinement of the faculty of reason and the method of science, they will eventually access the facts about the inner workings of the world. Based on this model, secularization is a temporally present experience even though its fulfillment is projected into the future. In other words, Weberian secularization is premised on a future promise, or rather, the promise of the future, even if the present socio-political conditions are profoundly religious. Moreover, to determine the value of secularization, the present situation is really insignificant, because secularization is inevitable and irreversible, given the intellectual trajectory of the laws of reason and the method of science.

It is this view of secularization as a present phenomenon projected into the future that has led so many critical thinkers to be blinded by the pervasiveness of religion in the present. For Weber, the present could be dominated by religious ideas and institutions, but it would still be secular, so long as the people in the present have internalized the model of intellectualist rationalization. And since Weber believes that everyday citizens have internalized the model of intellectualist rationalization, he concludes that the West is secularized, or at least is in the grip of a rapid and irreversible process of secularization.

This version of secularization has been premised on a disembodied rationality, which is teleologically predestined to supplant religion. In *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Steve Bruce offers the most spirited clarification and defense of this approach. According to Bruce, "there is no one secularization theory. Rather,

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[33] Weber (1946): 139. Weber's emphasis.
[34] Weber (1946): 139.

there are clusters of descriptions and explanations that cohere reasonably well."[35] Within his framework, Bruce emphatically claims that he does "not see the direct contest between scientific and religious ideas as central to the secularization process."[36] Rather, he considers the Protestant Reformation the central event leading to the inevitable decline of religion, because in removing the "the institution of the church as a source of authority between God and man"[37] and shifting the authority to an individual's personal relationship with the divine, religious schisms and competing perspectives eventually proliferated, thus leading to increasing religious fragmentation and a seriously weakened Church. In other words, the Protestant Reformation created the conditions for the emergence of numerous religious schisms and sects,[38] a proliferation of social and cultural diversity,[39] and the evolution of relativism as "an operating principle or a cognitive style."[40] All of these developments effectively undermined the traditional Church's "authoritarian and exclusive"[41] model of truth.

Of vital importance to this secularization model are "naturalistic ways of thinking."[42] Since naturalistic, as opposed to supernaturalistic models of thinking dominate in the West, secularization is an inevitable and irreversible process. As with Weber's model, this means that secularization is a dominant principle in the culture now, not because religion has disappeared, but because it is certain to wane. According to this model, there are rational explanations about the world and the human out there, and while we may not have epistemological access to those explanations today, we are certain to get them in the future, so long as we continue to refine the naturalistic ways of thinking and the methods of science. Moreover, everyday citizens in the West are certain to become secularized in the future, because they have already adopted in

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[35] Bruce (2002), *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*. Malden, Massachusetts; Blackwell Publishers: 2.
[36] Bruce (2002): 18.
[37] Bruce (2002): 10.
[38] Bruce (2002): 15.
[39] Bruce (2002): 16–18.
[40] Bruce (2002): 29
[41] Bruce (2002): 29.
[42] Bruce (2002): 28.

large measure this disembodied rational model. Therefore, the present is undergoing secularization, not so much because religion or religious ways of thinking are disappearing, but because the general populations in the West have internalized and/or continue to internalize a naturalistic way of thinking, which sets into motion an inevitable and irreversible process of secularization. And to confirm that secularization has been set into motion, Bruce shows how "church membership for the UK as a whole fell from 27 per cent of the population in 1900 to 10 per cent in 2000."[43]

In stark contrast to Weber and Bruce, here is a comment Richard Wright made in an early unpublished lecture version of his 1957 book *White Man, Listen!*: "The Mid-Twentieth Century finds more active religion on earth than at any time since 1455! This is a startling fact and I do not think that it has been sufficiently weighed, studied, and appreciated."[44] It is impossible to overstate the significance of Wright's reference to the year 1455. As he claims in *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos*, the Portuguese have the dubious honor of having launched the slave-trade "crusade against Africa," because they "had the right, under a papal bull of 1455, to subject to servitude all infidel peoples."[45] Put simply, the slave trade was legal and righteous, because the Church, God's representative on earth, authorized it. So when Wright mentions "active religion on earth" in the mid-twentieth century, he is suggesting that religion exerts as much political power in his day as the Church did when it authorized slavery in 1455. But how, one must ask, can Wright justify such an extreme claim? After all, Eric Williams, author of *Capitalism and Slavery* and one of Wright's primary sources for *Black Power*, specifically says that in the fifteenth century "the universal claims of the Papacy were still

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[43] Bruce (2002): 66.

[44] This lecture was titled: "TRADITION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION: *The Plight of the Tragic Elite in Africa*," and it was delivered "at the First Conference of Negro Artists and Intellectuals organized by the society of African Culture in Paris in September 1956," a lecture that would eventually become a chapter in *White Man, Listen!* This lecture is in the Richard Wright Papers in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. I want to thank the Beinecke Library for giving me access to these materials.

[45] Wright (2008), *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos*, in *Black Power*. New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: HarperPerennial: 22.

unchallenged by individuals and governments."[46] The Church in the mid-twentieth century certainly did not enjoy such unchallenged authority and power from either individuals or governments, as many secularization theorists rightly note. So either Wright lacks a basic understanding of traditional secularization theory or he has a different understanding of secularization and religion in mind.

That Wright is familiar with traditional secularization theory he indicates in *White Man, Listen!* In a passage that could be taken from Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, or Bruce's *God is Dead*, Wright explains "how Europe, during the Reformation, had rolled back the tide of religion and had established the foundations of the modern state, secular institutions, free speech, science, etc."[47] Wright apparently accepts the traditional view of secularization, which holds that John Calvin and Martin Luther unwittingly set into motion the irreversible process of secularization by letting "loose mental and emotional forces which, in turn, caused a vast revolution in the social, cultural, governmental, and economic conditions under which man lived."[48] Instead of relying on an external authority such as the Church for determining their religious relationship with the world and others, Calvin and Luther implicitly called upon people to refine their individual intellectual capacities in order to understand God's will for humanity. This refinement of the individual's intellectual capacity laid the groundwork for "science and atheistic thought,"[49] which is why Calvin and Luther could be categorized as the founders and heroes of secularization:

> As a result of Calvin's and Luther's heresy, man began to get a grip upon his external environment. Science and industry were born and, through their rapid growth, each enriched the other and nullified the past notions of social structures, negated norms of nobility, of tradition, of priestly values, and fostered new social classes, new occupations, new experiences, new structures

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[46] Williams (1994), *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press: 3.
[47] Wright (2008), *White Man, Listen!* in *Black Power*. New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: HarperPerennial: 687.
[48] Wright (2008): 715.
[49] Wright (2008): 715.

> of government, new pleasures, hungers, dreams, in short, a whole new and unheard of universe.[50]

This is one of the standard versions about the rise of secularization, and since Wright so clearly rehearses it, it only makes sense that a first-rate scholar such as Paul Gilroy would draw the following conclusion: "For Wright the decisive break in western consciousness which modernity identifies was defined by the collapse of a religious understanding of the world. He held this view consistently."[51]

But if Wright accepts this traditional view of secularization, then how are we to explain the following assertions? In *White Man, Listen!* Wright acknowledges that he grew up within a racist religious culture: "I lived my childhood under a racial code, brutal and bloody, that white men proclaimed was ordained of God, said was made mandatory by the nature of their religion."[52] Wright notes that he was raised in a provincial part of Mississippi, which could explain why religion dominated his childhood experiences, but a close look at his writings suggests that religion is a dominant mentality throughout the Western world. For instance, in *Black Power*, Wright claims that "it is ironical that the men of Europe who plundered this continent [Africa] did it in the name of religion."[53] Indeed, in *White Man, Listen!* Wright argues that Asian and African nations in the mid-twentieth century face "a Western world that stubbornly clings to the idea that God Himself has given it the right to rule the 'lesser breed.'"[54] Furthermore, Wright insists that white Westerners had to believe "that they were executing the will of God" in order "to harness the body of colored mankind into their personal service."[55] How is it possible for Wright to suggest that the secular "spirit of the Enlightenment and the Reformation"[56] paved the way for modernist nation states, but, at the same time, to claim that the Western world clings to a

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[50] Wright (2008): 716.
[51] Gilroy (1993), *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 160.
[52] Wright,(2008): 712.
[53] Wright (2008): 399.
[54] Wright (2008): 687.
[55] Wright (2008): 720.
[56] Wright (2008): 723.

belief that God has authorized its dominance over "lesser" nations and breeds?

It was in his 1953 novel, *The Outsider*, that Wright first offered a more nuanced understanding of secularization. On the surface, it would appear that Wright's main character, Cross Damon, confirms Gilroy's interpretation, which holds "that the secular character of modernity was what distinguished it and ruptured it from its prehistory,"[57] for Cross claims that modern consciousness is "'Godlessness in a strict sense.'"[58] Later in the novel, Cross again refers to "the atheistic position of modern man" (p. 482), and another character even likens Cross to "real atheists" (p. 564). Indeed, in a lengthy dialogue with a Marxist intellectual, Mr. Blimin, Cross makes a claim that would set him squarely between Weber and Bruce as a traditional secularization theorist. Referring to the condition of religion, Cross tells Blimin: "'We Twentieth Century Westerners have outlived the faith of our fathers; our minds have grown so skeptical that we cannot accept the old scheme of moral precepts which once guided man's life'" (p. 481). This rejection of the religious past, this loss of spiritual faith has specifically impacted the twentieth-century nation state, for as Cross claims: "'There is no modern industrial nation on earth today that makes decisions based upon anything remotely resembling the injunctions of the Old or New Testament; this holds true in their domestic as well as in their foreign policies'" (p. 481). Given these claims, it would seem that Cross and Wright have radically opposing views about the role of religion in the West. While Cross claims that modern nations are no longer based on religious principles, Wright claims that there is as much "active religion" in the twentieth century as there was in the fifteenth century.

But Cross makes a subtle distinction that ultimately renders his position identical to Wright's and totally undermines Weber's and Bruce's secularization model. After Blimin concedes that religion is a dead intellectual option in the modern age, Cross corrects him: "'since religion is dead, religion is everywhere … Religion was once an affair of the church; it is now in the streets in each man's

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[57] Gilroy (1993): 169–70.

[58] Wright (1993), *The Outsider*. San Francisco: HarperCollinsPublishers: 274. Hereafter cited in text.

heart. Once there were priests; now every man's a priest. Religion's a compulsion, and a compulsion seems to spring from something total in us, catching up in its mighty grip all the other forces of life—sex, intellect, will, physical strength, and carrying them forward'" (p. 483). The West claims to be not religious (hence, the claim that "religion is dead"), but given the pervasive nature of belief among the people in the streets, religion is omnipresent ("religion is everywhere"), which means that secularization is really an incoherent fiction.

What leads both Wright and Cross to this conclusion is their conviction that the disembodied rational model of secularization has virtually no bearing on everyday citizens. Wright makes this point forcefully in *White Man, Listen!* when he exposes the serious limitations of rationalism within the Western world. When discussing the formation of a modern society in Asia and Africa, Wright claims that most intellectuals have failed to understand the living reality of everyday citizens. Contra Weber and Bruce, who suggest that "intellectualist rationalization" or "naturalistic ways of thinking" dominate the culture at large, Wright presents us "with a picture that turns the usual view of this matter upside down. I state that emotion here precedes the idea, that attitudes select the kind of ideas in question."[59] Granted, Wright is discussing the masses in Asia and Africa in *White Man, Listen!* at this point, but in *The Outsider*, he makes a similar claim about the masses in the West. Religion is everywhere, because the people "in the streets" are governed not by a teleological rationality that will lead to a secular society in the future, but by an a-teleological emotionalism that gives birth to their ideas. Indeed, Cross specifies how "Modern man" continues to adhere to a pre-rational, religious model of understanding the world: "'Modern man still believes in magic; he lives in a rational world but insists on interpreting the events of that world in terms of mystical forces'" (p. 476). Based on Cross's direct references to magic and mystical forces, one gets the sense that he is directly correcting Weber in this passage. In essence, Wright has the same view as Kwame Anthony Appiah, who argues that "[s]ecularization seems hardly to be proceeding: religions grow in all parts of the world; more than 90 percent of North Americans

[59] Wright (2008): 690.

still avow some sort of theism." Central to Appiah's argument is a crucial distinction between what Wright refers to as the elite and the masses. Appiah concedes that secularization may have occurred in the "world of the higher academy and a few islands of its influence,"[60] but as for everyday citizens, it has simply not occurred.

At this point, let me bring into sharp focus the distinctions between Weber's account of the average citizen of Europe and Wright's account of the everyday person "in the streets." For Weber, the average European citizen has internalized a rationalist model, which will lead to the disenchantment of the world. According to this model, there are specific facts about the universe out there, and while we may not have epistemological access to those facts at the moment, we, as Enlightened subjects, can trust that such facts exist, and that, with the refinement of the faculty of reason and the method of science, we will eventually access those facts. The future-oriented trajectory explains the teleological nature of Weber's disenchantment thesis, because, even if the culture is not totally secularized in the present, it promises to become secularized as soon as science and reason illuminate what were once seen as religious mysteries about the world. Therefore, there are ultimately no religious mysteries about the world or the human, which is why secularization leads to the disenchantment of the world. Put differently, everything will eventually be explicable in and through science and reason. It is this teleological dimension of secularization that makes it seem like an inevitability, so even if the contemporary culture is dominated by religion, it will eventually overcome religion, so long as the citizens at large have internalized the rationalist model. Stated more strongly, the present is secularized, not because it is secular, but because the model of knowledge that everyday citizens have internalized implies and/or necessitates secularization in the future.

For Wright, white Westerners "in the streets" have not internalized a rational secularization model, but rather, an irrational or a-rational religious model. This model, instead of being teleological or future-oriented, is a-teleological and cyclical, which is why Wright claims that there is as much "active religion" in the mid-twentieth

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[60] Appiah (1992), *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press: 145.

century as there was in 1455. At this point, however, we need to make a crucial distinction, which is central for understanding a key split among secularization theorists. In 1455, the Church exerted overt power and control over governments and the people, so the Church could make direct pronouncements that governments and the people respected and obeyed. By the mid-twentieth century, the Church no longer had considerable credibility and authority, and yet it was extremely "active," as Wright claims. How is this possible? Wright believes that, even though the post-Enlightenment body politic had become more and more secular (through laws mandating the separation of church and state), the people who run the governments in the West and the people in the streets have become more compulsively and fanatically religious, which means that the government, while putatively secular, is really religious nonetheless. This explains why Wright mocks the typical white Westerner. As an imaginary knowing black man in *White Man, Listen!* says: "'Thank you, Mr. White Man, for freeing me from the rot of my irrational traditions and customs, though you are still the victim of your own irrational customs and traditions.'"[61] As evidence to justify the claim that religion continues to determine the West's political agenda, Wright cites poignant examples of powerful Western political leaders who "cross themselves just before they send a bombing mission to seize the Suez Canal, or when the President of the United States gets on his knees and prays to God just before he issues the order to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima."[62] These leaders may not have claimed that the state is acting in the name of faith when they made their decisions, but their faith certainly informed their political agenda, which is why Wright would consider their political agenda religious despite the seeming separation of church and state.

There is another, more important reason why the West would be considered religious despite its secular pretensions. In *White Man, Listen!* Wright says: "What rivets my attention in this clash of East and West is that an irrational Western world helped, unconsciously and unintentionally to be sure, to smash the irrational

[61] Wright (2008): 719.
[62] Wright (2008): 794.

ties of religion and custom and tradition in Asia and Africa."[63] Wright's irony is difficult to miss here. On a conscious level, the white West is rational and secular ("religion is dead"), and in its efforts to "civilize" Asia and Africa, it has divested Asians and Africans of their irrational ties to religion. But on a subconscious level ("unconsciously and unintentionally"), the white West is just as irrational as Asia and Africa, because, whether it knows it or not, it is the white West's subconscious commitment to Christianity ("a Western world that stubbornly clings to the idea that God Himself has given it the right to rule the 'lesser breed'") that has justified its imperialist agenda in Asia and Africa.

The question that will dominate the rest of this chapter is this: How does the secularization hypothesis function to conceal from our purview the theological foundations of Western political regimes? The answer to this question hinges on our definition and understanding of theological foundations, and to clarify my approach, I need to take a detour into the writings of Nietzsche, who is a decisive presence in Wright's work. As I will demonstrate, Nietzsche and Wright both understand that there is a direct relationship between a belief in an inviolable Truth, an idea that presupposes a God who has authored such a Truth, and a totalitarian will to power. For both Nietzsche and Wright, it is not so much the belief in the inviolable Truth as it is the emotional orientation toward the Truth that causes the problems, and it is this emotional orientation that they consider the most defining feature of religion. In other words, it is not Truth or a system of belief that determines whether someone is religious or not. Rather, it is the emotional orientation towards a system of knowledge.

II

As an unconditional honest atheist, Nietzsche considered himself in an advanced stage of unbelief, and from his advanced perspective, certain types of atheists do not qualify as internally consistent atheists, because their epistemological and emotional orientations

[63] Wright (2008): 718.

are still governed by theological presuppositions. In a passage from *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche specifically claims that many atheists have not worked through the logic of an atheistic worldview, which is why they would not be considered unconditional honest atheists. In an attempt to identify himself for his readers, he says:

> If we simply called ourselves, using an old expression, godless, or unbelievers, or perhaps immoralists, we do not believe that this would even come close to designating us: We are all three in such an advanced stage that one—that *you*, my curious friends—could never comprehend how we feel at this point. Ours is no longer the bitterness and passion of the person who has torn himself away and still feels compelled to turn his unbelief into a new belief, a purpose, a martyrdom.[64]

Most "atheists," instead of embracing an internally consistent atheistic perspective, convert their "unbelief into a new belief," and as a consequence, they would still be considered believers despite any professions to the contrary. For Nietzsche, what sets unconditional honest atheists apart from pseudo atheists is their ability to work through the logical consequences of an atheistic worldview and to act, both intellectually and emotionally, in accord with that conceptual system.

To understand how Nietzsche differentiates various atheisms we must take into account what he refers to as the ascetic ideal, which entails a renunciation, degradation, and negation of the human. It is difficult to define a phrase such as the ascetic ideal, for words and phrases assume different meanings within different rhetorical contexts in Nietzsche's writing. Therefore, a phrase such as the ascetic ideal will have one meaning when defined in relation to science, but it will have a slightly different connotation when defined in relation to nihilism. But to get a preliminary sense of the phrase, let me briefly examine how it would function in Plato's *Ion*. When discussing the type of knowledge that poets and seers possess, Socrates defines it in relation to the presence or absence of the human. In a moment of inspiration, "the deity" divests

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[64] Nietzsche (1990), *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin: 286.

the inspired ones of their senses. The deity does this so "that we listeners may know that it is not they who utter these precious revelations while their mind is not within them, but that it is the god himself who speaks, and through them becomes articulate to us."[65] Notice how Socrates underscores the fact that it is not humans "who utter these precious revelations." The implication is that, were humans to participate in the utterance of the "precious revelations," the "knowledge" that they would express would be tainted by the human subjective (it would be either in part or in whole human-constructed rather than ontologically pre-given), thus rendering it interested and non-objective and therefore illegitimate. But because "these revelations" are not tainted by contact with the human ("not of man or human workmanship"), we can conclude that they are "divine and from the gods," which is to say that the "precious revelations" are valuable, authentic, and legitimate only in so far as the human subjective is absent. This model makes objective knowledge dependent on God's existence, but—with a circular logic worthy of Descartes—it also makes God's existence the guarantor of objective knowledge.

The ascetic ideal presupposes the existence of an objective Truth that is what it is whether humans perceive it or not and that humans can epistemologically access only to the degree to which they renounce that which is "of man or human workmanship." For Nietzsche, this ideal has been the basis and foundation of Christianity as well as science: "It is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests—that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine."[66] Now let us consider a passage that seemingly contradicts this claim. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche refers to "the decline of faith in the Christian god, the triumph of scientific atheism."[67] On the one hand, the "triumph of scientific atheism" is in part responsible for "the decline of the faith in the

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[65] Plato (1961), *Ion*, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 220.
[66] Nietzsche (1990): 283.
[67] Nietzsche (1990): 306.

Christian god," but on the other hand, the modern "faith in science" is based on the "Christian faith, which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine." What makes science and Christianity synonymous, for Nietzsche, is their reliance on the ascetic ideal, which holds that knowledge (whether it is figured as a concept, fact, truth, or argument) exists independent of the human mind and must be discovered. In other words, knowledge, when theologically configured, is pre-existent, legitimate, and objective, because there is a Being (like God) that functions either as author or guarantor of that knowledge. Richard Rorty clearly articulates why this view of knowledge presupposes the existence of God: "The very idea that the world or the self has an intrinsic nature—one which the physicist or the poet may have glimpsed—is a remnant of the idea that the world is a divine creation, the work of someone who had something in mind, who Himself spoke some language in which He described His own project."[68] When humans treat knowledge as if there were an objective perspective, they would be utilizing a theological model of knowledge, whether they were professed atheists or not, because they would be presupposing the existence of a Being that has authored an intrinsic nature.

There are three distinct assumptions on which the ascetic ideal rests, and for the sake of clarity, let me examine each one separately. The first relates to a God's eye perspective, which justifies the existence of what Nietzsche refers to as "'knowledge in itself.'" Human perception is dependent on "active and interpreting forces," but these forces limit and restrict perception, which is why Nietzsche claims that for humans "[t]here is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing.'"[69] Nietzsche puts the word "'knowing'" in scare quotes in this passage, because he is trying to underscore the idea that a limited human's eye perspective does not, according to the dominant philosophical, scientific, and theological models of his day, qualify as "'knowledge in itself.'" The God-concept, by contrast, ensures the existence of "an eye turned in no particular direction,"[70] an objective vantage

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[68] Rorty (1989), *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 21.

[69] Nietzsche (1989), *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House: III.12.

[70] Nietzsche (1989): III.12.

point, which is not limited or restricted by spatial, temporal, or cultural conditioning or orientation. Within this paradigm, the intellectual goal is "'knowledge in itself,'" which humans achieve only to the degree to which their narrow and limited human perspective corresponds with a God's eye perspective. Therefore, those who obtain "'knowledge in itself'" would be in possession of religious as opposed to human-constructed knowledge. This is the case because the God-concept authorizes and guarantees the existence of knowledge in itself, so to be in supposed possession of non-human-constructed knowledge, a person, whether he or she realizes it or not, presupposes a more-than-human being that has authored and legitimized such knowledge. And, as Socrates claims, it is possible to access such knowledge-in-itself only in so far as one denies or represses the human subjective.

The second assumption relates to a correspondence theory of truth, which holds that there exist objective concepts, truths, or arguments that are best suited to signify the world's essence or nature. Put differently, irrespective of perspective, there exist concepts or arguments that signify the world aright, and if humans want to know the world as it is in and of itself, they must be able to access those concepts or arguments. Invoking the *liber mundi* tradition, Foucault articulates the primary assumption inherent in the correspondence theory of truth. Its practitioners presuppose that "the world presents us with a legible face, leaving us merely to decipher it."[71] Within this framework, suitable concepts and arguments are truths, and they are valid, because they are divine creations rather than human constructions. The ascetic ideal, in other words, posits the existence of an a priori truth system, which can be described as a metaphysical argument or concept that is waiting to be discovered. But this model requires, according to Nietzsche, an act of faith, "*faith in the ascetic ideal itself*," which "is the faith in a *metaphysical* value, the absolute value of *truth*, [which is] sanctioned and guaranteed by this ideal alone."[72]

The final assumption relates to the existence of a disinterested human, "a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject.'"[73]

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[71] Foucault (1971), "The Discourse on Language," in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books: 229.
[72] Nietzsche (1989): III.24. Nietzsche's emphasis.
[73] Nietzsche (1989): III.12.

According to this model, to access "knowledge in itself" or to discover a metaphysical truth, a person must both "renounce belief in one's ego" and "deny one's own 'reality.'"[74] This is the case because, were the human subjective to play a role in the discovery or construction of knowledge or a concept, that knowledge or concept would be tainted by individual interest, what we today refer to as cultural ideology, personal desire, or political agenda. By having the capacity to be disinterested, by cultivating the ability to overcome and renounce that which is of "man or human workmanship," humans can thereby come into possession of the "real and actual,"[75] a metaphysical "truth" that has been "posited as being, as God, as the highest court of appeal."[76]

For Nietzsche, science is a logical extension of Christianity, because both have been founded on the major assumptions of the ascetic ideal. Both are based "on the same overestimation of truth (more exactly: on the same belief that truth is inestimable and cannot be criticized),"[77] on their conviction that they are "a genuine philosophy of reality,"[78] and on the assumption that one must renounce what is of man and human workmanship in order to access knowledge in itself. This explains why Nietzsche claims that "[i]t is still a *metaphysical faith* that underlies our faith in science." Therefore, science, which is generally regarded as "the natural antagonist of the ascetic ideal," is actually "the driving force in the latter's inner development."[79] In other words, science presupposes a theological orientation toward knowledge, and as such, it implicitly makes the human redundant and diminishes life: "Physiologically, too, science rests on the same foundation as the ascetic ideal: a certain *impoverishment of life* is a presupposition of both of them."[80] Science and religion equally diminish the human, because they are premised on pre-given, objective truths, which passive humans can only discover, rather than human constructions, which testify to humanity's active capacity to create.

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[74] Nietzsche (1989): III.12.
[75] Nietzsche (1989): III.12.
[76] Nietzsche (1989): III.24.
[77] Nietzsche (1989): III.25.
[78] Nietzsche (1989): III.23.
[79] Nietzsche (1989): III.25.
[80] Nietzsche (1989): III.25. Nietzsche's emphasis.

If science is merely an extension of the Platonic/Christian ascetic ideal, thereby making it theological despite any pretensions to the contrary, nihilism is the polar opposite, and as such, it, too, is in large measure determined by the ascetic ideal. The key to understanding Nietzsche's critique of nihilism is to be found in a splendid passage from *The Gay Science*, which brilliantly articulates Nietzsche's post-ascetic ideal view of knowledge. "We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live—by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith nobody now could endure life. But that does not prove them. Life is no argument."[81] The theological view holds that there are a priori or metaphysical arguments about life, the world, and the human that have been authored by God. These arguments can be discovered, unraveled, and decoded, but to access them, the human subjective must not play a role in their discovery, for God-Truths are "not of man or human workmanship." But for Nietzsche, since there is no God, there can be no mind-independent discourse that is best suited to signify the world aright. Rather, he holds that all concepts about life, the world, and the human are anthropomorphic constructions. This does not mean that Nietzsche rejects discourse or considers it useless; Nietzsche explicitly claims that we could not endure life without human arguments. It just means that he considers all discourses and arguments about the world, no matter how useful, no matter how compelling, limited and biased, forever subject to the prejudices and limitations of their human creators. Even if an argument about the world works, that would not prove it. It would just mean that the argument is compelling and useful, nothing more.

Nihilists, Nietzsche notes, reject the idea that life is a provable argument that humans can decode, but they have drawn the wrong conclusion about this deconstruction of metaphysical knowledge and a priori truth. In a very tricky passage, he specifically faults nihilists through his critique of modern historiography. In stark contrast to Platonic/Christian dogmatism, modern historiography "rejects all teleology; it no longer wishes to 'prove' anything; it disdains to play the judge and considers this a sign of good taste—it

[81] Nietzsche (1990): 177.

affirms as little as it denies; it ascertains, it 'describes' … All this is to a high degree ascetic; but at the same time it is to an even higher degree *nihilistic*."[82] The nihilists are right that a priori or metaphysical truths do not exist, which is why it is impossible "to 'prove' anything," but they are wrong in their refusal to construct arguments about life and their rejection of all truths as irrelevant, insignificant, and meaningless. While there is no such thing as inherent meaning, according to Nietzsche, it does not follow that humans and life are meaningless. To the contrary, humans could not live without constructing truths and arguments about life, the world, and the human, so for Nietzsche, arguments and truths are extremely valuable, even if they are only provisional constructs. Moreover, humans derive considerable value from their conceptual constructions, even if these constructions will ultimately fade and dissolve.

What makes nihilists practitioners of the ascetic ideal is their twofold degradation and devaluation of the human, a point that Nietzsche intelligently articulates when he specifies the two faulty premises on which nihilism is based: "'Either abolish your reverences or—*yourselves*!' The latter would be nihilism; but would not the former also be—nihilism?"[83] For Nietzsche, truth is only a constructed conceptual illusion, a provisional argument about life, but its failure to achieve the status of a metaphysical or a priori reality does not render it nihilistically useless or meaningless. Humans derive considerable value and meaning from their construction of truths and arguments about life, so while their truths and arguments (their "reverences") do not have absolute or ultimate value, they can be profoundly meaningful to individual humans and communities. The same applies to human beings. Humans no longer have absolute value as children of God with spiritual souls, but it does not follow that they are only nihilistic blips waiting for extinction. In short, Nietzsche rejects nihilism because of its implicit denigration of the human: "what is nihilism today if it is not *that*?—We are weary *of man*."[84] The ascetic ideal has established an either/or system of value: either humans and

[82] Nietzsche (1989): III.26. Nietzsche's emphasis.
[83] Nietzsche (1990): 287. Nietzsche's emphasis.
[84] Nietzsche (1989): I.12. Nietzsche's emphasis.

their reverences have total and absolute value and meaning or they have absolutely no value and meaning.

Unconditional honest atheists differ considerably from "idealists of knowledge," such as "pale atheists, anti-Christians, immoralists, [and] nihilists,"[85] because they have matured beyond the ascetic ideal. Were readers unaware of Nietzsche's stratification of atheists, they could easily interpret his disparaging remarks about "pale atheists" as a wholesale rejection and/or condemnation of atheism, but what Nietzsche is ultimately critiquing are those conceptual systems (scientific atheism, anti-Christian atheism, and nihilistic atheism) that are based on the ascetic ideal, which is why they are not really atheistic. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche explains precisely why such pale atheists are nothing more than reactionary children. Modern intellectuals "are cautious [...] about ultimate convictions," because they distrust "every unconditional Yes and No."[86] Having recognized that such "ultimate convictions" are untenable, many "disappointed idealist[s]" behave like a "'burned child,'"[87] someone who is a mere reactionary. For instance, the nihilist, who rejects the idea that there is an ultimate meaning to life, considers life "*worthless as such* (nihilistic withdrawal from it),"[88] and as a consequence, the nihilist is an "idealist of knowledge" as much as any Christian or scientific atheist.

By contrast, the unconditional honest atheist has evaded the oppositional model of the ascetic ideal altogether. As Nietzsche claims in *The Gay Science*, he is governed by "the jubilant curiosity of one who formerly stood in his corner and was driven to despair by his corner, and now delights and luxuriates in the opposite of a corner, in the boundless, in what is 'free as such.'"[89] All idealists of knowledge are alike, according to Nietzsche, in that "[t]hey are far from being *free* spirits: *for they still have faith in truth*."[90] Another way of formulating Nietzsche's position here is to say: all idealists of knowledge are alike in that they lack faith in the human and what is of human workmanship, like "truth." My inverted formulation

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[85] Nietzsche (1989): III.24.
[86] Nietzsche (1990): 337.
[87] Nietzsche (1990): 337.
[88] Nietzsche (1990): 92. Nietzsche's emphasis.
[89] Nietzsche (1990): 337.
[90] Nietzsche (1989): III.24. Nietzsche's emphasis.

may sound like a contradiction of the *Genealogy* passage, in which Nietzsche faults idealists of knowledge for having faith in truth, but actually, Nietzsche only rejects Truth when it is treated as a metaphysical or an a priori reality which humans must discover and to which they must submit. Systems of knowledge premised on the ascetic ideal are based on "the self-belittlement of man, his *will* to self-belittlement,"[91] whereas a system of knowledge based on unconditional honest atheism holds that "truth" can be valuable as human-constructed. Indeed, there is no such thing as "truth" that is not human-constructed. According to this model, practitioners of the ascetic ideal can never be free, because they must submit to a sacred imagined pre-given Truth, which implicitly and inevitably leads them to denigrate the human and to restrict the humans' capacity to create "truth." The unconditional honest atheist, by contrast, experiences a freedom inaccessible to practitioners of the ascetic ideal, for in valorizing (but not ontologizing or metaphysicalizing) human-constructed "truth," unconditional honest atheists are not bound by the either/or mentality of the ascetic ideal—they do not hold that Truth is of absolute value or absolutely nothing. They are free in that they appreciate and value "truth" as a provisional human construct, and they have been able to achieve this only by getting beyond or outside the oppositional corners of the ascetic ideal, which has enabled them to activate the human capacity to create "truth" and to experience "truth" as meaningful even though it is not metaphysical.

We are now in a position to understand one of Nietzsche's most important passages about atheism. In *Genealogy*, he claims:

> Unconditional honest atheism (and *its* is the only air we breathe, we more spiritual men of this age!) is therefore *not* the antithesis of that [ascetic] ideal, as it appears to be; it is rather only one of the latest phases of its evolution, one of its terminal forms and inner consequences—it is the awe-inspiring *catastrophe* of two thousand years of training in truthfulness that finally forbids itself the *lie involved in belief in God*.[92]

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[91] Nietzsche (1989): III.25. Nietzsche's emphasis.
[92] Nietzsche (1989): III.27. Nietzsche's emphasis.

Science is based on the same foundation as the ascetic ideal ("This pair, science and the ascetic ideal, both rest on the same foundation"[93]) and nihilism is the antithesis of the ideal, but unconditional honest atheism cannot be assessed or understood in relation to the ideal at all, because it is based on wholly different premises. Instead of presupposing an objective God's eye perspective, which authorizes the existence of knowledge in itself, and rather than negating the human and what is of human workmanship, which render humans and human constructions irrelevant and meaningless, unconditional honest atheists treat knowledge systems as provisional but extremely meaningful constructions. Indeed, it is through their capacity to construct truths or arguments about life and the world that humans can experience a sense of personal and communal relevance and fulfillment. In short, unconditional honest atheism leads to the empowerment of humans and humanity, which is why he argues that in rejecting God we redeem the world.[94]

The logic of Nietzsche's atheistic view of knowledge does not lead, as so many scholars have suggested, to an anything-goes philosophy or to a philosophy of violence. To the contrary, his philosophy mandates an extremely respectful relationship between people, which is calculated to ennoble. We see this most clearly in his critical depiction of slaves and tyrants. In a *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* passage that is of paramount importance, Nietzsche says: "Are you a slave? If so, you cannot be a friend. Are you a tyrant? If so, you cannot have friends."[95] Slaves cannot be friends because they are weak-willed believers who have been subjected into being through their naive belief in a master's pre-given metaphysical Truth, but neither can tyrants because they are manipulative predators who seduce weak-willed people into believing that their grammatical will to power is a final and absolute Truth. Though belief in this Truth is really nothing more than faith, the tyrants' seductive rhetoric effectively conceals from the weak-willed slave the fact that their Truth is just a human construction. In essence, tyrants wield what

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[93] Nietzsche (1989): III.25.

[94] Nietzsche (1989), *Twilight of the Idols*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House: 65.

[95] Nietzsche (1969), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Penguin Books: 83.

Nietzsche refers to as a "closed system of will."[96] For Nietzsche, because life is no argument, truth is an epistemic construction of the will imposed upon the world rather than an objective discovery of the intellect that neutrally represents the world. For people who wield a "closed system of will," their objective is to seduce people into believing that their Truth is the one and only Truth.

But since there is actually no mind-independent Truth for the wielders of a closed will to power to discover, what they really do is to use an imposing discourse to reduce the world to their closed system of will. Indeed, Nietzsche claims that language is, for the wielders of a closed system of will, a violent act of taking possession of that which is named: "The lordly right of giving names extends so far that one should allow oneself to conceive the origin of language itself as an expression of power on the part of the rulers: they say 'this *is* this and this,' they seal everything and event with a sound and, as it were, take possession of it."[97] While Walter Kaufmann's translation here is adequate, a close look at the original German makes the claim somewhat stronger. The last part of the passage reads: "*sie siegeln jegliches Ding und Geschehen mit einem Laute ab und nehmen es dadurch gleichsam in Besitz*."[98] Kaufmann was right to translate the verb *siegeln* into the verb "seal," but in English, the separable prefix, *ab*, gets lost in translation. When naming an object, lordly rulers seal that which they name, but in German, the claim is stronger because the act of giving a seal implies a sealing off such that the named object disallows naming from other quarters, and it is the non-standard separable prefix that functions to highlight this sealing-off activity. Granted, the act of affixing a seal to an object can imply exclusive rights to the sealed object, but the German, *siegeln … ab*, highlights this point more forcefully. So when those governed by a closed system of will name an object, they take exclusive possession of it, because they prevent others from naming the object as well. The consequence of this closed system of will is to reduce life, the world and the human to one interpretation, one truth: "it permits

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[96] Nietzsche (1989): III.23.

[97] Nietzsche (1989): I.2. Nietzsche's emphasis.

[98] Nietzsche (1988), *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, in Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, (eds) *Friedrich Nietzsche: Saemtliche Werke*. Berlin: de Gruyter: Volume 5, 260.

no other interpretation, no other goal; it rejects, denies, affirms, and sanctions solely from the point of view of *its* interpretation …; it submits to no power, it believes in its own predominance over every other power, in its absolute *superiority of rank* over every other power—it believes that no power exists on earth that does not first have to receive a meaning, a right to exist, a value, as a tool of the ascetic ideal, as a way and means to *its* goal, to *one* goal."[99] The closed system of will, which leads to total domination, presupposes that there is one way to define and understand life, the world and the human. Those who accept this view will tolerate no alternatives to the dominant Truth.

To highlight the difference between Nietzsche's Zarathustra and the tyrannical world-redeemer, Nietzsche says: "Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you."[100] Tyrants demand of their followers that they accept their way and their truth and their life as the way and the truth and the life, but to be Zarathustra's "follower," individuals must reject his teaching and construct their own. In other words, Zarathustra invites his "followers" to oppose him. Within this framework, a person such as Christ is a tyrant and his followers are slaves, which means that neither can be or have friends. In a parody of Christ, Zarathustra explains why this is the case: "No herdsman and one herd."[101] Hollingdale translates the word *Hirte* as herdsman, but this translation misses Nietzsche's clear allusion to Christ as *der gute Hirte* (the Good Shepherd). Zarathustra does not want to establish a system in which he legitimizes the existence of or has access to the one and only road to paradise, because such a system places others in an inferior position in relation to him. To the contrary, "Zarathustra shall not speak to the people but to companions! Zarathustra shall not be herdsman [shepherd] and dog to the herd!"[102] Zarathustra does not want disciples or followers; he wants companions. But to be Zarathustra's companion means understanding that his philosophy of the will to power is not something that other people should accept as

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[99] Nietzsche (1989): III.23. Nietzsche's emphasis.
[100] Nietzsche (1989), *Ecce Homo*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House: 220.
[101] Nietzsche (1969): 46.
[102] Nietzsche (1969): 51.

true, for as Zarathustra claims: "'This—is now *my* way: where is yours?' Thus I answered those who asked me 'the way'. For *the* way—does not exist!"[103] Given the logic of Nietzsche's model, to be Nietzschean, one must reject Nietzsche. Conversely and paradoxically, if a person accepts Nietzsche's view of the will to power as a final and absolute Truth, then that person could not be Nietzschean, for the essence of Nietzsche's atheistic view of language and truth is that, since there is no God to authorize or legitimize a final or absolute Truth to signify the world or the human, all truths are nothing more than provisional human constructions. According to the logic of this model, Nietzsche believes that humans should impose their truths on others, but they should not do so in an absolute way—the people who do so would be tyrants, who ultimately deaden the life spirit in their disciples. But Nietzsche also believes that humans should not accept other people's conceptual wills to power as final or absolute Truth—the people who do so would be slaves, who lack the capacity for creative freedom and individual agency. In essence, for Nietzsche, only by killing God and the concomitant belief in a metaphysical Truth can we create the conditions to overcome both slavery and tyranny. By contrast, if we don't eliminate the God-concept and its attendant mentality, totalitarianism, which requires knowing tyrants and willing slaves, is more than just probable; it is inevitable.

III

While many scholars acknowledge Nietzsche's extensive influence on Wright, they generally have only a caricature understanding of Nietzsche, and as a consequence, they invariably misrepresent Wright's appropriation of Nietzsche. For instance, Esther Merle Jackson interprets Bigger Thomas from *Native Son* as a "Nietzschean 'superman,'" which explains why he "elects violence, crime, and vengeance as the signs of life."[104] According to this

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[103] Nietzsche (1969): 213. Nietzsche's emphasis.

[104] Jackson (1984), "The American Negro and the Image of the Absurd," in Richard Macksey and Frank E. Moorer (eds), *Richard Wright: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall: 132.

approach, Nietzsche valorizes violence and murder as a means towards individual fulfillment, which is why Sarah Relyea characterizes Cross's murderous behavior ("a man who murders not for an idea, but on a whim") as essentially Nietzschean ("his Nietzschean *deeds*"[105]). In this same tradition, Nathan A. Scott, Jr notes "the explicit allusions to Nietzsche and Heidegger in *The Outsider*,"[106] and he specifically suggests that Damon's reading of Nietzsche results in a philosophical justification and glorification of violence: "Cross Damon, having read his Nietzschean primers, accepts his mission with deliberation and in the spirit of a kind of inverted messianism."[107] This inverted messianism is premised on a desire to get "outside of history altogether," but the only way to accomplish this is "through an act of consummate violence."[108] Such an approach is at the core of Mark Christian Thompson's *Black Fascisms*, which suggests that twentieth-century totalitarianism is the logical product of Nietzsche's philosophy. As Thompson claims, Wright's novel "finds totalitarianism, driven by the Nietzschean will to power, to be nothing less than the very ontological basis of sovereignty in Western political theory."[109] Michel Fabre most clearly articulates this approach to the role Nietzsche plays within Wright's work. *The Outsider*, Fabre claims, "depicts the explosion of the social unit, the civil anarchy that results from the growing concentration of power, the weakening of faith, the secularization of man, the advent of the Nietzschean man who has become his own 'little god'—all characteristics of the crisis in our civilization, a crisis so serious that it is debatable whether the West is undergoing the throes of an evolution or the agony of a decline."[110] This approach holds that, given the atheist's rejection of God, there is nothing that restrains people from behaving with reckless abandon.

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[105] Relyea (2006), "The Vanguard of Modernity: Richard Wright's *The Outsider*," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Fall): 189. Relyea's emphasis.
[106] Scott (1984), "The Dark and Haunted Tower of Richard Wright," in Richard Macksey and Frank E. Moorer (eds), *Richard Wright: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall: 149.
[107] Scott (1984): 159.
[108] Scott (1984): 159.
[109] Thompson (2007), *Black Fascisms: African American Literature and Culture between the Wars*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press: 144.
[110] Fabre (1973), *The Unfinished Quest of Richard Wright*. New York: Morrow: xviii.

Taken within a political context, since twentieth-century nation states are secular rather than religious, they have adopted political theories that have justified an anything-goes approach to its people and other nations, which leads necessarily to totalitarianism and fascism. In essence, the standard approach suggests that, unless there is a divine being that puts a check on human or political action, humans and nations will become totalitarians.

What scholars fail to understand about Nietzsche, however, is that his atheistic view applies not just to his present, but also to the past. For Nietzsche, there is no God, and there never has been a God, which means that believers may have believed that God was dictating their behavior, but the reality has been that they were driven by an absolute and total will to power all along, whether they were aware of it or not. Within this framework, the God-concept was simply a convenient instrument for believers to justify their particular approach to life and the world. What distinguishes the present from the past is not a philosophy of the will to power, but the technological means for achieving certain political objectives. Imagine what the ancient Hebrews could have done to the Canaanites, the Crusaders to the infidels, the Inquisitors to the heretics, the Protestants to the Catholics in Germany during the Thirty Years War, etc. had they had twentieth-century technology. Gillespie gives us a sober reminder about the nature of religious violence when he discusses the Wars of Religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

> By conservative estimates, the wars claimed the lives of 10 percent of the population in England, 15 percent in France, 30 percent in Germany, and more than 50 percent in Bohemia. By comparison, European dead in World War II exceeded 10 percent of the population only in Germany and the USSR. Within our experience only the Holocaust and the killing fields of Cambodia can begin to rival the levels of destruction that characterized the Wars of Religion.[111]

Nietzsche and Wright would not accept the claims of scholars such as Thompson and Fabre, who imply or suggest that 1) the past

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[111] Gillespie (2008): 130.

represents a time of more humane behavior, 2) that the present is becoming secular, and 3) that there is a link between secularization and large-scale political violence. Rather, Nietzsche and Wright suggest that 1) the past was profoundly barbaric, 2) that the present is becoming religious in new and frightening ways, and 3) that there is a link between the newly emerging religiosity and large-scale political violence.

Above all else, what scholars consistently fail to understand is that there is a distinction in Nietzsche's work, a distinction that Wright fully understood, between an absolute will to power and a provisional will to power. The total will to power is not the logical product of atheism; it is the product of a theological worldview. Plato, Christ, and Kant were wielders of the absolute will to power as much as Hitler and the Nazis, and they were able to justify the conceptual systems by claiming that they had epistemological access to the only road to paradise. In other words, they never acknowledge to themselves or others that their systems of truth are their own limited and biased human inventions. By stark contrast, the provisional will to power is the logical product of unconditional honest atheism, for unconditional honest atheists must acknowledge that their truth systems are their own human inventions, for there is no God to authorize the existence of an extra-linguistic or metaphysical Truth. In essence, the provisional will to power functions to disable the totalitarian model, for it mandates that leaders acknowledge the limitations and biases of their human-constructed system of truth and it insists that the people cast a skeptical eye on all truth systems.

Indeed, a careful interpretation of Nietzsche's and Wright's work indicates that the rejection of God does not lead to totalitarianism but rather to a designification that effectively disables totalitarianism. For instance, in a conversation with his love interest, Eva, Cross explains precisely what unconditional honest atheism entails. After telling Eva that modernism is "'Godlessness in a strict sense,'" Cross clarifies what he means: "'The natural world around us which cradles our existence and which we claim to know is just a huge, unknowable something or other'" (p. 274). In essence, there is no discourse that we can discover or create that will accurately signify the natural world, and it is unconditional honest atheism that has made this the case. In a post-God universe, what we are left with is a designified world, an "unknowable something or

other." Therefore, Cross tells Eva: "'What there is of the natural world that seems human to us is what we have projected out upon it from our own hearts'" (p. 274). For most believers, if there is no God to author or authorize a universally valid and objectively true discourse, then humans would be meaningless beings. But Cross is neither a religious believer nor a reactionary atheist in an early stage of development. He is an unconditional honest atheist, and as a consequence, he is comfortable living in the contingent world of anthropomorphic constructions. Indeed, Cross considers modern art to be the logical product of an internally consistent atheistic worldview, which honestly admits that all we have of knowledge are human projections: "'the world we see is the world we make by our manual or emotional projection'" (p. 275). Given that all we have left of "truth" are anthropomorphic projections, Cross endorses an art that would honestly acknowledge our atheistic situation: "'why not let us be honest and paint our own projections, our fantasies, our own moods, our own conceptions of what things are. Let's paint our feelings *directly*. Why let objects master us? Let's take forms, planes, surfaces, colors, volumes, space, etc., and make them express ourselves by our arrangement of them. It's an act of pure creation …'" (p. 275, Wright's emphasis). Just as important as the content is the tone in this passage. Cross is not the despairing atheist we find in Thomas Hardy's "God's Funeral," Rupert Brooke's "Failure," Ernest Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," or Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find." Rather, he is an atheist in the tradition of Nietzsche, James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, and Wallace Stevens's narrator from "Sunday Morning," who celebrate God's death and revel in human creativity and contingency.

The problem, however, is that most people do not honestly acknowledge that their truth-constructions are subjective projections. To the contrary, they act in "bad faith," which means that, instead of acknowledging that their human-constructed truth systems can never achieve the status of being universally valid and/or objectively true, they seduce others into accepting their anthropomorphic constructions as final and absolute. Indeed, Cross rationalizes his own bad faith tendencies, claiming that he rejects bad faith, the idea "that life was tending toward a goal of redemption," but "when he saw men mobilizing the natural hopes and anxieties of other men for their own selfish ends, he became all but hypnotized by the spectacle" (p. 253). There is something

hypnotic about seducing other people into accepting an individual will-to-power as an ontological fact of being. Indeed, some of the most intense forms of enjoyment come from creating a discursive system of power and then seducing people into accepting that system as final and absolute. Cross makes this discovery through his interactions with the Communist leader, Gil Blount.

As an internally consistent atheist, Cross refuses to accept or submit to any system as final or absolute: "For Cross had no party, no myths, no tradition, no race, no soil, no culture, and no ideas—except perhaps the idea that ideas in themselves were, at best, dubious!" (pp. 505–6). Since Gil is a reasonably enlightened man of the twentieth century, Cross assumes that he, like Cross, would also have some irony about all systems of truth, including Communism. But what Cross discovers is that Gil embraces Communism with unmitigated fanaticism. It is at this point that Cross finally hits upon Nietzsche's idea of a closed system of will to illuminate the behavior not only of a Communist leader such as Gil, but also totalitarian leaders of the twentieth century. The secret is power. But not just any type of power. It is a philosophy of "absolute power" (p. 267), which is a version of Nietzsche's closed system of will. For Cross, "the knowing and conscious men who wielded power" (p. 270) are aware that their systematization of life and the world is nothing more than an anthropomorphic construction. And yet, their greatest enjoyment comes, not from amassing material possessions or satisfying sexual appetites, but from using conceptual systems to dominate and control people at the very core of their being: "To hold absolute power over others, to define what they should love or fear, to decide if they were to live or die and thereby to ravage the whole of their beings—that was a sensuality that made sexual passion look pale by comparison" (p. 267). Cross's view of "absolute power" here is based on a theory of knowledge. Totalitarians impose upon the designified world an absolute instead of a provisional will to power. This will to power takes the form of a single and absolute system of Truth. Indeed, the conscious men can best control people through a fully formed conceptual system, one that can make consistent sense of the natural and human world: "Once a thorough system of sensual power as a way of life had gotten hold of a man's heart to the extent that it ordered and defined all of his relations, it was bound to codify and arrange all of his life's activities into one organic unity" (p. 269). At

this point, Cross is talking specifically about political leaders such as Gil. His point is that, once a leader discovers that he can satisfy his most primal needs by seducing people into accepting his internally consistent system of knowledge/power, he will be swept away by the very system he has utilized and even created. In other words, the joy that comes from wielding an absolute system of knowledge/power will function to persuade the leader (at the emotional level) that the system is right and true, which will alleviate the leaders' intellectual doubts about the conceptual system's truth value. It is this focus on the emotional rather than the intellectual (rational) that leads Cross to conclude "that he was beginning to look at the emotional skeleton of man" (p. 269).

Significantly, after defining the way this system of absolute power functions, Cross concludes that this is the "nameless religion by which" the totalitarian political leaders "lived" (p. 270). But on what basis does Cross refer to the totalitarian leaders' behavior in terms of a nameless religion? The answer is based on his conception of what a religious mentality entails. Just like Woolf's Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, who is extremely attentive to the degree to which certain ways of thinking imply the existence of God (which I discussed in the preceding chapter), Cross concludes that totalitarian systems could only function if they are based on a theological model of knowledge. That Cross, like Mrs. Ramsay, is concerned about being "trapped" into systems of belief is clear just after he survives a devastating train wreck. Reflecting on his life, Cross says to himself: "He leaned back and wondered why his life had been spared. Or had it been? To say that he had been 'spared' implied that some God was watching over him, and he did not believe that" (p. 101). There are two things worth noting about this passage. First, Cross discovers that he continues to think in religious terms, despite the fact that he is an atheist. Second, he realizes that he, like Mrs. Ramsay, must work hard to purge from his inner life such religious habits of mind. For writers such as Nietzsche, Woolf, and Wright, it is not enough to be an atheist; one must be an unconditional honest atheist, which requires a radical rejection of the religious habits of feeling and thought that continue to dominate in the seemingly secular age.

Given the omnipresence of a nameless religious mentality in the West, Wright, I contend, would claim that Georg Lukacs's famous claim in *The Theory of the Novel*, that "[t]he novel is the epic of a

world that has been abandoned by God,"[112] is not only inaccurate but also reflects an unnuanced understanding of religion. By contrast, what Wright would say specifically about his novel is this: the novel is an epic of a world that has been abandoned by God, but it is also about a world in which a theological orientation towards the world, the political, and the human still dominates. For the world to actually become secular, it would take a lot more than just separating the church and state or valorizing science over religion. What is necessary is a radical purgation of the theological habits of feeling and thought that continue to dominate people at the level of the subconscious. Let me identify and define this theological orientation.

In a conversation with a leading Marxist intellectual, Cross claims "that political power, if it is to perform in the minds and emotions of men the role and efficacy that the idea of God once performed, [then it] must be total and absolute" (p. 489). For Cross and Wright, the real distinction between a theological and a secular worldview is simple: the theological orientation presupposes a mind-independent system of knowledge that God has authored and is therefore legitimate, whereas the secular orientation presupposes that all systems of knowledge are acknowledged as human-constructed and are therefore provisional and deconstructible. When people behave as if their truth system is a metaphysical reality, then they are presupposing a more-than-human Being that has authored the system. Based on this approach, Cross considers Communism just as much a nameless religion as medieval Christianity. Cross starts to realize this when he notes the power and effect that Communist ideology has on both others and himself: "It was not the objective reality of the revolutionary movement that was pulling so magnetically at Cross; it was something that that movement had and did not know it had that was seducing his attention. It was its believing that it *knew* life; its *conviction* that it had mastered the act of living; its *will* that it could define the ends of existence that fascinated him against his volition" (p. 255, Wright's emphasis). In many ways, this passage

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[112] Lukacs (1996), *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Translated by Anna Bostock. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press: 88.

echoes Nietzsche's claim that we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar. The Communists do not acknowledge that they have constructed a provisional system of knowledge to make sense of life and the world. Rather, they believe that they have discovered the secret laws and truths of life itself ("believing that it *knew* life"). It is such an approach to knowledge that continues to re-instate and re-instantiate the Divine, which is why Wright and Cross suggest that, while religion may officially be dead, it is just as alive today as it was in 1455, because people have failed to understand what unconditional honest atheism entails.

Godlessness in a strict sense implies a humble recognition that all systems of truth are human-constructed and, therefore, provisional, limited, and biased. By contrast, theological systems of knowledge presuppose an unbiased, unlimited, and infallible creator and, therefore, those truth systems, which supposedly take their cue from a Divine Author, are correspondingly total and absolute. Based on this model, a political system that claims to be grounded on an inviolable, metaphysical, and absolute foundation would be religious, even if it claimed to be secular. Such is the case with Communism. Reflecting on his emotional response to a Communist such as Gil, Cross indicates the degree to which Communism is based on a religious and therefore totalitarian foundation: "there was an absoluteness about it [his battle with Gil] that appealed to him, excited him. To grapple with Gil would involve a total mobilization of all the resources of his personality, and the conflict would be religious in its intensity" (p. 239). The internally consistent atheist acknowledges that all we have of the world are "our own conceptions of what things are," whereas the believer holds that there is a God-authored way that things are to which humans must submit. Based on this distinction, religion is defined as an emotional orientation rather than an intellectual system of knowledge. Put differently, the believer holds that things are conceptually what they are because God has authored the universe, so believers, to be right with God, must totally and absolutely accept the world as God has authored it. Since Communism presupposes an absoluteness that is only possible in a theocratic universe, it would qualify as religious, which is why Cross characterizes his potential conflict with Gil as "religious in its intensity."

Cross articulates his view of Communism as religion more clearly in a conversation with Mr. Blimin. After telling Blimin that

modern people still believe in magic, Cross references Nietzsche in order to indicate precisely why Communism is so dangerous. Indeed, Cross claims that Lenin derived some of his ideas from Nietzsche: "'Lenin repeatedly chided his comrades for lacking the will-to-power'" (p. 477). The problem with Communism, however, is that it plays the same trick on the masses as religion. Instead of acknowledging that Communism is a human invention, the epistemic construction of intelligent and charismatic people, it uses an idealistic discourse to conceal this fact: "'You [Blimin] use idealistic words as your smoke-screen, but behind that screen you *rule* … It's a question of *power*'" (p. 477, Wright's emphasis). Bear in mind that Nietzsche and Wright do not object to people wielding a will to power over others—both writers would argue that it is naive to think that we could escape the desire for power or avoid others imposing their system of power on us. But they both make a crucial distinction between a closed versus a provisional will to power. The person who wields an absolute will-to-power strategically uses idealistic words in order to conceal from believers that the person's system of knowledge is a human invention calculated to secure power. These people Nietzsche refers to as tyrants who deaden the impulse for life. By contrast, the person who wields a provisional will-to-power over others acknowledges that his or her epistemic construction is an interested product of the will rather than a disinterested product of the intellect. These people, such as Zarathustra, tell others not to accept their way as the Truth, but rather, to go into the world and construct their own "truth." The acknowledgment that the epistemic construction is only a human conception of what things are is a tacit invitation to the other to engage in a process of constructing provisional systems of truth in relation and/or opposition to others.

Put simply, the total will-to-power is religious, whereas the provisional will-to-power is secular. Indeed, Wright suggests that totalitarians practice a "nameless religion" which is primarily "religious in its intensity," because they are either duped into believing that their epistemic construction is a mind-independent reality to which all people must submit or it is their invention that they seek to project as a metaphysical Truth. In either case, it is the believers' *emotional orientation* towards the system of knowledge that determines whether the culture is religious or secular. The tyrant seduces believers into feeling that Truths are

mind-independent, infallible, and absolute. Therefore, they feel that they must submit either to the mind-independent Truth system or the person who has epistemological access to that Truth system. By contrast, unconditional honest atheists recognize that all truth systems are human inventions and, therefore, refuse to accept any truth system as final or absolute. Cross makes this point forcefully in his conversation with Blimin. For Cross, the "real world" is an "unknowable something or other," a fact that most people are unwilling to understand or accept. Therefore, instead of accepting the designified world in all its uncertainty, they, in their fear, use myths and religions to construct truth systems which they, then, impose upon the world as final and absolute: "'The more abjectly frightened the nation or race of men, the more their myths and religions projected out upon the world another world in *front* of the real world, or, in another way of speaking, they projected another world *behind* the real world they saw, lived, suffered, and died in. Until today almost all of man's worlds have been either pre-worlds or back-worlds, *never* the *real* world'" (p. 479, Wright's emphasis). Instead of courageously facing the designified world as it is, rather than becoming disciplined thinkers and artists who construct creative ways of systematizing the world, most people retreat into fear by accepting a totalitarian's metaphysical system of Truth.

If a person becomes a tyrant by projecting into existence an absolute system of Truth and then seducing others into treating that system as inviolable, mind-independent, and total, then a person becomes a slave by accepting the absolute system of Truth. Wright is certainly concerned with the psychology of the tyrant throughout *The Outsider*, but it is really the psychology of the twentieth-century slave that concerns him most, which is clear from his depiction of Menti, the obedient servant who enables the totalitarian state to function and flourish. Cross explicitly claims that Menti symbolizes the mindless masses who make totalitarianism possible: "Cross envied the strength and self-possession which Menti derived from his total submissiveness to the Party; it was the Mentis of this earth that made power possible, that made leadership possible; silent Menti was, enduring, uncomplaining, obscure, humble, dutiful … Without the Mentis of the world, men could not move in concerted action, whether they wished to move to left or right, toward slavery or freedom, toward war or peace…

The millions of obedient Mentis were the foundation of human life, society, mankind" (p. 540). Totalitarians produce seductive systems of absolute knowledge, but these systems can only flourish if there are totally submissive Mentis. In a telling conversation, Cross asks Menti if he belongs to the Party. Menti responds: "'Yes. I've no life except that of the Party. I have no wish, no dream, no will except that of the Party.'" As a man who assumes that all people and systems are limited and flawed, Cross asks Menti what he would do if "'the Party told you to do something you didn't want to do.'" Menti replies: "'That's unthinkable'" (p. 372). For Cross, the real problem plaguing the world is not a system of knowledge such as Communism; it is the emotional orientation towards the system. Menti feels that the Communist Party is the way and the truth and the life, and that there is no other way to fulfillment except through the Party. Therefore, instead of critically interrogating the Party's agenda, he assumes that it is infallible and inerrant—it is "unthinkable" that the Party would ask him to do something he does not want. As soon as Mentis accept, at the emotional level, the system of knowledge as an inerrant truth to which they must submit, the system, they feel, can never be wrong, even if the wielders of the system ask the Mentis to commit a barbaric atrocity.

In essence, the twentieth-century people in the Western streets remain religious, according to Wright, because they still subscribe to a religious epistemology, one that bases knowledge more on the emotions than on the rational intellect ("I state that emotion here precedes the idea, that attitudes select the kind of ideas in question") and one in which "'Modern man still believes in magic; he lives in a rational world but insists on interpreting the events of that world in terms of mystical forces." But they also remain religious because the content of their emotions, which determine their ideas, is primarily religious: the "Western world [...] stubbornly clings to the idea that God Himself has given it the right to rule the 'lesser breed.'" When Wright claims that the Western world believes that it has been ordained by God to rule the "lesser breed," he is not saying that Western political powers have crafted an overtly religious constitution. Rather, he is suggesting that religion functions in the West at a subconscious level within the minds of average citizens and political leaders. As Wright claims when discussing Nazi totalitarianism, what created "*one* solidarity of ideals, *one* continuous circulation of fundamental

beliefs, notions, and assumptions"[113] among the German people was a subconscious system of belief, which is premised on "implicit, almost unconscious, or pre-conscious assumptions and ideals."[114] These assumptions are religious in nature, which is why Wright claims that "The Mid-Twentieth Century finds more active religion on earth than at any time since 1455!"

IV

For Wright, the reason why so many people have failed to realize that the twentieth century is profoundly religious is that they have defined religion in terms of a conscious system of knowledge rather than a subconscious emotional orientation towards knowledge systems. But for both Nietzsche and Wright, it is the subconscious emotional orientation, which short-circuits straight into action, that determines whether a person or a culture is religious or not. Cross's claim to Blimin, which I discussed earlier, should now make much more sense: "since religion is dead, religion is everywhere." Given the separation of church and state, religion no longer wields official authority over the people (hence, secularization is true). But it doesn't have to, because the emotional orientation on which religion depends is just as widespread today as it was in 1455 (hence, secularization is ultimately false). Protestantism, Catholicism, Communism, Fascism—these are all premised on the same religious psychology, for as Cross claims: "Religion's a compulsion, and a compulsion seems to spring from something total in us, catching up in its mighty grip all the other forces of life—sex, intellect, will, physical strength, and carrying them forward." In a conversation with the District Attorney, Houston, about the psychology and motivation of tyrants, Cross sheds additional light on religion as a compulsion when he claims that the modern tyrant "'acts like a god'" (p. 379). Houston agrees, because the idea of god implies intellectual certainty. There is, independent of the human mind, a god-authored truth to which all people must submit. But

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[113] Wright (1998), "How 'Bigger' was Born," in *Native Son*. New York: Perennial Classics: 445. Wright's emphasis.
[114] Wright (1998): 445.

note how Houston indicates that a god-mentality authorizes an epistemology in which feeling precedes knowledge: "'But, above all, this man [the tyrant] must feel that he *knows* what's right'" (p. 379, Wright's emphasis). It is not the actions, but the feeling that one's actions are right that determines whether a person is religious or not, and it is the god-mentality that enables a person to have this feeling of certitude. Since Communists and Fascists feel that what they know and do is right, they are as religious as the novel's priest, whom Cross dislikes: "He [Cross] disliked most strongly all men of religion because he felt that they could take for granted an interpretation of the world that his sense of life made impossible. The priest was secure and walked the earth with a divine mandate" (p. 156). In a truly secular world, this feeling of certainty would not exist, because there would be no god to function as a guarantor of such certainty. Given this logic, since Communists and Fascists act with the same kind of certitude as the priest, they are just as religious as the priest.

For writers such as Nietzsche and Wright, the idea that secularization is underway is based on a simple and naive view of atheism. To explain why this is the case, let me briefly clarify what would constitute a move in the direction of secularization, according to Nietzsche and Wright. First, there would have to be a culture-wide rejection of belief in objective knowledge. For Nietzsche in particular, the valorization of science over religion has done nothing to undermine a theological worldview. Prior to the Enlightenment, religion and faith gave humans epistemological access to metaphysical Truth. During the Enlightenment, science and reason supplanted religion and faith, but the valorization of science and reason did nothing to undermine belief in metaphysical Truths that language could signify, which is why Nietzsche claims: "I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar." For Nietzsche to claim that we are getting rid of God, we would have to significantly alter our relationship with language. Instead of believing that language signifies a metaphysical reality, we would have to treat language as a provisional system of meaning (a necessary fiction) that humans have constructed to make systematic sense of a designified and unsignifiable world. In terms established in Wright's *The Outsider*, getting political leaders (Gil and Blimin) to acknowledge that their discourses are limited human constructions and citizens (the Mentis) to refuse to

treat grammatical constructions as metaphysical truths would be a decisive step in the direction of secularization.

Second, there would have to be a valorization of contingent meaning. One of the unfortunate consequences of living in an early stage of atheism was the illogical turn to nihilism. For instance, according to Lukacs, after "the Christian God began to forsake the world," humanity "was abandoned to its immanent meaninglessness."[115] This was considered the logical consequence of a post-God epistemology and ontology, which is why Lukacs draws the following conclusion: "the objectivity of the novel is the mature man's knowledge that meaning can never quite penetrate reality, but that, without meaning, reality would disintegrate into the nothingness of inessentiality."[116] If the world does not contain inherent and absolute meaning that is stable and immutable, then it is inherently nothing.

Like Lukacs, Nietzsche and Wright recognize that the world cannot possess inherent meaning, because there is no God to authorize it. But they would reject the idea that atheism entails nihilism, the faulty belief that humans are useless passions or meaningless ciphers. To the contrary, Nietzsche and Wright suggest that humans can achieve a new, more noble type of meaning in a godless universe, which is why they consider God's death an occasion for rejoicing. As Nietzsche claims: "The concept 'God' has hitherto been the greatest *objection* to existence … We deny God; in denying God, we deny accountability: only by doing *that* do we redeem the world."[117] In a universe authored by God, humans are held accountable to the world as God created it, which renders them passively redundant. But atheism liberates humans so that they can create a variety of discourses to signify the world. In essence, atheism empowers humans, implicitly granting them the creative license to construct original systems of knowledge about the world. Cross echoes Nietzsche's claims when he tells Eva that Godlessness in a strict sense liberates humans from objects: "'Why let objects master us? Let's take forms, planes, surfaces, colors, volumes, space, etc., and make them express ourselves by our

[115] Lukacs (1996): 103.
[116] Lukacs (1996): 88.
[117] Nietzsche (1989): 65. Nietzsche's emphasis.

arrangement of them. It's an act of pure creation …'" (p. 275). What accounts for Nietzsche's and Wright's enthusiastic response to God's death? The answer is that both have a total disregard for systems of knowledge that valorize the immutable, eternal, and absolute. Instead of measuring contingent systems of knowledge and meaning in relation to some phantom absolute, unconditional honest atheists consider metaphysical systems of meaning to be the seething product of a runaway imagination. Therefore, rather than seeing contingent systems of truth as pale reflections of an eternal and absolute, they assess them only in relation to other contingent systems. Moreover, they suggest that humans derive considerable personal meaning from their construction of such contingent systems of truth and meaning.

Since unconditional honest atheism leads not to despair, but to a radical affirmation of life and the human, Nietzsche and Wright would claim that those who turn to nihilistic despair on discovering that there is no God would be unwitting believers, which is one of the main reasons why so many people have failed to realize that secularization has not really begun. In essence, those "atheists" who claim "that we live in an empty, Godless universe, devoid of purpose,"[118] to quote A. N. Wilson, have fallen into one of the theists' most effective religious traps. To despair because there is no God and therefore no ultimate meaning inherent in things suggests that a person, at an emotional level, is still attached to and determined by the God-concept and its attendant religious mentality. Nietzsche and Wright, I suspect, would claim that Lukacs and Wilson are either atheists in an infant stage of development or closet believers because they believe that a godless universe entails nihilistic despair in which meaning is reduced to "the nothingness of inessentiality." Such a response to the death of God and religion, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, is precisely what believers want people to believe, for this nihilistic response functions as one of the most powerful arguments in favor of God and religion. In other words, nihilistic or despairing versions of secularization are actually believers' inventions, which effectively seduce non-believers into belief. It is because secularization theorists have

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[118] Wilson (1999), *God's Funeral*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company: 25.

had such a simplistic understanding of what constitutes unconditional honest atheism that they have overlooked how religion has functioned most effectively at the level of the subconscious. The ultimate paradox is that the more secular society appears at the level of the conscious and the empirical, the more freedom religion has to function at the level of the subconscious in the realm of the political. To see precisely how this works, let me turn to Forster and Foucault, who formulate sophisticated theories about the way the God-concept functions at the level of the subconscious in the modern polity.

PART TWO

The Theology of the Modernist God State

3

"In-depth Christianization": E. M. Forster and the modernist "religious sense"

I foreground Foucault's work on in-depth Christianization in this chapter in order to expose some of the limitations of those approaches that are currently reworking and reassessing the secularization hypothesis. The first approach holds that the seemingly secular West, whether it recognizes it or not, is very much indebted to religious ways of thinking. Tracy Fessenden develops this approach in *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* by using race theory to demonstrate that a white=Christian=American formulation was the implicit basis of identity in the United States from the time of the Pilgrims. This discourse enabled early Americans to configure minorities, especially Indians, "as the unregenerate Other to the Puritans'

salvific Word."[1] After the United States seemingly underwent a process of secularization, Fessenden argues, the "Protestant discourse of religious otherness [morphed] into a secular discourse of racial otherness,"[2] thus establishing a clear continuity rather than a decisive rupture between America's religious conception of subjectivity and its secular correlative. In *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, & Modernity*, Vincent Pecora focuses on modern philosophy and social theory to demonstrate that Western secularization, instead of having effectively overcome or supplanted religion, is for the most part a sublimation and/or distortion of a theological mindset and sensibility. Therefore, "what we complacently understand as 'secular,'" Pecora argues, "comes with certain historical and religious strings attached."[3] According to this approach, writers with a secular bent might have been indifferent or even hostile to religion, but their "secular" models are rooted in a theological way of thinking nonetheless.

The second approach holds that most post-Enlightenment writers were not very hostile to religion, and as a consequence, their "secular" works, instead of trying to eliminate religion, were merely trying to redefine religion's role within the modern polity. For instance, Pericles Lewis argues that the "sheer abundance of churchgoing scenes in the modernist novel suggests the need to rethink the secularization hypothesis."[4] Within Lewis's framework, what we witness during the modernist period is not Weberian disenchantment, but a shift "of the forces of enchantment from the public forum of churches to the private world of individual experience."[5] Put differently, there was neither hostility towards nor an attempt to eliminate religion among modernists. Rather, there was simply a need and desire to relocate it. As Michael Allen Gillespie claims in *The Theological Origins of Modernity*: "from the very beginning modernity sought not to eliminate religion but to support and

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[1] Fessenden (2007), *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press: 7.
[2] Fessenden (2007): 9.
[3] Pecora (2006), *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, & Modernity*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press: 2.
[4] Lewis (2004), "Churchgoing in the Modern Novel," *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 11, No. 4: 686.
[5] Lewis (2004): 689.

develop a new view of religion and its place in human life, and [...] it did so not out of hostility to religion but in order to sustain certain religious beliefs."[6] More specifically, Gillespie argues that what we actually witness in modernity is "the gradual transference of divine attributes to human beings (an infinite human will), the natural world (universal mechanical causality), social forces (the general will, the hidden hand), and history (the idea of progress, dialectical development, the cunning of reason)."[7] According to this second approach, both philosophical and literary modernists were never that hostile to religion, nor were they trying to eliminate it. Rather, they were merely trying to redefine and relocate it within the society and the mind.

Foucault has a very different approach to the shifts in religion's role in the West, but it is not so much because he deploys an alternative model of secularization but because he has a very different starting point for analysis. In essence, Foucault shifts the focus from secularizationists and their seemingly religion-destroying frameworks to the religious and their updated Christian paradigms. Put differently, rather than treating religion as a passive and stable conceptual system that will slowly but surely be supplanted by secular modernists, Foucault considers it an ever-evolving and ever-adapting system that will remake itself in relation to emerging political and conceptual realities. For Foucault, the idea that Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment theories of knowledge could supersede faith and religion is premised on a superficial understanding of and approach to religion. Indeed, Foucault argues that the Enlightenment, instead of setting into motion a theory of knowledge that would eventually and inevitably supplant religion, actually created the conditions for religion to substantially increase its power over individuals.

In this chapter, I use and expand on Foucault's theory of "in-depth Christianization" in order to clarify not only how but also the degree to which Christianity exerted, at the level of the subconscious, an overwhelming power to shape everyday people's political views and to determine their behavior in the early to mid-twentieth

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[6] Gillespie (2008), *The Theological Origins of Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: xii.
[7] Gillespie (2008): 273.

century. When I say subconscious, I do not mean something that was occurring at a psychological level too profound for anyone to comprehend. Quite the contrary, I mean a strategic agenda, which was crafted by a religiously committed segment of the society, to Christianize people in the West at the level of the subconscious. We see this specific approach to Christianizing the West most clearly in the secret and just recently published writings of the Moot, an organization of prominent intellectuals, including T. S. Eliot, Karl Mannheim, John Middleton Murry, and Christopher Dawson, who met regularly from 1938 until 1947.[8] These papers are extremely valuable, for the members, who would normally be much more judicious and guarded in their public writings, are extremely frank and candid in expressing their views and objectives in these private meetings. The Moot's agenda was to initiate a massive movement to re-Christianize the West. Indeed, J. H. Oldham, a former Scottish missionary and a founder of the group, outlines its ambitious objectives in one of its agenda-setting documents, which is titled: "A Reborn Christianity": "If we are serious in speaking of a re-born Christendom, we can only mean something which, if it were to come to pass, the historian of the future would regard as having comparable historical significance with the new social doctrines and systems which have emerged in our time."[9] The "social doctrines" of their time were Communism and Fascism, and the members of the Moot compared their movement to these two on a regular basis. For members of the Moot, given the separation of church and state in the West, it was no longer possible to deploy or re-establish the traditional Christian model in which the church

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[8] The recent book, *Moot Papers*, consists mainly of the minutes from twenty Moot meetings and are drawn from the papers of J. H. Oldham at the New College Library at Edinburgh University. There are also papers at the Institute of Education's archives at the University of London. These papers belonged to Sir Fred Clarke, who was a member of the Moot. What the new book, *Moot Papers*, does not include are letters, notes, and essays that were circulated to the members before and after the meetings. When referencing the minutes to the meetings, I will use the *Moot Papers* book, but when I reference memos, notes, or essays, I will reference the documents from the University of London's archives. I especially want to thank Becky Webster for all her assistance.

[9] This document is housed in the Institute of Education Archives, University of London. I reference the documents as they are catalogued in the archives. DC/MOO/1-5, File 1, The Order, 1939, document 2, page 2.

would have an equal say with, if not a greater say than, the state in determining the nature and agenda of the Western polity, which is why the Moot made a plea for "a new Christendom," one that would "call into existence a body of people convinced in the depths of their being that the hope of the world lies in the recovery of the Christian heritage, not in the sense of merely going back to the past, but of rediscovering in the central Christian affirmations new sources of spiritual energy to regenerate society."[10]

If Christianity is going to recover its power and authority, it would have to find a new strategy for determining the nature and agenda of the Western polity, and one strategy was to structure the subconscious of the "ordinary man." Oldham formulates one version of this subconscious approach when he articulates what is of ultimate epistemological importance with regard to the Christianization of the West:

> A political faith expressing itself in a definite social philosophy is not the same thing as the political programme of a parliamentary party. What is meant is a body of assumptions, purposes and ways of behavior which are shared by the great majority of the people and are the common foundation of different party programmes and varying intellectual formulations.[11]

Not the conscious and rational declarations of an official document such as a party program, but the unstated assumptions of the people is what really matters, so if the Moot were to "christianise the State and society,"[12] as Eliot defines the objective, then it would have to focus primarily on "the substratum of collective temperament, ways of behaviour and unconscious values."[13] What twentieth-century intellectuals as varied as Eliot (and the Moot) and Forster realize is that clearly formulated agendas in documents such as party programs are really of secondary importance to the unconscious, subconscious, or sub-textual ideologies that determine one's epistemological orientation. Eliot's ideas about Christianizing

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[10] DC/MOO/1-5, File 1, The Order, 1939, document 2, pages 20–1.
[11] DC/MOO/1-5, File 1, The Order, 1939, document 2, page 9.
[12] DC/MOO/56-58, File 8, Eliot Paper, 1941, document 58, page 10.
[13] Eliot (1977), *The Idea of a Christian Society*, in *Christianity and Culture*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company: 14.

the state at the level of the subconscious proved decisive for members of the Moot, but striking is the degree to which Forster suggests that many of the Moot's strategies were already in operation 25 years before its first meeting. Therefore, instead of claiming that Eliot and the Moot were the sole or even primary originators of a comprehensive philosophy to Christianize the state and society at the level of the subconscious, I will argue that it makes more sense to see them as the most articulate spokespeople for a new Christianizing strategy that was taking decisive shape throughout the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, John Robert Seeley, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge and author of the groundbreaking 1883 study *The Expansion of England*, formulated in the nineteenth century a modernist version of the Christian nation state that would become dominant in the first half of the twentieth century.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, it was when Forster wrote his overtly homosexual novel *Maurice* (1913–1914) that he started to reject the traditional secularization hypothesis. Moreover, it was at this time that he started to understand the degree to which a version of in-depth Christianization was at work within the culture, which in part explains Forster's rejection of the secularization hypothesis. Worth noting are the stunning parallels between the themes in Forster's *Maurice* and the ideas in Foucault's 1974–1975 course *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France*. Both works examine the construction of the normal/abnormal in relation to sexuality, interrogate the role in-depth Christianity plays in normativizing discourse about sexuality, and explore how Christianity's normativized discourses ultimately shape the political agenda. It is my contention that Forster's novel intelligently defines one of the new approaches Christians were using to Christianize people, society, and the political, and it was his understanding of the primacy of the subconscious that makes his work so prescient.

I

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries mark, Foucault claims in *Abnormal*, the beginning not of de-Christianization but of a new wave of Christianization. The first manifestation of the new wave

was the Spanish Inquisition, which used physical and legal methods to coerce individuals into belief and/or to expel non-believers from the body politic. One of the many unfortunate consequences of the Inquisition was the violent persecutions of witches. Within Foucault's framework, witchcraft is significant because it allows the Church to wield excessive authority in the realms of the legal and the political. For example, the Christian community defines the witch as a being in league with the devil, and as such, he or she can be legally punished: "Witchcraft is then codified, captured, judged, repressed, burned, and destroyed by the mechanisms of the Inquisition. Witchcraft, then, is caught up within the process of Christianization."[14] In the end, however, the witch symbolizes the failure of the Inquisition and its techniques, for by the seventeenth century, Inquisition methods were exposed as barbaric and uncivilized, thus undermining Church authority while simultaneously strengthening state claims to power.

The failures of Inquisition approaches led sixteenth- and seventeenth-century church leaders to develop more subtle techniques of control, what Foucault refers to as "in-depth Christianization," which explains the rise of confession and spiritual direction during the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. By shifting the locus of authority from the established Church to the individual conscience, it would seem that Reformation Protestants activated the autonomous faculty of reason while they simultaneously liberated individuals from dogmatic and homogenous systems of belief. But what actually occurred was that Protestant churches increased their power by evolving extremely sophisticated techniques of examination and mechanisms of control. Through the "practice of confession-examination of conscience and spiritual direction,"[15] Protestants were able to structure and discipline people into a belief that was considered inevitable and inviolable. For instance, "we see," Foucault argues, "the emergence in English Puritan circles of the practice of permanent autobiography in which each individual recounts his own life to himself and to others, to those close to him and the people of his own community, in order to

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[14] Michel Foucault (2003), *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France: 1974–1975*. New York: Picador: 205.
[15] Foucault (2003): 184.

detect signs of divine election within this life."[16] The Catholic Church, on the other hand, formalized its mechanisms of power and control during the Council of Trent (1545–1563) through its restructuring of penance. As Foucault argues, it was during this time that the Church constructed comprehensive strategies "for the government of souls,"[17] which involved "a concerted technique of analyses, reflected choices, and the continual management of souls, conducts, and finally bodies."[18] In essence, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witness the emergence of an "unlimited analytical discourse and constant surveillance,"[19] which would function to monitor and control behavior and thought in ways hitherto unimagined.

But just as the fifteenth and sixteenth century's new wave of external and legal Christianization (Inquisition) undermined Church authority by leading to the violent persecution of witches, so too did the sixteenth and seventeenth century's new wave of in-depth Christianization (confession and spiritual direction) undermine Church authority by leading to the phenomenon of possession. Possession represents "the installation of a new apparatus of control and power in the Church,"[20] mainly because it "is an internal, rather than an external, effect."[21] Possession differs from witchcraft for two separate reasons. First, witches make a pact with the devil, whereas the devil invades the body of the possessed. On the surface, it would seem that the invasion of the body would make the possessed person more culpable than the witch, who is "bound to the devil by a contract."[22] But the exact opposite is the case. The witch makes a conscious and rational choice to co-operate with the devil in the endless project of evil, which is why "the witch's will is really a juridical type of will."[23] "The possessed," by contrast, "is someone who resists the devil's

[16] Foucault (2003): 184.
[17] Foucault (2003): 177.
[18] Foucault (2003): 184.
[19] Foucault (2003): 202.
[20] Foucault (2003): 204.
[21] Foucault (2003): 205.
[22] Foucault (2003): 208.
[23] Foucault (2003): 209.

power at the very moment she becomes his receptacle,"[24] which is the second reason why possession differs from witchcraft. The witch is evil pure and simple, so the church can legally prosecute and persecute him or her, whereas ambiguity and ambivalence are the distinctive features of possession, so the possessed person is given spiritual direction rather than persecuted. However, given the Church's new techniques of interrogation, surveillance, and control, the possessed body is pushed beyond its capacity, which leads to the phenomenon of convulsion. Indeed, Foucault claims that convulsive flesh is the logical product of developments within Christianity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for "the convulsive flesh appears as the endpoint, the abutment of the new investment of the body established by the government of souls after the Council of Trent. The convulsive flesh is the body penetrated by the right of examination and subject to the obligation of exhaustive confession and the body that bristles against this right and against this obligation."[25]

The convulsive flesh posed a major problem for the Church. On the one hand, the Church wanted to "maintain and develop the technologies for the government of souls and bodies that were established by the Council of Trent." But on the other hand, it wanted to avoid "being caught in the trap of convulsions."[26] Therefore, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Church started to distance itself from the convulsion by dubbing it a medical rather than a religious condition. At the same time, it had to use the techniques of spiritual direction and control that it established in the sixteenth century to channel individual spirituality into a more positive and productive direction, which it did, especially in the nineteenth century, through the vision. Hence, "nineteenth-century Christianization" displaces the convulsion by promoting "the vision, which is no longer the vision of the devil." In other words, "the visions of the nineteenth century [...] absolutely exclude physical struggle,"[27] which was necessary in order to minimize the possibility of convulsion.

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[24] Foucault (2003): 207.
[25] Foucault (2003): 213.
[26] Foucault (2003): 217.
[27] Foucault (2003): 225.

Foucault's characterization of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Christianization is suggestive, but sketchy and underdeveloped at best. However, his work on in-depth Christianization can be used to illuminate major cultural and political developments of the early twentieth century, and in this chapter and the next I use the works of Forster, Erdrich, Walker, and Mamet to expand on Foucault's project. Specifically, I examine in this chapter the form in-depth Christianization assumes within specific characters ("ordinary men"), while in the next chapter I focus on the way in-depth Christianization functions in relation to the sacred imagined nation.

II

To claim that Forster portrays in-depth Christianization in *Maurice* is problematic, mainly because readers are given so little information about the workings of the Christians' inner life or their communities. While the novel opens with Mr. Ducie's Christian affirmation of heterosexual ideals and concludes with Mr. Borenius's Christian denunciations of sexual irregularities, there is no extensive or systematic representation of the novel's Christians coordinating their efforts to convert the individual or to determine the political. And yet, given that in-depth Christianization functions most effectively at the level of the subconscious, it would be a mistake for Forster to picture Christianity as an openly defined strategy or system, for in-depth Christianization must, per definition, function at a level that is inaccessible to the conscious and rational intellect in order to be effective. But Forster must also give readers enough information to discover the role Christianity plays behind the scenes or under the surface in structuring social forms and determining the political agenda. The aesthetic dilemma of portraying in-depth Christianization is formidable.

That Forster is concerned with the conspiratorial in *Maurice* is clear from his characterization of the Cambridge dons, who suspect undergraduates of improprieties, such as class miscegenation and/or homosexual love. In the case of Clive and Maurice, there is good reason to be concerned. Weary of Cambridge, the two decide to go on a picnic, where they experience a sexually

charged but Platonic form of intimacy. The Dean, Mr. Cornwallis, suspects something happened, which leads him to expel Maurice. On the surface, Mr. Cornwallis sends Maurice down for cutting chapel, lectures, and hall and disregarding an order to stop when the Dean saw him departing the college, but what really motivates Cornwallis's behavior is the "unnatural" relationship between Maurice and Clive: "A good thing he [Clive] would no longer be distracted by [Maurice] Hall. Mr Cornwallis always suspected such friendships. It was not natural that men of different characters and tastes should be intimate, and although undergraduates, unlike schoolboys, are officially normal, the dons exercised a certain amount of watchfulness, and felt it right to spoil a love affair when they could."[28] There are two separate shifts in this passage worth noting. Initially, Cornwallis is concerned about Maurice's influence on Clive, which justifies the expulsion of Maurice. But by the end of the passage, Cornwallis's real motivation becomes clear: he wants to destroy what he perceives as an illicit "love affair." The second shift relates to the dons. At the beginning of the passage, it appears that the decision to send Maurice down is ultimately Corwallis's ("Cornwallis always suspected such friendships"). But by the end of the passage, it is clear that it is the dons, and not just Cornwallis, who have cultivated surveillance techniques to identify sexual improprieties ("the dons exercised a certain amount of watchfulness") and formulated specific strategies ("to spoil a love affair when they could") to prohibit "unnatural" relationships.

If the dons' actions were the only example in the novel of a coordinated effort to monitor and control human behavior, it would be difficult to draw a larger conclusion about a society-wide conspiracy. But Forster begins and ends the novel with characters who strategically work with others to structure certain habits of mind and determine human action. For instance, the novel opens with Mr. Ducie, who suspects, we can infer, the 14-year-old Maurice of having homosexual tendencies. Ducie does not explicitly claim that Maurice is a homosexual. Rather, in a conversation with the junior assistant, Mr. Read, he touches "on a certain [but unspecified] theme" (p. 10). Read disapproves of Ducie's intrusive behavior, but

[28] Forster (1971), *Maurice*. New York: W. W. Norton: 79–80. Hereafter cited in text.

he and the Principal ultimately defer to the senior assistant when the three masters take their charges out for a walk. Even though it is inconvenient for only two masters to watch all the boys and even though the Principal has already had a "'good talk'" with Maurice, the two masters allow Ducie to have alone time with Maurice. It is at this point that the reader can deduce the nature of Ducie's suspicions, for during the walk, Ducie waxes rhapsodic about the glories of heterosexual love: "He spoke of male and female, created by God in the beginning in order that the earth might be peopled, and of the period when the male and female receive their powers" (p. 13). Evidently, Ducie suspects Maurice of homosexual desire, which is why he feels compelled to use his position of authority to indoctrinate Maurice with heterosexuality, and the two other masters ultimately work together with Ducie by ensuring that he is free to indoctrinate Maurice.

The coordinated efforts of Ducie (and the masters) and Cornwallis (and the dons) merely anticipate those of the rector of Clive's village church, Mr. Borenius. As a clergyman, Borenius does exactly what he is supposed to do—proclaim the teachings of the Church and baptize people into the faith. But what is significant with regard to the conspiracy theme in the novel is the role Clive's wife plays within this drama. Borenius targets the servants in Clive's home, so he knows who is confirmed and who is not. Or so it seems. After discovering that three servants, including Maurice's lover Alec, had not been confirmed, Borenius confronts Clive's wife, claiming that he thought all the "'servants had been confirmed.'" Given Mrs. Durham's response, it is clear that she has been working with Borenius: "'I thought so, Mr Borenius, I did think so'" (p. 188). The clergyman and the household mistress work together to ensure that the servants ultimately accept the faith. But Borenius is particularly concerned about Maurice's newfound lover, Alec, who is planning to sail to Buenos Aires to start a new life. Borenius fears that there is not enough time to prepare Alec to enter the church. However, to underscore the degree to which the conspiracy is global in scope, Forster indicates that Borenius has connections in Argentina who can carry on his work. So on the day Alec is supposed to leave, Borenius meets him at the ship in order "'to bring him a letter of introduction to an Anglican priest at Buenos Aires in the hope that he will get confirmed after landing'" (p. 236). In essence, Forster is suggesting that there exists, behind the visible scenes in the novel,

a conspiratorial group that works together to monitor and control human behavior. Within the novel, this group targets schoolboys, undergraduates, and servants, and is active in the schools, the home, and abroad.

Significantly, the conspiratorial group in *Maurice* is Christian in nature and anticipates the Moot. Taking their cue in some measure from Jacques Maritain's work, members of the Moot debated whether they should "advocate active revolution […] or engage in a more subtle and conspiratorial indoctrination."[29] Kenneth Asher's usage of the word "conspiratorial" is not his pejorative interpretation, for "one of the original names proposed for the group was 'The Christian Conspiracy,'"[30] and as one of the members says at a 1941 Moot meeting, "he had always been conscious in the Moot of a tendency to turn a Christian group into a political conspiracy."[31] Composed mainly of university professors and prominent intellectuals, the Moot targeted "the ordinary man." For instance, a confidential July 5, 1940 document titled "THE COUNCIL ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE COMMON LIFE: THE SPIRITUAL FRONT" lists proposals for instituting a Christian organization of society, and in a subsection with the heading, "EDUCATION AND PROPAGANDA," point 25 stipulates: "The starting point in the educational process must be not the abstract formulation but a point in the life and experience of the ordinary man in the variety of his occupations and interests."[32] Central to the group's agenda is "the progressive permeation of all particular social activities with the Christian conception of the purposes of life," "to permeate the national mind with a new spirit,"[33] and the best way to achieve its objective is to convert the "ordinary man in the variety of his occupations and interests." Since so many of the members of the Moot were professors (at schools such as Edinburgh University, Winchester College, Cambridge University, Manchester University, University of London, Glasgow

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[29] Asher (1998), *T. S. Eliot and Ideology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 85.

[30] Asher (1998): 85.

[31] *The Moot Papers: Faith, Freedom and Society: 1938–1947*, Ed. Keith Clements. London: T&T Clark, 2010: 373.

[32] DC/MOO/26-29, File 5, July 1940, document 26, page 4.

[33] DC/MOO/1-5, File 1, The Order, 1939, document 2, pages 24, 25.

University, and Reading University), they formulate a strategy of Christianizing the ordinary man through the colleges and universities, which certainly sheds some light on the experiences of Clive and Maurice. This is made most clear in a "*strictly confidential*" document that lists ten principles for converting the ordinary man. Principle eight reads: "The permeation of the educational system with a positive social philosophy embodying the Christian values." Principle nine reads: "Active measures to secure that new forms of community education and the education of youth are leavened with Christian values and that place be found in connection with them for specific Christian teaching."[34] Note the language here. Students will not be told that they are being taught Christian values. Rather, the objective is to imbue everything with Christianity without explicitly stating that the students are being Christianized.

It would seem that well regarded educators would have some serious reservations about using schools and/or universities to indoctrinate students with "Christian values," but there are two reasons why Moot members felt that their approach was justified. First, given the success of Communism and Fascism in Europe, Moot members felt that the coercive approaches of totalitarian states were some of the best ways to achieve their desired political end. For instance, at the first meeting, Adolf Löwe, lecturer in economics and sociology at Manchester University and author of *Has Freedom a Future?*, introduces the idea of "a Christian dictatorship," which would be "based on the values and ideals of true Christian tradition,"[35] in order to establish a just body politic. Christopher Dawson, author of *Religion and Culture* and eventually a professor of Catholic Studies at Harvard, concurs with Löwe by claiming that "the solution ultimately is a totalitarian Christian order," but he goes on to claim that such an order "would be the Kingdom of God."[36] John Baillie, professor of Divinity at Edinburgh University and author of *The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity*, finds the idea of a totalitarian Christian order fascinating, for he believes that "there might be nothing unchristian in totalitarianism so long as it was an expression of Christian

[34] DC/MOO/26-29, File 5, July 1940, document 27, page 2, principles 8 and 9.
[35] *Moot* (2010): 52.
[36] *Moot* (2010): 52.

spirit."[37] Since the Western polity is crumbling and since people no longer take Christianity as an axiomatic given, the best policy might be the imposition of a Christian totalitarian state.

The second and more important reason to justify indoctrinating students is their conviction regarding the fallen condition of humanity. In their prelapsarian condition, humans not only have access to but can also live according to the "Absolute Law" of God. But after "the Fall, not only was his [man's] natural being disordered, but the supernatural state was lost,"[38] as Ruth Kenyon, a high church Anglican Socialist, argues in her paper, "The Idea of the Natural Law," which was discussed at the twelfth Moot meeting (April 1–3, 1941). According to Kenyon, in a prelapsarian world, there was "no *dominium* or coercive element; no coercive State."[39] But given humanity's "disordered" condition "relative to the Fall," there is a need for a Christian state that "admits a coercive element."[40] While Kenyon does not specify the kind of coercive action she has in mind, Eliot argues in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, a book that consists of lectures delivered at Cambridge in March 1939 and is heavily indebted to ideas formulated in Moot meetings, that what is needed is the subtle coercion at the level "unconscious" rather than the totalitarian approach of imposing "by force upon its people."[41]

Deriving much from Mannheim's extensive work on ideology and the unconscious as articulated in the 1929 book, *Ideology and Utopia*, Moot members understand that, if Christianity is going to recover its status and power in the twentieth century, it has to target "the unconscious or underground level of mental life, which underlies and governs the conscious or rational level."[42] Therefore, when formulating strategies for converting the ordinary man to the faith, the group recognizes the primacy of the unconscious. As Eliot claims during a brainstorming session, "we should not aim at finding a happy formula to which all could agree, but rather at getting below the surface at which everything is unconsciously or

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[37] *Moot* (2010): 57.
[38] DC/MOO/59-65, File 9, June–July 194, document 64, page 4.
[39] DC/MOO/59-65, File 9, June–July 194, document 64, page 2.
[40] DC/MOO/59-65, File 9, June–July 194, document 64, page 2.
[41] Eliot (1977): 14.
[42] *Moot* (2010): 531.

potentially Christian."[43] Gilbert Shaw, an Anglican priest, is even more direct when he mentions the necessity of understanding "the unconscious element in social control."[44] In essence, the group realizes that targeting the unconscious assumptions of ordinary men will yield more results than conscious or rational arguments, which is why H. H. Farmer, professor of systematic theology at Cambridge, encourages the group to examine not just the ordinary man but "the conditions which produce the kind of categories in which normal people now think."[45]

While it might seem that the Moot originated this extremely subtle Christianizing approach, it is more likely that Eliot strategically guided the group towards it, for he had formulated such a conspiratorial strategy to Christianize the culture as early as 1935 in his essay, "Religion and Literature," when he articulates the limitations of G. K. Chesterton's fiction.[46] Eliot admires and respects Chesterton's novels, but he ultimately rejects Chesterton's Christianization approach. To have an impact on the reader, Eliot calls for "a literature which should be *un*consciously, rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian."[47] Eliot would refine this unconscious approach to Christianization by adopting Maritain's neo-Thomist approach, which uses Natural Law philosophy as an instrument for converting people to Christianity whether they know it or not.[48]

But what would become a formally defined method of "*un*consciously" Christianizing the culture for some members of the Moot

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[43] *Moot* (2010): 113.
[44] *Moot* (2010): 564.
[45] *Moot* (2010): 44.
[46] In *The Moot Papers*, Clements notes that Eliot was part of the Christendom Group, which came into being in 1923 and had many members who would eventually become members of the Moot. It is possible that Eliot introduced into the Moot ideas that had already been formulated in the Christendom Group.
[47] Eliot (1945), *Essays Ancient and Modern*. London: Faber and Faber: 346. Eliot's emphasis.
[48] There might be some confusion about the shift in terms from subconscious to unconscious. Based on the usage of the terms, it appears that there is no discernible difference between Forster's subconscious short-circuiting into action and Eliot's unconscious Christianization. Here is my method in this book: I will remain faithful to the author's terminology, so if the author I am discussing uses the word unconscious, than I will use the word unconscious. But it should be noted that I treat the words unconscious and subconscious as interchangeable, unless otherwise noted.

is already operating in Forster's *Maurice*. Forster goes out of his way to underscore the subtle role Christianity plays in the novel. For instance, when describing Maurice's upbringing, the narrator notes that the Hall family almost left their villa just outside London when a church was built nearby. But instead of leaving, the family "became accustomed to it [the church], as to everything, and even found it a convenience" (p. 16). Church proximity ultimately impacts Maurice, which becomes clear only a few pages later, when he has a momentous dream about a future friend. The friend is Maurice's unidentified male lover, either Clive or Alec. But at this point in the novel, he interprets the friend as Christ, for after "he was confirmed," he "tried to persuade himself that the friend must be Christ" (p. 22). Maurice does not feel an attachment to Christ; rather, he feels that he should be attached to Christ, which is why he tries to persuade himself. In other words, Maurice "became accustomed" to Christ and found him to be a convenient friend in exactly the same way his family responded to the church. The suggestion is that the church has developed an effective strategy for habituating people who are not particularly sympathetic to the church ("They nearly left when the church was built") into the faith.

Clive, who fashions himself a Hellenist and explicitly rejects Christianity, specifically takes note of the way Christians use subtle methods in order to manipulate people into belief. After telling his family that he is no longer Christian, Clive refuses to take Holy Communion. But his mother pressures him by saying that his refusal would damage the family's reputation. When this tactic fails, she resorts to a subtle rhetorical strategy, which Clive denounces in a conversation with Maurice: "'She said I was wicked. I could have honoured her if she had said that six months before, but now! now to drag in holy words like wickedness and goodness in order to make me do what I disbelieved'"(p. 43). Religious discourse ("holy words") is calculated to enforce action ("to make me do"), action that conforms to the community's notions of appropriate and righteous behavior. Failure to conform is dubbed "wicked," which implies that conforming to the norm is "goodness."

Clive's comment about the subtle but coercive function of religious discourse is one of the most important ideas in *Maurice*, primarily because it enables Forster to expose the degree to which modernist society, instead of being secularized, is actually grounded

in theology. We see this most clearly when Maurice seeks advice from his neighbor, Dr. Barry. After Maurice confesses that he is "'an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort,'" Barry says: "'never let that evil hallucination, that temptation from the devil, occur to you again.'" Immediately after Barry's admonition, the narrator, using free indirect discourse, interjects: "The voice [of Dr. Barry] impressed him [Maurice], and was not Science speaking?" (p. 159). Having Barry the doctor use religious discourse ("evil hallucination" and "temptation from the devil") to characterize Maurice's condition underscores the degree to which religion predetermines Barry's "scientific" outlook ("was not Science speaking"), and since Forster has Clive call our attention to the coercive function of religious discourse ("holy words") earlier in the novel, it is clear that Forster wants his reader to note the significance of Barry's choice of words. Put simply, the irony that science is speaking about the devil and evil is too flagrant to overlook, which is why Forster's characterization of religion in relation to science implicitly challenges the dominant view. Traditional secularization theory holds that science supersedes and supplants religion, and for twentieth- and twenty-first-century theorists as varied as Adorno, Horkheimer, Habermas, Bruce, and Taylor, the process of secularization is well underway. But what Forster suggests in *Maurice* is that science, instead of replacing religion, actually rests on a theological foundation, a central idea in Nietzsche's work, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 2.

In addition to exposing the degree to which science is grounded in theology, Forster uses his portrayal of Barry to counter the view that modernist society has been secularized. For instance, the narrator, when describing Barry's response to Maurice, explicitly indicates that religion dominates the society: "Averse to it [homosexuality] by temperament, he endorsed the verdict of society gladly; that is to say, his verdict was theological" (p. 160). Barry's scientific view of homosexuality merely confirms "the verdict of society." But society's verdict is "theological," which means that Barry's scientific view is premised on theology. By drawing a clear line of connection between Dr. Barry and the theologized society, Forster's narrator suggests that science and theology work in tandem with regard to social issues, both disciplines mutually reinforcing each other's conclusions. Therefore, rather than treating science and religion in the modern age as irreconcilable disciplines, which is the standard

view among traditional secularization theorists, Forster sees them as interdependent entities, which work together in shaping society's views about social issues, such as homosexuality.

This view of theology in relation to science begs the question: what is Forster's conception of theology? To answer this question, I want to briefly discuss Graham Greene's scathing condemnation of Forster's works. As a Christian writer, Greene had a specific religious agenda, but more importantly, he had a particularly uncharitable (and inaccurate) view of atheist writers, which he discloses most clearly in his essay "François Mauriac." According to Greene, the death of Henry James had tragic and disastrous consequences, "[f]or with the death of James the religious sense was lost to the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act." We see the deadly consequences of the loss of the religious sense in "the characters of such distinguished writers as Mrs Virginia Woolf and Mr E. M. Forster," who wander "like cardboard symbols through a world that was paper-thin." For Greene, human action can only have meaning and value if it exists in relation to an ultimate world of absolute meaning. This meaning derives from God, who guarantees the existence of a more-than-human perspective and a two-layered realm of value. To bring into sharp focus the hollowness of Woolf's and Forster's works, Greene compares them to Trollope's "materialistic" novels, in which readers "are aware of another world against which the actions of the characters are thrown into relief." Trollope's characters exist not only in relation to other humans "but also in a God's eye." This is significant, because the human world, on its own, is ultimately meaningless. Greene makes this point clearly and emphatically by positing a two-tiered realm of meaning in which a character's "unimportance in the world of the senses is only matched by his enormous importance in another world." [49] The implication of Greene's position is this: the moment "the religious sense" is lost, humans can no longer have Value or Meaning, because existence "in the world of the senses" is ultimately unimportant and insignificant, which is why Forster's and Woolf's a-religious characters are ultimately "cardboard symbols" and their worlds are "paper-thin."

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[49] Greene (1969), *Collected Essays*. New York: Viking Press: 115.

Greene is both right and wrong in his interpretation of Woolf and Forster. He is right in that Woolf and Forster are unconditional honest atheists, who dispense with God, a God's eye perspective, and a realm of ultimate Meaning and Value. But he is wrong to assume that "the world of the senses" is meaningless or unimportant. In fact, writers as varied as Michael Bakunin, Nietzsche, Woolf, Forster, Joyce, Lawrence, Wright, and Kundera aggressively and diligently expose the assumption of a two-tiered realm of meaning as misguided and even destructive. Their objectives are to expose the other world as a phantom ideal that ultimately leads people to form an unhealthy and destructive relationship with the material world and to valorize the material world as potentially meaningful and valuable in its own right. But within the context of *Maurice*, Forster indicates that Greene's theological model dominates society, and this model is precisely what is doing irreparable damage to people such as Clive and Maurice. At this point, let me be absolutely clear about the nature of this theological model. People would be religious (have the "religious sense") if they *consciously* or *subconsciously believed* and, therefore, *felt* that 1) events or characters in the world of the senses are meaningless in themselves, 2) there exists a world above and beyond the material world, 3) a Being in this other world has an authoritative perspective ("in a God's eye"), and 4) this other world has ultimate Meaning and Value. While Greene is right to claim that Woolf and Forster rejected the "religious sense" as defined above, he is wrong to suggest that the two did not address the "religious sense" in their novels. Greene, of course, could not have read *Maurice* when he wrote his 1945 essay on Mauriac, since the novel was not published until 1971. But, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, it was exactly the "religious sense" as Greene defines it that Forster pictures as destructive for people and the political. Moreover, Forster suggests that this "religious sense" continues to dominate modern society.

In the first couple years of their relationship, Maurice and Clive settle into an intimate though Platonic routine, which was calculated to enhance an ideal form of spiritual love. However, the narrator strikes an ominous tone by suggesting that, while "[s]ociety received them, as she receives thousands like them," there is a mechanism behind society that would ultimately destroy their relationship: "Behind society slumbered the Law" (p. 99). The upper-case Law, as it functions in *Maurice*, is a Divine Ideal,

departure from which institutes the perverse and the unnatural, the criminal and the illegal, the degenerate and the abnormal. For Forster, this Law does not exist; like Nietzsche, Forster is an unconditional honest atheist, who holds that life is not an argument waiting to be decoded. As I argued in Chapter 2, this does not mean that humans should not construct arguments about life and the world. It just means that the arguments that humans formulate about life and the world are provisional and limited constructions rather than immutable and absolute revelations. But in *Maurice*, the Christian conspirators can control human behavior most effectively by indoctrinating people with a belief that the sacred imagined Law is an ontological and, therefore, Natural Law of Being—their objective, like Greene's, is to make people feel and/or believe that the Divine Law exists and has absolute authority over the world of the senses.

Borenius discloses the theological view that animates the thoughts and actions of Ducie, Cornwallis, and Barry most clearly when he explains to Maurice why he has taken such an active interest in Alec: "'being neither a hellenist nor an atheist I hold that conduct is dependent on faith, and that if a man is a 'bit of a swine' the cause is to be found in some misapprehension of God. Where there is heresy, immorality will sooner or later ensue'" (p. 236). More-than-animal action is that which conforms to the Law of God, so if humans have a "misapprehension of God," they are likely to behave as less than human ("'bit of a swine'"). Foucault's work on in-depth Christianization sheds considerable light on Borenius's long-term strategy. From the Council of Trent onward, the Churches (Catholic and Protestant) have been formulating extremely sophisticated techniques for monitoring human behavior and thereby prohibiting godless immorality. But it was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that "a technique of normalization,"[50] "the emergence of the power of normalization,"[51] would become the Church's most effective method for winning converts to the faith and controlling human behavior. In *Abnormal*, Foucault does not spend much time discussing the way in-depth Christianization functions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rather, he

[50] Foucault (2003): 25.
[51] Foucault (2003): 26.

shifts the focus to "a psychologico-moral point of view."[52] But what Forster suggests in *Maurice* is that twentieth-century science and psychology take their moral cue of normalcy from the Law of God, which is why the verdict of modern society is ultimately dubbed theological. Note the logic of Borenius's claim that "[w]here there is heresy, immorality will sooner or later ensue." Of ultimate importance are the edicts of the intellect. If a person has a proper concept of the Law of God, then his or her actions would follow suit, which would qualify them as normal and moral. By contrast, if a person has a faulty concept of the Law of God ("heresy"), then his or her actions would follow suit, which would qualify them as abnormal and immoral ("immorality will sooner or later ensue"). Therefore, to Christianize the state and society, it is imperative that the churches identify, define, and dictate what is Natural and Normal, the Law of God, and once the larger public accepts this Law, it will be naturally predisposed to accept the full Revelation of Christ. Indeed, Borenius suggests that identifying, criminalizing, and punishing abnormal and hence immoral behavior is a logical and necessary step for the churches to regain overt control over the country: "until all sexual irregularities and not some of them are penal the Church will never reconquer England" (p. 237). By instituting the Natural, the Normal, and the Law of God, England is en route to re-establishing a modern theocracy.

My focus in this chapter is on the first half of the twentieth century, when prominent and influential Christians were beginning to understand how to manipulate the subconscious and the unconscious in order to Christianize society, but it was in the mid- to late nineteenth century that John Robert Seeley formulated a Christianization model that would prove decisive for the modernist God states of the early twentieth century. In 1883, Seeley published *The Expansion of England*, which was initially delivered as two lectures in 1881 and 1882. As John Gross rightly notes of *Expansion*, "[f]ew works of the same unmistakably academic stamp can ever have created so immediate a stir—and in the highest circles, too."[53] Less known is that "it was as a Christian thinker

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[52] Foucault (2003): 18.

[53] Gross (1971), "Introduction," in *The Expansion of England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: xi.

rather than as a practicing historian that Seeley was recommended by [Prime Minister William] Gladstone for the Cambridge chair in 1869."[54] This is a significant detail, for as R. T. Shannon claims, the historian in the nineteenth century performed a sacred duty for the British Empire: "since history is to be made into the scriptures of the National Bible, historians, as a profession, become a species of State priesthood." Within this political framework, one's Christian orientation mattered more than one's academic credentials, and it was on this basis that Seeley was appointed to such a prestigious post: "Gladstone, impressed by Seeley's clear-sightedly Christian conception of what the teaching of history was about (and disregarding the fact that Seeley had published no history except a couple of articles on Rome), had made him one of the two academic heads of the historical profession in England."[55]

The work that secured Seeley's reputation as a significant and legitimate Christian thinker was *Ecce Homo* (1865). This book is important because it details the form Seeley believes Christianity should assume within the context of what he refers to as "the Universal Christian Republic."[56] According to Seeley, the emergence of Christianity symbolizes the beginning of a new politics, for "Christ did undertake to found and to legislate for a new theocratic society."[57] What "the establishment of the new Theocracy"[58] entails is a shift from an externally imposed order and law to an internally generated passion for an "everlasting state."[59] In other words, the citizens of the new theocracy, instead of passively submitting to God's mandates and laws as dictated by the church and its leaders, have become divine legislators in their own right, which makes the Christian of the new theocracy a more active creator of the modern polity than the passive subject of the ancient theocracy:

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[54] Gross (1971): xviii–xix.

[55] Shannon (1967), "John Robert Seeley and the Idea of a National Church," in Robert Robson ed. *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain: Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark*. New York: Barnes & Noble: 247.

[56] Seeley (1907), *Ecce Homo: A Survey of the Life & Work of Jesus Christ*. London: J. M. Dent & Company: 233.

[57] Seeley (1907): 49.

[58] Seeley (1907): 61.

[59] Seeley (1907): 44.

> it has been already shown that Christ raised the feeling of humanity from being a feeble restraining power to be an inspiring passion. The Christian moral reformation may indeed be summed up in this—humanity changed from a restraint to a motive. We shall be prepared therefore to find that while earlier moralities had dealt chiefly in prohibitions, Christianity deals in positive commands.[60]

Within this Christian framework, "[t]he Christian law is the spirit of Christ, that Enthusiasm of Humanity which he declared to be the source from which all right action flows. What it dictates, and that alone, is law for the Christian."[61] Without positive passion, the new theocracy could not come into being, for "the Christian Republic scarcely exists apart from the Enthusiasm which animates it."[62]

Fortunately for England, it is in a privileged position for instituting a universal Christian republic, because it already has in place a distinctly Christian conception of the self and the political:

> This moral sensitiveness, this absolute harmony of inward desire with outward obligation, was called by Christ and his Apostles by a name of which *holiness* is the recognized English equivalent, and it is attributed to the presence of a Divine Spirit within the soul. It is the absolute and ultimate test of true membership in the Christian Commonwealth.[63]

In essence, the shift from an external theocracy, in which the church dictated to either the communicants or the state, to an internal theocracy, in which the people act in accord with the "spirit of Christ" was already underway in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Readers of *The Expansion of England* might be a bit surprised by the nature of Seeley's views regarding religion, for there are very few references to Christianity in the 1883 text. And yet, what

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[60] Seeley (1907): 201.
[61] Seeley (1907): 218.
[62] Seeley (1907): 242.
[63] Seeley (1907): 344. Seeley's emphasis.

Seeley says in *The Expansion of England* indicates that there was virtually no change in his position from the days when he wrote *Ecce Homo*. In *The Expansion*, Seeley claims that "religion seems to me to be the strongest and most important of all the elements which go to constitute nationality"[64] and that "[i]n Europe a great fusion took place by means of the Christian Church, which fusion has throughout modern history been growing more and more complete."[65] But what is most significant for the argument I am developing in this chapter is Seeley's suggestion about the necessity of religion for the formation of a lasting and legitimate state: "For I always hold that religion is the great state-building principle." This is the case because "the church, so at least I hold, is the soul of the state; where there is a church a state grows up in time; but if you find a state which is not also in some sense a church, you find a state which is not long for this world."[66] The church is not an external body that dictates to another external body such as the state. Rather, the modern church is embedded within the concept of the state as its soul. According to the logic of this model, the state is mere matter, while the church is the animating principle (the "Christian law [which] is the spirit of Christ") of the "everlasting state." Without the animating "spirit of Christ," the state would be a soulless mechanism. This is clearly an early version of Eliot's claim that "[t]he task of the Church is to christianise the State and society, not to take over any of the functions either of the State or of private groups and foundations."[67] In the modern age, the most effective way for Christians to determine the nature and agenda of the state is to take epistemic control of the state by defining it, by embedding itself as the Christian soul within the state's secular body, thus establishing itself as the core structure of the state's meaning.

Instead of interpreting Seeley's work as an accurate depiction of the way things are, it would probably make more sense to see it as a discursive system that brings into existence the "reality" that it names. Stated more concretely, Seeley significantly contributes

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[64] Seeley (1971), *The Expansion of England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 178.
[65] Seeley (1971): 220.
[66] Seeley (1971): 123.
[67] DC/MOO/56-58, File 8, Eliot Paper, 1941, document 58, page 10.

to the development of in-depth Christianization by defining it as an intrinsic feature of an individual's personal, communal, and political identity. As Seeley claims in *Ecce Homo*, Christ is "the Legislator of a world-wide society,"[68] which imposes a specific demand on citizens: "Christ's society resembles other political societies in requiring from its members a disinterested devotion and patriotism."[69] Question, challenge, or oppose the everlasting state, and you are—implicitly, subconsciously—setting yourself against Christ the Legislator, who exists as the soul of the Christian state. Such is the logic implicit in Seeley's modern theocracy.

Eliot and the Moot adopted a similar view of the modern theocracy, but they had a much more sophisticated understanding of Natural Law philosophy and theories of the subconscious, which enabled them to do more sophisticated work as Christian social engineers. Let me briefly indicate how the Moot made use of the Natural Law in order to bring into existence a modernist God state. Described as "Private and Confidential to Members of the Moot,"[70] the minutes from a 1940 meeting record a discussion about the difficulties of using Divine Revelation versus Natural Law to convert people and the society more generally to Christianity. Eliot claims that Natural Law is "only of practical use in a mixed society of Christians and non-Christians."[71] To persuade non-Christians to be Christian, it is best to use Natural Law arguments. Oldham affirms Eliot's position by saying that the "only Natural Law we believed in was that illuminated by the Christian revelation,"[72] which is why Oldham agrees that it could be used to good effect with non-Christians: "If faith were true then you could rely on its inherent truth to enlist support of those who did not accept the creedal basis."[73] However, Oldham ultimately believes that the Moot should avoid using the Natural Law approach because it would distract people from its source, which is Divine Revelation. Sir Fred Clarke, Director of the Institute of Education at the University of London, takes issue with Oldham by questioning his

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[68] Seeley (1907): 44.
[69] Seeley (1907): 139.
[70] *Moot* (2010): 315.
[71] *Moot* (2010): 332.
[72] *Moot* (2010): 335.
[73] *Moot* (2010): 335–6.

"sharp distinction" between Divine Revelation and Natural Law: "Christian Revelation revealed the full range of natural axioms,—what might be termed 'embryonic values.'"[74] But in response, Oldham qualifies his objection by saying that Natural Law is a limited reflection of Divine Revelation, while "the Christian ground was a total conception of life illuminated by Christian revelation."[75]

Significant is that Herbert Arthur Hodges, philosophy professor at the University of Reading, Mannheim, and Eliot shift the conversation back to the issue of Natural Law in relation to non-Christians. Hodges notes that "many people believe" the truths of Christianity "without being Christians." For example, Hodges mentions "Kant and others [who] have believed in the norms on other grounds [than Divine Revelation] and to reach them the Christian premiss had to be tactically suppressed." Mannheim agrees with Hodges, claiming that "the origin of Natural Law was precisely this—that Christians had to live with pagans, and the direct appeal to Revelation was useless. Natural Law was a supplement." But Eliot makes an important qualification that would prove decisive for the Moot's Christianizing approach. According to Eliot, "Hodges' statement was a correct view of Natural Law, as opposed to Kant who maintained a view which made Natural Law a thing which non-Christians had a perfectly good reason for believing in. Consciousness of Natural Law did not exist for the natural man."[76] Since humans are fallen beings, they do not have a natural inclination for the Christian Good, which explains why "Consciousness of Natural Law did not exist for the natural man" and why Kant's universalist approach to Natural Law is limited and misguided. In essence, Kant's universal approach to morality fails to take into account the reality and consequences of original sin, and therefore, his model is limited and even flawed. What Eliot is ultimately suggesting through his critique of Kant is that there are two separate and irreconcilable approaches to Natural Law, the Enlightenment rationalist approach, which assumes the natural goodness of humans, and the orthodox Christian approach, which assumes that humans are fallen beings. Based on this distinction,

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[74] *Moot* (2010): 336.
[75] *Moot* (2010): 336.
[76] *Moot* (2010): 336.

the Christian model necessitates a certain level of coercion and manipulation in order to lead the ordinary person to the Christian Good, because, as a fallen being, the ordinary person has neither a natural understanding of the Good, nor an inclination to do it. Hence Eliot's claim that the "Natural Law" does not exist for the natural man. So when Eliot refers to a Natural Law, he does not mean a law for which humans have a natural understanding or inclination. He means a Law dictated by God, which should be natural for humans. So if members of the Moot would use the Natural Law approach to Christianize the state and the ordinary man, according to Eliot, then it would have to base its conception of Natural Law on Divine Revelation, which would be predicated on the ideal ought of Christianity rather than the fallen is of secularism.

According to Eliot, this failure to understand the distinction between the Christian ought and the secular is cuts to the heart of the problem plaguing the West. As he claims in "Religion and Literature": "the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, that it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life: of something which I assume to be our primary concern."[77] Since the world is neither Christian nor receptive to Christianity at the overt or conscious level, Christian writers must deploy super-subtle strategies to re-institute a spiritual sensibility within the people. Eliot clearly articulates the nature of this approach in an essay titled "Education in a Christian Society," which was published in the Moot's Christian News-Letter. Within a Christian educational system, "Wisdom and Holiness"[78] are the ultimate ideals, but to realize them, divine grace is absolutely necessary. In direct opposition to the Enlightenment humanist approach, Eliot emphasizes the need to appeal to the divine in order to have knowledge (Wisdom) of the Christian Good and to act (Holiness) in accord with that Good. The problem, however, is that society "is not necessarily conscious of what its real ideals

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[77] Eliot (1945): 352.

[78] Eliot (1940), "Education in a Christian Society," in *The Christian News-Letter*. Supplement No. 20; March 13: 1.

are"[79] and the overt ideals of modern society are emphatically not Christian. Therefore, Eliot holds that Christians must do two separate things: First, they must define true Godly ideals, and second, they must structure the subconscious of the ordinary man such that he lives in accord with those ideals. Hence, Eliot's claim that Christian "society can exercise some unconscious pressure upon its members to want the right things, the right life."[80] What motivates Eliot to take this approach is his understanding of the fallen condition of humanity. By contrasting the Christian and Enlightenment approaches, Eliot indicates why Christians have no choice but to use extremely subtle techniques of indoctrination: "Unless, at least, you hold a doctrine of the natural goodness of man (and even so you can hardly avoid admitting the corruption of society) you have the responsibility of inculcating the right values."[81] For those who believe in "the natural goodness of man," no form of unconscious indoctrination is necessary, but for those who understand the fallen condition of humanity (the human intellect is darkened and the will is weakened, so grace is necessary for humans to know what qualifies as a godly ideal and to act in accord with that ideal), the formation of a Christian society requires subtle forms of "unconscious pressure" and the inculcation of "right values."

It is this focus on the unconscious that differentiates the approach of Eliot from John Middleton Murry, husband of Katherine Mansfield and author of many books. To Christianize the society, Murry believes that the Moot should strategically place Christians in positions of political power. As the recorder of the minutes at the second meeting says of Murry's position: "his ideal involved a kind of theocracy in which there would be a sufficient number of men of Christian conviction and imagination in the governing group to direct its purpose in harmony with Christian ideals."[82] But Eliot rejects this approach, for a few influential Christians would not necessarily translate into a more Christian society. To institute a massive movement towards Christianity, of ultimate

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[79] Eliot (1940): 3.
[80] Eliot (1940): 4.
[81] Eliot (1940): 4.
[82] *Moot* (2010): 86.

importance is the spiritual sensibility of the ordinary man and the concept of the state. Put differently, to effectively Christianize the state and society, Christians must develop a mechanism that would enable believers to enact their political agenda but that would also coerce non-Christians into adopting and supporting a Christian intellectual and political system, whether they intended or desired to do so or not. The best way to achieve this is to structure the epistemological orientation of the ordinary man in relation to what is considered the only legitimate state and society—Eliot claims that "the Christian view was that the Christian community represented the remnant of the true society from which the majority had diverged."[83] Central to Eliot's position is that, given the consequences of original sin, Christian political leaders have the moral responsibility of subtly coercing the people into adopting the right values, which are Christian in nature.

Therefore, in "Religion and Literature," which explicitly addresses Christians ("it is our business, as Christians …,"[84]), Eliot admonishes his listeners to cultivate a distinct epistemological orientation, an orientation that Eliot ultimately hopes will permeate the society. Specifically, he cautions Christian readers to beware of the pernicious influence of secularism as it functions at the level of the unconscious. Eliot insists that reading has an enormous impact on us, but he stresses the fact that it is light reading ("reading for amusement") that can have the most decisive influence, because "this reading never affects simply a sort of special sense: it affects us as entire human beings; it affects our moral and religious existence."[85] Given Eliot's approach, it would seem that it is the quality and content of the writing that would most determine the effect on the reader, but actually, a close reading of Eliot's work indicates that it is the unconscious disposition that wields the most power. After claiming that "contemporary literature as a whole tends to be degrading,"[86] and "that even the effect of the better writers, in an age like ours, may be degrading to some readers,"[87] Eliot makes a confusing but nonetheless revealing claim about the

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[83] *Moot* (2010): 435–6.
[84] Eliot (1945): 353.
[85] Eliot (1945): 350.
[86] Eliot (1945): 350–1.
[87] Eliot (1945): 351.

unconscious: "for we must remember that what a writer does to people is not necessarily what he intends to do. It may be only what people are capable of having done to them. People exercise an unconscious selection in being influenced."[88] Saying that people exercise an unconscious selection in being influenced sounds like people can consciously and rationally control ("exercise") the way they are being influenced at the level of the unconscious. But the whole point of the unconscious is that influence occurs at a level that escapes the conscious understanding, and it appears that Eliot subscribes to this view when he entertains the possibility that the human is more passive than active in determining the nature of influence ("It may be only what people are capable of having done to them."). The key to Eliot's claim is his understanding of the way the unconscious functions in what he considers a secular age, "an age like ours."

Liberals, whom Eliot contrasts with Christians, "are convinced that if everybody says what he thinks, and does what he likes, things will somehow, by some automatic compensation and adjustment, come right in the end." In other words, "liberals are convinced that only by what is called unrestrained individualism will truth ever emerge." The problem, however, is this: the liberals' "world of separate individuals" is a phantom of the imagination; it doesn't exist.[89] And yet, the secular view dominates, and the contemporary Christian, therefore, exposes "himself to a mass movement of writers who, each of them, think that they have something individually to offer, but are really all working together in the same direction." Hence, the ultimate irony of the modern age: "it is more difficult to be an individual than it ever was before."[90] Within this framework, secular liberals consciously put forth an endless variety of individual truths, but at the level of the unconscious, they all subscribe to three basic principles: an uncritical acceptance of unrestrained individualism, a naive belief in full and transparent self-knowledge, and an inability to determine what constitutes a suitable ideal.

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[88] Eliot (1945): 351.
[89] Eliot (1945): 351.
[90] Eliot (1945): 352.

To counteract secular liberalism, Eliot admonishes Christians, especially as readers, to adopt a different framework for engaging texts:

> It is our business, as readers of literature, to know what we like. It is our business, as Christians, *as well as* readers of literature, to know what we ought to like. It is our business as honest men not to assume that whatever we like is what we ought to like; and it is our business as honest Christians not to assume that we do like what we ought to like.[91]

For Eliot, the unconscious, as a filter through which information passes and thereby influences a person, is of paramount importance. More specifically, Eliot admonishes Christian readers to determine, as Christians, what they "ought to like," rather than uncritically liking whatever is presented to them, as secular liberals seemingly do—given original sin, humans are not likely to desire what they should desire, so the Christian ought of Natural Law, which is based on Divine Revelation, must determine the nature of a suitable ideal. Once the Christian ought is identified, defined, and established, then Christians would be in a better position to interrogate their likes, determining whether their unconscious feelings ("what we like") line up with their Christian obligations ("what we ought to like").

Within Eliot's framework, a person could be, at the conscious level, a non-Christian, but still be nonetheless a supporter and disseminator of Christianity. As Eliot argues, of ultimate importance is "a Christian framework," which leads people "to think in Christian categories."[92] It is not essential that a person be consciously aware of the degree to which his or her beliefs correspond to Christian teaching, for when it comes to a political philosophy, what really matters is a "Christian organisation of society."[93] Given his political objectives, Eliot is as concerned with the conscious as the unconscious: "what I mean by a political philosophy is not merely even the conscious formulation of the ideal

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[91] Eliot (1945): 353. Eliot's emphasis.
[92] Eliot (1977): 22.
[93] Eliot (1977): 27.

aims of a people, but the substratum of collective temperament, ways of behaviour and unconscious values which provides the material for the formulation."[94] According to this model, a person could be a Hellenist, such as Clive, and still be an active supporter of Christianity, for as Eliot argues, "[w]hat the rulers believed, would be less important than the beliefs to which they would be obliged to conform. And a skeptical or indifferent statesman, working within a Christian frame, might be more effective than a devout Christian state obliged to conform to a secular frame."[95] If a non-Christian subscribes to Christian obligations ("what we ought to like"), which Eliot considers to be the Natural Law based on Divine Revelation, then the non-Christian could play an important role in the formation of a Christian society, whether he or she is committed to Christianity or not.

Clive is Eliot's ideal non-Christian Christian, because he has internalized the Christian prelapsarian ought and subsequently restructured his desires in relation to it. We know that Clive rejected Christianity before he met Maurice ("'I'm not Christian'" [p. 42]), but given Clive's willingness and ability to subordinate his wayward inclinations for men to the Divine Law, he is a perfect example of "a skeptical or indifferent statesmen," who contributes to a "Christian organisation of society" by upholding the Church's orthodox views of the Normal and the Natural—the Law of God. Clive discloses his transformation to Maurice in a letter: "'Against my will I have become normal. I cannot help it'" (p. 116). While Clive is explicitly not Christian, he has clearly rejected secular liberalism (as Eliot defines it) by interrogating the assumption that "whatever we like is what we ought to like." Surely Clive still prefers (likes) men to (over) women, which is why he describes his metamorphosis as being against his will. Given Clive's conflict, Matthew Curr interprets his transformation in terms of "an imposed public requirement,"[96] but as I intend to show, the text suggests that it is an imposed religious (Christian) requirement that has been strategically introjected into his subconscious by

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[94] Eliot (1977): 14.
[95] Eliot (1977): 22.
[96] Curr (2001), "Recuperating E. M. Forster's *Maurice*," *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (March): 63.

the novel's Christian conspirators. Having internalized the "Law," Clive can now discriminate between what he likes (Maurice, homosexuality) and what he ought to like (women, heterosexuality). Therefore, instead of promiscuously liking whatever he likes, he subordinates his likes to what he ought to like, which enables him to reject the unnatural ("It was not natural …"), the wicked ("evil hallucination"), and the Lawless ("heresy").

Ironically, we get most insight into Clive's transformation through his earlier rejection of Christianity. Struggling to understand his desire for men, Clive reads the classics, especially Plato, to get some insight into his homosexual feelings. But as a young male who is "[d]eeply religious" (p. 69), he cannot square his sexual desires with his Christian faith. Therefore, he feels that he must "throw over Christianity" (p. 70), which leads the narrator to make the following comment: "Those who base their conduct upon what they are rather than upon what they ought to be, always must throw it [Christianity] over in the end, and besides, between Clive's temperament and that religion there is a secular feud. No clear-headed man can combine them" (p. 70). This passage reads as if it were in direct response to Eliot. Eliot privileges the Christian ought, which leads him to define Christians as those who—consciously or unconsciously—submit to God's Eternal Law, whereas Forster privileges what people are (their likes), which is why he suggests that rejecting Christianity is necessary for people such as Clive. Given the logic of Eliot's religious model, the moment Clive renounces his desire for men because it is what he ought to do, he has begun contributing to the Christian organization of society, whether he believes in Christ or not. Therefore, Clive is an active participant in the project of evangelizing England to Christianity. To put this in the language of Borenius, since Clive now has a proper apprehension of God (via the Law), he is paving the way for Christianity to re-conquer England. But given the logic of Forster's secular model, the moment Clive renounces his natural desire for men, he has lost himself and thereby become a mechanical slave to an arbitrarily constructed dictate, a sacred imagined Law, which passes itself off as a Natural Law of Being.

According to Forster, therefore, modernist in-depth Christianization takes the form of a conscious or subconscious acknowledgment of and submission to the Christian ought, the Divine Law that exists above and beyond the world of the senses

and that functions to determine what is natural and normal. Within this in-depth Christianization framework, it is not necessary that one acknowledge God's existence or Christ's divinity for a person to be a supporter or disseminator of Christianity. What is of ultimate importance is one's acceptance of and submission to the sacred imagined Law, for it is the violation of that Law that leads to atheism. As Borenius claims: "'when the nations went a whoring they invariably ended by denying God'" (p. 237). Sexual immorality ("a whoring") leads people to reject God. Conversely, by indoctrinating the population with a belief in the Natural Law, the culture would be disposed to belief in God. It is this model of the Natural Law of God that functions with such unrelenting vehemence in *Maurice*, thus explaining Clive's conversion to heterosexuality and Maurice's self-loathing (which nearly leads him to suicide).

Understanding the overwhelming power of Christianity, specifically as it functions at the level of the subconscious, poses a major challenge to some of the most insightful interpretations of *Maurice*. Based on Clive's conversion to heterosexuality, Claude Summers claims that "Clive is exposed as shallow and hypocritical,"[97] while Curr claims that Clive is wrapped in a "complicated shroud of self-deception, of moral sophistry enclosing and entombing natural passion."[98] By focusing so much on the limitations of Clive, however, Summers and Curr overlook the tremendous power Christianity wields over the inner life of characters, especially those characters who seemingly reject Christianity. Forster is concerned with the intricate workings of the inner life, which he indicates most clearly when Maurice first becomes conscious of his homosexual yearnings: "It [agony] worked inwards, till it touched the root whence body and soul both spring, the 'I' that he had been trained to obscure, and, realized at last, doubled its power and grew superhuman" (p. 60). By internalizing the Christian ought, Clive has obscured his homosexual "I." That a smart and unconventional character such as Clive could succumb to the Christian ought, even though he has explicitly rejected Christianity, testifies to the power

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[97] Summers (1985), "The Flesh Educating the Spirit: *Maurice*," in Alan Wilde ed. *Critical Essays on E. M. Forster*. Boston: G. K. Hall: 102.
[98] Curr (2001): 64.

of in-depth Christianity. Indeed, given the overwhelming power of Christianity to structure social forms and to determine habits of mind/feeling, it should, therefore, come as no surprise that Maurice nearly becomes "normal" as well. After his meeting with Dr. Barry, Maurice thinks to himself: "It would be jolly certainly to be married, and at one with society and the law" (p. 161). Maurice's reference to "the [lower case] law" stands in stark contrast to "the [upper case] Law" that slumbers behind society. As an atheist, Maurice does not think about "the Law" in relation to the Divine. He considers "the law" in lower case terms, which accentuates the role humans play in constructing it. But throughout the novel, the Christian conspirators have been working tirelessly to persuade people that there is an ultimate Law independent of humans, and that a person can only be right in society and with God in so far as he or she acts in accord with that Law. Even though Maurice does not acknowledge God's Law, he is on the verge of submitting to it through his feeling that to be "one with society and the law" can only occur through heterosexual marriage, thus confirming Ducie's heterosexual theology. And the moment Maurice submits to that Law, he would become a Christian, whether he is aware of it or not.

Given my reading of *Maurice*, instead of saying that the Christian community is slowly but surely losing importance and influence in the early twentieth century because of the rise of science and reason, as many traditional secularization theorists maintain, it would make more sense to say that Christians have effectively reconstituted the religious sense such that people feel normal and natural only in so far as they submit to and live in accord with the Divine Law, a view that presupposes God. In other words, people and the society are not becoming less religious. Rather, they are becoming more intensely religious, but in a way that is less overt and obvious and more subconscious and internal. Therefore, the Christian community is very much active and alive in *Maurice*, but its coordinated efforts to indoctrinate people are only discernible to those who have the ability to identify and expose how they are working behind the scenes or under the surface to structure what Mannheim refers to as "the unconscious or underground level of mental life." But this is exactly as it must be; for religion to maximize its impact on the general population, it must work its conspiratorial magic on people without them being aware of it. That the Christian conspiracy is working Forster

makes clear when he has the narrator refer to society's verdict as theological. For Forster, modernist society is theological precisely because it is not paying attention to the subtle but effective strategies Christians have cultivated to monitor and control human behavior. In a sense, Forster anticipates both Eliot and Greene, who seek to re-Christianize the culture by indoctrinating individuals not with a conscious conceptual system of Christian knowledge but an unconscious religious sense of the Christian ought (Law). Within this framework, people might assume, on a conscious level, that science and psychology are in irreconcilable conflict with Christian theology. And most Christian conspirators would gladly have people make this assumption, because it blinds them to the subsurface reality, which is that modernist science and psychology take their legal, moral, and political cue from the sacred imagined Law of theology. In so far as theology is the basis and foundation for science and psychology, the society would be theological, whether it admits it or not, whether it knows it or not.

While the novel underscores the degree to which society continues to be theological, Forster suggests that certain individuals can effectively elude Christianity and its Law. To signify Maurice's release from Christianity, Forster has him damn the church. The scene occurs after Maurice's night of lovemaking with Alec: "'Sir, the church has gone four, you'll have to release me,'" Alec says to Maurice. Ignoring the reference to the church, Maurice tells Alec to call him by his first name, but Alec maintains his focus on the church: "'But the church has—.'" No longer willing to accommodate the church, as he and his family did early in the novel, Maurice retorts: "'Damn the church'" (p. 196). Were this declaration a simple rejection of Christianity, it would be aesthetic overkill, for Maurice rejects Christianity and even professes a dislike for Christ early in the novel. But Maurice's damning of the church at this point marks his rejection not so much of Christianity as of in-depth Christianization. What we see in *Maurice* is a symmetrical architectonic with regard to Christianity. Structurally, the novel moves from in-depth Christianization (through the building of a new church, to which the Hall family becomes "accustomed") to a conscious acceptance of Christianity (Maurice interprets Christ as the friend of his dream) to a conscious rejection of Christianity (through Clive's arguments exposing Maurice's ignorance of Christianity) and to an understanding and

subsequent rejection of in-depth Christianization (when Maurice damns the church). The implication is this: instead of being a passive entity that is slowly but surely becoming extinct, as traditional secularization theorists would have us believe, the church in the modern age is active and alive, very much in control of the society, which is why society's verdict is considered theological. But it is not so much through overt Christianity that the church exerts considerable power. Rather, it is through the subtle techniques that Christian conspirators have constructed that the church can wield so much power over the lives of everyday people. While the novel opens with in-depth Christianization functioning to coerce Maurice and Clive into becoming unconscious Christians (in the sense that Eliot and Greene define), it closes with Maurice rejecting in-depth Christianization. Therefore, not only does Maurice reject Christianity and the church; he rejects the Christian ought in favor of his homosexual is. In short, he has become an in-depth secularist, what Nietzsche refers to as an unconditional honest atheist. Most of modernist society, however, remains in thrall to the Christian ought of the Divine (imagined) Law, which we see through Clive and which is why Maurice and Alec must retreat from society. But that they find each other symbolizes their triumph over Christianity and God, which marks the beginning of friendship and love. Based on this interpretation, the novel is not suggesting the secular triumph of atheism in the modern age through Maurice's and Alec's love. Rather, it is suggesting the secular triumph of two homosexuals in a modern age that is dominated by in-depth Christianization.

III

Forster's representation of in-depth Christianization, especially as it functions in relation to homosexuality, debunks the standard secularization hypothesis, and the best way to see this is to do a brief analysis of the famous Bertrand Russell case. In 1940, after the retirement of two prominent philosophers from the College of the City of New York, the City College voted to appoint Bertrand Russell. There was considerable outrage about the appointment, as the well-regarded philosopher, Paul Edwards, notes, because

Russell believed "'in atheism,'"[99] condoned masturbation,[100] and approved of homosexuality.[101] Given the public's outrage, the City College board was given an opportunity to rescind its offer, but the board ultimately voted in favor of the infidel philosopher. This led the concerned citizen, Mrs. Jean Kay of Brooklyn, to file "a taxpayer's suit in the New York Supreme Court to void Russell's appointment on the ground that he was an alien and an advocate of sexual immorality."[102] In the end, Justice McGeehan, who tried the case, sided with Mrs. Kay, and consequently, Russell was not allowed to teach at City College.

What struck most people about McGeehan's ruling was his religious justification. Consistent with the Natural Law philosophy of Eliot and some members of the Moot, McGeehan, a Catholic, based his verdict on "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God."[103] Given that God's Law is the basis and the foundation of the nation as well as its legal and educational system, McGeehan believed that he was in a position to formulate a clear definition of intellectual freedom, specifically with regard to public universities that make use of taxpayer money: "Academic freedom does not mean academic license. It is the freedom to do good and not to teach evil."[104] This was the case because intellectual heresy ("to teach evil") will lead necessarily to immorality. So self-evident is this truth that McGeehan insisted that it needs no argument or precedent to be the basis for his judicial ruling:

> One of the prerequisites of a teacher is good moral character. In fact, this is a prerequisite for appointment in civil service in the city and state, or political subdivisions, or in the United States. It needs no argument here to defend this statement. It need not

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[99] Edwards (1957), "Appendix," in Bertrand Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, ed. Paul Edwards. New York: Simon & Schuster: 209.
[100] Edwards (1957): 243–4.
[101] Edwards (1957): 219.
[102] Edwards (1957): 218.
[103] McGeehan (1941), "Decision of Justice McGeehan," in John Dewey and Horace M. Kallen (eds), *The Bertrand Russell Case*. New York: Viking Press: 223.
[104] McGeehan (1941): 222.

> be found in the Educational Law. It is found in the nature of the teaching profession.[105]

Nature is that which is determined by and consistent with God and His Laws ("the laws of Nature and of Nature's God"), so if people behave in an unnatural way (as a "'bit of a swine,'" as Borenius claims in *Maurice*), this is because they have "some misapprehension of God," and have thereby implicitly set themselves against God, Nature, and the Law. Hence, McGeehan is outraged by "Dr. Russell's utterances as to the damnable felony of homosexualism."[106] As Thom Weidlich claims: "Ultimately, it was Russell's advocacy of 'homosexualism' that caused McGeehan to revoke his appointment."[107] According to the logic of McGeehan's ruling, Law, to be legitimate, moral, and just, must be premised on the Divine; indeed, it must incarnate the Deity Himself. Therefore, that which conflicts with the Divine Law is unnatural, immoral, and evil.

I reference the Russell case in order to clarify one of the central arguments of this book, which is that an epistemological orientation will determine whether a person views the West as secular or religious. Given the logic of my model, philosophers, who valorize the conscious and the rational and dismiss the subconscious and/or unconscious as irrelevant and/or non-existent, were surprised by Judge McGeehan's ruling, because they assumed that the United States is a secular country. For instance, Edwards indignantly condemns McGeehan's 1940 ruling in a 1957 essay because "New York City is in the United States of America, a secular nation."[108] This was the dominant view of the philosophers, who were writing at the time of the controversy. In response to McGeehan's verdict, America's foremost pragmatic philosopher, John Dewey, and New School founder and philosopher, Horace M. Kallen, published in 1941 *The Bertrand Russell Case*, a collection of essays condemning McGeehan's ruling and defending Russell's character. Dewey opens the volume by specifying the dominant epistemological orientation

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[105] McGeehan (1941): 218.
[106] McGeehan (1941): 225.
[107] Weidlich (2000), *Appointment Denied: The Inquisition of Bertrand Russell*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books: 131.
[108] Edwards (1957): 229.

of the contributors, which is based on "the method of intelligence, the scientific method,"[109] and not surprisingly, the contributors are stunned by the religious tenor of McGeehan's ruling. The Philosophers of the City College claim that McGeehan's ruling is illegitimate because the "Constitution of the United States" ensures the "separation of church and state,"[110] and Sidney Hook, a Marxist and pragmatist philosopher, faults McGeehan's ruling because it is inconsistent with the ideals "of our national culture,"[111] one of which is "Secularism in education."[112] Put simply, the philosophers are baffled by the McGeehan ruling, because it violates the Western belief in "the traditional separation of church from state."[113]

In stark contrast to the philosophers, Forster claims in 1939 that "this is an age of faith,"[114] and consequently, instead of being surprised or baffled by the McGeehan ruling, Forster would have considered it (based on his representation of religion within the modern polity in *Maurice*) the logical product of the West's theological-political model. In essence, there are two separate reasons why Forster would reject the philosophers' approach. First, he was very conscious of the ability of prominent Christians (*Maurice* clearly anticipates groups such as the Moot) to adapt to the realities of the modern world. For the philosophers, religion is premised on a stable system of knowledge that came into being in antiquity, and as such, it can only passively watch its role within society become limited and reduced by the inevitable processes of secularization, specifically in so far as science and reason supplant religion and faith and the separation of the church and state limits the role of religion within the political. To put this in the words of Kallen: "the employment of scientific ideas and techniques would have the same effect on ecclesiasticism as the employment

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[109] Dewey, *The Bertrand Russell Case*: 8.

[110] This essay was written by Daniel J. Bronstein, Abraham Edel, Lewis Feuer, Yervant H. Krikorian, Joseph Ratner, and Philip P. Wiener, who were members of the Philosophy Department at the time of Russell's appointment. *Bertrand* (1941): 177.

[111] *Bertrand* (1941): 197.

[112] *Bertrand* (1941): 196.

[113] *Bertrand* (1941): 197.

[114] Forster (1966), "What I Believe," in *Two Cheers for Democracy*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace & Company: 67.

of the railroad and the motor-car had on the horse and buggy."[115] Eventually, inevitably, religion will lose credibility and significance as science and reason become more dominant and thereby expose the church and its teachings as irrelevant and outdated. Forster, by contrast, recognized how religious figures (Ducie and the masters; Cornwallis and the dons; and Borenius, Mrs. Durham, and the Anglican Priest in Buenos Aires) were coordinating their efforts to indoctrinate people into belief through a Natural Law theology, which would render society's verdict theological ("to think in Christian categories," which is premised on a "Christian framework," as Eliot claims), even if many members of the body politic professed no faith. According to someone such as Forster, therefore, the philosophers' puzzlement regarding the Russell case would indicate a naive understanding of the way prominent religious figures have effectively theologized the modern subject and polity.

More specifically, and this is Forster's second reason for rejecting the secularization hypothesis, he realized that prominent religious figures were strategically indoctrinating the public at the level of the subconscious. Philosophers focus on the state's official and conscious words, values, formulas, and moralities (such as constitutional declarations regarding the separation of church and state), and since McGeehan's ruling, based as it is on a religious foundation ("the laws of Nature and of Nature's God"), violates the seeming secular foundation of the Western body politic, the philosophers cry foul. Novelists, by stark contrast, focus on the subconscious, and, therefore, they realize that "God, of course, is an implicit assumption in the thought of our age. He is one of those beliefs so spontaneous and ineluctable and taken so much as a matter of course that they operate with great effectiveness (though generally on a level of subconsciousness) in our society."[116] I take this quotation from the novelist, J. Saunders Redding, who published these words in 1951, 11 years after the Russell trial and six years before Edwards's Appendix to the "Bertrand Russell Case." In essence, novelists focus on the unofficial and

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[115] *Bertrand* (1941): 36.

[116] Redding (1962), *On Being Negro in America*. Indianapolis and New York: Charter Books: 137–8.

subconscious frameworks that determine how people will understand and interpret their culture's official words, values, moralities, and formulas, and since McGeehan's ruling is based on a religious foundation, the novelists would say that religious figures, such as Borenius, have in part achieved their goal—by explicitly making the sexual irregularity of "homosexualism" "penal," Judge McGeehan is setting the stage for the Church to "reconquer" the consciously secular but subconsciously religious nation. In other words, the novelists realize that the culture at large has internalized at the level of the subconscious the religious belief "that conduct is dependent on faith, and that if a man is a 'bit of a swine' the cause is to be found in some misapprehension of God." Russell's supposed support for "homosexualism" indicates that he has a "misapprehension of God" and His Laws, which is why McGeehan felt justified in his ruling.

As should be obvious, my focus in this book is less on the actual case than it is on the specific interpretation of the ruling. Occurring in 1940, the case sheds light on the dominant interpretation of the Western body politic, which was considered secular, and emphatically not religious. This blindness to the prominent role of religion was the logical consequence of a failure to epistemologically adapt to the religious community's new methods of indoctrination and operation. For instance, quoting one of the board members who appointed Russell, Weidlich suggests that McGeehan's ruling was an attempt to recover the Catholic Church's power in the realm of education.[117] But there is nothing in McGeehan's ruling that specifically indicates a preference for Catholicism. Indeed, the reference to "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God" would effectively appeal to mid-twentieth-century Catholics and Protestants alike—members of the Moot argued that Protestants and Catholics could come together through their common ground in a Natural Law that is premised on Divine Revelation. Many Christians by this time realized that denominational hegemony was no longer possible. Therefore, by using a more denominational neutral discourse, McGeehan could affirm the universal tenets of Christianity and thereby appeal simultaneously to Catholics and Protestants. This is something that Steve Bruce did not take into account in his theory

[117] Weidlich (2000): 130.

of secularization, which I discussed in Chapter 2. According to Bruce, given the Protestant Reformation's rejection of a central authority to determine the nature of Christian belief, there will be an endless proliferation of religious sects that will ultimately lead to the de-legitimization of religion and its truths. But what twentieth-century Christians did to circumvent this problem was to establish a non-denominational discourse about "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God" that would have universal appeal to most splintering factions. According to this model, Protestants and Catholics could come together in their non-denominational opposition to "the damnable felony of homosexualism" and still retain their denominational affiliations. This universal/specific and non-denominational/denominational distinction enabled Catholics and Protestants to reverse, at least for the moment, the inevitable process of secularization that Bruce so clearly identifies and defines. In essence, Catholics and Protestants could come together within the body politic as Christians against pagans, freethinkers, and agnostics, even though they differed with each other on the specific nature of belief.

But what unified them at the level of the subconscious was their epistemological orientation in relation to "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God," that which is Natural, Normal, and Moral. Put simply, groups such as the Moot were beginning to enact by 1940 Borenius's Law-based religious politics, which McGeehan perfectly embodies. What was happening to the people "in the streets," as Wright refers to them, was that they were internalizing, at the level of the subconscious, a model of the legitimate nation state, which gave primacy to religion and its Laws. This is something that the philosophers continually missed in their interpretations of the Russell case. For instance, Kallen refers to a "series of attacks and denunciations [against Russell] by individuals and groups with various labels but with a common politico-ecclesiastical animus."[118] Given the way religious intellectuals were re-imagining religion within the context of the modern body politic, Kallen's formulation needs to be reversed. It is a religio-political animus. More specifically, it is a Christian (non-denominational)-political animus. Church leaders do not and cannot dictate to the state. Rather, the

[118] *Bertrand* (1941): 25.

state, to be legitimate, must be based on the "laws of Nature and of Nature's God," and this is something that Christians, irrespective of denominational affiliation, could accept. Judge McGeehan's ruling, therefore, effectively represents what was taken as an axiomatic given among the general population (this explains why the public overwhelmingly supported McGeehan over Russell and why McGeehan's ruling stood, despite all the obvious missteps and violations), who consider the nation to be religious, not because the church dictates to the state, but because the general population believed that the state, to be legitimate, must incarnate the Divine Law in the same way that Christ incarnates the Godhead. In Eliot's terms, we could say that Christianity has effectively Christianized the state, which means that the body of the state could be considered secular, but its soul is emphatically Christian, because it is premised on the prelapsarian Christian ought of Divine Revelation. According to this model, it would make more sense to refer to the religious politics of the time rather than the political religion or the political theology of the age. This is the case because the general public considered a nation legitimate only in so far as it was based on or incarnated religion. The priority of terms here is absolutely crucial, because religion clearly has primacy over the political, and not the other way around. This was the new formulation of religion that so many scholars failed to take into account.

According to this framework, religion is the incarnation of the Divine Law and the basis of the modern polity, but it is important to note that this definition of the nation exists not as an official law of the state, but as a subconscious framework that determines how people understand the state—the Christian soul is secretly embedded within the concept of the secular state. This explains the shift in Forster's work. In the 1908 novel *A Room with a View*, the narrator says that religion "was fading like all the other things," but by 1913 and 1914, when Forster wrote *Maurice*, the narrator claims that "the verdict of society" is "theological." Forster realized that in-depth Christianization was at work, and that Christians could effectively re-theologize the society, not by forcing people to make overt declarations of faith or by imposing the Church's Laws on them, but by subtly indoctrinating them at the level of the subconscious into the faith through a discourse of the Natural and the Normal. If people, such as Clive, had internalized a Christian conception of the Divine Law, they would be

Christians and thereby contribute to the formation of a Christian nation, even if they professed fidelity to an alternative creed or no creed at all. And once the Christian creed had been established as an axiomatic given at the level of the subconscious, it would then be possible to re-Christianize the state and the society in a more overt and conscious manner. Such was the new theological strategy of the modern age, but it was this view of religion as a subconscious reality that the philosophers could not see, which explains why they were so angered and baffled by the McGeehan ruling. For a more detailed model clarifying how in-depth Christianization functioned in relation to the sacred imagined nation in the early twentieth century, it is now time to examine the novels of Erdrich, Walker, and Mamet.

4

Louise Erdrich, Alice Walker, and David Mamet on the supersessionist theology of the sacred imagined nation

My primary objective in this chapter is to use the work of Erdrich, Walker, and Mamet to establish a new way of thinking about the connection between colonialism and the Holocaust. The standard approach takes secularization as an axiomatic given. For instance, Paul Gilroy intelligently exposes the degree to which Western racism underwrites intellectual and political history from the

Enlightenment to World War II. Within this framework, there is a link between "the presence of colonial peoples in Europe to the history of Europe's Jews,"[1] thus underscoring "a significant relationship between the sometimes genocidal brutality of the colonies and the later genocide in Europe."[2] Central to this model is the focus on a "full-fledged racial science,"[3] which has supplanted the religious approach to human subjectivity. In essence, Gilroy theorizes within the same tradition as Benedict Anderson, who claims that the secular nation state supplanted the sacral monarchy, thus setting the stage for twentieth-century totalitarianism.

Erdrich, Walker, and Mamet implicitly reject the secularization approaches of Gilroy and Anderson, for their work is in the tradition of Foucault, who examines not just the way in-depth Christianization functions to interpellate individuals, but also how it contributes to the formation of the nation state. Note that I do not just say the objectives or agenda of the nation state. The claim is stronger. Foucault says that "modern states begin to take shape while Christian structures tighten their grip on individual existence."[4] For Foucault, the emergence of the nation state in the West is incomprehensible without taking into account concomitant developments within Christianity. According to this model, the rise of the modern nation might entail the separation of the church and the state, but the modern nation itself presupposes the internalization rather than the disappearance of a Christian sensibility. Put differently, Foucault suggests that Christianity, when defined in relation to the churches, is certainly losing some of its political power during and after the Enlightenment, but he would qualify this claim by saying that Christianity, when defined in relation to the modern nation, has increased its power substantially precisely because it has become embedded as a structure of meaning within the concept of the modern nation, thus forming the sacred imagined nation.

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[1] Gilroy (2001), *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*. Harvard University Press: 77.
[2] Gilroy (2001): 141.
[3] Gilroy (2001): 138.
[4] Foucault (2003), *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France: 1974–1975*. New York: Picador: 177.

I

Erdrich's *Tracks* charts the way the United States government strategically divested Indians of their land and culture between the years 1912 and 1924. To underscore this theme, the novel opens with a reference to "a storm of government papers,"[5] which formalize the process of forced assimilation, and culminates with "government [...] bureaucrats," who have sunk "their barbed pens into the lives of Indians" (p. 225). Scholars such as James D. Stripes and Susan Stanford Friedman have rightly noted the role the government, and specifically its "federal Indian policy of allotment,"[6] played in the destabilization of Native American culture in the early twentieth century. What scholars have yet to clarify, however, is the link between religion and the government, a theme that is central to Erdrich's novel. Most significant is Erdrich's ability to portray the way supersessionist Christian theology, which I define below, functions in relation to the formation of the sacred imagined nation.

We get a clear sense of the novel's focus on religion through the character of Pauline Puyat, who em*bodies* contradiction. An unattractive pariah, she is a "crow of the reservation" (p. 54). As a character who perceives herself through the gaze of the dominant white community, Pauline experiences her Indian self as flawed. And yet, she considers herself spiritually privileged, one of God's treasured possessions, because she abides in the "mystical body" (p. 138) of Christ, thus making her a "good soul" (p. 153) in the eyes of God. So Pauline, as an Indian, is reduced to one of the wretched of the earth, but as a Christian, she is honored as a child of God.

Pauline's split sense of self could be characterized as a spiritual version of W. E. B. Du Bois's theory of double consciousness. For Du Bois, the non-white "ever feels his twoness," first as an American, an honorific appellation symbolizing freedom, then as a

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[5] Erdrich (1988), *Tracks*, New York: Perennial: 1. Hereafter cited in text.

[6] Stripes (1991), "The Problem(s) of (Anishinaabe) History in the Fiction of Louise Erdrich: Voices and Contexts," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Autumn): 27–8. See also Susan Stanford Friedman (1994), "Identity Politics, Syncretism, Catholicism, and Anishinabe Religion in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," *Religion & Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (March): 108.

non-white, a derogatory reference symbolizing non-freedom. While many non-whites might, on their own, see their American selves as the bodily site of infinite possibility and endless promise, they are subtly coerced into looking at themselves "through the eyes of others, of measuring" their "soul[s] by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." Not surprisingly, this split sense of self leads many non-white Americans to live in a state of perpetual contradiction in which "two warring ideals"[7] do battle in one conflicted body, what Stripes refers to as a form of "divided consciousness."[8]

Given the nature of Pauline's experience, however, Du Bois's theory, influential and insightful as it is, can only provide limited insight, for as soon as religion plays a prominent role within the psychological, linguistic, and societal formation of the non-white American subject, there is a significant imbalance in the conceptual weighting of discourses. This is the case because religion, as a discourse, is not treated as one equally weighted semiotic formation among others. It is seen as the ultimate discourse, a signifying system that incarnates the one Way, the one Truth, and the one Life. According to this interpretation, the masses, who have internalized the supersessionist religious discourse of the sacred imagined nation, form destructive relationships with others and even themselves, because the discourse is calculated to subsume and efface that which does not conform to the tacit ideals implicit within the sacred imagined nation. We see this most clearly when Pauline imagines that Christ tells her that she is not who she thinks she is. Instead of being of mixed racial heritage, Christ informs her that she "was not one speck of Indian but wholly white" (p. 137). According to Du Bois's secular model of double consciousness, black and white are "two unreconciled strivings"[9] antagonistically balanced against each other with equal intensity. But in Erdrich's novel, the Logos, that is, Christ's Word and Christ as the Word, functions to efface every speck of Indianness, thus banishing Du Bois's equally balanced antagonisms by transforming Pauline into a "wholly white" person. Pauline has internalized the nation state's divine ideals, which equate whiteness and Americanness as Godly

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[7] Du Bois (1995), *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: A Signet Classic: 45.
[8] Stripes (1994): 27
[9] Du Bois (1995): 45.

attributes, and as a consequence, the more religious she becomes, the more does she believe that she has triumphed over and effaced her Indianness.

Erdrich's decision to use the Incarnate God to efface Pauline's Indianness reflects an understanding of the primacy and power of religious discourse in relation to race and the body as it was functioning in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For instance, in the nineteenth century, Ernst Renan propagandized scores of Christians throughout the West with his immensely popular book, *The Life of Jesus*. In this study, Renan evolves a supersessionist theology in which Christ effectively supplants and effaces his Jewish heritage: "Far from Jesus having continued Judaism, he represents the rupture with the Jewish spirit. […] The general march of Christianity has been to remove itself more and more from Judaism. It will become perfect in returning to Jesus, but certainly not in returning to Judaism."[10] Jesus may have been born a Jew, but in so far as he assumes his divine role, he supersedes Judaism and the Jewish spirit, which is why returning to Christ is an act of removing Christianity from Judaism. Given this logic, the triumph and perfection of Christianity will implicitly supplant Judaism and the Jew.

In the wickedly humorous story, "Little Bessie," which was written between the years 1908 and 1909, Mark Twain examines how supersessionist theology functions within the mind of an average citizen. In this story, a precocious three-year-old and her mother engage in conversations about religion and the Bible. The mother, who has uncritically internalized many of her culture's simplistic religious ideas, considers the truths of religion "'natural and right.'"[11] But Little Bessie, who has not yet been interpellated, consistently questions and challenges her mother's faith and thereby exposes her religious beliefs as shallow and absurd. Most significant for my argument is a discussion the two have about defining a virgin. When Bessie describes "'a virgin that has been having a child,'" the mother retorts: "'Nonsense! A virgin can't

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[10] Renan (1955), *The Life of Jesus*. New York: Modern Library: 391.

[11] Twain (1992), "Little Bessie," in *Mark Twain: Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, and Essays: Volume 2: 1891–1910*. New York: Library of America: 864.

have a child.'"[12] To explain why this is the case, the mother uses the conversion of the Jew to Christianity to clarify her point: "'It's something like this: a Jew couldn't be a Jew after he had become a Christian; he couldn't be a Christian and a Jew at the same time. Very well, a person couldn't be mother and virgin at the same time.'"[13] The mother specifically describes the transformation that takes place within both the virgin and the Jew as "'Physiological.'" Just as the act of having sex ontologically obliterates and effaces a virgin's physiological virginness, so too does the act of converting to Christianity ontologically obliterate and efface a Jew's physiological Jewishness. In other words, what occurs in the realm of the religious can ontologically triumph over (supersede) the physiological, and since Twain, when using "the word Jew," claims that it stands "for both religion and race,"[14] this means that the Jew's newfound Christian identity triumphs over and effaces his or her previous religious and racial identity.

Set in the years 1912 through 1924, *Tracks* examines the crucial role supersessionist theology played in the early twentieth-century decimation of Native American religion, culture, and identity. To direct her reader's attention to the prominent role of Christian supersessionism, Erdrich skillfully links Pauline with Thérèse of Lisieux, author of *The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: The Story of a Soul*, who lived in France between 1873 and 1897; was canonized by Pope Pius XI on May 17, 1925; and was "declared, with St. Francis Xavier, the principal patron of all missionaries and missions."[15] In Erdrich's novel, the Mother Superior of the convent explicitly claims that she thinks of "The Little Flower" (p. 138), a name by which "Thérèse is known everywhere" and "the name she gave herself,"[16] when she looks at Pauline. But the likenesses between the two run deep. Thérèse's biological sister was the prioress of the local Carmelite convent, and it is she who formally

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[12] Twain (1992): 871.
[13] Twain (1992): 871.
[14] Twain (2000), "Concerning the Jews," in Charles Neider ed. *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain*. New York: De Capo Press: 355.
[15] Beevers (1957), "Introduction," in *The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: The Story of a Soul*. Translated by John Beevers. Garden City, New York: Image Books: 9.
[16] Beevers (1957): 12.

commissioned her biological and spiritual sister to write the story of her soul. Not coincidentally, Thérèse's sister is named Pauline. Erdrich's Pauline, however, is based more on Thérèse than Thérèse's sister. For instance, Erdrich's Pauline proudly proclaims that she "will be the bride and Christ will take me as wife" (p. 204), while Thérèse boasts that she is "the bride of Jesus."[17] Pauline begins her spiritual journey by "kneeling in the Virgin's sight" (p. 95), while Thérèse kneels "before the statue of Mary"[18] prior to starting her spiritual autobiography. When kneeling before a statue of the Virgin Mary, Pauline watches the figure shed tears, which Pauline gathers into her "skirt pocket" (p. 95). When Mother Genevieve, foundress of the local Carmelite convent, dies in *The Story of a Soul*, Thérèse notices "a tear shining on an eyelash like a lovely diamond." Like Pauline, Thérèse gathers the tear: "In the evening I took a scrap of linen and went to her without anyone seeing me. And now I possess a saint's last tear."[19] For Pauline, "'[s]uffering is a gift to God'" (p. 144), which she therefore welcomes, while for Thérèse, she "welcomed the Cross" and therefore concludes: "my love of suffering grew steadily."[20]

The more important likenesses between the two, however, relate to their religious mission. Pauline is given "the mission to name and baptize, to gather souls" (pp. 140–1), while Thérèse realizes that her "mission was to lead" novices "to God."[21] This evangelical mission translates into an insatiable desire for souls, so when Pauline tells Christ that she has brought him "'many souls,'" Christ responds: "'Fetch more'" (p. 140). Thérèse and her Christ have a similar desire: "I wanted to quench the thirst of my Well-Beloved and I myself was consumed with a thirst for souls. I was concerned not with the souls of priests but with those of great sinners which I wanted to snatch from the flames of hell."[22] Indeed, the more Thérèse collects souls for Christ, the more she desires: "I gave

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[17] Thérèse of Lisieux (1957), *The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: The Story of a Soul*. Translated by John Beevers. Garden City, New York: Image Books: 102.
[18] Thérèse (1957): 19.
[19] Thérèse (1957): 105.
[20] Thérèse (1957): 91.
[21] Thérèse (1957): 134.
[22] Thérèse (1957): 63.

souls the Blood of Jesus and offered Him these purified souls that His thirst might be quenched. The more I gave Him to drink, the more the thirst of my own poor soul increased, and He gave me this burning thirst to show His love for me."[23] Given this imagined need to convert the heathen, both Pauline and Thérèse have been assigned the task of doing surveillance, which consists of spying out the wickedness of their spiritual enemies. For instance, Christ tells Pauline that "He had an important plan" for her, which is "to find out the habits and hiding places of His enemy" (p. 137). Thérèse's mission is virtually identical: "ever since I placed myself in the arms of Jesus, I have been like the watchman keeping an eye on the enemy from the highest turret of a strong fort. Nothing escapes my gaze and I am often astonished to be able to see so clearly."[24]

Given the insatiable desire for souls and the need to expose the heathen, both Pauline and Thérèse conceive of themselves as warriors, who must rout their spiritual enemies. Strengthened by God's "tests and privations," Pauline claims that she is "armored and armed" (p. 195) for the spiritual battle ahead of her. Indeed, as an empowered believer, Pauline describes herself "as a dangerous lion that had burst into a ring of pale and fainting believers" (p. 196). Thérèse strikes a similar chord. She claims that she wants "to be a warrior": "I would like to perform the most heroic deeds. I feel I have the courage of a Crusader. I should like to die on the battlefield in defence of the Church."[25] Whatever the consequences, Thérèse insists that she will fulfill her Christian duty: "God has given me the grace of having no fear of a fight. I will do my duty at any cost."[26]

Of ultimate importance for both is the triumph of the Christian faith, a theological victory that ultimately sanctions the most horrendous of acts. Having established that her primary objective is to preach Christ's "Name" and to raise the "glorious Cross in pagan lands,"[27] Thérèse pays tribute to "the Church Triumphant," for it is through "the Church Suffering" that humanity will be able "to extinguish the flames which threaten her, and on to the

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[23] Thérèse (1957): 64.
[24] Thérèse (1957): 133.
[25] Thérèse (1957): 153.
[26] Thérèse (1957): 135.
[27] Thérèse (1957): 153.

Church Militant to ensure her victory."[28] This victory consists of the Christian Word effacing or obliterating anything that threatens its supremacy. Teresa of Ávila, a famous Carmelite nun and a prominent Catholic saint, clearly articulates the supersessionist theology governing Thérèse's spiritual mission. In the first chapter of *The Way of Perfection*, Teresa suggests that identifying and destroying spiritual enemies is crucial to the project of spiritual perfection and necessary for the spiritual health of France. In her case, the enemies are the Lutherans. Indeed, she notes "the harm and havoc that were being wrought in France by these Lutherans and the way in which their unhappy sect was increasing." Given this deplorable situation, she entreats the Lord "to remedy this great evil." So intense is her passion, so righteous is her mission, and so evil is her enemy that she "would have laid down a thousand lives to save a single one of all the souls that were being lost there"[29] in France. And since Thérèse of Lisieux considers Teresa of Ávila "'her holy patron,'"[30] it only follows that she believes that it is her duty to carry on Teresa of Ávila's sacred mission.

The links between Pauline and Thérèse are too numerous and significant to be considered mere accident, and they function, at least according to semiotic theory, to activate "an interpretive framework in the mind of the reader." As Catherine Rainwater demonstrates, such allusions to Christian figures and religious symbols function in Erdrich's texts "to cue the reader to expect the story to unfold within an intertextual framework of references," specifically "within a Judeo-Christian value system."[31] Of course, scholars generally acknowledge the numerous references to Christianity in *Tracks*, particularly in relation to Pauline. But they usually interpret Pauline as a perversion or distortion of Christianity. For instance, Rainwater refers to "the warped theology of Pauline," an interpretation that leads Rainwater to refer to Pauline's "sadomasochistic Christianity as marginal and aberrant."[32] Similarly, Michelle Hessler

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[28] Thérèse (1957): 157.

[29] Teresa of Ávila (1964), *The Way of Perfection*. Translated by E. Allison Peers. Garden City, New York: Image Books: 36.

[30] Thérèse (1957): 34.

[31] Rainwater (1990), "Reading between Worlds: Narrativity in the Fiction of Louise Erdrich," *American Literature*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (September): 407.

[32] Rainwater (1990): 409.

claims that Pauline "invents a sadistic form of Catholicism,"[33] while Lawrence Gross refers to Pauline's faith as "a fanatical form of religious expression."[34] Friedman seemingly follows suit when she defines Pauline's Christianity within the context of "the extremes of missionary Catholicism."[35] All of these interpretations suggest that Pauline distorts and perverts Christianity, specifically Catholicism, and as a consequence, they enable the scholars to condemn Pauline without faulting Christianity (or Catholicism) per se.

Friedman, however, is not content with such a dismissive reading of Pauline's character, and she intelligently and rightly demonstrates that Pauline's actions are actually consistent with the behavior of well-regarded mystics and saints. In essence, Friedman suggests that, because many famous Catholic women were as excessive and extreme as Pauline, it follows that Erdrich is not as critical of Pauline as most scholars argue. I, however, draw the exact opposite conclusion. Given that so many Church-sanctioned mystics and saints were extreme, Erdrich implicitly critiques not just Pauline but also Christianity, which has disseminated a way of thinking that leads to horrific acts of violence. Approaching the text in this way explains Pauline's motivation for killing Napoleon Morrissey. Pauline's task is to fetch "souls" (p. 140) for Jesus, but before she can accomplish this, she must first locate the "enemy" of Christ, which is described as "a devil in the land, a shadow in the water, an apparition that filled their [Native Americans'] sight" (p. 137). So long as this infernal enemy lives, converting the Indians to Christianity would be impossible, for "[t]here was no room for Him [Christ] to dwell in so much as a crevice of their minds" (p. 137). Locating the "enemy" and then killing it, therefore, would enable Pauline to create the necessary conditions for the conversion of the Indians.

That enemy she identifies as the Manitou, "Misshepeshu, the water man, the monster" (p. 11). Pauline specifically refers to him as "a devil," and at the end of the novel, after praying in a boat on

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[33] Hessler (1995), "Catholic Nuns and Ojibwa Shamans: Pauline and Fleur in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring): 40.

[34] Gross (2005), "The Trickster and World Maintenance: An Anishinaabe Reading of Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Fall): 56.

[35] Friedman (1994): 115.

Lake Matchimanito, where she believes Misshepeshu dwells, she internalizes the role of the Virgin Mary by strangling Napoleon with her rosary. Earlier in the novel, when describing a French plaster statue of the Virgin Mary, Pauline focuses on the Holy Mother's white foot crushing the devilish snake: "Stars turned up at Her feet, which rested full weight on a lively serpent. The snake was bent to strike and colored a poison green. The virgin's foot was small, white, and marvelously bare" (p. 92). Following Teresa of Ávila, who would lay down a thousand lives in order to save a single soul, following Thérèse of Lisieux, who would do her duty at whatever cost in order to ensure the victory of the "Church Militant," Pauline flashes the ultimate symbol of supersessionist theology at Napoleon: "My resolve was to transfix him with the cross" (p. 200). For Pauline, to bring spiritual life to the community through her supersessionist theology of the Cross, she must first, like the Virgin Mary, Teresa of Ávila, and Thérèse of Lisieux, eradicate evil. By having Pauline use her rosary to strangle Napoleon, and by linking Napoleon with the "devil" in the water, Erdrich clearly suggests that Pauline kills Napoleon because she has internalized the Catholic view of Mary as the victor over evil. And since Napoleon assumed the "body [of] the devil" (p. 203), she feels no remorse for having killed him. How could she? By destroying evil (that which is non-Christian or anti-Christian), she has fulfilled the task Christ has set for her, which was to create space within the minds of the Native Americans, thus making room for Jesus to enter into their psyches. In other words, by delegitimizing what she considers a demonic religious figure, such as Misshepeshu, Pauline believes that she has set the stage for the one true faith to supplant and supersede the Indian's false religion. And given that prominent women such as the Virgin Mary, Teresa of Ávila, and Thérèse of Lisieux provide a theological justification for Pauline's violent behavior, it would make more sense to say that Pauline is a logical product of her Catholic faith rather than a freakish aberration. There is additional support for this reading of the text if we take into account Pauline's decision to refer to the Indians as Jews, but before I turn to this topic, let me briefly discuss the link between a religious conception of the self and the emergence of the sacred imagined nation.

II

Absolutely crucial for understanding Erdrich's *Tracks* is knowledge of the link between Christianity's supersessionist theology and the formation of the modern nation state. It is my contention that twentieth-century novelists in particular have been increasingly cognizant of this link, which explains the proliferation of extremely powerful and successful novels that focus on missionaries over the past 50 years, including Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959), Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Brian Moore's *Black Robe* (1985), Erdrich's *Tracks* (1988), and Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998), to name only a few. What concerns all these writers is not so much the missionaries' arrogance as much as their ability to institute a politics of domination, which is why Richard Wright examines "the teachings of the missionaries as a technique of colonial control."[36] According to my reading, the missionary, with its attendant supersessionist theology, is not so much a person as it is a structure of meaning embedded within the concept of the modern nation state, and as such, it is impossible to understand the colonizing, imperializing, and totalitarian politics of the West without taking into account the theologization of the Western concept of the nation.

To illuminate the epistemic role of the missionary, let me briefly discuss Walker's *The Color Purple*, which bears a striking resemblance to *Tracks* in that it is mainly set in the early twentieth century (1890s through 1940s) and focuses on the degree to which Christian supersessionism forms the basis of the modern nation state. Nettie is one of the novel's Christian missionaries, who believes that Africans "need Christ."[37] Indeed, Nettie wants to be "useful as a missionary" (p. 132), and within the context of *The Color Purple*, this usefulness has a very specific meaning. To civilize and Christianize Africans, Nettie must first divest them of their traditional values and culture. In a poignant scene, when the parents of the young African girl, Tashi, express their concern about their daughter's unconventional

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[36] Wright (2008), *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos*, in *Black Power*, New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: HarperPerennial: 171.

[37] Walker (1982), *The Color Purple*. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc.: 131. Hereafter cited in text.

behavior of attending school, Walker brilliantly exposes Nettie's objective. Tashi's mother claims that her daughter "learns everything" she teaches her, but she claims that "the knowledge does not enter" Tashi's "soul" (p. 160). In other words, Tashi understands her parents' culture and traditions, but she is not internalizing them, which makes the mother "puzzled and afraid" and the father "angry." What is significant in this passage is Nettie's response: "I thought: Aha. Tashi knows she is learning a way of life she will never live. But I did not say this" (p. 160). Nettie realizes ("Aha") that Tashi is becoming alienated from both her parents and her culture ("she is learning a way of life she will never live"), and such a development is an occasion for rejoicing, for in making Tashi uncomfortable with her native culture, Nettie would be in a better position to evangelize her. But it is absolutely crucial for Nettie to conceal her understanding ("I did not say this") of Tashi's internal sense of alienation, for if Tashi's parents understood what was occurring, they would more proactively inculcate their culture's values and traditions within their daughter and distance her from the Christian missionaries, thus making Nettie's job of converting Tashi to Christ much more difficult. Put simply, Nettie is an effective missionary because she knows how to read the inner life of her subject and she knows when and how to strategically conceal her missionary objective.

Having made the younger natives uncomfortable with their own culture and values, Nettie is then ready to indoctrinate them with hers. For instance, a couple letters later, after the roadbuilders destroy the Olinkas' village, Nettie notes how the native "boys now accept Olivia [Celie's daughter and Nettie's niece] and Tashi in class and more mothers are sending their daughters to school. The men do not like it: who wants a wife who knows everything her husband knows? they fume" (p. 170). Obviously, Nettie has played her hand perfectly, for she has effectively outwitted Tashi's parents. At the conclusion of the earlier letter, Tashi's father specifically told Nettie that she should respect Olinka culture by teaching "only the boys" (p. 162), for "[t]he Olinka do not believe girls should be educated" (p. 155). But Nettie certainly had no intention of respecting the wishes of Tashi's parents, which is why she strategically concealed her thoughts. And now, without gloating, Nettie indicates that she has effectively had her way with the Olinka youth.

The reason why Nettie feels so comfortable divesting Africans of their culture is that she has internalized what Aimé Césaire

refers to as a "Christianity=civilization" mentality. As Césaire claims, Christianity in the West has been equated with civilization ("*Christianity=civilization*"), while paganism has been equated with savagery ("*paganism=savagery*").[38] In *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin specifically notes how Western powers have linked "the terms 'civilized' and 'Christian'"[39] in order to justify their politics of global domination. In her 1997 acceptance speech for being Humanist of the Year, Walker clearly places herself within this tradition of writers when she claims that many in the black community have been taught "that spiritually civilized life began with the birth of Jesus Christ."[40] Indeed, in a short story from her collection *In Love & Trouble*, Walker has an African nun directly express the view that Christianity and civilization are interchangeable: "I am a wife of Christ, a wife of the Catholic church. The wife of a celibate martyr and saint. I was born in this township, a village 'civilized' by American missionaries."[41] This equation between Christianity and civilization, Tracy Fessenden intelligently remarks, was disseminated through such seemingly neutral sources of information as the dictionary. For instance, in his 1828 dictionary, Noah Webster equates Christianity and civilization through a rhetorical question he poses in his definition of civilization: "'What nation, since the commencement of the christian era, ever rose from *savage* to civilized without christianity?'"[42]

Webster's equation of Christianity and civilization was a major concern for Frederic Perry Noble, who published in 1899 the definitive study of the time about Christian missionaries in Africa, which is titled, *The Redemption of Africa: A Story of Civilization*. According to Noble, "the missionary is the mainspring of Africa's

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[38] Césaire (2000), *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press: 33.

[39] Baldwin (1991), *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Vintage Books: 52.

[40] Walker (2001), "The Only Reason You Want to go to Heaven is That you have been Driven out of your Mind," in Anthony Pinn ed. *By These Hands: A Documentary History of African American Humanism*. New York and London: New York University Press: 295.

[41] Walker (1973), "The Diary of an African Nun," in *In Love & Trouble*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.: 114.

[42] Quoted in Tracy Fessenden (2007), *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press: 52.

modern evolution, the creator of her future civilizations and the chief human hope for the betterment of her hapless people."[43] Indeed, for Noble, Christianity and civilization go hand in hand, for missionary activity in Africa is described as "a movement always in vital touch with the growth of Christianity or with the advance of civilization."[44] At first glance, it would seem that the "growth of Christianity" and "the advance of civilization" would be interchangeable. But as one reviewer of Noble's book claims, *The Redemption of Africa* solved two major intellectual and political puzzles: "that civilization cannot successfully precede evangelization with the native African, and, second, that in Africa, as in no other land, the Christian missionary and the spirit of missionary endeavor have led the way for science and exploration. The well-meant efforts of individuals and societies to civilize first and then to Christianize the black man have been followed again and again by utter failure." If civilization is going to flourish in Africa, then Africans must first be Christianized. In other words, civilizing Africans will not necessarily lead them to become Christians, and if they do not become Christians, the "civilization" that Africans would construct would most certainly crumble. In fact, it would not even qualify as civilization. Therefore, the reviewer, citing Noble, concludes: "'Christian missions must civilize African peoples by bringing man after man into personal fellowship with God in Christ.'"[45] With regard to the sacred imagined nation, Christianity has the conceptual weight to ontologically transform Africans into civilized beings. By stark contrast, a concept of civilization that is not premised on Christianity would lack the semantic force to effect a substantive transformation within Africa or Africans.

Noble specifically identifies King Leopold II, monarch of Belgium and colonizer of the Congo, as one of the "statesmen whose African activities aimed at her betterment."[46] This is the case because Leopold penned one of the most incisive apologias (an open letter) of Europe's religiously inflected political agenda in Africa. As Leopold claims, of ultimate importance is establishing

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[43] Noble (1899), *The Redemption of Africa: A Story of Civilization*. Chicago, New York, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company: xiv.
[44] Noble (1899): 5.
[45] "Africa," in *New York Times*: March 11, 1899.
[46] Noble (1899): 4.

clear communication between Europe and Africa, which "will closely connect the Congo with the mother country, which will prompt Europe (whose eyes follow us [Belgians]) to take a benevolent and generous interest in all our labours, which will convey to our progress a more and more rapid and decisive impetus, and which will soon introduce into the vast region of the Congo all the blessings of Christian civilisation."[47] Note how everything in this passage is leading up to the "blessings of Christian civilisation." To legitimize all that Leopold is doing in the Congo, he must indicate to his audience that his objectives are in line with Europe's religiously inflected political philosophy. Therefore, to establish civilization in the Congo, Leopold must introduce Christianity into the region. As he says of the Congolese: "Their primitive nature will not resist indefinitely the pressing appeals of Christian culture. Their education, once begun, will proceed apace." To be expected, Leopold specifically claims that "our priests and missionaries"[48] play a crucial role in the project of establishing Christian civilization in the Congo. For Leopold, civilization presupposes Christianity, and as a consequence, the Europeans have a moral obligation to inculcate within the Congolese a truly religious mentality so that they can become a truly civilized people.

This Christianity=civilization mentality effectively justifies political violence, for as Leopold claims, "the development of civilisation in the centre of Equatorial Africa" is absolutely crucial, and therefore, "strong authority must be imposed to bring the natives (who have no such inclination) to conform to the usages of civilisation." Thus, it is his duty to dominate the Congolese in the name of Christian civilization: "in view of this desirable spread of civilisation, we count upon the means of action which confer upon us dominion and the sanction of right."[49] Leopold's political agenda is based on the assumption that Western political models are, first and foremost, religious ("Christian civilisation"), and, therefore, to oppose the West's "desirable spread of civilisation" would be a tacit rejection of morality, justice, and even God.

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[47] Leopold (2003), "Letter from the King of the Belgians," in *Fictions of Empire*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company: 108.
[48] Leopold (2003): 107.
[49] Leopold (2003): 106.

Prominent twentieth-century writers were particularly attentive to King Leopold's Christian justification of his political project in the Congo. For instance, on June 22, 1906, Twain refers to Leopold as an "intensely Christian monarch," who "has stolen an entire kingdom in Africa, and in the fourteen years of Christian endeavor there has reduced the population of thirty millions to fifteen by murder, mutilation, overwork, robbery, rapine—confiscating the helpless native's very labor and giving him nothing in return but salvation and a home in Heaven, furnished at the last moment by the Christian priest."[50] To underscore the Christian justification for Leopold's colonial project in the Congo, Twain includes on the cover of the British version of his book *King Leopold's Soliloquy* a picture of a cross and a sword. On both sides of the image are skulls in grass, the logical product of Leopold's Christianizing campaign in the Congo, and below the image is the inscription: "BY THIS SIGN WE PROSPER." This whole page is bordered with chains, suggesting the degree to which Leopold's project has functioned to enslave rather than to liberate. Perhaps the most damning indictment of Leopold's Christian political agenda is to be found in an image with which Twain frames the book. After opening *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, the reader is immediately given quotations about Leopold that are in the form of a cross (see Figure 4.1), an image that links Leopold's colonizing agenda with his Christian faith. To indicate the destructive consequences of this Christian project on Africans, Twain pictures on the penultimate page of the primary text a young African with a hand chopped off, which is but a single example of what was occurring on a massive scale in the Congo, as Adam Hochschild documents in his excellent study *King Leopold's Ghost*. This image accurately signifies what Belgians were literally doing to Africans (chopping off their hands), but it also represents what Belgians were symbolically accomplishing in Africa (divesting Africans of individual agency, which is best symbolized by handless people). To conclude the work, Twain includes another text that is formed in the image of a Cross. By using this same religious image to frame Leopold's soliloquy, Twain intimates that the Belgian project in the Congo begins and ends with Christ, which Twain underscores by having Leopold say that

[50] Twain (1963), "Reflections on Religion," *Hudson Review*, Vol. 16: 341.

"IT IS I"

"Leopold II is the absolute Master of the whole of the internal and external activity of the Independent State of the Congo. The organization of justice, the army, the industrial and commercial regimes are established freely by himself. He would say, and with greater accuracy than did Louis XIV., 'The State, it is I.'" *Prof. F. Cattier, Brussels University.*

"Let us repeat after so many others what has become a platitude, the success of the African work is the work of a sole directing will, without being hampered by the hesitation of timorous politicians, carried out under his sole responsibility,—intelligent, thoughtful, conscious of the perils and the advantages, discounting with an admirable prescience the great results of a near future." *M. Alfred Poskine in "Bilans Congolais."*

his objective is to "lift up those twenty-five millions of gentle and harmless blacks out of darkness into light, the light of our blessed Redeemer, the light that streams from his holy Word, the light that makes glorious our noble civilization—lift them up and dry their tears and fill their bruised hearts with joy and gratitude—lift them up and make them comprehend that they were no longer outcasts and forsaken, but our very brothers in Christ."[51] For Twain, Leopold's Christianization of the Congo ultimately leads to the disempowerment of Africans.

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[51] Twain (1905), *King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule*, Boston: The P. R. Warren Co.: 6.

Baldwin offers a similar critique of Leopold's Christian domination of the Belgian Congo. In his portrayal of Western political regimes, Baldwin specifically faults "the Christian world," which "has been misled by its own rhetoric and narcotized by its own power." To illustrate his point, he focuses on "the natives of the Belgian Congo," who have "endured the most unspeakable atrocities at the hands of the Belgians." What has led the Belgians in particular and the Europeans in general to overlook their massive atrocities is the very Christian discourse that Leopold articulated in his open letter. As Baldwin claims: "This [the Congolese] suffering occurred in silence. This suffering was not indignantly reported in the Western press, as the suffering of white men would have been. The suffering of the native was considered necessary, alas, for European Christian dominance."[52] To Christianize and, therefore, civilize African savages, violence and force are necessary, which is why white Christians never really considered the suffering of Africans legitimate. With time, Africans would eventually accept Christianity and, therefore, become civilized, which would render the sufferings and deaths of so many Africans a necessary sacrifice on behalf of Christian civilization. Hence, there is no reason to lament the then-current suffering and death of so many Congolese, for in the final analysis, their sacrifices will have served a noble end. Such is the logic that not only justifies African suffering but also European domination.

In an interview, John O'Brien addresses Walker's critique of Christianity throughout her work, and Walker clarifies why this is the case: "I am interested in Christianity as an imperialist tool used against Africa."[53] To underscore how Christianity has functioned in the seemingly secular West, Walker creates a painfully uncomfortable scene in which a W. E. B. Du Bois-inspired character, Edward DuBoyce, verbally flogs a former Christian missionary for unwittingly participating in Leopold's dehumanization and extermination of the Congolese. Samuel, Nettie's husband and a fellow missionary, tells a story about his first wife's aunt, Theodosia, who was a Christian missionary. During an at-home, Theodosia

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[52] Baldwin (1969), "Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," in *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*. New York: Richard W. Baron Publishing Co.: 8.
[53] Walker (1993), "Alice Walker: An Interview," in Henry Louis Gates, Jr and Kwame Anthony Appiah (eds), *Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present*. New York: Amistad: 341.

tells everyone present "about her African adventures, leading up to the time King Leopold of Belgium presented her with a medal" (p. 236). For Theodosia, this medal "validated her service as an exemplary missionary in the King's colony," so she beams with pride when telling her tale. But the DuBoyce character, who understands Western ideology, African history, and world politics, dashes Theodosia's sense of accomplishment by telling her how her missionary activity enabled Leopold to enact his brutal colonizing project in the Congo: "Rather than cherish that medal, Madame, you should regard it as a symbol of your unwitting complicity with this despot who worked to death and brutalized and eventually exterminated thousands and thousands of African peoples" (p. 237).

To understand what prompts DuBoyce's barbed response, it would be useful to examine what was probably one of Walker's sources for her construction of this scene. In *The World and Africa*, Du Bois details the seductive psychology of Christianity that subtly convinced so many people, such as Theodosia and Nettie, to contribute to the degradation and violation of Africa and Africans. As Du Bois claims, when he was a young boy, he was seduced by Henry Stanley's vision of Africa, specifically "of the great new Christian Kingdom of Congo which civilization was about to rear in the Dark Continent, to lead the natives to God."[54] Du Bois is calling our attention to the Christianity=civilization basis of Western politics. Civilization is giving birth to the "Christian Kingdom of Congo," which is to say that, because the Kingdom of the Congo will be Christian, it will qualify as civilization. Given this noble and righteous project, "[m]illions of pounds and dollars went into the 'conversion of the heathen' to Christianity and the education of the natives." Indeed, Du Bois ironically observes, "the triumph of Europe [in Africa] was to the glory of God and the untrammeled power of the only people on earth who deserved to rule."[55] This passage certainly informs Walker's novel. When Nettie arrives at the "Missionary Society of New York" (p. 136), she sees a picture of Stanley among other prominent white males on the wall (p. 137), and when she gets to Africa, she

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[54] Du Bois (1965), *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History*. New York: International: 317.
[55] Du Bois (1965): 33.

finds pictures in her trunk, which were donated "by the missionary societies in England and America." One picture was of Stanley (p. 159). Read through the lens of Du Bois' critique, Theodosia contributed, whether she knew it or not, whether she desired to do so or not (an "unwitting complicity"), to the European domination and exploitation of Africa and Africans, which explains why DuBoyce specifically mentions that "King Leopold cut the hands off [African] workers" (p. 237). Put simply, Theodosia's Christian missionary zeal helped Leopold divest Africans of agency, which is best symbolized by Leopold's policy of chopping off African hands.

To understand why Walker specifically references King Leopold II and the Christian politics of the 1890s, it would be useful to locate her work within the context of the African American critique of the sacred imagined nation. For African Americans, no story mattered as much as the tale of the Exodus. According to Allen Dwight Callahan, African Americans revere Moses as a "venerable ideal of African American leadership,"[56] since he provided oppressed people with the perfect model for setting the captives free. So instrumental was the figure of Moses in the project of emancipating blacks that he has been considered almost as important as Jesus, for as James Cone records: "black Christians have always known that the God of Moses and of Jesus did not create them to be slaves or second-class citizens in North America."[57] No doubt, Moses figured prominently in nineteenth-century African American literature and culture, as can be seen in traditional spirituals ("Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said,/ Let my people go" ["Go Down, Moses"]), Frances Harper's "Moses: A Story of the Nile" (Moses brings about the "great deliverance"[58] of the enslaved and the oppressed) and Paul Laurence Dunbar's "An Ante-Bellum Sermon" ("de Lawd will sen' some Moses/ Fu' to set his chillun free.")[59]

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[56] Callahan (2006), *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 98.

[57] Cone (1984), *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books: 8.

[58] Harper (1990), "Moses: A Story of the Nile," in Frances Smith Foster ed. *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Reader*. New York: The Feminist Press: line 153.

[59] Dunbar (1913), "An Ante-Bellum Sermon," in *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company: lines 30–1.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive view of Moses in the black community, there was some dissent, especially in the twentieth century. For instance, in a letter to Carl Van Vechten about what she considered one of her most important works, *Herod the Great*, Zora Neale Hurston claims that "Moses forced" his laws on the ancient Hebrews "by terror and death" and that "Moses was responsible for the actual death of at least a half million of the people in his efforts to force his laws upon them."[60] So ruthless, monomaniacal, and fanatical was Moses that Hurston refers to him as a "dictator,"[61] a description that certainly had profound implications in 1945, just after the end of World War II, when Hurston penned the letter. In her 1997 speech, Walker acknowledges the black community's devotion to and appropriation of Moses: "In the black church, we have loved and leaned on Moses, because he brought the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt. As enslaved and oppressed people, we have identified with him so completely that we have adopted his God." But for Walker, this devotion to Moses is not a virtue. Rather, it is a major vice. The problem with Moses is that he believes in a God who does not love black people, which is why Walker, after mentioning the black community's devotion to Moses, concludes: "It is fatal to love a God who does not love you."[62] What explains the progression from the nineteenth-century view of Moses as the Great Deliverer, to a mid-twentieth-century view of Moses as a dictator, to a late twentieth-century view of Moses as a man devoted to a God who does not love black people?

Wright gestures towards an answer in the Introduction to *White Man, Listen!*, when he cautions his readers to be skeptical of anyone who plays the role of Moses: "I'm no Moses and, as one great and shrewd American once said, if some Moses should lead you into the Promised Land, some other Moses, equally adroit and persuasive, could just as easily lead you out again."[63] Moses is ultimately an empty signifier, a semiotic vacuity that could be used

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[60] Hurston (2002), *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters*, ed. Carla Kaplan, New York: Random House: 529.
[61] Hurston (2002): 530.
[62] Walker (2001): 297.
[63] Wright (2008), *White Man, Listen!* in *Black Power*. New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: HarperPerennial: 646.

to liberate the oppressed but also to re-enslave the liberated. In an unpublished lecture version of the first chapter from *White Man, Listen!*, Wright explains in more detail the reasons why people should be so reluctant to embrace Moses as a political figure:

> This platform is not Mount Sinai and I have no Ten Commandments to hand down to you for your salvation. I'm not Moses to lead you into the Promised Land. And, if I were you, I'd be extremely doubtful of any Moses who promises to lead you into that Promised Land, for, if a Moses should lead you into that Promised Land, another Moses could just as easily lead you right out again. In this connection I'd advise you to read most carefully the terrifying and melancholy utterances of a certain Comrade Khrushehev who recently explained to the doting and faithful millions how much murder a Moses can commit.[64]

Written between 1951 and 1956, long after Wright had rejected Communism, Wright's reference to Khrushehev should not be considered an endorsement of Soviet politics. Wright is extremely critical of Khrushehev later in the lecture. But he is trying to underscore the fact that the image of Moses, as a model for a political leader, can be as dangerous as it is empowering. In other words, blacks can deploy the Moses myth in order to achieve liberation, but they must understand that, in valorizing Moses, they are also making it possible for the Moses figure to be used to justify their subjugation and annihilation.

More than anything else, what compelled so many black writers to reassess the Moses myth was the theology of the sacred imagined nation, and no one articulates that theology more cogently than Rudyard Kipling. It was in the late 1890s, when Leopold was colonizing the Congo and the United States was annexing the Philippines, that Kipling published "The White Man's Burden," a poem exhorting the United States' citizens to bind their "sons to [the] exile" of colonial rule in order to liberate the "Half-devil

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[64] I take this quotation from one of the lecture versions of "some psychological traits of oppressed people," which would eventually become the first chapter of *White Man, Listen!* This lecture is in the Richard Wright Papers in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. I want to thank the Beinecke Library for giving me access to these materials.

and half-child" of non-Christian nations, such as the Philippines, from their "heathen Folly." In other words, Kipling considered the United States to be in a similar position as Great Britain. As he claims in his poem, "Recessional," the Chosen Race is special because it has privileged epistemological access to the Divine Law. Within this framework, an imperial power, which stands beneath the "awful Hand" of the "God of our fathers," holds "Dominion" over the "lesser breeds," who are "without the Law."

For early twentieth-century black writers, "The White Man's Burden" and "Recessional" were two of the most offensive and destructive poems ever written, because they forcefully and cogently formulated the religious philosophy on which the West's racist political agenda rested. So influential were the poems that most black writers, when referencing them, did not even mention Kipling by name. For instance, in an editorial titled "The Passing of Jack Johnson," James Weldon Johnson says: "One of the delusions fostered by the Anglo-Saxon is that white men are superior to those of 'lesser breed' not only intellectually, but also in physical strength and stamina."[65] In "The Souls of White Folk" chapter from *Darkwater*, Du Bois denounces the United States for becoming like Europe by committing the "worst sin against civilization. She aspires to sit among the great nations who arbitrate the fate of 'lesser breeds without the law.'"[66] In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Césaire mentions "the famous *white man's burden*"[67] twice to indicate the powerful effect of Kipling's rhetoric in the cause of colonization, and in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the narrator immediately indicates to the reader that he or she should distrust the white philanthropist, Mr. Norton, by referring to him as "a bearer of the white man's burden."[68]

For black writers, particularly galling was Kipling's placement of the white man in the position of Moses. For example, in "The White Man's Burden," Kipling suggests that non-whites are chosen people, but they are like the ancient Hebrews who have become

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[65] James Weldon Johnson (2004), "The Passing of Jack Johnson," in *Writings: James Weldon Johnson*. New York: Library of America: 615.

[66] Du Bois (1995), "The Souls of White Folk," in David Levering Lewis ed. *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader*. New York: Henry Holt and Company: 464.

[67] Césaire (2000): 60, 73.

[68] Ralph Ellison (1995), *Invisible Man*. New York: Vintage Books: 37.

inured to their enslaved lives in Egypt. According to this interpretation, the white man is positioned within the biblical text in relation to Moses, who selflessly serves the spiritual needs of the chosen race but who receives only resistance and derision from the momentarily benighted chosen people:

> Take up the White Man's burden—
> And reap his old reward:
> The blame of those ye better,
> The hate of those ye guard—
> The cry of hosts ye humour
> (Ah, slowly!) toward the light:—
> "Why brought ye us from bondage,
> Our loved Egyptian night?"

Kipling uses the Exodus myth, and he even places the colonized Other in the position of the Chosen People, but by placing the white man in the position of Moses and by conceiving of the colonial Others as ancient Hebrews within an Egyptian night, he was able to use the Moses story, and even the black interpretation of that story, to justify the white man's domination of the "lesser breeds." In a twisted sense, Kipling's intellectual move in "The White Man's Burden" is brilliant, and it reflects a clearer formulation of Europe's theological justification for imperialism. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whites in both Europe and the United States dubbed blacks Canaanites or Hamites, thus reducing them to non-chosen people, in order to justify the perpetual domination and violation of non-whites. But by characterizing blacks as the Chosen People who are simply steeped in an Egyptian night, Kipling was able to honor non-whites with a chosen title, while still justifying an imperial relation. What I am trying to demonstrate here is that black writers, acutely aware of the intricate logic of the Bible's Exodus myth, were able to recognize the theology on which Kipling's nation-state politics were based.

Let me define that theology more clearly. Through in-depth Christianization, ordinary Westerners have internalized the view that the nation state, to be legitimate, must be premised on Christianity's Divine Law, which is why Seeley, as I argued in Chapter 3, claims that "the church […] is the soul of the state." In the modern age, the church does not dictate to the state. Rather,

religion, as an orienting and governing ideology, is embedded within the concept of the state (it "is the soul of the state"), and thereby determines its form and agenda. Noble makes this point directly in an epigraph to *The Redemption of Africa*, which articulates the nature of this idea with striking precision: "The religious idea at the bottom of our civilization is the missionary idea."[69] The state exists not as an ontological reality independent of the human mind, but as a communally imagined reality, which inhabits the minds of ordinary citizens and political legislators. According to this view, it is impossible to understand modern Western civilization in all its complexity without taking into account the "missionary idea," for this idea has given birth to the concept of Western civilization and its attendant colonizing mandate. The priority of terms here is absolutely crucial, which means that it would be an intellectual mistake to reverse the equation by claiming that the religious idea at the bottom of the missionary idea is civilization. It is not civilization that leads to the missionary idea; rather, it is the missionary idea that has created the necessary conditions for Western civilization to emerge. Within this framework, Christian supersessionist theology is embedded within the concept of the state.

Walker brilliantly exposes the way this supersessionist theology functions through Samuel's horrid realization that he has internalized the Christianity=civilization mentality, and as a consequence, has contributed to the West's ruthless political agenda, which is why he concludes that he has been "TWENTY YEARS A FOOL OF THE WEST" (p. 236). Samuel arrives at this conclusion when he reflects on his former wife's education at Spelman Seminary to become a missionary. The seminary, the same one Theodosia attended, "Started in a church basement, [but] it soon moved up to Army barracks" (p. 234). Conflating the church and the army is certainly no mistake, for both equally serve the economic and political interests of the white community, which Walker underscores when she notes how the school's founders ("two white missionaries from New England") "were able to get large sums of money from some of the richest men in America" (p. 234). Most significant, however, is that the school's motto is indistinguishable from Leopold's Christianity=civilization political agenda. As Samuel says of the

[69] Noble (1899): title page.

school: "Their official motto was OUR WHOLE SCHOOL FOR CHRIST. But I always thought their unofficial motto should have been OUR COMMUNITY COVERS THE WORLD" (p. 235). On the surface ("official motto"), the school's mission is focused narrowly on the community, but beneath the surface ("unofficial motto"), its mission is ultimately a politics of global domination, a view derived from the Gospel of Matthew: "go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations."[70] Leopold would lovingly support and encourage such a school's Christian mission, for in forming future soldiers of Christ, Spelman is simultaneously working with Western political leaders to establish civilization, which they believe only Christianity incarnates.

Throughout the novel, Walker strategically draws her readers' attention to the prominent political role Christianity plays in the domination and exploitation of Africa, and even the world. For instance, to secure funding for the missionaries' project in Africa, Nettie, Corrine, and Samuel visit New York, where "[t]here are more than a hundred churches" (p. 135). Eager to serve the Christian civilizing cause, many New Yorkers "give and give and then reach down and give some more, when the name 'Africa' is mentioned" (p. 135). Based on such generosity, Nettie says of the New Yorkers: "They *love* Africa" (p. 135). But Walker's decision to italicize the word *love* invites her readers to interrogate what their *love* entails. In and through their charity, New York Christians have basically funded a project that will divest Africans, such as the Olinka, of their culture and land. Naive, idealistic, and uncritical, Nettie cannot understand this link between her Christian worldview and Western political domination, so when she visits the "churches of England" (p. 138), she fails to see how missionaries ultimately serve the English culture industry. For instance, after noting that the English have been sending missionaries abroad for hundreds of years, she notes how the museums in England are "packed with jewels, furniture, fur carpets, swords, clothing, even *tombs* from all the countries they have been" (p. 139, Walker's emphasis). In her enthusiasm, Nettie blithely celebrates the achievements of foreign cultures ("the things they have brought back!"), but she fails to see

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[70] *Holy Bible: The New American Bible*. Nashville, Camden, and New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers: 1971: Matthew 28.19.

the link between England's well-stocked museums and Christian missionaries in foreign countries.

Ultimately, what Walker depicts through the Christian missionaries is the way ordinary people have internalized a religious conception of self that works in tandem with Western Christian governments. But she also underscores the degree to which the missionaries are blind to the role they play in serving the project of political domination. For instance, to expose the missionaries' role, Walker introduces a white missionary woman, who fooled everyone into thinking that she had "a pious interest in heathens" (p. 230), when in fact she merely pretended to be a missionary so that she could have some solitude to write novels. After years of service in Africa, she meets Nettie on her journey back to England, and in a conversation, she predicts the coming of World War II. Nettie exposes her own ignorance when she confesses that she and Samuel "never really thought about war" (p. 228). By stark contrast, the white missionary woman thinks a great deal about war and politics, which is why she can *read* the signs which indicate that "a big war is coming": "First there's a road built to where you keep your goods. Then your trees are hauled off to make ships and captain's furniture. Then your land is planted with something you can't eat. Then you're forced to work it. That's happening all over Africa, she said" (pp. 228–9). This white missionary's words must certainly pain Nettie, for instead of indignantly resisting Westerners who decimated the Olinka village in order to exploit African resources for the coming war effort, Nettie felt "a great surge of love" (p. 163) for the Olinkas, who did "not approach the roadbuilders empty-handedly," but brought them "goat meat, millet mush, baked yam and cassava, cola nuts and palm wine" (p. 163). In other words, Nettie encouraged the Olinkas to contribute to their own destruction, which consisted in "the building of the road" (p. 163); the removal of "ancient, giant mahogany trees, all the trees" (p. 169); the destruction of the "yam field" to make way for a "rubber manufacturer" (p. 169); and the dispossession of the land, which forced the Olinka either to work for the English or to abandon their land (p. 170), just as the white missionary woman has noted. Put simply, missionaries, such as Nettie, have unwittingly worked with Western political powers to manipulate Africans into serving colonization and the war effort.

Significantly, the letter in which Nettie unwittingly documents the way the Olinka are divested of agency and land exactly as

the white missionary outlines is the same letter in which Nettie indicates that she triumphed over the Olinka "way of life" by naturalizing female attendance in school. What Walker suggests through this juxtaposition is that the totalitarian scramble for the world is incomprehensible without taking into account not just the role Christianity played in paving the way for World War II, but the role it played in framing the ideology (theology) on which the Western totalitarian agenda was based. Let me put this as bluntly as possible. To understand Nettie, we need to take into account Walker's view of the Christian origins of Western totalitarianism, which is to say, rather than seeing the West as having strategically co-opted Christianity and Christians into serving the West's political agenda, we need to see Christianity as the axiomatic basis of the modernist God state and its concomitant political objectives. According to this interpretation, the missionaries, instead of being a fanatical extreme of Western ideology, are actually the most vivid embodiment of the West's religiously inflected politics, which inhere as a structure of meaning (Christian supersessionism) within the concept of the Western nation state.

While Walker clearly critiques the modernist God state in *The Color Purple*, it is also important to note what makes such a state possible, which is a failure in literacy. Because Theodosia does not know how to read colonial history and European politics, she unwittingly contributes to the Belgian domination and exploitation of the Congolese. Because Nettie does not know how to read the objectives of British imperialists and war-time nations, she unwittingly contributes to the destruction of the Olinka. Because Spelman missionaries do not know how to read the school's "unofficial [subconscious] motto" of global domination, they unwittingly contribute to the decimation of Africa. While the ability to read history and the political is certainly central to *The Color Purple*, Walker also focuses on the ability to read the Western nation state, which is premised on Christian supersessionist theology. The West's sacred imagined nation has internalized the Gospel of Matthew claim, which urges its citizens to "make disciples of all the nations." But in so far as this ideology has embedded itself within the concept of the legitimate nation state, it has assumed a supersessionist form, which functions either to transform that which is seemingly inferior into its own image (Pauline) or to efface it altogether (Napoleon). For those who subscribe to the sacred

imagined nation's supersessionist theology or who fail to read how it functions within the subconscious, they (Theodosia) not only overlook the degree to which sacred imagined nations violate "lesser breeds without the law," but they also contribute—wittingly or not—to that very violation (Nettie and Samuel).

When Cross Damon rejects the view that the West has been secularized, it is because people in the modern streets have become fanatically and compulsively religious. What makes these people in the streets religious is a form of in-depth Christianization, which operates at the level of the subconscious, and as Walker claims, the subconscious is the "deepest reality" of people, "the accumulated collective reality of the people themselves."[71] In so far as characters such as Theodosia, Samuel, and Nettie are concerned, the subconscious is not separate from the modern nation state. To the contrary, the concept of the sacred imagined nation has contributed significantly to the formation of the missionaries' subconscious, which is why Samuel is so angry with himself for being 20 years the fool of the West. Only when Samuel and Nettie finally learn how to read the subconscious theology on which Western politics is premised are they able to reject it.

III

In *The Color Purple*, Nettie and Samuel finally learn how to read—they read Christianity, the political, and the combination of the two. And what they discover is how Christianity ultimately functions within the context of the modernist God state to divest people of individual and political autonomy. Hence, they draw the same conclusion about Christianity as Walker: "We have been beggars at the table of a religion that sanctioned our destruction."[72] In *Tracks*, however, Pauline does not have a similar epiphany. She remains passionately committed to the West's supersessionist Christian theology, which mandates the ontological subordination of everything to the dictates of the sacred imagined nation. Erdrich's novel, I contend, offers a brilliantly insightful way of understanding

[71] Walker (1993): 339.
[72] Walker (2001): 297.

the relationship between the Christian concept of the self and the modernist God state, and it is Pauline's allusion to the Jew that is of central importance, for the Jew is one of the central figures within the psychic imaginary of citizens in the twentieth-century West.

To understand Pauline, it is important to note that her objectives are not simply religious. They are also part of a nationalist agenda. Just as Teresa of Ávila claims that allowing Lutherans to multiply would threaten the spiritual health of France, so too does Pauline suggest that allowing Native Americans to multiply would threaten the spiritual health of the United States. To illustrate the destructive political consequences of tolerating the existence of Native American culture and religion, Erdrich specifically has Pauline refer to Indians as "this lost tribe of Israel" (p. 196). Within the framework of supersessionist theology, Pauline's reference to the "lost tribe of Israel" not only makes perfect sense but is also crucial to the colonizing theme of the novel. As Tudor Parfitt rightly notes, when the Spanish first arrived in America, Native Americans were considered one of the Lost Tribes of Israel, which meant "that the indigenous peoples of the Americas were Jews, or in part Jews," and this view became "a dominant discourse both in England and North America."[73] Central to Parfitt's argument, however, is that the numerous portrayals of indigenous people in America, India, Burma, New Zealand, Japan, and Africa as Lost Tribes of Israel were really the product of a colonizing political agenda rather than an actual historical fact. Put differently, the myth of the Lost Tribe of Israel "is a vital feature of colonial discourse,"[74] and "[t]he chief agents for the dissemination of theories about the Lost Tribes throughout the world, both among colonists and native peoples, were Christian missionaries of one sort or another."[75]

By having Pauline refer to Native Americans as a "lost tribe of Israel," Erdrich underscores the function the Jew played within the context of early twentieth-century nation-state politics. As Hurston notes, the white West used Christianity's Chosen People theology to ground and justify its colonial political agenda, and within this

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[73] Parfitt (2002), *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson: 58.
[74] Parfitt (2002): 1.
[75] Parfitt (2002): 100.

framework, Jews, who were superseded by Christians, represent that which must be subjugated, dominated, and even exterminated. In *Dust Tracks on a Road*, for instance, Hurston notes how New Testament supersessionist theology functioned to displace Jews as the Chosen People. After examining how the ancient Hebrews formulated a Chosen People theology in order to justify dominating and even exterminating Canaanites, she then examines how Christians internalized this Chosen People theology in order to justify their violation of Jews: "Paul and the disciples set up a New Order in Palestine after the death of Jesus, but the Jews gave it nothing but their shoulder-blades. So now the Orthodox Jew became a manifest enemy of right."[76] Hurston's point is not simply that the early church was anti-Semitic; she is trying to explain the contemporary political situation, for as she claims just a few paragraphs later: "Those Jews who would not accept Christianity look very bad in the New Testament. And two thousand years have gone by and all the Western World uses the sign of the Cross, and it is evident that the Jews are not the only ones who do not accept it."[77] Two thousand years later and Christianity's Chosen People theology, Hurston suggests, is now the Western world's basis and foundation for subjugating and violating Jews and many others. Hurston's vagueness about the Jews not being "the only ones" who fail to accept Christianity should not be seen as intellectual sloppiness on her part. She understands that the Jew, within the Western body politic, is an empty signifier. As Jean-Paul Sartre says in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, "it is the Christians who have *created* the Jew."[78] Baldwin makes this same point in *Notes of a Native Son*, when he claims that the Jew functions within Christian communities simply as a term for people who do not accept Christ:

> though the traditional Christian accusation that the Jews killed Christ is neither questioned nor doubted, the term 'Jew' actually operates in this initial context to include all infidels of white skin who have failed to accept the Savior. No real distinction is made:

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[76] Hurston (1991), *Dust Tracks on a Road*. New York: HarperPerennial: 245.
[77] Hurston (1991): 245–6.
[78] Sartre (1995), *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*. Translated by George J. Becker. New York: Schocken Books: 68. Sartre's emphasis.

> the preacher begins by accusing the Jews of having refused the light and proceeds from there to a catalog of their subsequent sins and the sufferings visited on them by a wrathful God.[79]

Notice how Baldwin treats the concept of the "Jew" as a variable term. It includes not people who are of Jewish racial descent or who subscribe to the Jewish faith. Rather, it simply refers to all infidels who reject Christ and who are therefore justly punished by a wrathful God. Hence, when Hurston refers to the other "ones," she is suggesting all those people who have been victimized by Christian supersessionist theology, a theology that has used the Jew as a template for identifying and marginalizing a wide variety of others.

Pauline explicitly deploys the supersessionist theological model when she refers to Native Americans as "this lost tribe of Israel." Note her logic when she reflects on both the mission Christ assigned her and her life after her mission: "I was pledged to a task, and when it was accomplished I would have no further use, or quarter, for this lost tribe of Israel" (p. 196). Exposing the Indians' pagan ways is not just important to fulfill the task Christ assigned her, but also in order to define herself as a Chosen Person: "They could starve and fornicate, expose their young for dogs and crows, worship the bones of animals or the brown liquor in a jar. I would have none of it. I would be chosen, His own" (p. 196). In stark contrast to the lost tribe of Israel, Pauline is God's "chosen, His own." Read alongside Renan's *The Life of Jesus*, Pauline becomes increasingly more Christian in so far as she casts off the Indian-Jew. In other words, to accentuate her "chosenness," she has to underscore the Indian-Jew's "unchosenness," which she does when she refers to the ritual of worshipping the bones of animals. But this passage is not really about Jews, which is why it is important to read it with Hurston, Sartre, and Baldwin in mind. The Jew is an empty signifier, a pejorative reference to anyone who fails to accept Christ. Therefore, when Native Americans fail to accept Christ, they become Jews, and since the supersessionist goal is to efface and eradicate Jewishness (that which is antithetical to Christ and/or Christianity), the Indian-Jew must either be totally assimilated

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[79] Baldwin (1964), *Notes of a Native Son*. New York: Beacon Press: 55.

(as with Pauline, who becomes wholly white as Christ informs her) or totally annihilated (as with Napoleon, who is exterminated with a rosary).

More importantly, as a nationalist trope, the infidel-Jew is indispensable for enacting a country's political agenda. Without Christianity, as Noble claims, there can be no civilization, which means that tolerating the presence of the Indian-Jew would threaten the very foundation of civilization. Following Parfitt, who claims that the trope of the lost tribe of Israel was the missionaries' major contribution to colonization, Pauline's task of converting the Indian-Jew to Christianity is more than just a spiritual act; it is central to the life of the God state, an idea that Teresa of Ávila espouses when she claims that France can only be healthy and whole when it banishes evil anti-Christians, such as the Lutherans. Not surprisingly, to conclude her "lost tribe of Israel" chapter, Pauline discloses to the reader the religious name the convent's Mother Superior assigned her: "*Leopolda*" (p. 205). This name is significant, for it places Pauline in the same position as Walker's Theodosia, a Christian missionary who has been unwittingly complicit in Leopold's project of colonization. To bring civilization to Africa, it is imperative that the Congolese first be Christianized, and as Adam Hochschild rightly notes, "Leopold subsidized the Catholics lavishly and sometimes used this financial power to deploy priests, almost as if they were soldiers, to areas where he wanted to strengthen his influence."[80] By dubbing Native Americans the "lost tribe of Israel," Pauline/Leopolda, like her namesake Leopold, could justify to others and herself not only the political project of colonizing Indians but also the imposition of "strong authority" in order "to bring the natives (who have no such inclination) to conform to the usages of civilization." In-depth Christianization, with its attendant supersessionist theology, has made Theodosia and Pauline feel and believe that they are right with God only in so far as they contribute to the formation of the sacred imagined nation.

At this point, let me detail precisely how Christian supersessionist theology functions within the context of the sacred imagined

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[80] Hochschild (1999), *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company: 134.

nation in Erdrich's *Tracks*. God lovingly cares for His people, which means that, if a nation flourishes over time, then it can be assumed that God has blessed that nation and its people. By contrast, if a nation or a people consistently suffers over time, then it can be assumed that the nation and/or people worship a false God. Such is one of the key precepts embedded within the modernist concept of the sacred imagined nation, which explains why Pauline ultimately rejects her fellow Indians. Reflecting on the differences between whites and Indians, Christians and pagans, Pauline draws the following conclusions:

> It was like that with Him, too, Our Lord, who had obviously made the whites more shrewd, as they grew in number, all around, some even owning automobiles, while the Indians receded and coughed to death and drank. It was clear that Indians were not protected by the thing in the lake or by the other Manitous who lived in trees, the bush, or spirits of animals that were hunted so scarce they became discouraged and did not mate (p. 139).

Pauline employs circular logic in this passage. On the one hand, the whites grow in number and wealth because God has created them to be "more shrewd." On the other hand, given that whites grow in number and wealth, we can conclude that God favors whites. The same principle applies to the Indians. On the one hand, the Indians are receding and coughing to death because God must have created them to be less shrewd. On the other hand, given that the Indians are receding and coughing to death, we can conclude that their God does not protect them. In essence, a principle of prosperity is structured within the concept of the sacred imagined nation, thus justifying the claim that God has created the thriving people as ontologically superior or that God has blessed His people with prosperity.

As I have been trying to demonstrate throughout this chapter, Pauline's logic should not be considered freakishly aberrant, for Luther makes an identical argument in his book, *On the Jews and their Lies*. After faulting Jews for failing to convert to Christianity, Luther argues that the Jews' prolonged and overwhelming suffering is an argument both in favor of Christianity and against Judaism: "For one dare not regard God as so cruel that he would punish his

own people so long, so terribly, so unmercifully, and in addition keep silent, comforting them neither with words nor with deeds, and fixing no time limit and no end to it. Who would have faith, hope, or love toward such a God? Therefore this work of wrath is proof that the Jews, surely rejected by God, are no longer his people, and neither is he any longer their God."[81] Given the degree to which Jews are the antithesis of Christ and Christianity, Luther encourages Christians "to set fire to their synagogues or schools";[82] to raze "their houses"; to confiscate "their prayer books and Talmudic writings"; and to forbid their Rabbis "to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb."[83] As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 7, Luther even suggests that wiping out Jews could sometimes be both legitimate and appropriate.

At this point, it would be instructive to compare and contrast Luther and Pauline. In 1543, when Luther published *On the Jews and their Lies*, he engaged in a form of religious triumphalism, but in the years between 1917 and 1924, which is when Pauline tries to convert her fellow Indians, she engages in a form of religious-government supersessionism. The approaches are similar in that they follow a common pattern regarding the treatment of the infidel, which Raul Hilberg succinctly defines: "Since the fourth century after Christ, there have been three anti-Jewish policies: conversion, expulsion, and annihilation."[84] Christians begin by trying to convert infidels. If this does not work, then expulsion becomes necessary. If, however, expulsion does not succeed, then annihilation (extermination, *Vernichtung*) is the only choice.

We see this model in action most clearly through Pauline's interactions with the Indians/Jews. As Pauline says to Fleur, Margaret, and Nanapush: "'I'm sent to prove Christ's ways'" (p. 190). Since her conversion, Pauline has been strategically creating the conditions for the conversion of the Indians/Jews. She believes that the Indians/Jews will eventually realize that their Gods are not protecting or caring for them, and when they finally come to this

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[81] Luther (1971), *On the Jews and their Lies, in Luther's Works*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press: 138–9.
[82] Luther (1971): 268.
[83] Luther (1971): 269.
[84] Hilberg (1961), *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books: 3.

realization, she will be able to introduce them to the true God and true faith: "There would have to come a turning, a gathering, another door. And it would be Pauline who opened it" (p. 139). Pauline is alluding to Revelation 3.20, in which Christ stands before the door and knocks. If and when the Indians/Jews recognize the errors of their ways, they would be invited to the table of the Lord, who would welcome them with open arms. The problem, however, is that the Indians, like the Jews, have not been receptive to the Word, which leads Pauline, like Luther, to take matters to the next level, which is expulsion. It is at this point that she refers to the Indians as "this lost tribe of Israel." Since the Pillagers, Kashpaws, and Nanapush refuse to abandon their false Gods and to turn their lives entirely over to Christ, Pauline vows to have nothing more to do with the Indians/Jews. But their rejection so frustrates Pauline that she takes matters to the ultimate extreme, when she annihilates Napoleon only a few pages later. Given the nature of her mission and the failed response of the Indians/Jews, she feels no compunction for having killed him: "it suddenly was revealed to me that I had committed no sin. There was no guilt in this matter, no fault" (p. 203). Indeed, in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, Pauline, in confession, tells Father Damien: "'I confess to strangling the devil in the shape of the man!'"[85] Since Christ refers to the Jews as children of the devil in John 8.44, it should come as no surprise that Pauline refers to the Indian/Jew as "the devil in the shape of the man." Therefore, in word and deed, Pauline fulfills the established pattern of conversion, expulsion, and annihilation outlined in a document such as Luther's *On the Jews and their Lies*, and it is by referring to the Indian/Jew as a devil that she, like Luther, can justify such horrific action.

What differentiates Pauline from Luther, however, is the role her supersessionist theology plays in relation to the formation of the modern polity. In Luther's day, the Church exerted an enormous amount of power on the monarchy, but after the Reformation, with the decline of the monarchy and the emergence of the nation state, there was a palpable split between the Christian churches and the nation state, which has led many scholars to conclude that the West

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[85] Erdrich (2002), *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. New York: Harper Perennial: 273.

was undergoing a process of secularization. While there is certainly some truth to this secularization approach to Western political history, I have been trying to demonstrate that Christianity, starting in the sixteenth century, actually went underground (in-depth Christianization) instead of slowly but surely disappearing, and by the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, it became extremely powerful by embedding itself as a structure of meaning within the concept of the state. Based on this model, modern Christianity is not an external power impinging on the state, but an internal structure that determines in large measure the nature of the modernist state and its agenda. In other words, the modernist state of the West assumes its shape and meaning in relation to Christianity, so citizens are necessarily Christian in so far as they are loyal subjects of the state. Or, conversely, citizens promote Christianity simply by serving the state, which is exactly what Samuel realizes when he refers to himself as 20 years the fool of the West. By being a Christian missionary, Samuel, whether he intended to or not, was acting as a loyal subject of a Western sacred imagined nation.

Pauline's religious triumph over the Indians, therefore, is—simultaneously, interchangeably—a victory for Christianity and the government. From beginning to end, *Tracks* examines the government's attempts to dispossess Indians of their culture, land, and identity: the Indians are bombarded with "a storm of government papers" (p. 1), "the words of the government treaty" (p. 2), "the government bait" (p. 8), "a government file" (p. 32), "the government issue" (p. 99), and "the government commodities" (p. 171). For the government to achieve victory, it must first de-legitimize Indian culture, and within the context of *Tracks*, this means debunking Anishinabe religion. Pauline certainly believes that she, as representative of Christ and, therefore, the government, triumphs over the Anishinabe after killing Napoleon, for as she claims: "I believe that the monster was tamed that night, sent to the bottom of the lake and chained there by my deed. For it is said that a surveyor's crew arrived at the turnoff to Matchimanito in a rattling truck, and set to measuring. Surely that was the work of Christ's hand" (p. 204). For Pauline, killing Napoleon is not just Christianity's triumph over what she considers the Indian's false religion. It also represents the government's victory over the Indians:

> The land will be sold and divided. Fleur's cabin will tumble into the ground and be covered by leaves. The place will be haunted I suppose, but no one will have ears sharp enough to hear the Pillagers' low voices, or the vision clear to see their still shadows. The trembling old fools with their conjuring tricks will die off and the young, like Lulu and Nector, return from the government schools blinded and deafened (pp. 204–5).

Through "the work of Christ's hand," Pauline has been able to de-legitimize Anishinabe religion, thus setting the stage for the younger generation's (Lulu and Nector) inability to see or hear the world the way their Anishinabe ancestors did. This loss of religion will facilitate Indian assimilation—Native Americans will abandon their traditional relationship with the land, live in squared housing allotments, and become capitalist-driven consumers.

The novel itself supports this reading. Friedman rightly claims that "Pauline wants Fleur's power destroyed, believing that Fleur's sorcery represents the machinations of the devil in his battle against Christ."[86] Fleur communicates with the Manitou, Misshepeshu, who is considered "one of the most powerful manitous in Anishinaabe culture."[87] Within the context of Anishinabe religion, a guardian Manitou would appear to a person in a dream in order to locate game or an enemy, and in *Tracks*, Fleur has such a dream: "She told Eli of the path that had appeared in her sleep, a complicated trail through the woods, where the deer tracks began" (p. 170). As it turns out, Fleur is wrong, and this functions to de-legitimize Fleur, her guardian Manitou, and the Ojibwa religion, as Nanapush claims in a dejected voice: "Fleur had not saved us with her dream […] Her dreams lied, her vision was obscured, her helper [Misshepeshu] slept deep in the lake" (pp. 176–7). Careful readers of the novel should realize immediately that Fleur's dream could not have succeeded, because it occurs in 1918 or 1919, years after the Turcot lumber company had already begun to irrevocably alter the landscape and environment—given the rapid pace of development, the "complicated trail through the woods" that Fleur envisions in her dream and mentions to Eli might not even be there

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[86] Friedman (1994): 113.
[87] Gross (2005): 51.

anymore. Indeed, when Eli gets to the place that Fleur mentions, instead of finding a dense forest, "[t]he snow where she sent him was smooth and bare" (p. 171). No dense forest for deer to hide in, but a barren field is all that remains.

One certainly does not get the sense that Pauline and the Turcot lumber company have been strategically and consciously coordinating their efforts to de-legitimize Fleur and/or her religion, but that is exactly what happens during the course of the novel. And when Fleur and her religion fail, Christianity and its government are in a position to succeed—with the death of the Anishinabe religion, there is now room within the Indians' mind for Christ. To underscore Fleur's failure and the government's triumph, Nanapush vividly pictures Fleur leaving: "I watched her until the road bent, traveling south to widen, flatten, and eventually in its course meet with government school, depots, stores, the plotted squares of farms" (p. 224). Fleur's failure confirms Pauline's point that the "Indians were not protected by the thing in the lake." For Pauline, this failure is a divine sign, because she is now there to open "another door" for the Indians, one that leads first to Christ and, therefore, to the "government school, depots, [and] stores." Without Pauline's surveillance work, which enables her to identify "the habits and hiding places of His enemy" (p. 137), it would not have been possible to find the most effective way to delegitimize the Native American culture, and especially Fleur. And without this delegitimization, it would have been difficult if not impossible to ultimately persuade such a strong character as Fleur to give up on the land and the culture. However, given the way the Turcot Lumber Company and Pauline have worked together to debunk the Anishinabe religion, the Indians have no choice but to answer the knock at the "door" (p. 139) at which Pauline, Christ, and the government stand.

IV

To bring into sharp focus the nature of my claim, let me briefly discuss David Mamet's novel *The Old Religion*, which offers a new way of thinking about the transition with regard to religion from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The novel focuses on the

case of Leo Frank, a Jew who was falsely accused in 1913 of raping and murdering a 13-year-old factory girl in Georgia. Significant are the novel's strategic references to the Edgardo Mortara case, which occurred in Italy in the 1850s. For instance, in the first chapter, Frank botches the details of the Mortara case, claiming that the boy's "Catholic nurse took him from the house and had him baptized" and that state magistrates in Spain kidnapped the young Edgardo.[88] Striking are Frank's errors. Anna Morisi, the Catholic nurse, did not take Edgardo from the house to have him baptized. She baptized him in the house. Not the state, but the Catholic Church kidnapped the Jewish boy. And the event occurred in Italy, not Spain.

But just after narrating the details of the Mortara case, Frank mentions that he had many conversations with Jewish friends about the plight of the boy (p. 2), and in Chapter 4, which is titled "Discussion of the Mortara Case," Frank makes more incoherent and inaccurate claims. Put simply, the chapter reads like T. S. Eliot's poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." As Frank and his friends engage in a seemingly serious conversation about the child abduction, Frank's mind roams from "the smell of breakfasts" (p. 17); to the local townspeople at church (p. 18); to his "wife moving carefully, to protect one's sleep" (p. 18); to "the *Mortara* boy" (p. 18, Mamet's emphasis); and then to thoughts about his "*guests*" (p. 18, Mamet's emphasis). Given so many divergent topics in just a page and a half, it is clear that the conversation consists of fragments of thought, inaccurate ideas, and mindless trivialities. In other words, Mamet gives his readers a picture of smug, bourgeois American Jews, who may think they are talking about something philosophically and politically important but who have an inadequate grasp of the facts and are prone to undisciplined ways of thinking.

Later in the novel, however, Frank's thoughts about the Mortara case undergo a transformation. Instead of claiming that the nurse left the home to have the boy baptized, he notes that she "secretly baptized him" (p. 78). Rather than claiming that the event happened in Spain, he rightly observes that it occurred in Bologna, Italy. And now he faults the Church ("Bishopric of Bologna") instead of the

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[88] Mamet (1997), *The Old Religion*. New York: The Free Press: 2. Hereafter cited in text.

state. This leaves us with the question: What is Mamet trying to accomplish through Frank's transformation? It is my contention that Mamet uses Frank's reflections about the Mortara case and his own experience in order to offer a new and more accurate way of thinking about modernist anti-Semitism.

While Chapter 2 contains no direct references to the Mortara case, the chapter makes little sense without an understanding of the case. Morris, a friend of Frank's, narrates a story to his guests about KKK members, who put an announcement in a local newspaper, telling Jews and Catholics to leave town or suffer the deadly consequences. A well-established Jew by the name of Weiss initially decides to stay in order to protect his home and store. But with the tension mounting, members of the family can bear the situation no longer, so they pack some of their belongings and head for the train station. Just as the family boards the train, hooded KKK members ask Mr. Weiss where he is going. In reply, he says that he is leaving as instructed. But one of the KKK members replies: "'not *you*. You're *our* Jew …'" (p. 11, Mamet's emphasis). At this point, Morris' Jewish guests "erupted in laughter" (p. 11).

What links this story with the Mortara case is the reference to the Klan as a modern version of the Inquisition. As members of the Weiss family make their way to the train station, they spot the Klan, who are described as being garbed "in the Robes of the Inquisition" (p. 9). The Inquisitor who ordered the 1858 abduction of Mortara was Father Feletti, and in 1860, after the Catholic Church lost control of Bologna to Victor Emmanuel II, he was arrested. David Kertzer rightly notes that this marks one of the most important shifts in Western religious and political history. The Inquisitor could justify the abduction of the six-year-old boy because Church law prohibited Jews from raising a Christian. Therefore, when the Church discovered that Edgardo had been baptized, it had no choice but to remove the boy from his family, and the state could not stop the Church (in fact, it assisted the Church), because the state acknowledged the Church's authority. But with the shift of temporal power from the Catholic Church to the constitutional monarch and the subjection of Inquisitorial authority to secular law, the natural rights of citizens trumped the seemingly superior laws of the Church. In a sense, it was the Mortara case that effectively delivered the final blow to the Inquisition, which is why Kertzer sees this case as the triumph of

"the new liberal, secular ideology that spread throughout Europe in the nineteenth century."[89]

If it is true that the Mortara case contributed to and reflects the demise of the Church's temporal authority and the rise of Western secularization, then on what basis could Mamet liken the KKK to the Inquisition? Mamet adopts the same in-depth Christianization approach to Western political and religious history as Foucault. While writers such as Foucault and Mamet would concede that there has been a separation of church and state, they would contest the view that this has led to secularization, because they would say that Christian churches have developed new and more sophisticated techniques for Christianizing people and society. In other words, the Inquisition may have been officially abolished in Italy in 1859,[90] but it does not follow that it ceased to exist. Indeed, a new version of it exists, as Mamet suggests, but in secrecy, with the new inquisitors' faces hidden under their hooded Robes. This in-depth Christianization approach leads Mamet to draw a direct line of connection between the Catholic anti-Semitism of nineteenth-century Italy and the Protestant anti-Semitism of twentieth-century America.

Let me briefly define the way in-depth Christianization functions in *The Old Religion*. With the exception of the last chapter, the dialogue in the novel takes place in the mind of Frank, who is on trial for supposedly murdering the young factory girl, Mary Phagan. As the novel and trial progress, Frank's thinking becomes more lucid and rigorous, which explains why his later reflections about the Mortara case are more accurate and trustworthy. As the novel charts Frank's thinking about the reasons why Americans hate Jews and are specifically persecuting him, he concludes that it is because the United States is a "'Christian country'" (p. 112). But it is important to keep in mind that a Christian nation in the twentieth century differs considerably from Christian nations before the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church, via the Inquisitor, had the power to order government officials of Papal States to enact and enforce Christian

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[89] Kertzer (1997), *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf: 299.

[90] Kertzer (1997): 179.

law, but with the growing separation of Church and state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Christianity had to develop new, more subtle strategies for enforcing submission to Christian law. Frank realizes this, which is why he claims that "'[t]he brand of religion'" that Christians "'practice [...] can only be called *furtive*'" (p. 85, Mamet's emphasis). Put starkly, the difference between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries is not that one is religious and one is secular, that one has an Inquisitor and one does not. The difference is that citizens can see the Inquisitor's face in the eighteenth century but they cannot in the twentieth century.

As Frank reflects more on the ideology that has led him to be falsely accused of murder, he starts to get a better grasp of the modernist God state, which is premised (consciously or unconsciously) on a specific Christian theology. On the surface, the United States does not endorse a particular religion and allows, therefore, for religious freedom. Indeed, "as an American," Frank believes that he has the "right as a citizen" to practice the religion of his choice, for the country itself "guaranteed religious freedom" (p. 149). But this surface claim about freedom of religion is in irreconcilable conflict with his personal experience as a Jewish-American, and the source of the problem, Frank comes to realize, is the very concept of America. Albert Lindemann makes a careful distinction between Europe and the United States in the early twentieth century, claiming that "Jews were accepted as American citizens without debate."[91] As an abstract ideal, this is true, but for Mamet, the reality of lived experience tells a much different story. Throughout the novel, Frank reflects on "the theme of 'Americanism'" (p. 94), specifically asking what it means "to belong to a country" (p. 32), and what he concludes is that there is something in him that is in irreconcilable conflict with Americanism.

That Frank draws the conclusion that his Jewish identity puts him in conflict with Americanism is not as important as why he considers this the case. In a chapter titled "A different religion," Frank returns to the idea of belonging to a country, but at this point, he makes a distinction between an intellectual and emotional experience. Intellectually, he knows that he can be an American

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[91] Lindemann (1991), *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank) 1894–1915*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 17.

and a Jew, because the Constitution guarantees citizens religious freedom. But Mamet, through Frank, moves his readers beyond the intellectual ("when he did not confront it intellectually" [p. 148]) and into the emotional. Note how Frank, when reflecting on the idea of national belonging, focuses on the importance of emotion:

> When he looked away, as it were, there it was. It was a warm and correct feeling of belonging. "That is it," he thought. "It feels 'correct.'" (p. 148)

When Frank reflects on national belonging from the vantage point of the intellect, he concludes that a religious Jew could be an American, but when he considers the idea from the vantage point of emotion, he draws the opposite conclusion: "he saw that they [true Americans, who are implicitly Christian] did not want him and despised his efforts to belong. He saw that, to them, he would always be a Jew" (p. 148). Scholars who deploy a secularization model to interpret twentieth-century intellectual and political history could easily conclude that Frank does not and cannot belong to America because of his ethnic difference. But when Frank uses the word "Jew" in this chapter, it is clear that Mamet is underscoring the fact that Frank is a member of "A different religion," as indicated in the chapter title, which is why he does not and cannot feel like he belongs to America.

Throughout the novel, Mamet underscores Frank's feelings of alienation because of his religious, not ethnic difference. For instance, Frank realizes that he will always feel like an alien in the United States because of his Jewish heritage. As he says to himself about "the Christians": "'They look at us,' he thought, 'like we think about the Etruscans: a strange people about whom we know nothing'" (p. 85). All efforts to become truly American are futile, for America, as a "Christian country," will not truly accept a Jew. Frank's feelings of alienation underscore the power of in-depth Christianization as it functions within the modernist God state. Before the nineteenth century, the Church could direct the monarch or the state to institute and enforce laws that were derived from Christianity and preserved the country's Christian identity. Such laws, no doubt, had a devastating impact on Jews, making them feel like foreigners or aliens in their seemingly own countries. It would appear that, given the separation of church and state, such

feelings of alienation would have disappeared by the twentieth century, but Mamet is clearly indicating that progress towards secularization is nothing more than a political illusion.

Therefore, in stark contrast to secularization theorists, Mamet suggests that Christianity continued to dominate in the twentieth century, but instead of operating in an overt and conscious manner, it has assumed a new, more vigorous life at the level of the subconscious by becoming embedded within the concept of the modern Western nation. Within this framework, religious leaders do not need, as they did in the past, to direct state officials to act in a Christian way. The logic of the modernist God state cuts the other way. To be truly American, one must first be Christian. Therefore, those who are not Christian or do not behave in accordance with Christian values would not qualify as Americans.

Mamet brilliantly articulates how in-depth Christianization has determined the nature of political action in twentieth-century America through the prosecuting attorney's remarks. Addressing the jury, the prosecutor begins his argument by citing Scripture:

> "Let us expatiate upon the properties," he said, "of the Black Race. And let us begin with the words of Scripture. For do we not find it written in Leviticus that if thy servant *love* thee, thou shall *put an awl* through his ear, binding him to the door. And bind him, as it were, to your house for life?" (p. 89, Mamet's emphasis)

This passage is significant for three separate reasons. First, the attorney can take it as a given that an American jury bases its values on the Bible. Second, the attorney as well as the public accept an inaccurate interpretation of the Bible, which assumes that biblical slaves were black or that black is synonymous with slavery. Finally, the attorney has an imprecise understanding of the Bible—the passage to which he refers is actually in Deuteronomy (15.16–17) and/or Exodus (21.6), not Leviticus.

More important, however, is the logic of the prosecutor's Bible-based argument. American blacks know their place in society, and were they to venture beyond their God-appointed station, they would introduce chaos into the Christian country, which would result "in misery for black and white alike" (p. 90). Mamet is clearly defining a particular interpretation of Christianity that dominated

in the South. For instance, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe has the pro-slavery character, Marie, articulate the Southern Christian position after she returns from church. Discussing the sermon, Marie says:

> The text was, "He hath made everything beautiful in its season;" and he showed how all the orders and distinctions in society came from God; and that it was so appropriate, you know, and beautiful, that some should be high and some low, and that some were born to rule and some to serve, and all that, you know; and he applied it so well to all this ridiculous fuss that is made about slavery, and he proved distinctly that the Bible was on our side, and supported all our institutions so convincingly.[92]

Within a beautifully ordered Christian polity, each person has a specific station, and the good of society depends upon people knowing their God-appointed place. Given the logic of this Christian model, the prosecutor rhetorically asks what would happen were the black "'To leave his state? To bear the just wrath of a city disordered—through caprice? Why? Who would desire to do that?" (p. 90). The implication is this: most Georgia blacks in 1913 do not and will not abandon their God-ordained stations in life, inferior as those stations are, for as good Christians, they have a desire to live in a divinely ordered society.

Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852, but Nella Larsen's 1927 novel *Quicksand* indicates that this same approach to Christianity continued to dominate the South years after Frank's 1913 trial and 1915 lynching. In the opening chapter, a white preacher visits a fictional historically black college, and in a sermon, he admonishes the black students:

> He hoped, he sincerely hoped, that they wouldn't become avaricious and grasping, thinking only of adding to their earthly goods, for that would be a sin in the sight of Almighty God. And then he had spoken of contentment, embellishing his words with scriptural quotations and pointing out to them that it was their

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[92] Stowe (1986), *Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life Among the Lowly*. New York: Penguin Books: 279.

> duty to be satisfied in the estate to which they had been called, hewers of wood and drawers of water. And then he prayed.[93]

What angers the protagonist, Helga Crane, more than the offensive content of this sermon is the fact that the students and her colleagues do not object to it. In other words, many American blacks in the South accepted this particular approach to Christianity.

But why, one must ask, does Mamet include the prosecutor's Christian justification for black inferiority in a novel about a Jew who is falsely accused of raping and murdering a young factory girl? The answer is in Mamet's response to a question posed in one of the sources for *The Old Religion* (p. 195). As Lindemann queries: "how is one to explain outbursts of anti-Semitism in modern times?"[94] Scholars generally agree that Jim Conley, a black sweeper at the factory, murdered the 13-year-old Mary Phagan, and given all the lies and distortions in Conley's testimony, scholars have questioned why the prosecution targeted Frank, who was considered reliable and trustworthy. Dinnerstein, whom Mamet also cites as one of his sources for *The Old Religion* (p. 195), frames the issue best: "Given Southern feelings about the Negro, an attempt must be made to understand why the authorities did not build up a case around Jim Conley, particularly in view of later findings that the proof against Frank was inconclusive."[95] In *The Old Religion*, Mamet offers responses to Lindemann and Dinnerstein, but his answers differ considerably from theirs. In short, Mamet suggests that the persecution of Frank only makes sense in relation to the rise not of secularization but of the modernist God state.

American blacks in 1913, the year of the trial, would not have been considered a threat to the "Christian country," because they knew their God-appointed place. After all, Booker T. Washington's accommodationist theology ("cast your bucket down where you are") was widely accepted during this time period, as leading black writers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, and J. Saunders Redding have lamented. It is the Jew who poses the biggest threat

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[93] Larsen (1986), *Quicksand*, in Deborah E. McDowell ed. *Quicksand and Passing*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press: 3.

[94] Lindemann (1991): 70.

[95] Dinnerstein (1968), *The Leo Frank Case*. New York and London: Columbia University Press: 33.

to the modernist God state. Therefore, the prosecutor begins by explaining how blacks (an implicit reference to Conley) know their God-appointed place within American society. After briefly explaining how those who fail to know their God-appointed place create chaos, he describes Frank's supposed crime of raping and killing Mary Phagan. More than anything else, what irritates the prosecutor is that Frank, who is a mere "*guest*" (p. 91, Mamet's emphasis), should have behaved much differently. Neither a resident nor a citizen, Frank is considered a visitor, an alien. Of course, this is, on the surface of things, inaccurate. Frank was born in the United States, and he resides in Georgia (in the novel, he owns his home). So on what basis does the prosecutor refer to Frank as a guest? Consistent with the theme of belonging all throughout the novel, Mamet suggests that Frank cannot be a true American citizen (hence, his guest status) because he is a Jew.

But Frank's experience only makes sense if we use Foucault's in-depth Christianization model. Central to the concealed theology of the modernist God state is an "'unspoken bond'" (p. 83) that unifies Christians. Later Frank refers to this bond as an "amorphous code," one "to which they [American Christians] felt that they subscribed" (p. 102). Reflecting on perjured testimony against him, Frank begins to understand how Christianity and America have come together as the basis for the code that is calculated to eliminate him:

> "How lovely. That the state, that the community, that one's home and religion, all say, 'Go forth and kill. In the name of God.' What have they done else these two thousand years," he thought, "with their prattle of 'progress,' of 'the future,' of 'change,' of 'America?' What swine, what fiends, what hypocrites—this American Religion." (p. 103)

In the American psychic imaginary, that which makes a person an American is the belief in Christianity and its providentially ordered worldview. When a person or a people pose a threat to Christianity or its most sacred beliefs, then the Christian citizens feel that they must take decisive action against the offenders. Since Jews do not accept Christ, they are, by definition, un-American, which is why the prosecutor refers to Frank, who is technically an American citizen, as a guest.

Specifically, within a modernist God state, the masses believe that Christianity inheres within the concept of the nation, so they, of their own accord, will work vigorously to purge the "Christian country" of all that is antithetical to Christianity and, hence, America. According to the logic of the in-depth Christianization model, directives do not come from sanctioned Church leaders. Rather, they issue from the theology inherent within the modernist God state, which explains the hostility directed at Frank. While there are certainly many directives issuing from the theology of the modernist God state, my focus in this chapter is exclusively on those regarding the treatment of Jews. This model explains the outcome of Frank's trial. As Dinnerstein notes about the trial:

> The defense attorneys and Judge Roan had received communications during the trial to the effect that they would not leave the courtroom alive if the "damned Jew" were turned loose. There is some indication that the jurors were similarly threatened. Crowds outside the courthouse chanted, "Hang the Jew."[96]

As for the actual prosecutor, Hugh Dorsey, when he "left the courthouse each day," Dinnerstein notes, "the admiring throng greeted him with thunderous ovations."[97] So inflamed were Georgia citizens about the trial that the editors of Atlanta's three dailies feared a riot similar to the 1906 Atlanta riot should Frank be declared innocent. When the guilty verdict finally came in, "'a mob thousands strong … went wild with joy,'" and Frank said: "'even the jury was influenced by mob law.'"[98] To underscore the degree to which the masses determined Frank's hapless fate, Mamet records how people in the courtroom responded to the damning but perjured testimony of a woman against Frank: "they'd applauded her. As she stepped down and the judge cried for silence, and the bailiff cried for silence, but the courtroom knew they did not mean it" (p. 83). It was the people, not the state, who led the prosecution and persecution against Frank. And the people were not prosecuting or persecuting a criminal—the evidence in the actual case and in

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[96] Dinnerstein (1968): 60.
[97] Dinnerstein (1968): 54.
[98] Dinnerstein (1968): 56.

the novel clearly points more towards Conley than Frank. They were prosecuting and persecuting the non-America Jew, who, in his very being, was considered the antithesis of the Christian theology inherent within the modernist God state, the very theology that tacitly disqualified him as an American.

But it is important to note how persecution functions within the modernist God state. In one of the last chapters, Frank returns to the idea of belonging: "'What is more lovely than belonging?' he thought. '*Nothing*'" (p. 186, Mamet's emphasis). At this point, Frank is in the hospital, because a fellow inmate tried to kill him by slitting his throat. Reflecting on the look of his assailant, Frank claims that he looks "as if he could have been participating at his daughter's wedding, or at the confirmation of a child. Or the receipt of some reward" (p. 187). Killing Frank is not a crime. To the contrary, Frank realizes that "'[a]ll of these people have been told by their God that it is a praiseworthy act to want me dead'" (p. 188). The Christian God would bless such an act in the same way he does a wedding or a confirmation. Annihilating a Jew, to use Hilberg's terminology, is consistent with Christian anti-Semitic policy. For citizens of the modernist God state, it is their job, not the state's, to rid the country of all that is antithetical to its Christian essence.

V

When Kertzer wrote his excellent study *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, he spent most of his time discussing Church leaders in order to clarify what happened. In the novels of Erdrich, Walker, and Mamet, there is very little in the way of portrayal or discussion of Church leaders. The focus, rather, is on ordinary citizens, who believe that their acts are Christian, because they conform to the Christian theology implicit within the modernist God state. The burning questions at this point are: How far will Christians of the modernist God state go in the name of their faith? And what model can explain the horrific nature of their crimes against humanity? Michael Bakunin and Joseph Conrad offer answers that eerily anticipate Hitler and the Nazis.

5

Joseph Conrad and Michael Bakunin on the redemptive logic of Western genocide

Chapters 3 and 4 focused on the way in-depth Christianization set the stage for the emergence of the modernist God state, which deployed a supersessionist theology that enabled citizens to violate others with emotional and psychological impunity. Since my work is building towards an understanding of National Socialism as the most extreme version of the sacred imagined nation, it is necessary at this point to examine how the religious politics of the modern body politic effectively mobilized specific individuals to commit genocide. There have been, to be sure, first-rate studies examining how ordinary Nazis justified to themselves and others their exterminationist agenda, such as Christopher R. Browning's *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Berel Lang's *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*, and James Waller's *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*, but it is my contention

that Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* provides one of the most insightful ways for understanding the psychopolitical mechanisms that allowed ordinary people to justify a genocidal politics.

Before turning to *Heart of Darkness*, however, I need to say a few things about the role the novel plays, according to Conrad, in exposing the specific structures of consciousness that make an oppressive and sometimes genocidal politics possible. Consistent with the aesthetic theories of Lawrence, Woolf, Forster, Styron, Walker, and Kundera, Conrad holds that the novelist can articulate a kind of "truth" that is superior to other intellectual professionals. Deriving his view in large measure from Henry James' "The Art of Fiction," Conrad "claims for the novelist the standing of the historian." However, he considers the novelist superior to the historian, because "history is based on documents and the reading of print and handwriting—on second-hand impression," while the novel "stands on firmer ground," for the novelist's work is "based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena."[1] It would be wrong to assume that Conrad, when mentioning "the reality of forms," has a distinctly Platonic conception in mind, for in his brief essay titled "Books," Conrad cautions the writer to avoid the temptation to seek "inspiration ready made from some heaven of perfections of which he knows nothing."[2] Instead of depicting a Divine Ideal, the "reality of forms" is a reference to the provisional structures of human consciousness.

Conrad sheds very specific light on such structures and forms in his "Anatole France" essay. According to Conrad, France "is a great analyst of illusions. He searches and probes their innermost recesses as if they were realities made of an eternal substance." The illusions Conrad has in mind at this point are the provisional structures of a socially constructed consciousness, specifically the consciousness of "an average man." To clarify his point, Conrad does a brief analysis of the opening lines of the first story from France's work, *Crainquebille*. Jerome Crainquebille stands before a tribunal on the "'charge of insulting a constable,'" but what is significant for Conrad are the images contained within the scene:

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[1] Joseph Conrad (2004), *Notes on Life and Letters*. J. H. Stape ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 19.
[2] Conrad (2004): 14.

"The bust of the Republic and the image of the Crucified Christ appear side by side above the bench occupied by the President Bourriche and his two assessors; all the laws divine and human are suspended over the head of Crainquebille." Based on this depiction, one could conclude that there is an "accord" between the "two emblems of state and religion," but Conrad immediately exposes this interpretation as "the confused reasoning of an average man." According to Conrad, Crainquebille may be confused, "[b]ut the reasoning of M. Anatole France is never confused." In essence, "the visual impression of the accused and of the court"[3] in France's story function to illuminate not just the consciousness of an average man, but a confused consciousness.

Understanding that Conrad's focus is more phenomenological than ontological, more about the culturally determined structures of human consciousness than the static forms of an immutable Reality, effectively exposes one of the dominant critiques of Conrad's work as unfair and even misguided. As is well known, F. R. Leavis, building on E. M. Forster's critique, faults Conrad's style for its "adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery," which tends "to muffle"[4] rather than illuminate. Extending this critique, Chinua Achebe accuses Conrad of using a mystifying writing style ("a haze of distortions and cheap mystifications"[5]) in order to induce a "hypnotic stupor in his readers,"[6] which forces readers to overlook the racist content of *Heart of Darkness* and enables Conrad to become a "purveyor of comforting myths."[7] This mystifying writing style, what Patrick Brantlinger refers to as "Conrad's impressionism,"[8] ironically functions to serve the political agenda of a dominant political power. This is ironic because, while Conrad, on the surface,

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[3] Conrad (2004): 30–1.

[4] Leavis (1948), *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*. London: Chatto & Windus: 177.

[5] Achebe (2006), "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," in Paul B. Armstrong ed. *Heart of Darkness: Fourth Edition*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company: 348.

[6] Achebe (2006): 338.

[7] Achebe (2006): 339.

[8] Brantlinger (1988), *Rule of Darkness: British Litertaure and Imperialism, 1830–1914*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press: 256.

opposes the British Empire's imperialistic project, "the impressionism of Conrad's novels" has the exact opposite effect, which is "to submerge or 'derealize' the critique of empire."[9]

There are two separate reasons why this critique of Conrad's work is inaccurate and unfair. First, these scholars assume that Conrad, in using "cheap mystifications," failed to understand why a nebulous writing style could be an aesthetic flaw. But a careful reading of an essay titled "Guy de Maupassant" indicates that Conrad was fully aware of the problems of aesthetic mystification. Commenting on early Maupassant drafts, which eventually became "perfect stories," Conrad claims that "the first feeble" versions suffer because the "subjects have not yet been adequately seen." At the aesthetic level, this failure to have a clear "vision" of a story's "true shape and detail" leads the writer "to group expressive words that mean nothing around misty and mysterious shapes dear to muddled intellects."[10] But once the vision is clearly formulated, the writer can avoid this aesthetic flaw, which is what, according to Conrad, Maupassant achieves in the final versions of his stories.

The second problem is the tendency to conflate Conrad and Marlow. For instance, Achebe claims that Marlow enjoys "Conrad's complete confidence," which is why Achebe equates the two by referring to them as "Marlow/Conrad."[11] Brantlinger follows Achebe's lead, but he reverses the ordering when he asks: "does Conrad/Marlow agree with the values expressed by the primary narrator?"[12] For Brantlinger, Marlow does not just reflect Conrad's views ("Marlow/Conrad"), as he does for Achebe. He is actually Conrad's official spokesperson ("Conrad/Marlow").

In the following pages, I argue that there are "cheap mystifications" within *Heart of Darkness*, but that they are central to Conrad's aesthetic objective, which is to shed light on a specific type of consciousness (that of "muddled intellects") that could justify horrific crimes against humanity, specifically genocide. Central to my interpretation are the following: 1) *Heart of Darkness* is a phenomenological work. I do not mean phenomenology in a

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[9] Brantlinger (1988): 265.
[10] Conrad (2004): 27.
[11] Achebe (2006): 342.
[12] Brantlinger (1988): 257.

Kantian or Hegelian sense. As Richard Rorty notes, Kant and Hegel were willing to reject the existence of an extra-linguistic truth that humans could discover. However, "they persisted in seeing mind, spirit, the depths of the human self, as having an intrinsic nature—one which could be known by a kind of nonempirical super science called philosophy."[13] While it is sensible to locate Conrad's work within a phenomenological tradition (he is, after all, more concerned with a human's consciousness of the external world than the nature of the world as such), it is important to note that he did not make the same mistake as Kant and Hegel. In brief, we can say that Conrad's work reflects a shift from a phenomenology of ideal thinking to a phenomenology of actual thinking, which is why Conrad's work anticipates central claims in Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*. As Mannheim says, he "is concerned with the problem of how men actually think," which stands in stark contrast to the way "thinking appears in textbooks on logic." Both Conrad and Mannheim examine how thinking "really functions in public life and in politics as an instrument of collective action."[14] Conrad, in particular, understood that there are various types of socially constructed consciousnesses, and his objective was to shed specific light on the distinctive consciousness that enabled many in the West to justify genocide. 2) Even though Marlow's reasoning in *Heart of Darkness* is confused, Conrad's is not. 3) Conrad's phenomenological depiction of a genocidal consciousness brilliantly anticipates Hitler and the Nazis, but because Conrad has a limited understanding of the specific version of Christianity that was taking shape in Germany during the nineteenth century, his depiction of Germany's genocidal consciousness is unclear and unspecified. Therefore, I use the work of the revolutionary anarchist, Michael Bakunin, to supplement Conrad's approach by clarifying the specific model of Christianity that the National Socialists would eventually adopt.

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[13] Rorty (1989), *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 4.

[14] Mannheim (1966), *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World: 1.

I

For Conrad, the ellipsis is the most important signifier in a consciousness that can justify genocide. Ironically, in recent studies of *Heart of Darkness*, many Conrad scholars tacitly agree that the ellipsis has negligible narrative and epistemic value. For instance, Con Coroneos examines "the interplay of suspicion and redemption" in the novella, calling our attention to a darkness, which is "the result of an illuminating metaphysics based on self-induced blindness." To illustrate his point, he quotes the famous "conquest of the earth" passage, in which Marlow identifies the condition that vindicates colonization. It is justified when it is based on "'an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to.'"[15] Notice how Coroneos fails to include the ellipsis at the end of this quotation. In Conrad's text, the passage ends with the following: "offer a sacrifice to …" But Coroneos is not the only recent scholar to omit the ellipsis. Nic Panagopoulos uses Nietzsche's first book to bring into sharp focus the Apollonian function of creating a beautiful lie to redeem the Dionysian horror of dissonant being in *Heart of Darkness*. Within this framework, Marlow's justification of colonization is described as a "redeeming idea,"[16] and Panagopoulos, who quotes the passage twice,[17] does not include the ellipsis in either. Mark Wollaeger focuses his analysis on "the equivocal language of idolatry"[18] in the "conquest of the earth" passage, and even though the ellipsis could be used to underscore his main point, he too fails to include it in his quotation. For these scholars, the ellipsis apparently means nothing; it adds nothing to our understanding of the text. Therefore, it is worth omitting, because its epistemic value is the same whether it is present as an absence or absent as an absence.

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[15] Coroneos (2002), *Space, Conrad, and Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 109–10.

[16] Panagopoulos (2002), *Heart of Darkness and The Birth of Tragedy: A Comparative Study*. Athens: Kardamitsa: 89.

[17] Panagopoulos (2002): 89, 136.

[18] Wollaeger (2005), "Conrad's Darkness Revisited: Mediated Warfare and Modern(ist) Propaganda in *Heart of Darkness* and 'The Unlighted Coast,'" in *Conrad in the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Routledge: 75.

For a scholar such as Susan Jones, however, the ellipsis is crucial to Conrad's aesthetic project. As she convincingly argues, modernists were preoccupied "with absences, spaces, and gaps as metaphorical signifiers undermining conventional notions of aesthetic unity," and to signify such "absences, spaces, and gaps," Conrad made extensive use of ellipses, which "may represent in the protagonist some form of physical or psychological crisis, a dislocation of consciousness or memory, an epistemological dilemma; or in the narrator, an uncertainty about literary subjectivity or authority."[19] Jones's work on the ellipsis is certainly valuable for illuminating one dimension of modernist aesthetics, but the ellipsis could also be used to expose, as I intend to show, a distinctive feature of genocidal consciousness.

One has to wonder why Marlow's sentence about the belief in an unselfish idea, which redeems the brutal conquest of the earth, ends with an ellipsis. Had Marlow not broken off, what would he have said? How would he have finished the sentence? To answer these questions, it is important to note the logical progression implicit in Marlow's litany of terms. After mentioning that a belief in an unselfish idea would redeem the inevitable horrors of colonization, there is a dash, which has the function of likening or equating "an unselfish belief in the idea" and "something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to …" Put simply, belief in an unselfish idea implicitly leads to a form of idolatry that results in a sacrifice. Or, conversely, an idolatrous conviction that results in a sacrifice is implicit in the unselfish belief that redeems colonization. This characterization, however, is not complete, because the unselfish idea does not just lead to or implicitly contain only a sacrifice, for the sentence concludes with an ellipsis, which suggests something more, something beyond a mere sacrifice.

To ascertain what this something more could be, let us start by examining what it could not be. Here is a version of the sentence that could not work: "an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to, and build a monument to." Notice how my last term violates the

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[19] Jones (2005), "Conrad on the Borderlands of Modernism: Maurice Greiffenhagen, Dorothy Richardson, and the Case of *Typhoon*," in *Conrad in the Twenty-First Century.* New York: Routledge: 199.

logical progression implicit in Marlow's sentence. The first term in Marlow's post-dash litany is harmless, and as such, it would probably not make many people uncomfortable—an unselfish belief in an idea that makes a person set up a scholarship fund for future generations would occasion no discomfort. It is only with the second term in the series that some readers might experience reservations—bowing down before God is one thing, but bowing down to an idea would certainly give some people pause. It is with the third term that careful readers would surely experience some doubts. What kind of sacrifice does Marlow have in mind? To say that I am making a personal sacrifice so that my children could have a better life than me is a perfectly acceptable and even admirable instance of sacrifice. But Marlow discusses something to which one could "offer a sacrifice to." This has an Isaac or Iphigenia sense of being sacrificed to the gods, but in Marlow's case, we are left in the dark about the nature and the intensity of the sacrifice. Are many Europeans going to be offered as a sacrifice? Or, are many Africans going to be sacrificed? And how many people are going to be sacrificed in the name of the unselfish belief in the idea? Answering these questions with certainty is obviously not possible, and the answers are not even important for my argument in this chapter. All I am trying to establish at this point is this: there is an escalating level of discomfort in Marlow's series, so if we want to say what would come after the sacrifice, we would have to insert something more extreme than a sacrifice, which is why my phrase "build a monument to" would not work.

But this begs the question: why didn't Marlow insert that something more uncomfortable into the sentence? Why instead the ellipsis? One answer could be that Conrad was making use of a narrative device frequently deployed within the tradition of the sublime. The escalating series moves onward in intensity, but the final term or terms are so ineffable that they defy signification. According to this interpretation, the best way to signify the unrepresentable is through the escalating series, which is suddenly broken off, thereby demanding that the reader emotionally and psychologically introject into the space of the ellipsis the unrepresentable horror that could never be contained by discourse. Had Marlow inserted something into the space of the ellipsis, he would have implicitly reduced the sublime and unrepresentable horror to a mundane or quotidian expression, which would thus minimize or lessen the reality he is trying to signify.

There is another interpretation, however, that rules out the sublime approach. Instead of interpreting the ellipsis within the context of some ineffable reality, Conrad is using it to illuminate a structure of consciousness within a character such as Marlow. As a thought experiment, let me suggest that we interject the following into the space of the ellipsis: "and commit genocide for." Central to my argument is that the ellipsis (and the structure of consciousness that it depicts) enables Marlow to live in a state of denial. Marlow's denial is not the kind found in women, who must, he claims, banish injustices from their field of vision in order to live in their beautifully constructed world (I will discuss the significance of Marlow's condescending remarks about women later in this chapter). Rather, his denial functions in relation to the justification of the unselfish belief in the idea of colonization. Within this context, he can acknowledge some of the horrible sacrifices that must be made in order for the noble conquest of the earth to happen, but anything that would jeopardize the internal coherence of his unselfish-belief philosophy must be blocked from his view. Otherwise, his noble world in which colonization is a justifiable ideal "would," like the women's "too beautiful" world, "go to pieces."[20] In other words, Marlow's benevolent ideal of colonization can only bear a certain amount of injustice and atrocity before it falls apart, so he must have in place a conceptual apparatus that conveniently and effectively blocks from his view certain types of atrocities, specifically the unnamed atrocities that fill the space of the ellipsis.

We see how this justifying apparatus functions most clearly whenever Marlow is confronted with a situation in which the horrors of colonization become absolutely overwhelming, thus threatening to undo his philosophy of colonization as a worthy ideal. The primary feature of his justifying apparatus is his belief in an unselfish idea that redeems the horrors of human sacrifice. Marlow develops this idea when he distinguishes Roman conquerors from European colonizers. If the Romans, who "were no colonists" (p. 8), were merely "conquerors," grabbing "what they could get for the sake of what was to be got" and committing in the process "aggravated murder on a great scale," Marlow's contemporary colonizers

[20] Conrad (1999), *Heart of Darkness*. New York and London: Penguin Books: 19. Hereafter cited in text.

are ministers of civilization, whose "conquest of the earth" may resemble the activities of Roman conquerors, but differs because it is redeemed by virtue of "an unselfish belief in the idea." According to Marlow's logic, Roman conquerors and European colonizers could engage in "robbery with violence" and "murder on a grand scale" in equal measure, but for the Ancient Romans, the actions are unjustified, because they are not redeemed by an unselfish belief in the idea, whereas for modern Europeans, the same actions are justified, because they are redeemed by an unselfish belief in the idea. Therefore, when Marlow witnesses the suffering and/or death of natives, he experiences heartfelt sorrow and grief, but he also finds ways of ultimately redeeming the suffering and death, bathing them, as it were, in the redemptive light of his colonizing ideal.

For instance, in the grove of death scene, Marlow experiences profound grief and even intense outrage over the suffering of starving natives. The scene is graphic and poignant, describing how African men have been reduced to "Black shapes," who "were dying slowly" (p. 27). So intense is their suffering that the men are disfigured into "bundles of acute angles" (p. 28), "scattered in every pose of contorted collapse" (p. 29). Taken alone, this scene has the effect of making Marlow seem profoundly humane, concerned with and committed to securing human rights for suffering Africans. But there is an abrupt shift both in the narrative and in Marlow's attitude that seriously undermines the humanitarian interpretation of Marlow's character. Too much for Marlow to bear, he decides to make a quick departure. More significant than the retreat, however, is Marlow's emotional transformation. Immediately after his departure, Marlow meets "a white man, in such an unexpected elegance of get-up that in the first moment I took him for a sort of vision" (p. 29). The shift from the horrific experience in the grove of death to the euphoric response to the chief accountant's visionary attire is startling. Within two sentences, Marlow has completely lost sight of the human sacrifices being made in the name of colonization. To underscore the shift in his thinking, let me contrast Marlow's emotional response from one page to the next. Watching one of the Africans crawling "on all-fours towards the river to drink," Marlow says: "I stood horror-struck" (p. 29). On the next page, when discussing the accountant's impressive appearance, Marlow says: "I respected the fellow" (p. 30). But even more troubling is the way Marlow valorizes the accountant such

that the African sacrifices become negligible and invisible. After confessing that he "respected the fellow" for maintaining a civilized appearance "in the great demoralisation of the land," Marlow asks the accountant "how he managed to sport such linen." With "just the faintest blush," the accountant claims that he taught "'one of the native women,'" but he confesses that "'It was difficult,'" for the woman "'had a distaste for the work'" (p. 30). Instead of reflecting on the meaning of the accountant's "faintest blush," why it was "so difficult" to teach the native woman, or what he means by her "'distaste for the work,'" Marlow responds: "Thus this man had verily accomplished something. And he was devoted to his books, which were in apple-pie order" (p. 30). The wonders and glories of civilization, such as the accountant's "starched collars and got-up shirtfronts" (p. 30), ultimately justify and redeem human sacrifices, such as the grove's dying and dead. Of course, in this paragraph, it is only the native woman who becomes invisible in relation to the redemptive ideals of colonization. But in the shift from the grove of death to the native woman, Marlow is so overwhelmed by the accountant's civilized appearance that he loses sight of the dying and enslaved natives, and as such, their suffering and death pale in relation to the glories of civilization.

Later in the novella, in the scene involving his helmsman's death, Marlow's philosophy of redemptive colonization almost goes to pieces, but even there, his justifying apparatus redeems and/or effaces the suffering of sacrificial victims. Marlow confesses that he has formed "a subtle bond" with the helmsman, which causes him to experience "regret" when the "savage" (p. 93) dies. Indeed, Marlow even questions whether the loss of the helmsman's life was worth retrieving Kurtz. After discussing Kurtz's seductive power over people, Marlow says: "I can't forget him [Kurtz], though I am not prepared to affirm the fellow was exactly worth the life [the helmsman's life] we lost in getting to him" (p. 93). At this moment, Marlow's system is on the verge of collapse. What makes Marlow question his redemptive-colonization ideal is his "subtle bond" with the helmsman. The other natives were nameless figures whose deaths, while horrible, did not touch him so closely. But Marlow had daily contact with the helmsman for a protracted period of time: "for months I had him at my back" (p. 93). This intimate connection makes this "savage who was no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara" (p. 93) have more personal meaning to Marlow.

Therefore, Marlow has to find a way to justify the helmsman's death, and he does so by inserting the helmsman into the redemptive teleology of colonialism. In Marlow's world, human events are ultimately teleological, marching onward and gaining significance the more they near a colonizing end, which is civilization. This explains why Marlow feels a "remote kinship" (p. 65) with the Africans found on the banks of a river, who are howling, leaping, spinning, and making horrid faces (p. 64). This is what we civilized once were, Marlow's argument goes, so if we examine history from an atemporal perspective ("stripped of its cloak of time" [p. 65]), we will discover a bond of "remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar" (p. 65). Put differently, what the Africans now are, we once were, but in the teleological fullness of colonial time, the Africans are destined to become what Europeans now are. Therefore, we are all bound together through the redemptive colonizing ideal, the unselfish belief in an idea.

The helmsman may not understand that his death ultimately has significance and meaning, but this is because he is not privy to the colonizer's atemporal perspective. When he is dying, the helmsman looks up at Marlow and another white man "as though he would presently put to us some question in an understandable language; but he died without uttering a sound" (p. 85). He may not have expressed anything verbally, but his face articulates his personal horror: "Only in the very last moment, as though in response to some sign we could not see, to some whisper we could not hear, he frowned heavily, and that frown gave to his black death-mask an inconceivably sombre, brooding, and menacing expression" (p. 85). Hostility, anger, frustration, hatred—these are just a few words that would best express the emotions connected with the helmsman's "sombre, brooding, and menacing expression." And rightly so. He has been forced, by mysterious invaders from a foreign land, into steering a boat upstream for a purpose he cannot fathom. To him, his death must seem absolutely senseless and meaningless, and it should therefore come as no surprise that he dies with an ominous expression on his face.

But for Marlow, the helmsman's death looks very different. After describing the "subtle bond" that formed between the two, Marlow refers to the helmsman's death in a way that stands in stark contrast to the helmsman's response: "And the intimate profundity of that look he gave me when he received his hurt

remains to this day in my memory—like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment" (p. 94). Given the helmsman's "sombre, brooding, and menacing expression," one would surely have some difficulty understanding how Marlow can justify his kinship interpretation. Of course, Marlow is referring specifically to the moment when the helmsman first "received his hurt," which has the helmsman looking at Marlow "anxiously, gripping the spear like something precious, with an air of being afraid I [Marlow] would try to take it away from him" (p. 84). But even if we focus exclusively on this moment when the helmsman receives his hurt, nothing in his expressions or actions justifies Marlow's depiction of a "distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment." At work here are two separate conceptions of human events: the helmsman's, which is expressed in an "inquiring glance" (p. 85), and Marlow's, which is based on a redemptive-sacrifice philosophy. Unable to comprehend his place within the colonizer's world, the native dies "without uttering a sound," whereas Marlow, who has epistemological access to the redemptive teleology of colonial time, can not only articulate the meaning of the helmsman's death, but can also redeem it by dubbing it a "distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment," which certainly recalls the European's "remote kinship" with the howling and leaping Africans. Within Marlow's framework, the helmsman's death is certainly awful, but ultimately it is a redemptive "sacrifice," meaningful in so far as it contributes to the "unselfish belief in the idea" that will culminate with civilization.

What poses insurmountable difficulties for Marlow's justifying apparatus, what he cannot conveniently subsume into his redemptive-sacrifice philosophy is Kurtz, who takes Marlow beyond sacrifice into the mystifying space of the ellipsis. Like Marlow, Kurtz has adopted the teleological model of colonization, which he indicates in his report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. This report is 17 pages long, but the reader is given only three pieces of information about its content: 1) whites "'must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings'" (p. 92), 2) "'we whites'" have the ability to "'exert a power for good practically unbounded'" (p. 92), and 3) an ominous postscript declaration: "'Exterminate all the brutes!'" (p. 92). More significant than the actual content of this report is Marlow's response. Kurtz's report was explicitly

written for a society committed to the suppression of savage customs, and as such, it is exactly the kind of document, minus the postscriptum, that would have led Marlow's aunt to claim earlier in the novella that the colonizers in Africa are "'weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways'" (p. 19). Marlow mocks his aunt for naively believing such "rot," and yet, he responds to Kurtz's claims with an unbridled enthusiasm similar to the aunt's:

> From that point he soared and took me with him. The peroration was magnificent, though difficult to remember, you know. It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence. It made me tingle with enthusiasm. (p. 92)

Note that Marlow cannot recall the content of Kurtz's conclusions. Nonetheless, he waxes rhapsodic about the ideas contained within the document. This is the very kind of "confused reasoning" that Conrad decries in his "Anatole France" essay.

But let me explain precisely why Marlow's response effectively exposes the Leavis-, Achebe-, and Brantlinger-critique as misguided and unfair. On the surface, Marlow's reference to "an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence" confirms the Brantlinger idea that Conrad's writing and, therefore, "meaning" in *Heart of Darkness* are shrouded "in misty halos."[21] This critique, however, only works if we see Marlow as a reliable narrator. But if Conrad is using this scene to expose Marlow's "confused reasoning," then the "cheap mystifications" should be viewed as an attempt to shed light on Marlow's muddled mind rather than the African continent. To be sure, it is not difficult to demonstrate that there is a huge discrepancy between Conrad and Marlow on the basis of this passage. As Conrad explicitly claims in his "Guy de Maupassant" essay, grouping "expressive words that mean nothing around misty and mysterious shapes" is an intolerable aesthetic flaw, and Marlow's reference to "an exotic Immensity" would certainly qualify as such an empty mystification. Since Conrad explicitly critiques and condemns such mystifying language, it would make more sense to see it as a critical reflection on Kurtz's

[21] Brantlinger (1988): 267.

report and/or Marlow's mind rather than a lapse in Conrad's aesthetic judgment.

However, there is an even more compelling reason to read Marlow's response ironically, and this is because of the reference to the "august Benevolence." Anyone who has just a passing knowledge of Conrad's views would certainly find it more laughable than absurd to think that he would have mentioned, in a non-ironic way, a benevolent being that governs any part of the world. Conrad explicitly rejects the idea of a benevolent being in a letter to his aunt, whose cousin just recently died. Empathizing with her suffering, Conrad mentions "the inexplicable cruelty of an invisible power which has guided inanimate things toward the destruction of an existence necessary to the happiness of other innocent beings."[22] Ultimately, it is the senseless disorder of the universe that compels Conrad to mock the idea of a good God, as indicated in a letter to R. B. Cunninghame Graham: "I shall be inexorable like destiny and shall look upon your sufferings with the idiotic serenity of a benevolent Creator (I don't know that the ben:Crea: is serene;—but if he is (as they say) then he *must* be idiotic.) looking at the precious mess he has made of his only job."[23] For Conrad, if there is a Being governing the universe, it would be a supreme Malevolence, and emphatically not an "august Benevolence." Given Conrad's Thomas-Hardy-like approach to the divine, he would certainly not have responded as Marlow did to Kurtz's document, that is, with an adolescent giddiness.

The question, then, is this: what function does Kurtz's document serve within *Heart of Darkness*? The answer, I contend, has something to do with the phenomenological structure of genocidal consciousness. Kurtz's document begins by outlining a benevolent philosophy, which justifies the colonizing politics of the West, a politics that supposedly culminates in civilization. The report concludes with a call for genocide, and this has led scholars to claim that there is an irreconcilable contradiction within the report. But if we read Kurtz's report alongside Marlow's redeeming-idea philosophy, then there would be no contradiction.

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[22] Conrad (1986), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Frederick R. Karl, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1:86, July 8, 1891.

[23] Conrad (1986): 1:418; December 6, 1897. Conrad's emphasis.

That Conrad was working through the logic of a redeeming-idea philosophy during the time he was thinking about and composing *Heart of Darkness* is clear from his correspondence with Graham. In 1897, Graham published his essay, "'Bloody Niggers,'" which examines how the English appropriated the Chosen People mentality from the Old and New Testaments to justify to themselves and others global domination and, when necessary, human rights violations. According to Graham's model, the English are, as he ironically observes, specifically chosen, "God's favoured nation."[24] Given their status as "God's own Englishmen,"[25] the English have a right to colonize the world:

> Much of the earth was his [the Englishman's], and in the skies he had his mansion ready, well aired, with every appliance known to modern sanitary science waiting for him with a large bible on the chest of drawers in every room. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, and countless islands, useful as coaling stations and depots amongst the heathen, all owned his sway.[26]

Put simply, as the Chosen People, the English have been charged with building the city of God on earth. Therefore, they can take whatever land on the planet they deem fit.

As for non-white, non-chosen races, specifically "bloody niggers," they must submit themselves to the English. At this point, Graham underscores how Europeans have exploited the word "nigger" to inspire hatred and to vindicate violence: "In the consideration of the 'nigger' races which God sent into the world for whites (and chiefly Englishmen) to rule, 'niggers' of Africa occupy first place."[27] Within this framework, the English as the Chosen People are obligated to govern the non-chosen, and should the non-chosen resist, the English are authorized and even required to take violent action. And since non-whites are not fully human in the strict sense of the word, the English will not be committing a crime were they to kill the non-chosen races: "'Niggers' who have no cannons, and

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[24] R. B. Cunninghame Graham (1981), "'Bloody Niggers,'" in *Selected Writings of Cunnighame Graham*. London and Toronto: Associated University Presses: 65.
[25] Graham (1981): 63.
[26] Graham (1981): 64–5.
[27] Graham (1981): 66.

cannot construct a reasonable torpedo, have no rights. 'Niggers' whose lot is placed outside our flag, whose lives are given over to a band of money-grubbing miscreants (chartered or not) have neither rights nor wrongs."[28] Humans have rights, not animals, and because Africans are not human in the strict sense of the word, the English can kill them with emotional, psychological, and legal impunity. Just in case Graham's reader may have failed to understand how the God-concept legitimizes genocidal action against Africans, he states his point directly: "Better, by far, to have made the 'niggers' white and let them by degrees all become Englishmen, than put us to the trouble of exterminating whole tribes of them, to carry out his plan."[29] Exterminating Africans is legitimate so long as the English are carrying "out his [God's] plan." And how can Europeans know God's plan? The answer is the Bible, for as Graham says, "our own exploits amongst the 'niggers' of to-day" resemble "the record of crimes, of violence"[30] in the Old Testament.

In mid-June of 1898, just six months before he started writing *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad read "Bloody Niggers," which he considered "very good, very telling."[31] However, he did have some objections. The essay lacks subtlety. What Conrad specifically objects to, I contend, is the clear and overt link Graham makes between the English appropriation of the Chosen People philosophy and the genocidal call for "exterminating whole tribes of" Africans. Conrad did not fault Graham for noting the cause and effect relationship; like Graham, he thought altruistic-sentiment philosophies, seemingly authored by an "august Benevolence," can easily lead to an "Exterminate all the brutes" philosophy. For instance, in a letter to Graham, Conrad notes how people in the West are born into a system of belief that leads to criminal behavior: "We are born initiated, and succeeding generations clutch the inheritance of fear and brutality without a thought, without a doubt without compunction—in the name of God."[32] In the name of God, people commit atrocities, and they do so without compunction and without doubt, so Conrad understood the link between belief in

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[28] Graham (1981): 66–7.
[29] Graham (1981): 66.
[30] Graham (1981): 62.
[31] Conrad (1986): 2:69, June 15, 1898.
[32] Conrad (1986): 2:25, January 23, 1898.

a benevolent deity and a genocidal mandate. In another letter to Graham, Conrad says that "Posterity shall be busy thieving, lying, selling its little soul for sixpence (from the noblest motives)."[33] But Conrad also understood that the typical colonizer would never acknowledge to himself or others the genocidal impulse implicit in his Chosen People philosophy. Therefore, to replicate the way the colonizing consciousness, which is prone to confused reasoning, functions to justify colonization and even atrocities, he had to produce a suitable narrative device. That device is found in Marlow's escalating-horror passage, which culminates with an ellipsis.

In Marlow's ellipsis passage, the suggestion is that the unselfish belief in the idea of colonization can justify and redeem actions that are even more horrific than a sacrifice. But what is in the space of the ellipsis can never be specified, not because the ellipsis content is so sublimely harrowing that it defies signification, but because the ellipsis, as an empty signifier, gives colonizers the latitude to commit the most horrid atrocities, while it simultaneously enables them to consider themselves noble, righteous, and just. In short, the ellipsis is the structure of consciousness that enables colonizers to justify atrocities, including genocide. Indeed, the ellipsis, as an essential structure of the redeeming-idea consciousness, may be able to bear the weight of Kurtz's exterminate-all-the-brutes philosophy, but only so long as it is not spoken or defined. Put differently, the structure of the redeeming-idea consciousness allows for atrocities, even genocide, so long as the genocidal declaration remains unspecified, undefined, and unspoken. Genocide spoken and defined would destroy the redeeming-idea philosophy on which the colonizing politics of Europe are premised, while genocide unspoken and undefined, implied only through the ellipsis, is permissible and even legitimate. According to the logic of this model, Kurtz's crime is not necessarily genocide, but acknowledging and articulating what the West's redeeming-idea philosophy makes possible and sometimes entails.

Understanding the ellipsis in this way explains Marlow's behavior throughout the novella. Even though the ellipsis passage leaves open the possibility for genocide, Marlow uses an original/

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[33] Conrad (1986): 1:371, August 9, 1897.

sham distinction to suggest that Kurtz's postscriptum is the declaration of a man whose "nerves went wrong" (p. 91). According to this interpretation, the original Kurtz is a man committed to a humanitarian philosophy based on a redeeming idea that leads to civilization, while the sham Kurtz is a fallen man who has an insatiable lust for power. This original/sham distinction has allowed a first-rate scholar such as Peter Edgerly Firchow to treat Kurtz's genocidal declaration as a form of madness that is completely inconsistent with his altruistic-sentiment philosophy: "though Kurtz undoubtedly does advocate genocide, he does so only in a moment of apparent madness."[34] According to the logic of this interpretation, instead of understanding the postscriptum as a lucid articulation of what the redeeming-idea philosophy makes possible and sometimes entails, it treats Kurtz's postscriptum as a madman's insane declaration, which suggests that there is an irreconcilable contradiction between the humanitarian spirit of Kurtz's document and its call for genocide.

And yet, despite Marlow's original/sham distinction, there is evidence within the text to suggest that Marlow considers it possible to reconcile the two parts of the report. Marlow, no doubt, is disturbed by the postscriptum, for he refers to it as "terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky" (p. 92). However, it is my contention that Marlow is disturbed not by the implied action of genocide but by the articulation of what should remain unspoken and undefined within a redeeming-idea political philosophy. That Marlow considers Kurtz a noble and righteous practitioner of the redeeming-idea philosophy, abominations and all, is clear when he reflects on his own attitude towards Kurtz. After mentioning Kurtz's famous cry of horror, Marlow affirms Kurtz's project: "It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last" (p. 133). Despite the "abominable terrors" and the "abominable satisfactions," Marlow considers Kurtz's horror show in Africa "an affirmation, a moral victory." According to this interpretation, the problem with Kurtz is not his behavior, even if that

[34] Firchow (2000), *Envisioning Africa: Racism and Imperialism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press: 153.

behavior includes an abominable terror such as genocide. The problem is that he articulates what must remain unspoken, a verbal indiscretion that, were it to get widespread circulation, could make the unselfish-belief-in-the-idea philosophy go to pieces.

Within this framework, Kurtz's verbal and written indiscretions force Marlow to lie in order to preserve the aura of the colonizing idea. Marlow claims that he "hate[s], detest[s], and can't bear a lie" (p. 47), and yet, the novella concludes with him telling the Intended that Kurtz, on his deathbed, "pronounced" the woman's name (p. 145), when in fact his last words to Marlow were the horror. If Marlow is willing to lie on a conscious level, despite his hatred of lies, how much more prone would he be to lie on an unconscious level? In essence, Marlow's conscious lie forces readers to retrospectively analyze his earlier remarks to determine whether they qualify as lies. For instance, is it a lie to say that he experienced "a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment" when the helmsman received his deathblow? Nothing in his description of the helmsman scene justifies such an interpretation. In fact, Marlow's description of the helmsman's response blatantly contradicts his kinship claim. Is it a lie when Marlow offers Kurtz's report to a Company man "with the postscriptum torn off" (p. 135)? After all, the report with the postscriptum reflects not just what Kurtz thought but how he behaved in Africa, so if Europeans want an accurate historical record of the words and deeds of European colonists such as Kurtz, Marlow has thwarted and subverted that desire.

Through his strategic misrepresentations, Marlow gives to Europeans a Kurtz who represents colonization as an unselfish belief in an idea. In other words, colonization, with its attendant atrocities, is ultimately a noble project that justifies and even redeems the horrid sacrifice of many enslaved and exterminated Africans—this, at least, is how colonization appears, based on Marlow's strategic lies to others and himself. Is it any surprise, then, that Marlow's aunt, a woman who is a victim of exaggerated rhetoric "let loose in print and talk" in the 1890s, has uncritically accepted missionizing discourses that make colonizers emissaries of light and lower sorts of apostles? Marlow may not believe in the beautiful-world philosophy of his aunt and the Intended, but he has clearly adopted a version of that philosophy, one in which suffering, slavery, and death are ultimately redeemed through an unselfish belief in the

idea of civilization. But more than that, Marlow and Kurtz produce people such as Marlow's aunt and the Intended, because they are the agenda setters (through Kurtz's report) and editors (through Marlow's decision to remove the postscriptum), who craft the ideology on which colonization depends and flourishes. To be more specific, because of Marlow's lie to the Intended, she can live in the all-too-beautiful world in which a colonizer, such as Kurtz, exerted in Africa a power for good practically unbounded, and that the world has suffered a grave loss with his death: "'"What a loss to me—to us!"—she corrected herself with beautiful generosity; then added in a murmur, "To the world"'" (pp. 142–3). Because of Marlow's lie to the Company man (the implicit lie of removing the postscriptum), Europeans, such as Marlow's aunt, will read reports, such as Kurtz's, which will give them "the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence" and lead them to believe that colonizers are in Africa weaning "'ignorant millions from their horrid ways.'" In other words, without the edited version of Kurtz's redemptive-sacrifice philosophy and without Marlow's strategic lies, women such as the aunt and the Intended would not be so easily duped into constructing an all-too-beautiful world.

It is important to note that Marlow is fully aware of his deceptions of women. Throughout *Heart of Darkness*, women are simply Marlow's projected fantasy, and if the women in the novella exhibit any blindness, it is because people such as Marlow have consciously, strategically, and willfully deceived them. As Marlow claims: "'They—the women I mean—are out of it—should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse'" (p. 88). Early in the novella, Marlow faults women for being out of touch, and yet, as is clear from this passage I have just cited, it is people such as Marlow who strategically keep women, including the aunt, "out of it" by editing out of Kurtz's manuscript the postscriptum. Conrad is clearly inviting us to be critical of Marlow. But what enables a Marlow to deceive himself and others so thoroughly and completely? The answer is the deceptive narrative structure of the ellipsis. Women, as Marlow notes, praise colonization, but they do so out of ignorance. Inaccessible to women is the absent content contained within the ellipsis, such as the cry of horror and the call for genocide, the very things that Marlow willfully and strategically conceals from

women (among others). Colonists also praise colonization, but they do so for a different reason. While they, unlike women, may have access to the horrors and atrocities perpetrated in the heart of Africa, they have internalized a philosophy that enables them to convert colonial abominations into the moral victory of civilization, thus justifying the act of banishing those criminal acts from theirs as well as the larger public's field of vision, which is what Marlow does after leaving the grove of death and after witnessing the helmsman's death. Whatever the case, what occurs in the space of the ellipsis is skillfully effaced, edited out of the narratives and psyches of the perpetrators and supporters of the colonial enterprise.

Therefore, what makes the beautiful-world philosophy of the women possible are the lies Marlow tells himself and others, and the narrative structure of the ellipsis, which mirrors a specific structure of consciousness, enables him to justify his lies to himself and others. Since the ellipsis passage allows for an unspecified atrocity that is more heinous than a sacrifice, Marlow is able to redeem the most abominable terrors. But when Kurtz specifies what would be in the place of the ellipsis with a phrase such as "Exterminate all the brutes," he freights the unselfish-belief-in-the-idea philosophy with more than it can bear. An average person, with his or her muddled intellect and confused reasoning, may be willing to accept the idea that we must make unspecified and undefined sacrifices in order to achieve civilization, but few would be willing to accept the idea that the colonizing idea could justify genocide. Again, the problem is not Kurtz's actions, for Marlow dubs them a moral victory, even when they include abominable terrors and abominable satisfactions. The problem is his articulation of what the philosophy makes possible and sometimes entails. For Marlow's redeeming-idea philosophy to function, the most important narrative reality is the absence that only the ellipsis can signify, an absence that enables his muddled intellect to redeem the most horrid of crimes. According to this reading, Marlow is either unable or unwilling to acknowledge or interrogate what exists in the narrative and psychological space of the ellipsis. Indeed, specifying the content of the ellipsis would not only cause the redemptive-sacrifice philosophy to go to pieces, but it would also make it impossible for people such as Marlow to glibly justify dubbing the suffering and death of others redemptive. Therefore, through his conscious and unconscious lies, Marlow sets

into motion the machinery that enables colonizers to commit the most horrid of atrocities, atrocities that are not even recognizable as crimes against humanity because they are conveniently effaced through Marlow's redemptive-sacrifice philosophy. When Marlow gives the report to the Company man with the postscriptum torn off and lies to the Intended, he preserves the integrity of the redeeming-idea consciousness, which is based on a confused reasoning that can justify genocide.

II

Conrad does not just use the redemptive-idea model to illuminate the psychopolitical mechanisms that justify oppression and even genocide in the Belgian Congo. His model has universal applicability, though it should be noted, as I argued in Chapter 1, that the modernist universal is provisional and contingent. Conrad's model cannot be applied to Plato's Greece, Dante's Italy, or Shakespeare's England. Indeed, the model Conrad establishes is only relevant for those countries that have adopted the view that a Christian ideal inheres within the concept of the modern nation. According to Conrad, this means modern European nations, for as he claims in his "Anatole France" essay: "we all in Europe are Christians that is true enough."[35] Within the context of *Heart of Darkness*, the redeeming-idea model applies to countries such as England, France, and Germany, which explains the significance of Marlow's reference to the German-named Kurtz and his parents: "His mother was half-English, his father was half-French." Given this background, Marlow concludes that "[a]ll Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (p. 91).

It was between the years 1905 and 1919 that Conrad started to use his redeeming-idea model to analyze other God states. For instance, in his 1919 essay "The Crime of Partition," Conrad suggests that the Germans have adopted the very mentality that enabled the Europeans from *Heart of Darkness* to commit their atrocities in Africa. Central to that mentality is a conviction about

[35] Conrad (2004): 34.

"the inferior races of the earth so full of sin and unworthiness."[36] What differentiates Germans from other European citizens, however, is that they treat non-German Europeans (whites) in the same way that the ordinary Europeans treat blacks. As Conrad claims in his 1915 essay "Poland Revisited," the Germans are "that race planted in the middle of Europe assuming in grotesque vanity the attitude of Europeans amongst effete Asiatics, or barbarous niggers; and with a consciousness of superiority freeing their hands from all moral bonds, anxious to take up, if I may express myself so, the 'perfect man's burden.'"[37] Conrad's decision to reference but also revise Kipling's "white man's burden" is significant. As I argued in Chapter 4, Kipling's poems "Recessional" and "The White Man's Burden" most clearly embody the supersessionist theology of the sacred imagined nation, which holds that white Europeans have a moral obligation to divest the lesser-breeds of their lesser-breedness in the name of Christian civilization. But the Germans, according to Conrad, have taken the Kipling idea to the next level by narrowing the concept of the privileged and entitled (it is no longer just whites, but perfect whites) and thereby justifying the violation of certain whites, which is why Conrad replaces the word "white" with the word "perfect."

Conrad's depiction of Germans in terms of the "perfect man's burden" in the year 1915 is remarkably prescient, especially if we read his assertions alongside the works of Aimé Césaire and Zora Neale Hurston, who lodge a similar critique against Germans, though they have the Germans from World War II in mind. Like Conrad, both writers mention Kipling's work in derogatory terms, but what is even more noteworthy is their suggestion that the primary crime of Hitler and the Nazis was that they did to the Europeans what Europeans normally did to blacks. For example, Césaire claims that Hitler's real crime was "the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India, and the 'niggers' of Africa."[38]

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[36] Conrad (2004): 101.

[37] Conrad (2004): 118.

[38] Césaire (2000), *Discourse on Colonialism*, Translated by Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press: 36.

Like Césaire, Hurston concludes that Hitler's crime is not really colonization or even murder; after all, Europeans have been doing such things for centuries to Africans and Asians. "Hitler's crime," she claims, "is that he is actually doing a thing like that to his own kind."[39] For Hitler and the Nazis, to justify their attack on the Jews and other European nations, they could not just use the Kipling model of the white man's burden. They had to refine Kipling's model, which is exactly what Conrad suggests they did by shifting the burden from the white man to the perfect man.

Here is the logic of the model of the "perfect man's burden." The imperfect man is but a "Half-devil and half child," so it is incumbent upon the perfect man (German) to take up the burden of leading the imperfect (non-German) man "toward the light." What differentiates the perfect from the imperfect man is knowledge of the redemptive colonizing idea. In a child's stage of development, the imperfect man, such as the helmsman from *Heart of Darkness*, lacks the colonizer's atemporal perspective, which would enable him to see how the suffering he endures in the present at the hands of the perfect man will ultimately be redeemed by the institution of civilization, which signifies an adult stage of development. This explains the imperfect man's "blame" and "hate" of the perfect man. Since the imperfect man cannot see the noble "goal" of the redeeming idea, he will engage in "Sloth and heathen Folly," and thereby bring all the perfect man's "hope to nought." But the perfect man, who knows full well the rightness of his project, must press onward in the hope that future generations will ultimately come to understand the "dear-bought wisdom" of the perfect man's redeeming idea of civilization.

It is important at this point to keep in mind Conrad's principle objections to the redeeming-idea model. Above all else, Conrad critiques the mystifying language of a redeeming ideal that appeals to the muddled intellect and confused reasoning of the average man. Conrad does not necessarily object to ideals. In his 1918 essay titled "Tradition," Conrad specifies two types of idealisms, one destructive and one productive. The destructive idealism he describes as "a misty, winged angel without eyes," while the productive one is described as "a divine figure of terrestrial aspect

[39] Hurston (1991), *Dust Tracks on a Road*. New York: HarperPerennial: 251.

with a clear glance and with its feet resting firmly on the earth on which it was born."[40] Note the contrasts Conrad establishes: the destructive idealism is "misty," while the productive one is "clear." The destructive one is ethereal ("winged angel") but not rooted in the earth, while the productive one is spiritual ("a divine figure") but of an earthly character ("resting firmly on the earth on which it was born"). In essence, one idealism is empirical ("with a clear glance") and one is non-empirical ("without eyes").

When Conrad critiques Kipling and the Germans, it is not primarily because of their offensive views of lesser breeds, but because of their misty-minded idealism, which appeals to "the confused reasoning of an average man." Conrad makes this point about Kipling in a letter to Graham. After mentioning how "Allah *is* careless," Conrad offers evidence to support his claim: "here's His very own chosen people (of assorted denominations) getting banged about and not a sign from the sky but a snowfall and a fiendish frost." But then Conrad offers a potential explanation for Allah's negligence: "Perhaps Kipling's Recessional (if He understood it—which I doubt) had offended Him."[41] To critique Kipling's poem, Conrad could have mentioned the reference to the "lesser breeds without the Law," which has rightly occasioned much outrage among writers of African descent, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 4. But Conrad's objection has more to do with Kipling's unclear and imprecise claims, which are so baffling that not even Allah could understand them. This is the same critique Conrad lodges against German writers. In "Poland Revisited," Conrad says: "I have observed long before that German genius has a hypnotising power over half-baked souls and half-lighted minds. There is an immense force of suggestion in highly organized mediocrity. Had it not hypnotised half Europe?"[42] The German genius does not illuminate; it manipulates "half-baked souls and half-lighted minds." Moreover, it is a "misty" and "hypnotising" language that enables writers such as Kipling and German geniuses to manipulate the average man.

This critique of hypnotizing language explains Conrad's scathing remarks about mysticism. For Conrad, the word "mystic" is usually

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[40] Conrad (2004): 153.
[41] Conrad (1986): 2:228, December 19, 1899.
[42] Conrad (2004): 127.

associated with Russia, as when Conrad mentions the "the mystic Russian fashion"[43] in "The Crime of Partition." There is something ominous and autocratic about the word mysticism, which Conrad underscores in his 1905 essay "Autocracy and War." In this article, Conrad tells his reader that "the decrepid, old, hundred years old, spectre of Russia's might still faces Europe." He amplifies on this view by claiming that Russia "still faces us with its old stupidity, with its strange mystical arrogance, stamping with its shadowy feet upon the gravestone of autocracy."[44] A few pages later Conrad specifies the nature of Russia's political orientation, and not surprisingly, the word mystical plays a crucial role:

> autocracy and nothing else in the world has moulded her [Russia's] institutions and with the poison of slavery drugged the national temperament into the apathy of a hopeless fatalism. It seems to have gone into the blood tainting every mental activity in its source by a half mystical, insensate, fascinating assertion of purity and holiness. The government of Holy Russia arrogating to itself the supreme power to torment and slaughter the bodies of its subjects like a God sent scourge has been most cruel to those whom it allowed to live under the shadow of its dispensation.[45]

Some sort of mystical reference to purity and holiness taints every mental activity, which allows Russia "to torment and slaughter the bodies of its subjects." In this instance, mysticism has a two-fold function: to mystify by invoking nebulous concepts such as purity and holiness and to justify the violation of people. Given the way nebulous concepts function, if a nation is going to defend the rights of the ordinary people, mysticism cannot play a role. Conrad makes this point directly in the "Author's Note" to his autobiography *A Personal Record*, which was published in 1912. When describing his upbringing, Conrad says: "An impartial view of humanity in all its degrees of splendour and misery together with a special regard for the rights of the unprivileged of this earth, not

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[43] Conrad (2004): 102.
[44] Conrad (2004): 75.
[45] Conrad (2004): 82.

on any mystic ground but on the ground of simple fellowship and honourable reciprocity of services was the dominant characteristic of the mental and moral atmosphere of the houses which sheltered my hazardous childhood."[46] Note how Conrad rules out the possibility of aiding "the unprivileged of this earth" on the basis of "any mystic ground." There is a reason for this. Conrad considers mysticism an essential part of the redeeming-idea philosophy, which so easily justifies violence and oppression.

Indeed, Conrad sheds specific light on the redeeming-idea philosophy in "Autocracy and War." After briefly examining how war and peace have become interchangeable concepts, Conrad makes an observation that recalls Marlow's justification of brutal sacrifices on behalf of the idea. War, Conrad claims,

> has made peace so magnificent as to be almost as expensive to keep up as itself. And it has taken even more upon itself. It has sent out apostles of its own who at one time went about mostly in newspapers preaching the gospel of the mystic sanctity of its sacrifices and the regenerating power of spilt blood to the poor in mind—whose name is legion.[47]

In this passage, which bears a resemblance to Marlow's redeeming-idea philosophy, Conrad does not just mention the sanctity of sacrifices; he specifies the "mystic sanctity." This is significant because it is such misty, mystifying, and mystical language that has enabled writers such as Kipling and German geniuses to seduce "the poor in mind" into believing in a redemptive-sacrifice philosophy, which justifies a belief in "the regenerating power of spilt blood." The priority of terms is absolutely crucial at this point. Conrad objects primarily to the apostles who preach the gospel of mystic sanctity rather than those who actually spill blood, because it is the intellectual-agenda setters who provide the justification for the atrocity. The best way to prevent the atrocity, according to Conrad, is to eliminate the mystifying language of sacrifice. Given the nature of Conrad's critique in this passage, there are

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[46] Conrad (1988), "Author's Note" to *A Personal Record*, in *The Mirror of the Sea & A Personal Record*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press: vii.
[47] Conrad (2004): 90.

two separate but equally important reasons why he objects to Marlow's redeeming-idea philosophy. First and foremost, it relies upon the kind of "misty and mysterious [conceptual] shapes [that are] dear to muddled intellects." Second, it is such misty language that enables people to justify and redeem the suffering and death of "the unprivileged of this earth."

As careful readers of *Heart of Darkness*, we have to ask: Is Conrad inviting us to see Kurtz (whether original or sham) as a clear-headed idealist, who uses a grounded discourse to inspire people to be more noble and humane? Or, is he inviting us to see Kurtz as a German genius, who uses mystical language to hypnotize people into committing atrocities? In like manner, is Conrad inviting us to see Marlow as an astute thinker, who has the capacity to critically interrogate what he is told? Or, is he inviting us to see him as an average man with a half-lighted mind, who can be easily hypnotized by a German genius?

There are two separate reasons why we should consider Marlow "poor in mind." First, his critique of women indicates his "confused reasoning." Marlow faults women for adopting a beautiful-world philosophy. But one has to wonder if he realizes that it is his lies that prohibit women from seeing the real world. If Marlow had not edited out of Kurtz's report the postscriptum and if he had not lied to the Intended about Kurtz's last words, people, such as Marlow's aunt, would be able to get a more accurate picture of the Kurtz who had heads mounted on stakes in front of his African hut, and consequently, they would not have been so eager to embrace and endorse Kurtz's philosophy, which gives a person "the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence." In essence, Marlow faults women for being naive, and yet, the text itself suggests that he is the reason why they are naive.

The more important reason to say that Marlow is guilty of confused reasoning has to do with his response to Kurtz, whom Conrad strategically gives a German name and whom Marlow refers to as "a universal genius" (pp. 135–6). In essence, Kurtz is exactly what Conrad depicts as a "German genius [who] has a hypnotising power over half-baked souls and half-lighted minds." More significant, however, is the German Kurtz's ability to formulate a mystical philosophy, which functions to free people's "hands from all moral bonds." In the ellipsis passage, Marlow subscribes to the view that the idea of civilization can justify a

sacrifice and an unspecified something more. In his report on the Suppression of Savage Customs, Kurtz specifies that something more, which is genocide. While Marlow initially expresses concern about Kurtz's genocidal proclamation, he ultimately affirms Kurtz's ideas and "abominable" behavior by referring to them as a "moral victory." By eliminating the postscriptum, Marlow, therefore, not only makes it possible for the redeeming-idea philosophy, with its implied genocidal mandate, to continue to be operational in Africa, but he also contributes, in his capacity as editor, to the effectiveness of the document. Hence, the central paradox of genocidal consciousness in *Heart of Darkness* is this: genocide is made possible and even probable only so long as it is suggested and/or implied through the mystifying semantics of a conceptual absence (the ellipsis) within the context of a redeeming-idea philosophy. Accordingly, Kurtz's report can only make genocide possible by not mentioning genocide. By stark contrast, the moment the space of the ellipsis is filled with a specific mandate, such as "Exterminate all the brutes," the philosophy would be exposed as objectionable, offensive, and incoherent and would, therefore, fall apart. In essence, intellectual honesty and clarity are the biggest enemies of genocide, while the nebulous discourse of the redeeming-idea philosophy in which genocide is implied but not stated makes genocide possible.

III

The redeeming-idea model with the attendant ellipsis that Conrad establishes has tremendous explanatory power. However, if we know anything about Conrad, it is that he rejects models that purport to be universal in a traditional sense. As he claims, "facts must stand in some relation to time and space."[48] Such a qualification does not mean that we should dispense with universals, but it does mean that we need to recognize the contingent nature of the universal models we deploy. For instance, Conrad believes that the ideas contained in Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" provide a

[48] Conrad (2004): 64.

partial explanation for the behavior of Belgians in the Congo, the English in India, or the Americans in the Philippines, but it does not illuminate Germany's behavior in Europe, which is why he revised and updated Kipling's model by referring to it as the "perfect man's burden." In essence, Conrad adds to Kipling's model by clarifying how the German genius seduces half-lighted minds, and thus clarifies why people should be so concerned about Germans and Germany in the early twentieth century.

But what Conrad does not understand is the distinctive nature of the redeeming-idea model as it was functioning in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Conrad does claim that Germans are extremely provincial, for as he says of Germany: "I had never lingered in that land which, as a whole, is so singularly barren of memorable manifestations of generous sympathies and magnanimous impulses. An ineradicable, invincible provincialism of envy and vanity, clings to the forms of its thought like a frowsy garment."[49] Unfortunately, Conrad does not specify the provincial forms of thought he has in mind.

What is missing from Conrad's picture is the distinctive form of Christianity (the redeeming idea) that enabled Germans to justify their "perfect man's burden" politics. This is not to say that Conrad failed to understand the degree to which Christianity functioned to justify extreme forms of cruelty and violence. In fact, Conrad tells Edward Garnett in a letter how he, "from the age of fourteen, disliked the Christian religion, its doctrines, ceremonies and festivals."[50] To Conrad's mind, something in Christianity lends "itself with amazing facility to cruel distortion," and consequently, Christianity "has brought an infinity of anguish to innumerable souls—on this earth."[51]

Much more than Conrad, Michael Bakunin provides specific insight into the nature of the Christian model that the Germans started to formulate in the mid- to late nineteenth century in order to justify a totalitarian political regime. In a book that was to be titled *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution*, written between the years 1870 and 1872 but published as

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[49] Conrad (2004): 130.
[50] Conrad (1986): 2:358, December 22, 1902.
[51] Conrad (1986): 5:358, February 23, 1914.

God and the State in 1882, Bakunin formulates arguments that anticipate Foucault. For Foucault, the in-depth Christianization of the nineteenth century took the form of the vision, which enabled Christian leaders to control the people and simultaneously eliminate unpleasant side-effects, such as possessions and convulsions (see Chapter 3). Like Foucault, Bakunin understood the degree to which religion, specifically Christianity, dominated a person's inner life in the nineteenth century. For Bakunin, religion exerts considerable power over people in the nineteenth century:

> As collective insanity it [religion] has penetrated to the very depths of the public and private existence of the peoples; it is incarnate in society; it has become, so to speak, the collective soul and thought. Every man is enveloped in it from his birth; he sucks it in with his mother's milk, absorbs it with all that he touches, all that he sees. He is so exclusively fed upon it, so poisoned and penetrated by it in all his being, that later, however powerful his natural mind, he has to make unheard-of efforts to deliver himself from it, and even then never completely succeeds.[52]

Even if a person consciously and formally renounces Christian belief, it continues to impact his or her person and behavior, for it penetrates the "natural mind" at both the public and private level, which explains Bakunin's assertion that most atheists remain believers despite their claims and intentions to the contrary.

That Christianity continues to structure consciousness is not as important as Bakunin's specific understanding of Christianity. For Bakunin, Europe in the nineteenth-century is simply incomprehensible without taking into account the conflict between materialism and idealism, which is why he opens *God and the State* with the question: "Who are right, the idealists or the materialists?" (p. 9). Throughout the book, Bakunin argues that the materialists are right and the idealists are wrong, which leads him to claim that Christianity is wrong. In a passage about his contemporaries, Bakunin insists that many "believe still in Christianity, in idealism,

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[52] Bakunin (1970), *God and the State*. New York: Dover Publications: 68. Hereafter cited in text.

in God" (p. 77). Note that for Bakunin Christianity equals idealism. There are obvious problems with defining Christianity in such a narrow way, given the varieties of Christianity, but as I will demonstrate in the following two chapters, Bakunin's characterization presciently anticipates the specific version of Christianity that Hitler and the Nazis would adopt, what I refer to as Christian idealism, though I will explain some of the limitations of Bakunin's conception in so far as National Socialism is concerned.

Writing at a time when scientific positivism was increasingly becoming for intellectuals one of the most compelling discourses for making systematic sense of the world, there was a growing sense that the material world, including the human, was nothing more than a mindless mechanism, predetermined to follow the ineluctable laws of nature. In such a world, there can be no freedom. To counter this mechanistic view of the human and the world, Christians did two separate things. First, they defined the physical universe as meaningless in itself. As Bakunin says, matter is not just matter according to Christian idealists. It is "*vile matter*" (p. 12, Bakunin's emphasis), which reduces matter to "supreme nothingness" (p. 13). In essence, the idealists "have taken away from matter intelligence, life, all its determining qualities, active relations or forces, motion itself, without which matter would not even have weight, leaving it nothing but impenetrability and absolute immobility in space" (p. 13). The logic behind the Christian idealist model is this. If people subscribe to materialism, then they must acknowledge that they are nothing more than nihilistic blips waiting for extinction, for matter, in itself, is essentially nothing.

For Bakunin, it is the Christian idealist's intellectual point of departure that leads to this radical mischaracterization of matter. Instead of starting with simple ideas about the material world and then moving towards more complex ones, Christian idealists start with the most complex and metaphysical ideas and then impose them on the human and the world, which is why he concludes that they are "obsessed, blinded, and pushed on by the divine phantom which they have inherited from theology" (p. 14). To be more specific, he claims: "They [Christian idealists] go from the higher to the lower, from the superior to the inferior, from the complex to the simple. They begin with God, either as a person or as divine substance or idea, and the first step that they take is

a terrible fall from the sublime heights of the eternal ideal into the mire of the material world; from absolute perfection into absolute imperfection; from thought to being, or rather, from supreme being to nothing" (p. 14). Rather than interrogating matter in a disinterested manner, Christian idealists posit the existence of an ultimate spiritual reality, which is the God-concept, and then define matter as the antithesis of the divine ideal, which leads Christian idealists to claim that matter is ultimately bereft of meaning and value.

In stark contrast to the emptiness and meaninglessness of the material world is the fullness of meaning in the spiritual world. Constructing this ultimate spiritual world was the second thing Christian idealists did to oppose the rise of the mechanistic model of the world. According to this paradigm, humans and their actions become meaningful only in so far as they originate in God. Consequently, if a person's ideas or deeds are "invested with a divine sanction," then that individual would be in a position "to exercise greater authority among men," because his or her actions and deeds would be "directly consecrated by God himself." In essence, Christian idealism allows believers to "divinize all that constitutes humanity in man" (p. 36). It is such a philosophy that creates the conditions for a Kurtz to emerge, for as Bakunin asserts: "From the moment that God, the perfect and supreme being, is posited face to face with humanity, divine mediators, the elect, the inspired of God spring from the earth to enlighten, direct, and govern in his name the human race" (p. 37). Kurtz and his gang of virtue are the quintessential idealists. As people who appear to be "in the nature of supernatural beings," he and his fellow whites can "'exert a power for good practically unbounded,'" which is why they believe that they have not just a right but also an obligation to colonize Africa, for Kurtz and his gang must "enlighten, direct, and govern" the Africans. What justifies this stance is the "divine sanction" emanating from the spiritual world, the only world that ultimately has meaning. Hence Marlow's response, which consists of a "notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence." The "exotic Immensity" is Africa, a meaningless continent in itself, as are all material lands. But the material world can undergo a transubstantiation in so far as it is consecrated by the divine, which is exactly what Marlow suggests when he claims that the "exotic Immensity" is "ruled by an august Benevolence." In other words, Africa has become totally meaningful in so far as

it is now governed by a benevolent Deity. And what specifically leads to Marlow's effusive response is Kurtz's report, a document that justifies the European program to "enlighten, direct, and govern" Africa and Africans. Without the divinely sanctioned actions of European whites, who exert a power for good practically unbounded, Africa would remain an empty and meaningless land.

Were this tendency to hyperbolically degrade the material world and valorize the ideal world just an instance of intellectual mischaracterization and/or dishonesty, Bakunin would dismiss it as the harmless but seething product of runaway imaginations. The problem, however, is that Christian idealism has deadly social and political consequences. As Bakunin claims: "Everywhere, in short, religious or philosophical idealism, the one but the more or less free translation of the other, serves to-day as the flag of material, bloody, and brutal force, of shameless material exploitation" (p. 47). Christian and philosophical idealism, which amounts to one and the same thing in the nineteenth century, leads necessarily to systemic human rights violations, which is why Bakunin concludes that "in defending the doctrines of idealism one finds himself enlisted perforce in the ranks of the oppressors and exploiters of the masses" (p. 47). Indeed, those who subscribe to Christian idealism become radically desensitized to the suffering of others, for as Bakunin claims: "Divine zeal, preoccupation with the idea, finally dry up the tenderest souls, the most compassionate hearts, the sources of human love. Considering all that is, all that happens in the world from the point of view of eternity or of the abstract idea, they treat passing matters with disdain; but the whole life of real men, of men of flesh and bone, is composed only of passing matters; they themselves are only passing beings, who, once passed, are replaced by others likewise passing, but never to return in person" (p. 54). Since only that which is divine has absolute and total meaning, humans, who are composed of matter, are worthless beings in themselves, and as such, they can be justly eliminated.

According to this Christian idealist model, humans, composed as they are of matter, have no value or meaning in themselves, and consequently, they can be violated with emotional, psychological, and legal impunity. However, in so far as humans are linked with the divine, they have ultimate meaning and value, and consequently see themselves and their actions as being invested with a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused: "These illustrious

men think, no doubt, that idealistic theories or beliefs are essentially necessary to the moral dignity and grandeur of man" (p. 48). As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, this is the position of Hitler and the Nazis (as articulated in *Mein Kampf*, the National Socialist Party Program, and other Nazi writings). On their own, independent of God, humans are worthless passions, evanescent in nature, trifling in content. But Christian idealists differ considerably from secular materialists, for while materialism implicitly reduces humans to beast-like beings, idealism elevates humans to the level of the divine.

Striking is the degree to which Bakunin suggests that the Germans of his day have already internalized Christian idealism, and the extent of Bakunin's prescience will become increasingly clear in Chapters 6 and 7. To be expected, Bakunin warns his reader of the need to be free from the government "of the inspired idealists" (p. 64), and for Bakunin, Germany "represents idealism in its most abstract, most pure, and most transcendental form" (p. 44). Indeed, Bakunin mentions Germany again later in the text:

> The idealistic abstraction, God, is a corrosive poison, which destroys and decomposes life, falsifies and kills it. The pride of the idealists, not being personal but divine, is invincible and inexorable: it may, it must, die, but it will never yield, and while it has a breath left it will try to subject men to its God, just as the lieutenants of Prussia, these practical idealists of Germany, would like to see the people crushed under the spurred boot of their emperor (p. 64).

Put simply, Germany perfectly embodies "divine idealism" (p. 65), and consequently, it is a country that must be feared.

Bakunin rightly argues that Immanuel Kant's idealism had a decisive impact on Germans. According to Bakunin, Plato's philosophy suffered because he was "absolutely convinced of the reality of the divine idea." To his credit, Kant "demolished the objectivity or reality of the divine ideas," but instead of delivering the deathblow to God and religion, Kant "tried to replace these divine ideas upon their transcendental or celestial throne" (p. 71). If humans could no longer use speculative reason to justify the existence of God, they could at least presuppose God's existence based on their capacity to act as autonomous moral

agents, a model, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, which is premised on a materialism/idealism binary. According to the logic of Bakunin's critique, what justifies political domination and/or human rights violations is the religious conception of the material world as empty and meaningless, and even though Kant eliminated traditional belief in metaphysics and God, his transcendental philosophy was still premised on the hyperbolic degradation of the material world and the hyperbolic valorization of the spiritual world, which is why Kant belongs to a long line of philosophers whose work is based on a religious foundation that "has been and still continues to be the consecration of all the horrors which have been and are being committed in the world" (p. 15).

If we bring together Conrad's model from *Heart of Darkness* and Bakunin's depiction of nineteenth-century Germany, then the redeeming idea for which Germans would be willing to commit genocide would be Christian idealism. Central to this model is the German genius's propensity and ability to manipulate the "half-lighted minds" of the masses with a "gospel of mystic sanctity," which justifies extreme forms of violence by underscoring the "regenerating power of spilt blood." This is not to say that Conrad and/or Bakunin prophesied the Holocaust. My claim is rather that their depiction of the actual religious consciousness that made genocidal action permissible and sometimes mandatory can be used to illuminate the exterminationist political program of Hitler and the Nazis. Having provided a general framework for understanding the conditions that gave birth to the modernist God state and genocidal consciousness, it is now time to fill in the details by doing a close analysis of primary sources from Hitler and some prominent Nazis. Once I specify the nature of the Christian model that the National Socialists deployed, I will then be in a position to show how William Styron illuminates Nazi totalitarianism by doing what only the novelist could do: to chart the way the Nazis' specific conception of Christianity, which functions most powerfully and effectively at the level of the subconscious, short-circuits straight into totalitarian and exterminationist political action.

PART THREE

The Nazis' Christian Reich

6

The making of Hitler and the Nazis: a tale of modern secularization or Christian idealism?

Doris Bergen rightly claims that scholars almost invariably "present Nazism as a thoroughly secular phenomenon."[1] What, in part, accounts for this interpretation is the academic tendency to conceive of National Socialism within the context of a post-Enlightenment narrative of secularization, and in 1938, with the publication of *Political Religions*, Erich Voegelin penned the approach that would dominate for decades. For Voegelin, it is impossible to understand Hitler and the Nazis without taking secularization into account, for "the secularisation of life, which the concept

[1] Bergen (1996), *The Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press: 9.

of humanism brought with it, is precisely the soil in which anti-Christian religious movements such as National Socialism could grow."[2] Voegelin defines secularization in relation to a philosophy of immanence. True religions are "'world-transcendent religions,'" whereas false religions are "'world-immanent religions.'"[3] Within this framework, adherents to a world-transcendent religion hold fast to an atemporal religiosity, for they believe that God exists outside of time, whereas adherents to a world-immanent religion hold fast to a temporal religiosity, for they believe that God exists in time. The consequence of adopting a world-immanent approach to God and the human is staggering:

> In an attitude of temporal religiosity, the individual accepts this position: he regards himself as a tool, as an Hegelian cog in the great whole and willingly subordinates himself to the technical means with which the organization of the collectivity incorporates him. Knowledge of the world's content and the technical systems founded as a result are not the temporally subordinated means for the eternal goal of life in the world-transcendent God, but rather the life blood of the world-immanent God himself.[4]

The world-immanent position entails determinism at best and fatalism at worst, because it subjects God and the human to antecedent conditions of being and the mechanistic laws of nature. Therefore, the only way to retain the reality of God and the dignity of the human is to believe in a world-transcendent God.

Given the nature of this model, Hitler and the Nazis would qualify as secular anti-Christians, because they subscribe to a world-immanent religion, which alternately converts God into the Führer, the Volk, the race, or the State. Whether they recognize it or not, such an approach is actually a perversion and distortion of the real God and true religion, which is why Voegelin draws the following conclusion about world-immanent religions: "Temporal religiosity, that of the collectivity, be it mankind, the *Volk*, the class, the race,

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[2] Voegelin (1986), *Political Religions*. Translated by T. J. DiNapoli and E. S. Easterly III. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press: 3.
[3] Voegelin (1986): 14.
[4] Voegelin (1986): 65.

or the State, which is expressed as the *Realissimum*, is a falling away from God."[5] Specifically, in National Socialist Germany, "the divine head is struck off, and, in place of the world-transcendent God, the State appears as both the ultimate condition and the source of its own being."[6] From Voegelin's perspective, National Socialism should be considered a political religion, because it claims to be based on God and religion. But since it is premised on a philosophy of immanence, it is actually a secular movement, which is essentially anti-Christian, anti-religious, and therefore anti-God.

This secular interpretation of the twentieth century has significantly distorted our understanding of Hitler and the Nazis. To illustrate my point, let me begin with a brief discussion of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899), a book from which Hitler lifted many of his views about religion, politics, and the Jews. Chamberlain, as William R. Shirer notes, was extolled as "the 'spiritual founder' of National Socialist Germany,"[7] and on September 5, 1925, "the Nazi *Völkischer Beobachter*" celebrated Chamberlain's 70th birthday "with five columns of encomiums," one of "which hailed his *Foundations* as the 'gospel of the Nazi movement.'"[8] As for the publication and distribution of *Foundations*, Shirer says that it "sold more than a quarter of a million copies"[9] by 1938. Given Chamberlain's comprehensive vision of religion, politics, and Germany, Alfred Rosenberg, author of *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* and editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, "hailed him as a pioneer and spiritual forerunner and viewed himself as Chamberlain's true successor."[10] In 1923, Goebbels read *Foundations*, and when he met Chamberlain in 1926, he indicates in his diary how important

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[5] Voegelin (1986): 78–9.
[6] Voegelin (1986): 7–8.
[7] Shirer (1960), *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*. New York: Simon and Schuster: 158.
[8] Shirer (1960): 159.
[9] Shirer (1960): 156.
[10] Field (1981), *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain*. New York: Columbia University Press: 1.

Chamberlain was to National Socialism by referring to him as a "spiritual father," dubbing him a "Trail blazer, pioneer!"[11]

Most significant and telling, however, are the interactions between Chamberlain and Hitler. In an intellectual biography about Chamberlain, Geoffrey Field notes that Hitler "read the *Foundations*, Chamberlain's biography of Wagner, and some of the war pamphlets."[12] But more important for Hitler's stature as well as his sense of himself were Chamberlain's very public response to and endorsement of Hitler. After only a couple meetings with Hitler, Chamberlain told Hitler in a letter: "'you have transformed the state of my soul.'"[13] Not only did his letter bolster the Nazi party, for "Chamberlain became the first person of national and even international reputation as a writer to align himself with the Nazi movement," but it also affirmed Hitler's sense of himself as the destined leader of Germany. Indeed, after receiving word of the letter, members at the Nazi Party headquarters in Munich were euphoric, and Hitler was so giddy that he was supposedly "'like a child.'"[14]

What should strike careful readers of Chamberlain is the way he is represented in the scholarship in relationship to Hitler and the Nazis. Instead of acknowledging that the axiomatic basis for his whole theology is a world-transcendent conception of God and religion, scholars consistently portray him as a world-immanent secularist who treats race and/or blood as the *Realissimum*. For instance, when discussing the tendency among German Christians to deny Christ's Jewish ancestry, Bergen claims that many Germans deployed arguments "along the lines that English racial theorist Houston Stewart Chamberlain and theologians like Emanuel Hirsch popularized."[15] By portraying Chamberlain as a race theorist and Hirsch as a theologian, Bergen gives the impression that race is the grounding concept in Chamberlain's work while God is the foundational idea in Hirsch's work. In a similar vein, Richard Weikart works tirelessly to demonstrate that Hitler and the Nazis

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[11] Goebbels (1962), *The Early Goebbels Diaries: 1925–1926*, Helmut Heiber ed. New York: Frederick A. Praeger: 83.
[12] Field (1981): 452.
[13] Field (1981): 437.
[14] Field (1981): 438.
[15] Bergen (1996): 155.

were proponents of a "biological anti-Semitic racism,"[16] a view that "undermines any system of ethics claiming transcendence,"[17] and to argue his case, he interprets Hitler and the Nazis alongside "the anti-Semitic racist ideas of H. S. Chamberlain."[18]

Theodore Ziolkowski formulates the most distorted version of secularization when he underscores the links between Chamberlain and Rosenberg in his depiction of the origins of National Socialism. Ziolkowski outlines how twentieth-century writers made a decisive break with the theological mindset of the past, thus leading twentieth-century writers to produce secular surrogates that are but pale reflections of authentic and true religion. Such a loss of traditional religion set the stage for the secular, anti-Christian Nazis. To support his primary claims about the secular and therefore anti-Christian origins of National Socialism, Ziolkowski focuses mainly on Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, a work, he argues, that significantly contributed to the Nazis' "'intention in their dictatorial state to replace Christianity.'"[19] Central to Ziolkowski's interpretation is his focus on the Nazis' secular obsession with race and blood. According to Ziolkowski, "Rosenberg would scarcely have enjoyed such a great success with his 'myth of blood' if the public had not already been accustomed to an organic conception of myth," and one of the people who paved the way for Rosenberg's secular conception about the "myth of blood" is Chamberlain, who pays his "respects to blood" in his "pan-Germanic propagandistic writings."[20]

What Ziolkowski fails to mention, however, is noteworthy. Rosenberg is critical of the churches, but in *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, he ultimately embraces Christ: "For this reason Jesus, in spite of all Christian churches, signifies a pivotal point in our history. He became the God of the Europeans; although, up to the present, he appeared in a repellent distortion." Rosenberg distrusts the churches because, instead of leading people to Christ,

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[16] Weikart (2004), *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan: 219.
[17] Weikart (2004): 211.
[18] Weikart (2004): 221.
[19] Ziolkowski (2007), *Modes of Faith: Secular Surrogates for Lost Religious Belief*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 164.
[20] Ziolkowski (2007): 163.

they have led them to a "repellent distortion" of Christ. But for Rosenberg, he wants to return to Christ, for he is "seeking ideas in harmony with the teaching of Jesus." [21] And the reason why is because Jesus embodies love: "The religion of Jesus was, without doubt, centered in the preaching of love. All theology is, in fact, principally spiritual excitement which will always be closely related to love."[22] This propensity to center everything in the person of Christ is also crucial for Chamberlain, who claims that "'history' in the real sense of the term only begins with the birth of Christ";[23] that "in order to understand the figure of Christ, we must know the people who crucified Him" (p. I:11); that "having once seen Jesus Christ—even if it be with half-veiled eyes—we cannot forget Him" (p. I:183); that "nothing is more necessary than to see this revelation of Christ clearly in the light of truth" (p. I:248); that "the earthly life of Jesus Christ forms the origin and source, the strength and—fundamentally—the significance of everything that has ever called itself Christian religion" (p. II:13); that "[i]n Jesus Christ the absolute religious genius had entered the world; no one was so well adapted to hear this divine voice as the Teuton; the present spreaders of the Gospel throughout Europe are all Teutons" (p. II:258), and that "we cannot express in words what a figure like Jesus Christ signifies, what it reveals; it is something in the inmost recesses of our souls, something apart from time and space" (p. II:501).

My list of quotations, taken from passages all throughout the 1,100-page, two-volume work, might seem excessive, but it is directly relevant to my main point: you have to be either profoundly dishonest to use Chamberlain to justify a secular approach to the rise of German National Socialism or you have to be almost totally blinded by secularization theory. As if to confirm my point, it is worth noting that Rosenberg cites Chamberlain in *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*:

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[21] Rosenberg (1993), *The Myth of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age*. Translated by Vivian Bird. Newport Beach, California: The Noontide Press: 249.

[22] Rosenberg (1993): 397.

[23] Chamberlain (1912), *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. New York: John Lane Company: I.5. Hereafter cited in text.

> One is indebted to the last work of H.S. Chamberlain. This book, *Mensch und Gott*, grasps clearly what is taking place. It is a search for a direct way to express the personality of Christ. Herder once demanded that the religion dedicated to Jesus should become a religion of Jesus. This was what Chamberlain strove for. A completely free man who disposed inwardly over the entire culture of our time, he has shown the deepest sensitivity for the superhuman simplicity of Christ. He represented Jesus as what he had once appeared to be: mediator between man and God.[24]

Given Ziolkowski's objectives, it should come as no surprise that he does not quote this passage or the many like it.

At this point, let me briefly explain how my method of analysis differs from traditional scholars. In *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, Fritz Stern does a first-rate study of the work of Julius Langbehn, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, and Paul de Lagarde, "leading critics of modern Germany,"[25] in order to illuminate some of the intellectual and cultural crises that set the stage for the rise of National Socialism. Stern focuses on many issues I discuss in this book, but his method of analysis is very different (and sometimes confusing), and here is why. In his discussion of Lagarde, who considered himself a Christian, Stern acknowledges Lagarde's influence on Chamberlain,[26] but when discussing Lagarde's Christianity, Stern refers to it as a "pseudo-religious faith,"[27] later calling it "a new, post-Christian faith."[28] As a reader, one wonders: Is Stern saying that Lagarde is explicitly calling for a post-Christian faith? Or, is Stern saying that, given the way Lagarde defines Christian faith, it, according to Stern, would not qualify as a true instantiation of Christianity? In my reading of Lagarde's work, I believe that he would be horrified to hear someone say that he endorses a "post-Christian faith." Quite the contrary, Lagarde, like Hitler, Chamberlain, and many prominent Nazis, considered his

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[24] Rosenberg (1993): 408.
[25] Stern (1963), *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press: xi.
[26] Stern (1963): 90.
[27] Stern (1963): 34.
[28] Stern (1963): 47.

specific approach to Christianity to be true Christianity. In stark contrast to Stern (and there are many scholars who have adopted his approach, as I will demonstrate throughout this chapter), when I talk about the Christianity of Hitler and the Nazis, I will not refer to their version as a "pseudo-religious faith," nor will I claim that their version is post-Christian. My objective is to define Christianity as Hitler and the Nazis understood it.

In this chapter, I define the specific version of Christianity that Hitler and the Nazis adopted, and I take my cue from Richard Steigmann-Gall, who has made two extremely important contributions to the debate about the Christian roots of Nazism. In stark contrast to scholars who interpret National Socialism through the secular lens of a political theology, Steigmann-Gall interprets "Nazism as religious politics rather than a political religion."[29] The primacy of the religious is of crucial importance, especially for understanding the National Socialist approach to race, for as Steigmann-Gall rightly claims: "the same antisemitism that is usually regarded as a function of racialism was for many Nazis conceived within a Christian frame of reference. Even as they argued that race was the supreme law of life, they did not argue that it overrode religion, since in their view race was God's law."[30] This is the case because Chamberlain, Hitler, and many prominent Nazis establish a clear hierarchy of knowledge in which religion must always be the epistemic foundation of the legitimate political order. Indeed, religion, as they understand it, establishes the basis for an experience of transcendence rather than immanence, which is for them the only legitimate foundation for a religion, a religious experience, and a sacred imagined nation. To put this in Chamberlain's words: "Teutonic philosophy is transcendent, and Teutonic religion is ideal" (p. II.498).

I

The most significant links between Chamberlain and Hitler relate to their theology, which they both inherited from Immanuel Kant.

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[29] Steigmann-Gall (2003), *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 61.
[30] Steigmann-Gall (2003): 29.

This is not to say that Kant is the sole figure to impact Chamberlain and Hitler, nor it is to say that Kant would have endorsed the Final Solution—he would not have. In my estimation, Berel Lang best articulates the way to understand the causal relationship between Kant's philosophy and the Nazi genocide when he claims that "certain ideas prominent in the Enlightenment [and he specifies Kant] are recognizable in the conceptual framework embodied in the Nazi genocide" and "that if the relation between those two historical moments is not one of direct cause and effect (the one, that is, does not *entail* the other), the Enlightenment establishes a ground of historical possibility or causal evocation for the Nazi genocide."[31] While I follow Lang's lead by claiming that Kant's work provided the Nazis with the ideational basis for their anti-Semitic political action, I take issue with his secular approach to Kant, the Enlightenment, and the Nazis.

According to Chamberlain, Jesus' divinity as well as his message are only comprehensible through the lens of Kant's moral philosophy, a philosophy that emanates from (and seemingly reconciles) the Third Antinomy as defined in *Critique of Pure Reason*. An antinomy could be characterized either in a strong sense as a contradiction or in a weaker sense as an aporia, and Kant's Third Antinomy focuses on pure (speculative) reason's inability to reconcile two conflicting types of causality, one according to the laws of nature and one according to the laws of freedom. Within a mechanistic universe, "everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature," which means that "everything which *takes place* presupposes a preceding state upon which it inevitably follows according to a rule." Given the inexorable logic of this mechanistic worldview, pure (speculative) reason can only conclude: "There is no freedom."[32] However, since it is impossible to conceive of a world which does not have a first cause (what Kant refers to in *Critique of Practical Reason* as an "unconditioned causality"[33]) that precedes and sets into motion the conditioned

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[31] Lang (2003), *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press: 168–9. Lang's emphasis.

[32] Kant (1965), *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St Martin's Press: 409. Kant's emphasis.

[33] Kant (1993), *Critique of Practical Reason*. Translated by Lewis White Beck. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall: 110.

laws of nature, we must "assume a causality through which something takes place, the cause of which is not itself determined, in accordance with necessary laws, by another cause antecedent to it."[34] In other words, since we cannot imagine an infinite series of causes without presupposing an originary cause that set the causal series into motion, we can assume the existence of a cause that operates according to a different law and logic from the causality that governs the mechanistic laws of natural necessity. That other causality is what Kant calls freedom.

What poses the most serious threat to freedom is determinism, whether that is the determinism of physics or psychology. In *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant addresses the issue of determinism when he defines the mechanistic worldview: "all necessity of events in time according to natural law can be called the 'mechanism of nature,' even though it is not supposed that things which are subject to it must really be material machines."[35] For Kant, "the mechanism of nature" is "the direct opposite of freedom,"[36] because "[n]ature, in the widest sense of the word, is the existence of things under laws."[37] Humans may not be actual machines, but in so far as they are subject to the temporal laws inherent within the mechanism of nature, they could be understood as acting in a machine-like way. Given the logic of this mechanistic and therefore deterministic system, "every action which I perform is necessary because of determining grounds which are not in my power. That means that at the time I act I am never free."[38] For those who subscribe exclusively to this deterministic model, it is impossible to condemn immoral or illegal behavior, because such acts are merely the logical product of antecedent conditions of being. To illustrate this point, Kant gives an example of a thief: "Suppose I say of a man who has committed a theft that this act, by the natural law of causality, is a necessary result of the determining ground existing in the preceding time and that it was therefore impossible that it could have not been done."[39] Given the

[34] Kant (1965): 410–1.
[35] Kant (1993): 101.
[36] Kant (1993): 29.
[37] Kant (1993): 44.
[38] Kant (1993): 99.
[39] Kant (1993): 100.

sociological and psychological laws of being, human action could not be other than what it is, because it follows the inexorable logic implicit in the mechanistic universe's causal chain of events. Hence, freedom is the seething product of an overheated imagination.

As a sober-minded rationalist, who acknowledges the mechanistic laws of natural necessity, Kant is a determinist. And yet, he refuses to reduce the mechanistically determined human to the human as such. In other words, Kant believes that humans are, in large measure, determined by the inexorable laws inherent within the mechanism of nature, but he also holds that humans can, at times, experience "freedom and independence from the mechanism of nature."[40] Humans achieve this by behaving as autonomous moral agents, behavior that is possible because humans are capable of experiencing two separate and distinct types of freedom. In Kantian terms, to be free, humans must have the ability to restrain and even overcome their *self*ish and materialistic inclinations, for "[i]nclination, be it good-natured or otherwise, is blind and slavish."[41] The moment humans overcome inclination, they experience what Kant refers to as negative freedom, an act that, in part, enables them to sacrifice self-interest (inclination) for a higher or more noble good. More difficult and demanding than negative freedom is positive freedom, which consists of acting as a self-legislating agent. Within this Kantian framework, humans belong to two worlds, the sensuous (empirical) world that is temporally conditioned and the intelligible world that is not temporally conditioned. Kant distinguishes these two worlds in terms of causality. In the world of sense, the mechanistic laws of natural necessity obtain, so humans are at the mercy of antecedent conditions of being and the laws of nature. But through positive freedom, humans can transcend the world of sense and thereby evade determinism by legislating to themselves the moral law. In essence, positive freedom implies a creative imposition upon the world, an act that enables people to overcome environmental and materialistic determinism in so far as they determine their environment rather than being determined by it.

In his famous "What is Enlightenment?" essay, Kant provides specific insight into the nature of positive freedom through his

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[40] Kant (1993): 90.
[41] Kant (1993): 124.

analysis of intellectual autonomy. Most people live in a state of "self-incurred tutelage,"[42] which means that they are "incapable of making use of" their "reason." Pre-existing systems of knowledge dictate to these people not only what but also how to 'think': "Statutes and formulas, those mechanical tools of the rational employment or rather misemployment of his natural gifts, are the fetters of an everlasting tutelage."[43] I put scare quotes around the word 'think,' because for Kant, whenever a person reduces human cognition to a mechanical activity, it ceases to qualify as thinking. Put differently, when the environment predetermines the nature and form of 'thinking' ("Statutes and formulas"), thinking cannot occur. By contrast, when thinking not only rises above but also determines the environment, then thinking is occurring. This intellectual activity of rising above and subsequently determining the environment is an example of positive freedom.

While Kant's philosophy of moral and intellectual autonomy is calculated to secure and affirm the dignity of the human, it actually set the stage for one of the most de-humanizing systems of thought to afflict the West. The problem is not just that subsequent thinkers appropriated debased versions of Kant's philosophy. Some of the problems are actually inherent in the philosopher's writings. One of the most troubling is the degree to which Kant's philosophy of moral autonomy is used either to deny certain people the privilege of being called human or to stratify humanness. For instance, Kant explicitly claims that humans rise above animality, and thereby realize humanness, only in so far as they activate practical reason through negative or positive freedom. If humans, as beings belonging to the sensuous (empirical) world, are animalistic in so far as they are mechanistically determined by the antecedent conditions of being and the inexorable laws of nature, then humans, as beings belonging to the intelligible world, are more-than-animal in so far as they activate practical reason and thereby transcend the mechanistic laws of natural necessity. It is important to note that Kant does not just say that humans are more than animal

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[42] Kant (1995), "What is Enlightenment?" in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Lewis White Beck. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall: 83.

[43] Kant (1995): 84.

because they have the *potential* to act as autonomous moral agents. His claim is stronger. A person must actually *activate the faculty of practical reason* in order to rise above animality and thereby realize humanness. This is clear from his definition of animality in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*: "The predisposition to *animality* in mankind may be brought under the general title of physical and purely *mechanical* self-love, wherein no reason is demanded."[44] In *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant expands on this definition and details the consequences of remaining in a state of animality:

> That he [a person] has reason does not in the least raise him in worth above mere animality if reason serves only the purposes which, among animals, are taken care of by instinct; if this were so, reason would be only a specific way nature had made use of to equip man for the same purpose for which animals are qualified, without fitting him for any higher purpose.[45]

It is by activating practical reason through the moral law, which enables a person to transcend the world of sense, that a person realizes humanness, which is why Kant concludes that "the moral law reveals a life independent of all animality and even of the world of sense."[46] Contrariwise, for those "humans" who never activate the faculty of practical reason by behaving as a moral and, therefore, free agent, they belong exclusively to the world of sense and are either totally animalistic or more animal than human.

Troubling as these ideas are, they become even more so when Kant specifies the very beings who fail to rise to the level of full-fledged humanness. For instance, Kant claims that the difference between Africans and Europeans "appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color."[47] More specifically, blacks evince little to no ability to behave as autonomous moral agents. "The

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[44] Kant (1960), *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Translated by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson. New York: Harper Torchbooks: 22. Kant's emphasis.
[45] Kant (1993): 64.
[46] Kant (1993): 169.
[47] Kant (1960), *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 111.

Negroes of Africa," he argues, "have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling,"[48] and as for North American Indians, they "show few traces of a mental character disposed to the finer feelings."[49] At first blush, these claims just sound stupid and offensive, but if we understand the inner logic of Kant's moral philosophy, they become pernicious and deadly. If "a feeling of respect for the moral law,"[50] what Kant refers to as "a moral feeling,"[51] is necessary for a person to rise above the "sensuous feeling,"[52] and thereby achieve freedom by submitting to the law of reason rather than slavish inclination, then blacks and Indians would be incapable of such freedom and, therefore, full-fledged humanness, because they are, "by nature," given to trifling and unrefined feelings.

Perhaps the most disturbing consequence of Kant's moral philosophy relates to the issue of human rights, which emanate from his theory of freedom. Those beings that rise to the level of the human through negative and/or positive freedom belong to the Kingdom of Ends. As Kant claims:

> A rational being belongs to the realm of ends as a member when he gives universal laws in it while also himself subject to these laws. He belongs to it as sovereign when, as legislating, he is subject to the will of no other. The rational being must regard himself always as legislative in a realm of ends possible through the freedom of the will whether he belongs to it as member or as sovereign.[53]

A person is a member of the Kingdom of Ends in so far as he can legislate to self the universal moral law, which entails "freedom of the will." As such, this person cannot be used as a means: "Man, however, is not a thing, and thus not something to be used merely as a means; he must always be regarded in all his actions as an

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[48] Kant (1960): 110.
[49] Kant (1960): 112.
[50] Kant (1993): 78.
[51] Kant (1993): 78.
[52] Kant (1993): 79.
[53] Kant (1959), *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Lewis White Beck. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall: 50–1.

end in himself."[54] By contrast, those beings that are determined exclusively by sensuous impulse rather than practical reason, and therefore incapable of "freedom of the will," would not be members of the Kingdom of Ends. Hence, they could be used as a means. As Kant claims:

> Everything in creation which he [a full-fledged human] wishes and over which he has power can be used merely as a means; only man, and, with him, every rational creature, is an end in himself. He is the subject of the moral law which is holy, because of the autonomy of his freedom.[55]

Given the logic of this model, if it can be shown that a certain being, "by nature," cannot experience "the autonomy of his freedom," then it would follow that this being would not qualify as a full-fledged human and, therefore, could be used as a means, which would imply a forfeiture of the used being's basic rights. It is exactly this unfortunate consequence of Kant's philosophy that has led Charles Mills to claim: "*the embarrassing fact for the white West (which doubtless explains its concealment) is that their most important moral theorist* [Kant] *of the past three hundred years is also the foundational theorist in the modern period of the division between* Herrenvolk *and* Untermenschen, *persons and subpersons, upon which Nazi theory would later draw*."[56] Since my objective in this chapter is to draw a clear line of connection between Kantian idealism and National Socialism, I now need to examine how the Jew functions within Kant's moral paradigm.

Central to the 1793 book *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* is Kant's distinction between "true religion"[57] and an "ecclesiastical faith."[58] Within this framework, ecclesiastical faith does not qualify as religion for two separate reasons. First, ecclesiastical faith is based on divine revelation, which is always contingent. Only those people who have heard the Good News of the

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[54] Kant (1959): 46.
[55] Kant (1993): 91.
[56] Mills (1997), *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 72. Mills' emphasis.
[57] Kant (1960): 79.
[58] Kant (1960): 99.

specific faith would be eligible for salvation, which would render religion provincial rather than universal. Second, ecclesiastical faith "appeals to" the "senses" instead of "moral dispositions."[59] Those faiths that are based on specific laws ("statutory laws") ultimately reduce humans to mindless automatons by making them passively obedient, which is why Kant concludes that "a God who desires merely obedience to commands for which absolutely no improved moral disposition is requisite is, after all, not really the moral Being the concept of Whom we need for a religion."[60] Given that divine revelation and statutory laws cow humans into passive submission, they cannot be the basis and foundation of true religion.

For a faith to qualify as true religion it must be based on a universal moral law, which inspires believers to experience both negative and positive freedom. In short, divine revelation and statutory laws must be subordinate to the universal moral law in true religion. This approach to religion had devastating consequences for Judaism and Jews. According to Kant, "of all the public religions which have ever existed, the Christian alone is moral,"[61] and this is the case, because Christianity consists "not in dogmas and rites but in the heart's disposition to fulfill all human duties as divine commands."[62] Kant defines Christianity most clearly by contrasting it with Judaism, which never rises to the level of a religion, because it is steeped in the sensuous (empirical) rather than the intelligible world:

> The *Jewish faith* was, in its original form, a collection of mere statutory laws upon which was established a political organization; for whatever moral additions were then or later *appended* to it in no way whatever belong to Judaism as such. Judaism is really not a religion at all but merely a union of a number of people who, since they belonged to a particular stock, formed themselves into a commonwealth under purely political laws, and not into a church; nay, it was *intended* to be merely an earthly state so that, were it possibly to be dismembered through

[59] Kant (1960): 99.
[60] Kant (1960): 117–18.
[61] Kant (1960): 47.
[62] Kant (1960): 79.

> adverse circumstances, there would still remain to it (as part of its very essence) the political faith in its reestablishment (with the advent of the Messiah).[63]

For Kant, nothing in Judaism inspires believers to behave as autonomous moral agents, because the faith is based on the Ten Commandments ("statutory laws"), which ultimately lead to "mechanical worship." In essence, Kant is saying that Judaism is a purely materialistic faith (hence, not a religion), which can never rise above the world of sense (the world of means) and thereby enter the intelligible world (the world of ends). This explains why, according to Kant, Christianity should be understood as "completely forsaking the Judaism from which it sprang."[64] Put simply, the birth of Christ the idealist signifies a decisive and irreversible rupture with the materialistic Jew and Judaism.

At this point, I want to take issue with Lang's claim that the Nazis were ultimately hostile towards Christianity, mainly "because of the origins of Christianity in Judaism."[65] Given the logic of Kant's model, the birth of Christ signifies a thoroughgoing rupture with Judaism—the full extent of this rupture will only become clear by Chapter 7. More specifically, Kant believes that the Jews belong to the empirical world, which means that they are thoroughgoing materialists, who are governed by the mechanistic laws of natural necessity and the sensuous inclination of egoistic desire. As such, they have no capacity to experience negative or positive freedom, which is why they cannot be religious or in possession of a religion. By stark contrast, Christ signifies the birth of religion (moral idealism), which enables humans to inhabit the intelligible world—Christians are idealists, who have the ability to transcend the mechanistic laws of natural necessity and to renounce sensuous inclination for the good of something more noble than the self.

In essence, what leads Kant to conclude that Christianity is a complete forsaking of Judaism is his conviction that only morality leads people necessarily to a belief in the existence of a transcendent God, which is the necessary prerequisite for a religion or

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[63] Kant (1960): 116. Kant's emphasis.
[64] Kant (1960): 118.
[65] Lang (2003): 184.

a church. As Kant claims: "we must assume a moral world-cause, that is, an Author of the world, if we are to set before ourselves a final end in conformity with the requirements of the moral law. And as far as it is necessary to set such an end before us, so far, that is in the same degree and upon the same ground, it is necessary to assume an Author of the world, or, in other words, that there is a God."[66] To be moral, to enter the intelligible realm of ends, a person must, through an act of negative or positive freedom, rise above the sensuous world, which is ineluctably determined by the mechanistic laws of natural necessity. The very act of behaving as an autonomous moral agent gives credence to the existence of an intelligible world and a transcendent God, and it is through Christ that humanity was first given a model of moral autonomy, a model that implicitly supplanted and superseded pseudo-religions such as Judaism. Given the logic of this model, Christianity does not originate in Judaism, as Lang suggests. Rather, it signifies a total and decisive rupture with Judaism.

Based on this model of Christian idealism, if people who are fundamentally incapable of behaving as autonomous moral agents were to determine the state, then the state that they would form and their very existence would jeopardize belief in the existence of transcendent realities, such as freedom and God. In essence, to give objective reality to the existence of the intelligible world, it must first be demonstrated that a people has exercised negative and/or positive freedom. But since Jews are defined as a people that has never exercised negative and/or positive freedom, and thereby transcended the mechanistic laws of natural necessity, it only follows that their very lives would serve to confirm a totally deterministic (materialistic) worldview and therewith negate religion and God. Such is the anti-Semitic logic at the core of Christian idealism, and it is such a logic that Chamberlain incorporated into his work.

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[66] Kant (1989), *Critique of Judgement*. Translated by James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press: II.119.

II

Chamberlain not only appropriated Kantian Christian idealism in whole, but he also updated and popularized it in such a way that it became readily accessible to a broad audience and was easily converted into political slogans. What, in part, made Chamberlain's work so appealing was his ability to allay people's fears about the rise of science. The traditional secularization hypothesis, most clearly articulated by Max Weber (Chapter 2), held that science was slowly but surely supplanting religion, and if the current trend held, religion would ultimately become obsolete. This, no doubt, occasioned much hostility towards science among the general population. But Chamberlain addressed the issue directly by alerting his readers to the fact that secularization is not really underway, as most people feared. To support his claim, he encouraged his readers to reflect on the discrepancy between the number of religious and science books being sold: "This century has been called an irreligious one; but never yet, since the first Christian centuries, has the interest of mankind concentrated so passionately around the person of Jesus Christ as in the last seventy years; the works of Darwin, however widespread they were, were not bought to one-tenth the extent of those of Strauss and Renan" (p. I.180). Chamberlain did not cite this statistic in order to encourage his readers to dismiss science in favor of religion. Chamberlain actually had enormous respect for science. Rather, he, like Kant, was interested in defining the limits of science and clarifying both the necessity and superiority of religion, which is why in his book, *Immanuel Kant*, he titles his main chapter, "Kant: Science and Religion." The objective is not to debunk science, but to clarify its limited role in the study of the human, and this is an approach that stands in stark contrast to Bakunin's account in *God and the State*. According to Bakunin, humans have one of two choices: either accept science, which implicitly makes a person a materialist, or accept religion, which implicitly makes a person an idealist. Chamberlain, using the work of Kant, was able to appeal to Germany's hugely literate but very religious public by indicating precisely how it could affirm and valorize science and its rapid advances while simultaneously retaining a firm belief in Christianity.

The way to do this was to make a strict distinction between the sensuous world and the intelligible world, which would eventually

be reduced to materialism and idealism. Science, as an absolutely crucial and vital discipline to human well-being, focuses exclusively on the world of sense (nature). Therefore, if humans want insight into the material nature of the human, then science is more than just valuable; it is the place where the human community must first begin. However, if people want insight into the moral nature of the human (freedom), science is ultimately limited. Chamberlain does not claim that science is useless; nor does he say that science is limited now, but in the future, it will eventually be able to provide an answer to all questions. Rather, using a Kantian framework and terminology, he argues that science can explain the mechanistic laws of natural necessity (nature), but that it cannot explain those things that require an understanding of the operations of the intelligible world (freedom), that world which is governed by an unconditioned causality. Chamberlain's disciple, Rosenberg, clearly articulates the nature of Kant's distinction:

> The Nordic spirit gained philosophical consciousness in Immanuel Kant whose fundamental achievement lies in the separation he established between forces of religion and science. Religion is concerned with 'the kingdom of heaven within us,' true science only with physics, chemistry, biology and mechanics.[67]

According to this model, science is concerned with superficial things such as the material world, and if science were the be all and end all of culture and civilization, the human would be nothing more than a mechanized automaton or a mindless animal. What makes a human more than a material machine is freedom in a Kantian sense. In other words, a being becomes more than animal when "he discovers in himself what Kant calls 'the spontaneity of freedom,' something utterly unmechanical and anti-mechanical" (p. II.480). Chamberlain is direct on this point:

> Now man becomes truly man, a creature differing from all animals, even human ones, when he reaches the stage of inventing without necessity, when he exercises his incomparable

[67] Rosenberg (1993): 74.

> gifts of his own free will and not because nature compels him, or—to use a deeper and more suitable expression—when the necessity which impels him to invent enters his consciousness, no longer from the outside, but from his inner self; when that which was his salvation becomes his sanctuary (p. I.24).

Invention alone does not entail freedom. What is most important is "inventing without necessity." If the grounding principles of a conceptual system would entail a specific conclusion, then the person who worked through the logic of the system in order to arrive at the conclusion that was already implicit within the system would be performing a mechanical activity. This would be an example of a necessary invention (the axioms of the system would necessitate specific conclusions), because there would be nothing of invention without necessity in the act. To transcend animality, invention without necessity is crucial. This form of invention is Kant's unconditioned causality, that which cannot be reduced to antecedent conditions of being and the mechanistic laws of natural necessity. Moreover, for both Kant and Chamberlain, it is religion that determines whether a human rises above animality. To quote Chamberlain: "the turning-point in 'man becoming man' is not to be sought in art, but in religion" (p. I.17).

As with Kant, Chamberlain holds that Christ and Christianity mark the beginning of humanity's entrance into the intelligible world, which enables humans to rise above animality through freedom. For Chamberlain, "The birth of Jesus Christ is the most important date in the whole history of mankind" (p. I.5). This is the case because "'history' in the real sense of the term only begins with the birth of Christ" (p. I.5), and consequently, "non-Christian peoples have no true history, but merely annals" (p. I.8). For a country to have a history, it must have been consciously, rationally, and actively determined. In short, Kant's unconditioned causality or Chamberlain's invention without necessity must have played a role in a country's formation for it to have a history. Those countries that merely came into being as a consequence of random environmental conditions, in other words, those that have been mechanistically determined by the environment, would have annals, but not a history.

In essence, Chamberlain is making use of a Kantian model that distinguishes everything on the basis of the sensuous and

intelligible world. Science concerns itself with conditioned causality (the sensuous world's invention with necessity), while religion concerns itself with unconditioned causality (the intelligible world's invention without necessity): "Science is the method, discovered and carried out by the Teutons, of mechanically looking at the world of phenomena; religion is their attitude towards that part of experience which does not appear in the shape of phenomena and therefore is incapable of mechanical interpretation" (p. II.486). Chamberlain applies this same model to the formation of a state. Morally autonomous people exercise positive and negative freedom to produce countries, while countries with annals are brought into being by antecedent conditions of being and the mechanistic laws of nature. My shift in the preceding sentence from the active voice in the independent clause to the passive voice in the subordinate clause is not an accident. Only those peoples and countries that exercise freedom in a Kantian sense could inhabit the intelligible world, and, therefore, only they could actively produce a country with a history. By contrast, those people and countries that are mechanistically determined by their environment or the laws of nature could only passively allow their countries to come into being, which is why they only have annals of their past. Within this framework, those people and countries that merely inhabit the world of sense are materialists, while those people and countries that have entered the intelligible world are idealists.

Chamberlain follows Kant by using this sensuous/intelligible distinction to define Jews, and the consequences are dire. As Chamberlain claims: "Following up the differentiation Kant was enabled to make the epoch-making assertion: 'Religion we must seek in ourselves, not outside ourselves.' That means, when we change it to the terms of our definition: Religion we must seek only in the world which cannot be interpreted mechanically" (p. II.485). That Chamberlain considers this approach to religion the logical product of Kant's understanding of Christ and Christianity he makes clear in his book *Immanuel Kant*: "Kant's doctrine of religion is no more and no less than the proof in detail, and the methodical development, of Christ's doctrine—'Behold! The Kingdom of God is within you.'"[68] Within Christian idealism, the

[68] Chamberlain (1914), *Immanuel Kant*. New York: John Lane Company: II.411.

non-mechanically interpreted world is Kant's intelligible world, the very world that Jews can never access or inhabit because of their inability to experience negative or positive freedom. This mechanical/non-mechanical distinction explains the gaping abyss that separates Judaism from Christianity. Just as Kant claims that "the origin of Christianity" represents a "forsaking [of] the Judaism from which it sprang," Chamberlain claims: "Whoever wishes to see the revelation of Christ must passionately tear this darkest of veils from his eyes. His advent is not the perfecting of the Jewish religion but its negation" (p. I.221). Indeed, "After Jesus had lived, nothing remained of the genuinely Jewish idea" (p. I.233–4). In essence, Chamberlain holds that Jews are solely materialists, and consequently, they can never exercise negative or positive freedom. While "freedom is the intellectual basis of the whole Germanic nature" (p. I.547), the Jew is solely governed by materialism, which Chamberlain defines as "prominence given to the historical motive power as opposed to the ideal, strong emphasis laid upon 'justice' in the secular sense of the word, that is, of legal and moral conduct and justification by works, in contrast to every attempt at spiritual conversion and to redemption by metaphysical perception or divine grace" (p. I.440). Judaism fits this description, which is why Chamberlain claims that it is "the most materialistic—yes, assuredly the most materialistic—religion in the world" (p. I.234). Within the context of Christian idealism, the failure to rise above materialism has four staggering ramifications: 1) Jews can never actually be defined as full-fledged humans, 2) Jews cannot have a history, 3) Judaism cannot be considered a religion, and 4) Jews cannot form a legitimate and/or lasting state.

Humans become fully human only in so far as they exercise negative and positive freedom, and since Jews cannot do this, they would not qualify as fully human. As Chamberlain claims: "The Semite is a human being like others; it is merely a question of degrees of difference, which, however, in this case, thanks to the extreme character of this human type, come very near to the borderland of Affirmation and Negation, of the To be or the Not to be" (p. I.418). To underscore both the non-idealist dimension of Judaism and the materialist nature of the Jew, Chamberlain invites his reader to compare and contrast Christian and Jewish races and religions: "Consider what a luxuriant growth of magnificent religious conceptions and ideas, and in addition, what art and

philosophy, thanks to the Greeks and Teutonic races, sprang up upon the soil of Christianity and then ask with what images and thoughts the so-called religious nation of the Jews has in the same space of time enriched mankind" (p. I.216). Were we to juxtapose Christian and Jewish political, architectural, philosophical, and artistic achievements, we would see that there is a vast abyss dividing them. This is the case because the Jew lacks the capacity to rise to the level of idealism. When detailing why Jews are an alien people, Chamberlain offers an explanation that is intended to underscore the distinctions between the Jews' and the Christians' inner life: "Outwardly his [the Jew's] inheritance was the same as ours [Christians']; inwardly it was not so: he inherited quite a different spirit. One single trait is all that is necessary to reveal in an almost alarming manner to our consciousness the yawning gulf which here separates soul from soul: the revelation of Christ has no significance for the Jew!" (p. I.336). With regard to externals, Jews and Christians have originated in the same region of the world and under similar conditions. But there is something unique and distinct about Christians, something that enabled them to rise above their culture and to produce great works of art. That something is freedom. As with Kant, Chamberlain arrives at many of his conclusions about Jews on the basis of his interpretation of Judaism. Semites produced the materialistic "religion" of Judaism, while Indo-Europeans developed the idealistic Religion of Christianity, and the distinctions between the two religions testify to the racial dispositions of the originators and practitioners of each faith: "Schopenhauer says in one place: 'Religion is the metaphysics of the people.' Now consider what kind of religion men can have whose most outstanding characteristic is the absolute lack of every metaphysical emotion, every philosophical capacity! This one sentence expresses the profound contrast between Semite and Indo-European" (p. I.411). What the Jews lack is positive freedom, that ability to create without necessity, for "the Jew has never distinguished himself by creative power, even in the limited sphere of religious legislation; indeed, what is most his own is borrowed" (p. I.446). Jews either passively allowed their religion to come into being or they imitated other religions, but they never exercised positive freedom by creating a religion that was non-mechanistically determined, which is why Chamberlain draws the following conclusion: "Their [the Jews'] scanty mythically

religious conceptions, indeed even their commandments, customs and ordinances of worship, they borrowed without exception from abroad, they reduced everything to a minimum which they kept rigidly unaltered; the creative element, the real inner life is almost totally wanting in them" (p. I.216). In essence, Chamberlain is arguing that, since the Jews have produced a purely materialistic "religion," we can infer that they are a non-metaphysical and non-spiritual race.

Based on the radical distinctions between Jewish materialism and Christian idealism, would it be possible for a Jew to become Christian? In a sense, Chamberlain offers this as a possibility. After discussing the "purely human feeling for the greatness of a suffering saviour" (p. I.337), Chamberlain says: "A Jew who feels that is in fact no longer a Jew, but a denier of Judaism" (p. I.337). The problem, however, is this: the Jew, according to Chamberlain, could not and would not have such a "purely human feeling," because his or her racial disposition precludes a trans- or meta-material experience of the world, something that becomes obvious were we to pore over Jewish interpretations of their own history. Instead of producing a coherent spiritual (metaphysical) interpretation, Jews merely chronicle individual events, and that, according to Chamberlain, is materialism. Based on the Jews' approach to their own "history," Chamberlain concludes: "Wherever the Semitic spirit has breathed, we shall meet with this materialism. Elsewhere in the whole world religion is an idealistic impulse; Schopenhauer called it 'popular metaphysics'; I should rather call it popular idealism" (p. I.422). I call it Christian idealism. Were Jews to have a purely human feeling for a suffering savior, were they to interpret history through a metaphysical lens, or were they to rise above their culture through idealism, they could become Christians, acts that would implicitly negate their Jewishness and Judaism. But given their Semitic racial disposition, there is virtually no possibility that they could or would ever do any of these things.

Given the Jews' materialism, it would not be legitimate to refer to Judaism as a religion. At this point, Chamberlain's critique of Jews shifts from their lack of positive freedom to their compulsive need to satisfy selfish (materialistic) inclination. The moment a person treats the human or the world as a means to the attainment of a self-interested end, then he or she has become a materialist. It is for this reason that Chamberlain considers Judaism a political

movement rather than a spiritual religion: "The relation of the Jews to their God is from the first political. Jehovah promises them the empire of the world" (p. I.232). The Jews use the God-concept to establish and secure political power, thus making religion a means-to-an-end instrument for the construction of a Jewish nation state, which is why Chamberlain draws the following conclusion about Judaism: "And thus it is that with this view of religion only practical ends are pursued, no ideal ones. It is to provide for prosperity in this world, and aims particularly at power and wealth" (p. I.422). Given this view of God and religion, Chamberlain can only draw one conclusion about Judaism and the Jews: "Downright materialism!" (p. I.422). Therefore, Chamberlain feels justified in posing the following rhetorical question: "But how then was it possible to let our judgment be so befogged as to consider the Jews a religious people?" (p. I.217) Quoting Kant, Chamberlain roundly asserts: "Judaism as a general proposition 'taken in its purity contains no religious faith.'"[69] Granted, for Jews, Judaism is a religion, but given that political (material) power is its primary objective, it does not qualify as religion in the strict sense of the word.

The consequences of the Jews' materialist, anti-idealist disposition for the construction of a legitimate and enduring state are devastating. For a state to flourish, the freedom of Christian idealism is essential: "Only a State-building race can be free; the gifts which make the individual an artist and philosopher are essentially the same as those which, spread through the whole mass as instinct, found States and give to the individual that which hitherto remained unknown to all nature: the idea of freedom" (p. I.543). Since Semites are, by their very nature, materialists, they cannot rise above their own culture. They are biologically, politically, and socially determined, which is why Chamberlain insists that Semites, instead of producing a distinct culture of their own, have only appropriated other cultures. In essence, the problem is freedom in both a negative and positive sense. As Chamberlain claims in a passage that presupposes a nuanced understanding of Kant's moral philosophy: "Do not all historians tell us that the Semites and half-Semites, in spite of their great intelligence, never succeeded in founding a State that lasted, and that because every one always

[69] Chamberlain (1914): II.390.

endeavoured to grasp all power for himself, thus showing that their capabilities were limited to despotism and anarchy, the two opposites of freedom?" (p. I.543). Negative freedom is the opposite of despotism. Humans, as inhabitants of the world of sense, are governed by inclination. But they can sacrifice self-interest for the good of the larger community or the state. However, it is only full-fledged humans who could make such a sacrifice. Since Jews cannot exercise negative freedom, they—each individually and alone—are governed by a despotic principle for total self gratification, which makes the formation of a state impossible. Positive freedom is the opposite of anarchy. To construct a well-functioning state, leaders must impose an order on it. But since Jews cannot exercise positive freedom, their state would be anarchically determined by a wide array of random events rather than the rational dictates of autonomous moral agents.

Central to Chamberlain's work is his conviction that "mental attitude (*Gesinnung*)" (p. II.182) determines the kind of state that a particular race could construct. If the mental attitude of a people is governed by the world of sense, which is marked by the contingent and the provisional, by the environmentally determined and the temporally conditioned, then the "state" that the people would form would be slavishly determined by the ever-changing and unpredictable environment. By contrast, if the mental attitude of a people rises to the level of the intelligible world, which is marked by spiritual immortality and unconditioned creativity, then the state that the people could form would partake of that which is unconditioned and immortal. Put more concretely, as a materialistic people who cannot step outside of time through an individual or communal act of self-legislation, Jews imitate other cultures and slavishly obey the mechanistic laws of cultural and environmental necessity. Given the logic of this model, to found a state that would last, it must be built by people who are capable of negative and positive freedom. Since Jews lack both types of freedom, the "state" that they would found would be based on ephemeral (materialistic) principles that they have either imitated from other cultures or that their environment has conditioned and determined. Hence, Chamberlain's claim that the Jews, instead of founding a lasting state that is built on the edifice of an immortal, metaphysical Idea, have only produced anarchic "states" that cannot last.

According to the logic of Christian idealism, were a people such as the Jews to rule and govern, death and destruction would

flourish: "If the Jewish influence were to gain the upper hand in Europe in the intellectual and cultural sphere, we should have one more example of negative, destructive power" (p. I.492), for as Chamberlain claims in his book, *Immanuel Kant*, Judaism "poisons our religious conceptions and with them our whole conscious and unconscious Thinking."[70] Notable is that Chamberlain specifically credits Kant for alerting Europeans to the dangers posed by the Jews:

> It is absolutely impossible ever to bring home to such a man [a Jewish scholar] what we Teutons understand by Godhead, religion, morality. Here lies the hard insoluble kernel of the "Jewish problem." And this is the reason why an impartial man, without a trace of contempt for the in many respects worthy and excellent Jews, can and must regard the presence of a large number of them in our midst as a danger not to be underestimated. Not only the Jew, but also all that is derived from the Jewish mind, corrodes and disintegrates what is best in us. And so Kant rightly reproached the Christian churches for making all men Jews, by representing the importance of Christ as lying in this, that He was the historically expected Messiah. (p. I.482–3)

Jews can be tolerated, so long as there is only a small number of them. But if they grow to a large number, societal disintegration and political destruction are inevitable, because they will infect Christians with their materialism, thus rendering idealism impossible.

Let me briefly detail the Christian idealist logic that led Chamberlain to draw this conclusion. For Chamberlain, Kant exposed a logical fallacy, which is the belief that humans could prove the existence of God. And yet, Chamberlain rightly notes that, for Kant, "to believe in the existence of God is a moral necessity so compelling that he looks upon the man who does not so believe as wanting in moral worth."[71] Chamberlain reconciles this seeming contradiction by claiming that humans can, according to Kant, presuppose the existence of God given the demonstrable

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[70] Chamberlain (1914): II.390.
[71] Chamberlain (1914): II.397.

reality of freedom: "belief in God, and with God in immortality, is not a condition of morality, but, on the contrary, it is the fact of the imperative of duty that leads us to such ideas. The reality of freedom proves the possibility of God."[72] Christians, who have the capacity for freedom, affirm the reality of God and immortality by virtue of their acts of negative and positive freedom, and, therefore, they can produce a flourishing and enduring God state, which mirrors God's immortal being. But since Jews are materialists who lack freedom, their very being is both an argument and a proof against the reality of God and immortality. In other words, if a state can only flourish and endure based on the degree to which it has been constructed by morally autonomous people, materialist Jews could never construct a God state, because they lack freedom. Therefore, to preserve the integrity of the God state, eliminating Jews is first a religious and then a political must. But what should be done with that excessive number of Jews? And how are they to be eliminated? It is now time to turn to Hitler and the Nazis.

III

It is my contention that Hitler did not just internalize parts of Christian idealism willy-nilly. Rather, my claim is that Christian idealism is the basis for Hitler's political vision. Chamberlain recognized this, which is why he claims in a letter to the future dictator that Hitler is the "'opposite of a politician.'" According to Chamberlain, politics involves "'membership of a party,'" but with Hitler, "'all parties disappear,'" because he is "'consumed by the heat of'" his "'love for the fatherland.'"[73] Such an approach to politics is, Chamberlain claims, central to his apolitical conception of the ideal political order, an ideal that Hitler embodies: "'The ideal kind of politics is to have *none*. But this non-politics must be frankly acknowledged and forced upon the world through the exercise of power.'"[74] The only way to understand Chamberlain's

[72] Chamberlain (1914): II.384.
[73] Field (1981): 436.
[74] Quoted in Field (1981): 437. Chamberlain's emphasis.

claim that Hitler is an apolitical politician is to grasp precisely how Hitler adopted Chamberlain's Christian idealism.

That Hitler considered National Socialism to be based on idealism and that he considered the movement successful because of its roots in idealism he makes clear in a 1935 speech. Many people, Hitler argues, fail to understand the reason why National Socialism rose to power so quickly, but this is because "[t]hey imagine that a people and a State are nothing but a lifeless machine."[75] Hitler obviously rejects this materialistic interpretation, for he believes that it is "[t]he strength of idealism alone [that] has accomplished these acts which have moved the world." Indeed, he goes on to claim that the successes of National Socialism testify to the truth of idealism: "Were any yet greater proof needed of the might of idealism, it can be found in this Movement." So successful has National Socialism been that Hitler, when reflecting on the then-current situation in Germany, can only gush about idealism: "What idealism it was—but what a force lay in that idealism."[76]

Without understanding Hitler's commitment to idealism, it is simply impossible to grasp his approach to history and politics. We first see this in a 1919 outline of an unpublished book. According to the outline, the projected book would begin with the Bible, and here is how Hitler characterizes the first part:

1. The Bible—Monumental History of Mankind—2. Viewpoints—Idealism—Materialism[77]

For Hitler, the Bible provides the world with a monumental history of humanity, for it pictures from beginning to end the two most decisive viewpoints, which are idealism and materialism. Later in the outline, Hitler translates this idealism/materialism binary into "Christianity and Bolshevism."[78] In essence, Hitler reads all of political history through the lens of Christianity, which leads him to

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[75] Hitler (1941), *My New Order*. Ed. Raoul de Roussy de Sales. New York: Reynal and Hitchcock: September 13, 1935; 337.
[76] Hitler (1941): 338.
[77] Hitler (1974), *Hitler's Letters and Notes*. Ed. Werner Maser. Translated by Arnold Pomerans. New York, Evanston, San Francisco, and London: Harper & Row, Publishers: 283.
[78] Hitler (1974): 286.

believe that the battle is between Communist Russia and Christian Germany.

That Hitler follows Chamberlain's lead is clear when he claims that idealism is the necessary foundation for defining the human and establishing a culture. In defining idealism, Hitler is quick to distance it from any overly sentimental philosophy, claiming "that idealism does not represent a superfluous expression of emotion." Quite the contrary, it is "the premise for what we designate as human culture," which is why "it alone created the concept of 'man'!"[79] According to this model, humanness, in the strict sense of the word, is defined in terms of freedom. When Hitler first introduces the concept of idealism in *Mein Kampf*, he specifically defines it in relation to negative freedom. After briefly discussing how the German conception of duty means serving the community rather than the self, Hitler defines idealism by distinguishing it from egoism. Within this framework, animals are material beings, governed solely by egoistic inclination and desire, so sacrificing self-interest for the good of the community is simply out of the question. Given the logic of Hitler's claim, those who cannot experience negative freedom are more animal than human, a point Hitler makes most clearly in a discussion about egoism: "Egoism, as we designate this urge, goes so far that it even embraces time; the moment itself claims everything, granting nothing to the coming hours. In this condition the animal lives only for himself, seeks food only for his present hunger, and fights only for his own life" (pp. 296–7). Immersed in and governed by the temporal, the animal can never imagine the world beyond the present moment. In other words, because the materialist ego embraces only the temporal now, time mechanistically determines the ego. Translated into Kantian terms, a being is defined as animalistic in so far as he or she is mechanistically determined by the inexorable laws of nature, a situation that leads to a bondage in and to time.

By contrast, a being is defined as more-than-animal in so far as he or she can transcend the inexorable laws of nature (by initiating a causal series rather than being causally determined), a situation that implies a freedom from time. According to this model, the

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[79] Hitler (1971), *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin: 298–9. Hereafter cited in text.

most defining feature of humanness is not intellectual capacity but moral autonomy, which is why Aryans, Hitler claims, rank so high on the hierarchical scale of being. Hitler admits that the typical German is "not greatest in his mental qualities as such." Rather, the German is superior in so far as he puts "all his abilities in the service of the community," which is why Hitler concludes that "the instinct of self-preservation has reached the noblest form [in the German], since he willingly subordinates his own ego to the life of the community and, if the hour demands, even sacrifices it" (p. 297). More specifically, the Aryan has been able to establish great nations in direct proportion to his ability to exercise negative freedom.

Negative freedom, however, is ultimately not enough, for as with Kant and Chamberlain, Hitler argues that positive freedom is vital to the formation of a body politic. After mentioning Aryan achievements, Hitler underscores the positive dimension of idealism, which is manifested in acts of originality and creativity: "Without his idealistic attitude all, even the most dazzling faculties of the intellect, would remain mere intellect as such—outward appearance without inner value, and never creative force" (p. 299). What endows intellect with inner value is anti-mechanical activity. Were a person to mechanistically create something of dazzling beauty, it would still lack inner value, because what makes a monument of unageing intellect have value and worth is "creative force," that which determines the environment rather than being determined by it. In so far as something is merely a mechanical reproduction, it cannot have "inner value."

As with Chamberlain, Hitler considers positive freedom essential to the formation of the legitimate and lasting state. As Hitler argues, absolutely essential for the formation of a state is the "*culture-creating*" or "*culture-founding*" (p. 291, Hitler's emphasis) capacity, a "spark of genius [that] exists in the brain of the truly creative man from the hour of his birth" (p. 293). This culture-creating force is a version of positive freedom, which we know because Hitler defines it in relation to idealism: "For a state formation to have a definite spatial setting always presupposes an idealistic attitude on the part of the state-race" (p. 302). Indeed, "[i]n the exact measure in which this [idealistic] attitude is lacking, any attempt at forming, even of preserving, a spatially delimited state fails" (p. 302). This inner attitude of idealism has not only

benefited the Aryans, but all of humanity, "for it alone formed from pure spirit the creative force which, by a unique pairing of the brutal fist and the intellectual genius, created the monuments of human culture" (p. 299).

If idealism "alone created the concept of man" (p. 299), then the Jews would either be the lowest form of human on the great chain of being or they would not qualify as human in the strict sense of the word, because they lack "the idealistic attitude" (p. 301). On the topic of negative freedom, Hitler is direct: "In the Jewish people the will to self-sacrifice does not go beyond the individual's naked instinct of self-preservation," which is why Hitler concludes that the Jew "lacks completely the most essential requirement for a cultured people, the idealistic attitude" (p. 301). If, as Chamberlain argues, negative freedom is a prerequisite for a community, culture, and/or state to function, then the Jews' lack of the "idealistic attitude" would render the formation of such a community, culture, and/or state impossible. Hitler makes this point forcefully when he argues, like Chamberlain, that the Jews' enslavement to inclination leads necessarily to anarchy. Instead of subduing or renouncing individual inclination for the good of the larger community, "the Jew," Hitler argues, "is led by nothing but the naked egoism of the individual" (p. 302), thus resulting in endless strife and anarchic confusion when material rewards are not available for uniting the community.

The Jews also lack positive freedom, which explains why they have never been able to form a legitimate or lasting state. Jews can mechanistically reproduce what other cultures have accomplished, but they cannot produce a legitimate and lasting culture of their own, for as Hitler claims: "the Jew possesses no culture-creating force of any sort, since the idealism, without which there is no true higher development of man, is not present in him and never was present" (p. 303). Thus, Hitler concludes that "the Jewish people, despite all apparent intellectual qualities, is without any true culture, and especially without any culture of its own" (p. 302). After rehearsing these arguments about the Jews' lack of negative and positive freedom, Hitler draws what he considers the inescapable conclusion, that Jews cannot technically be dubbed human. After asserting that Jews never originate anything on their own, he notes that Jews excel only in "the art of acting." But even this observation, he claims, proves his point, for the Jew is like "an

ape," a being that lacks "creative genius" and is at most "a superficial imitator" (p. 303). Put baldly, the Jew is more animal ("an ape") than human, because he lacks the idealistic attitude, which is necessary for a person to experience positive freedom and thereby become a full-fledged human.

After doing an extensive analysis of the Jews' non- and anti-idealistic attitude, Hitler draws his most important conclusion: "the Jew cannot possess a religious institution, if for no other reason because he lacks idealism in any form, and hence belief in a hereafter is absolutely foreign to him" (p. 306). This passage would be nearly incomprehensible were readers unaware of the Christian idealism of Kant and Chamberlain. But for those who have read the work of both of these writers closely and carefully, Hitler's claim makes perfect sense. For both Kant and Chamberlain, Christ represents the birth of a new idea and the death of an old one. The old one is mechanical obedience to statutory laws, such as the Ten Commandments. As mindless automatons, Jews behave as servile beings, who merely follow orders. Christ awakened within humanity the capacity for negative and positive freedom, the abilities to restrain or sacrifice selfish and materialistic inclination in the name of a higher communal good and to determine the environment through an act of culture creating force. So linked for prominent Nazis was Christ with the freedom of idealism that Rosenberg actually places Christ and Kant on an equal footing: "The moral side of man accordingly rests upon a categorical moral law which rules within him. Otherwise, moral prayers would be a source of laughter and both Christ and Kant would seem to have been really stupid men. […] Without freedom there is no feeling of responsibility, no morality, no spiritual culture."[80] Jews did not accept Christ, because they are, "by nature," incapable of negative or positive freedom, an idea that Hitler derived from Chamberlain, who in turn derived it from Kant. It is for this reason that Hitler concludes: "the Jews are members of a *people* and not of a '*religion*'" (p. 306, Hitler's emphasis). Let me repeat Kant's formulation, as it bears a striking resemblance to Hitler's: "Judaism is really not a religion at all but merely a union of a number of people." That Jews cannot be religious is the most damning

[80] Rosenberg (1993): 205.

indictment Hitler could make, which is why he repeats himself in the very next paragraph: "The Jew has always been a people with definite racial characteristics and never a religion" (p. 306).

As should be obvious at this point, Christian idealism is the axiomatic basis for Chamberlain's and Hitler's religious conception of the legitimate state. Let me be absolutely clear. Without the freedom of Christian idealism there can be no lasting state. Within this framework, religion has primacy over race and politics; it is the conceptual point of departure for Hitler's political vision and agenda. Politics and race are certainly important, but they are always subordinate to and determined by the Ideals of Christian idealism. Eliminate Christian idealism, and you take away Chamberlain's and Hitler's justification for attacking and/or negating the Jews. Conversely, given the logic of Christian idealism, the elimination of the Jew becomes a cultural and political necessity, for as Chamberlain claims, Jews infect the culture "with fundamental views of a materialistic kind" (p. I.422). Consequently, if German Christians are infected by materialistic Jews, this would not just damage Christianity; it would render the construction of a legitimate and lasting political order impossible.

This is a point that Hitler made in the 1919 outline to his projected book, and it is my contention that many of the ideas in that outline are central to *Mein Kampf*. Towards the end of the outline, Hitler claims: "All nations have their own state—Except for the Jews."[81] The point Hitler is making is incomprehensible without taking into account the two binaries: materialism/idealism and Bolshevism/Christianity. To construct a legitimate and enduring state, idealism is absolutely necessary, and since Christ is the founding father of idealism, it is impossible to construct a God state without Christianity. Jews (who are Bolshevists and Marxists, according to Hitler and the Nazis) are materialists, and consequently, they can passively allow a state to come into being or they can imitate other state models, but they can never evade their environmental conditioning and thereby actively construct a God state of their own. As Hitler claims: "Since the Jew—for reasons which will at once become apparent—was never in possession of a culture of his own, the foundations of his intellectual work were

[81] Hitler (1974): 287.

always provided by others. His intellect at all times developed through the cultural world surround him. The reverse process never took place" (p. 301). Jews never constructed their own state, because they are passive materialists. They are not free religious (Christian) beings who can determine their environment. To the contrary, the cultural world surrounding them totally determined their being, which is why Hitler claims in the next paragraph that Jews lack the "idealistic attitude." As crass materialists, Jews can never reverse the process by transcending their environmental conditioning. Thus, if Jews were to rule and govern, death and destruction would surely follow.

This Christian idealism becomes decidedly more ominous when we note the degree to which Christian supersessionism was on the rise in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as I have argued in Chapters 3 and 4. In-depth Christianization led a vast array of people to weight theological discourse more heavily than all other discourses, as Twain suggests when little Bessie's mother claims that Christianity can—physiologically—efface a Jew's Jewishness (see Chapter 4). In essence, theological discourse supersedes and subordinates all other discourses, and this way of thinking becomes infinitely more dangerous in so far as it becomes embedded as a structure of meaning within the concept of the nation, thus leading to the formation of the sacred imagined nation. Within the context of Christian idealism, Christ, as an idealist, signifies the ultimate reality, while the Jew, as a materialist, signifies the negation of reality. It is my contention that this supersessionist theology was embedded as a structure of meaning within the Christian idealism of National Socialism, which is why the Third Reich would qualify as the quintessential sacred imagined nation.

IV

As I argued in Chapter 5, a redeeming-idea philosophy made possible and sometimes mandated genocide, and in the case of National Socialism, Christian idealism is the Nazis' redeeming idea, which instituted a politics that necessitated the negation of the Jew. What drew Hitler and the Nazis to Chamberlain was his Christ-centered approach to Christianity, which enabled them to

avoid the kind of denominational conflict that ravaged Germany in the 1870s during Bismarck's Kulturkampf and Austria in the 1890s during Georg Schönerer's Away-from-Rome movement. The Nazis were certainly aware of and sensitive to the tensions between Catholics and Protestants, which is why they included point 24 into the official Party Program of 1920, which reads:

> The party as such represents the standpoint of a positive Christianity, without tying itself to a particular confession. It fights the spirit of Jewish materialism within us and without us, and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our *Volk* can only take place from within, on the basis of the principle: public need comes before private greed.[82]

Steigmann-Gall defines "positive Christianity" as the Nazis understood it, but in his discussion, he does not spend enough time clarifying how the Nazis defined Christianity in opposition to "Jewish materialism." My argument is that it is impossible to understand or appreciate what the phrase "Jewish materialism" means without taking into account the theology that underwrites positive Christianity, and that theology is Christian idealism.

Indeed, it is only by understanding Christian idealism that we can explain the phrase "Jewish materialism," which implies three things: 1) a person who is governed solely by selfish inclination, 2) a person who is always environmentally and mechanistically determined, and 3) a person who treats everything (including God and religion) as a means to an end. According to this model, Jews infect the culture with materialism, thus making idealism impossible. And if Christian idealism is the only basis for the construction of a lasting state, then the presence of the Jew would make such a state impossible. Thus, the Nazis' very conception of Christian idealism mandates the negation of the materialistic Jew, and it is in relation to Christian idealism that the Nazis considered decisive and even violent action against Jews to be moral. Based on this approach, the phrase "Jewish materialism" is, first and foremost, a theological signifier, which means that the opposite of

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[82] Quoted in Steigmann-Gall (2003): 14.

Jewish materialism would be Christian idealism, and not German idealism.

Within this framework, implicit within the Nazis' sacred imagined nation is not just any version of Christianity. It is specifically Christian idealism. Central to Hitler's conception of the modernist God state is his notion that a political order can only be legitimate in so far as it is based on religion, specifically true Christianity. As he says in one of his first speeches after coming to power: "it is Christians and not international atheists who now stand at the head of Germany."[83] Given its commitment to Christianity, Hitler claims that the Nazi Party "stands on the ground of a real Christianity," because it is based on "Christian principles."[84] Even as late as 1945, Hitler insists that "God the Almighty has made our nation. By defending its existence we are defending His work."[85] According to the logic of Hitler's Christian conception of the political, were political leaders to erect a political system on materialist principles, the political order would be as unreliable and unstable as the principles on which that political system is based. This explains why decay, destruction, and death flourished throughout the Weimar Republic, for as Hitler claims, the political house that the leaders built "was founded on a lie." Put differently, "God's blessing was not with the builders and they have built the house very badly." When a political system is built on a non-religious foundation, the regime cannot receive God's blessing and is therefore destined to crumble: "The others in past years have not had the blessing of the Almighty—of Him Who in the last resort, whatever man may do, holds in His hands the final decision."[86]

Understanding Hitler's conviction that National Socialism is premised on true Christianity explains some of the scholarly confusion. For instance, I want to use Hitler's idea of "real

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[83] Hitler (1941): February 15, 1933; 148.

[84] Hitler (1942), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922–August 1939*. Translated by Norman H. Baynes. London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press: August 26, 1934; 386, 387.

[85] Hitler (1945), "Text of Hitler's Twelfth Annual Speech to Reich," *New York Times*. New York, NY: January 31: 4.

[86] Hitler (1942): March 1933; 409.

Christianity" to challenge a claim in Kevin Spicer's probing and impressive book, *Hitler's Priests*. Spicer claims that "[m]any members of the German Catholic clergy succumbed to the attraction of National Socialism at the expense of their perceived Catholic faith, separating their loyalty to the Church as priests of Christ from their allegiance to the state as advocates of a precarious nationalism."[87] Spicer's claim is misleading, because, according to Hitler, since National Socialism is premised on "true Christianity," priests who pledge allegiance to the state would implicitly be true ministers of Christ. Hitler unambiguously makes this point when he justifies taking action against "false servants" of the faith: "But, the National Socialist State will ruthlessly make clear to those clergy who instead of being God's ministers regard it as their mission to speak insultingly of our present Reich, its organizations, or its leaders, that no one will tolerate a destruction of this State, and that a clergy who place themselves beyond the pale of the law will be called to account before the law like any other German citizen."[88] For Hitler, "the Government of the Reich […] regards Christianity as the unshakable foundation of the morals and moral code of the nation,"[89] so if certain members of the clergy defy the state, they would be implicitly setting themselves against God. Therefore, in the name of God, Hitler feels not only justified but also obligated in taking action against godless opponents of the state: "We shall protect the German clergy in their capacity as God's ministers, but we shall destroy clergy who are the enemies of the German Reich."[90] The major premise that Hitler takes as a given could be stated thus: in serving the National Socialist state, members of the clergy are implicitly "God's ministers." Conversely, in defying the National Socialist state, members of the clergy are implicitly opponents not just of the state but of God. Within this framework, a specific Christian theology is embedded within the concept of the nation as an essential structure of its meaning. Seeley refers to this as the church being the soul of the state, while Eliot refers to it as the Christianization of the state, as I argued in

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[87] Spicer (2008), *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press: 11.
[88] Hitler (1942): January 30, 1939; 51.
[89] Hitler (1941): March 23, 1933; 157.
[90] Hitler (1942): January 30, 1939; 53.

Chapter 3. In other words, it is not necessary for Hitler to demonstrate that the Holy Reich is premised on a Christian ideal, for Christianity is considered a necessary condition for the possibility of the National Socialist state. And since the state is legitimate and can flourish only in so far as it is based on "real Christianity" and true "Christian principles," those clergy members who defy the state (and therefore God) would create the conditions for civilization to collapse. Therefore, if Catholic priests accepted Hitler's view that National Socialism is premised on true Christianity, then their allegiance to the state would not have conflicted with their allegiance to the Church. To the contrary, their allegiance to the modernist God state would have confirmed their allegiance to "true Christianity."

This political internalization of Christianity had devastating consequences for the Jews. According to Hitler and many Nazis, National Socialism, as a sacred imagined nation, is based on a non-denominational, Christ-centered idealism, which, in political terms, presupposes an inverse relationship between the revelation of Christ and the elimination of the Jew. The Christianization of the body politic both implies and necessitates the negation of the materialistic Jew. Or, conversely, in so far as "the spirit of Jewish materialism" flourishes within a culture, the revelation of Christ and the formation of a Christian polity cannot be realized. For Hitler, "the foundations of both [religious denominations] are corroded and undermined by the poison of the international world Jew" (p. 562). Therefore, Hitler claims that Germans in both denominations need to form an alliance as Christians against "the destroyer": "The folkish-minded man, in particular, has the sacred duty, each in his own denomination, of making *people stop just talking superficially of God's will, and actually fulfill God's will, and not let God's word be desecrated*" (p. 562, Hitler's emphasis). Only when Christians, as idealists, come together in their opposition to materialist Jews will Germany experience regeneration, rebirth, and redemption, which is why Hitler claims: "*by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord*" (p. 65, Hitler's emphasis).

V

What has caused so much confusion for scholars about Hitler and the Nazis is the failure to recognize that they shifted the focus of Christianity from the churches to Christ. There is ample evidence to support the claim that Hitler and the Nazis were critical of and sometimes hostile towards the churches. But this was because Hitler and the Nazis believed that the churches were distorting the message of Christ and Christianity, and not because they rejected Christ or Christianity. This is a critique that is central to the work of both Kant and Chamberlain. As Chamberlain claims: "what threatens to wreck the religious revolution is the monstrous secret power of the priestcraft of all confessions." The problem rests with the ministers of the faith, whom even Christ opposed: "Jesus Christ appeared as the enemy of the priests, and, gentle as He was, had nothing but hard words for them." [91] This is exactly the same position as Kant's, which is why Chamberlain queries: "Shall we ever succeed in breaking this anti-religious power, the kingdom of the priests, as Kant calls it?"[92] In essence, Kant and Chamberlain are critical of preachers and the churches, not because they are anti-Christian, but because they are pro-Christ and pro-Christianity. Hitler and the Nazis, as Steigmann-Gall rightly claims,[93] adopted this Christ-centered approach to Christianity, and it is the following passage from Chamberlain's *Foundations* that would become of central importance: "Surely we are guilty of no outrage upon due reverence if we say, it is not the Churches that constitute the might of Christianity, for that might is drawn solely from the fountain head from which the churches themselves derive all their power—the contemplation of the Son of Man upon the cross" (p. I.175). Field intelligently articulates the nature of Chamberlain's position as it took shape exactly when National Socialism was first defining itself: "After the First World War in *Mensch und Gott* (1921), the fullest statement of Chamberlain's religious views, he sketched proposals for nondenominational congregations that might facilitate such a Christian rebirth. Existing alongside established churches they

[91] Chamberlain (1914): II.410.
[92] Chamberlain (1914): II.411.
[93] Steigmann-Gall (2003): 51–85.

would be open to all who believed in Christ the redeemer; their communal devotions of prayers and religious art would foster a timeless, inner religion designed to eliminate the distance that churches had interposed between man and God."[94] Hans Schemm, head of the National Socialist Teachers' League, popularized this non-denominational approach to Christianity with his famous slogan, "'Our religion is Christ, our politics Fatherland.'"[95] The ordering here is important. Nation (politics, materialism) does not come before God (religion, idealism). Rather, God (Christ, idealism) is the foundation on which the legitimate nation is based. Within this framework, it is more important to focus on Christianity as such rather than the churches, which is why Schemm encourages Germans to pledge allegiance first and foremost to Christianity rather than the church: "'We all say a Lord's Prayer, we all have a savior, we all have a Christmas celebration. The banner above both confessions is: Christianity.'"[96]

One of the most active purveyors of a Christ-centered approach to Christianity was Julius Streicher. Editor of *Der Stürmer*, Streicher published from 1923 through 1945 articles and images in his newspaper that most clearly and crudely articulated the theological basis of the Nazis' Christian supersessionist/exterminationist politics. This newspaper enjoyed enormous support among Germans, for as Streicher's biographer, Randall L. Bytwerk, claims: *Der Stürmer* "had been one of the most widely circulated papers in Germany, the one paper Hitler himself claimed to read from cover to cover."[97] Given the paper's success, Himmler claimed that in the future, "'it will be said that Julius Streicher and his weekly newspaper the *Stürmer* were responsible for a good part of the education about the enemy [the Jew] of mankind.'"[98] Himmler was not alone in holding this view, for as Bytwerk claims: "The minister of finance under Hitler, Lutz Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, concluded that Streicher had exerted 'an influence on Germany that can only be compared with that of Goebbels' propaganda.'"[99]

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[94] Field (1981): 310.
[95] Quoted in Steigmann-Gall, 24.
[96] Quoted in Steigmann-Gall, 51.
[97] Bytwerk (1983), *Julius Streicher*. New York: Stein and Day: 1–2.
[98] Quoted in Bytwerk (1983): 171.
[99] Bytwerk (1983): 172.

While there are literally hundreds of images from *Der Stürmer* that articulate the Christian supersessionist/exterminationist agenda of the Nazi Party, let me discuss only two (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2) at this point to justify my claim—I will discuss others later in this chapter and book. In the first,[100] which is a Christmas picture, the birth of the redeemer ("*Erlösergeburt*") strikes terror into the heart of the Jew. The lightness emanating from the infant Christ and the holy mother extend to the rapt Germans, who look on both with reverence and awe. The caption, which is told from the perspective of the Jew, reads: "Their Lord does not abandon them. If one declares them lost, there's always one born who will lead them to the light" (my translation). In stark contrast to the German Christians, the Jew is clad in black, and his terrified and guilty expression suggests that Christ's birth has exposed him, which is why he recoils from the scene. The second image[101] is of the Resurrection ("*Auferstehung*"), and it bears a striking resemblance to the first. The German soldiers are depicted as white in the same way as the crucified Christ, while the Jew is garbed in black as he retreats in fear. The Cross is perched on the top of a hill, while the Nazi soldiers salute him. The suggestion is that Christ is being resurrected in Germany by the Nazis, a political situation that—logically and necessarily—terrifies the Jew, who intuitively realizes that Christ's political Resurrection entails his physical negation. By placing the church in the background and foregrounding Christ on the Cross, the image suggests that the Nazis are bringing the Christianity of Christ rather than the Christianity of the church back to Germany.

Goebbels's novel, *Michael*, is perhaps one of the most important documents of the early years of National Socialism, for it examines the interior life of the very kind of person who would become a devoted Christian idealist and, hence, an anti-Semitic Nazi. As Steigmann-Gall notes, Goebbels's novel was published in 1929 and "went through seventeen editions by 1945."[102] The main character of the novel is Michael, who is loosely based on Richard Flisges, a close friend of Goebbels and to whom the novel is dedicated,

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[100] *Der Stürmer*, December 1933, number 51.
[101] *Der Stürmer*, March 1929, number 13.
[102] Steigmann-Gall (2003): 21.

and Goebbels himself. The novel bears a striking resemblance to *Mein Kampf* in its depiction of a disillusioned German male who strives to formulate a religio-political vision that could reinvigorate Germany. Written in the 1920s, at roughly the same time Hitler was composing *Mein Kampf*, the novel, which consists mainly of the title character's diary entries, documents Michael's torturous return

to Germany after the horrors of the Great War. Psychologically wounded, mentally distraught, and spiritually ravished, Michael studies at the University of Heidelberg, where he desperately tries to formulate a religio-political philosophy.

Central to Goebbels's novel is Michael's and Germany's need to return to Christ. Throughout the novel, Michael calls Christ "the

genius of love,"[103] "the principle of love" (p. 66), and "the greatest and most tragic man who ever lived on earth" (p. 39). To underscore Michael's commitment to Christianity, Goebbels has him write a play throughout the novel, and "[i]ts hero is Jesus Christ" (p. 40), which explains why Michael, near the end of the novel, concludes that "[t]he German quest for God is not to be separated from Christ" (p. 120). This quest for God, Michael continues, is not just something that the Germans need for their own personal well-being; it is essential for the life of the nation, for "[a] nation without religion is like a man without breath" (p. 120). But note, immediately after declaring Christ and religion necessary for the life of the nation, Michael criticizes the churches:

> The various churches have failed. Completely. They are no longer in the front lines, they have long since retreated to the rear guard. From that position, their resentment terrorizes any formation of a new religious will. Millions of people are waiting for this new formation, and their yearnings will remain unfulfilled (p. 120).

Michael believes that the German nation will experience regeneration and renewal, but only when it turns to Christ, and not necessarily to the churches. The problem is that church leaders have ultimately distorted Christ. As Michael claims:

> Today's youth is not against God, we are only against his cowardly religious menials, who try to commercialize him as they do everything else.
>
> We have to square off against them if we want to square ourselves with God (p. 13).

Notice how Michael's focus is on the "religious menials," those people who have corrupted the faith by commercializing (materializing) God. The younger generation can right itself with God not by submitting to church leaders or the churches but by taking a stand against them. This shift from the churches to

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[103] Goebbels (1987), *Michael*. Translated by Joachim Neugroschel. New York: Amok Press: 39. Hereafter cited in text.

Christ explains Michael's conviction that a relationship with Christ would set him in opposition to the church: "I converse with Christ. I believed I had overcome him, but I have only overcome his idolatrous priests and false servants" (pp. 38–9). This is the same position that Chamberlain and Rosenberg adopted. Michael believes that the churches have given him a repellent version of Christ rather than Christ himself. Therefore, in turning to Christ, he must distance himself from the church and its "false servants."

Michael's decision to center faith in Christ represents a major modernist shift in Christianity. True Christianity is not to be found in or through the churches; rather, it exists simultaneously as a structure of meaning embedded within the inner lives of the people and within the concept of the sacred imagined nation. This is actually the core of Hitler's approach to Christianity. In his writings, Hitler takes a passionate stance against not just Jews but also those who have distorted "real Christianity." For instance, in a passage from *Mein Kampf*, Hitler specifically attacks fellow Germans who are distorting Christianity and, therefore, the German nation by cavorting with anti-Christians:

> His [the Jew's] life is only of this world, and his spirit is inwardly as alien to true Christianity as his nature two thousand years previous was to the great founder of the new doctrine. Of course, the latter made no secret of his attitude toward the Jewish people, and when necessary he even took to the whip to drive from the temple of the Lord this adversary of all humanity, who then as always saw in religion nothing but an instrument for his business existence. In return, Christ was nailed to the cross, while our present-day party Christians debase themselves to begging for Jewish votes at elections and later try to arrange political swindles with atheistic Jewish parties—and this against their own nation (p. 307).

Significantly, Streicher included quotations from Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in *Der Stürmer* on a regular basis, and this passage about Christ was one of the most frequent to appear (see Figure 6.3).[104] In this passage, Hitler is saying that the Jew is, by nature,

[104] This passage was pictured in the following issues: June 1935, number 25; July 1935, number 28; August 1935, number 32, and January 1936, number 4.

atheistic, "because he lacks idealism in any form" (p. 306), which means that the Jew sees everything, including religion, as "nothing but an instrument for his business existence." When German Christians align themselves with Jews, they are necessarily opposing the formation of "their own nation," for the very essence of materialistic Jews and Judaism is in irreconcilable conflict with Christian idealism, which is the only legitimate basis for the sacred imagined nation. Put differently, embedded within the sacred imagined nation, as defined by National Socialism, is a specific theology (Christian idealism), which implicitly mandates the negation and eventual extermination of Judaism and the Jew. Hence, to institute a nation based on "true Christianity" ("dem wahren Christentum"), the Nazis must not only fight against but also eliminate "the spirit of Jewish materialism within us and without us," and the best way to accomplish this is to turn to true Christianity rather than the "Christianity" of the churches' "religious menials."

For Hitler, Goebbels, and Streicher, those "Christians" who support "atheistic Jewish parties" have allied themselves with anti-Christian (materialist) beings, and as a consequence, they have corrupted more than just religious faith; they have vitiated the political order itself. It is for this reason that the political powers of the Weimar Republic failed to invigorate the German nation. Note Hitler's logic as he denounces the post-Great War political agenda: "[W]here, I would ask, was Christianity for them in these fourteen years when they went arm in arm with atheism? No, never and at no time was greater internal damage done to Christianity than in these fourteen years when a party, theoretically Christian, sat with those who denied God in one and the same Government." By aligning themselves with atheistic parties, Weimar Republic German leaders, who are only "theoretically Christian," have corrupted the faith, which is why the political order ultimately failed. Hitler, by contrast, argues that he and the Nazi Party will institute a different kind of politics, one based on the true faith: "I do not merely *talk* of Christianity, no, I also profess that I will never ally myself with the parties which destroy Christianity."[105] For Hitler, those theoretical Christians have forfeited their right

[105] Hitler (1941): February 15, 1933; 148–9. Hitler's emphasis.

aus Karlstadt a. M. Er wurde ins Amtsgerichtsgefängnis Marktheidenfeld eingeliefert.

In Brühl (Rheinland) trieb sich Ende April ein jüdischer Hausierer herum. Er führte in einem schmutzigen, verbeulten Koffer Scheren, Rasiermesser und Klingen mit sich. Vorzugsweise sprach er in solchen Wohnungen vor, in denen nur Frauen anwesend waren. In einer Wohnung gelang es ihm mit einem Trick die Mutter eine Weile aus dem Zimmer zu entfernen. Ihre Abwesen-

Christus und die Juden

Das Leben des Juden ist nur von dieser Welt und sein Geist ist dem wahren Christentum innerlich so fremd, wie sein Wesen es zweitausend Jahre vorher dem großen Gründer der neuen Lehre selber war. Dieser machte auch aus seiner Gesinnung dem jüdischen Volke gegenüber kein Hehl. Er griff, wenn nötig, sogar zur Peitsche, um aus dem Tempel des Herrn diesen Widersacher jeden Menschentums zu treiben. Denn dieser sah auch damals wie immer in der Religion ein Mittel zur geschäftlichen Existenz. Dafür wurde dann Christus freilich an das Kreuz geschlagen.

Adolf Hitler: „Mein Kampf" Seite 336.

n gleich, sobald es darauf ankommt, zu
1812 waren die Juden die Spione, die
wurden und die beide Teile verrieten

Helmuth v. Moltke, (1800—1891)

Die Juden sind Euer Verderben!

to call themselves true Christians or true Germans, and having debased Christianity and thereby themselves, they have implicitly set themselves "against their own nation."

This is the Christian model at the core of Goebbels's novel. To receive God's blessing and to ensure that God remains an active presence within the culture, the leaders and the people must adopt true religious virtues. But, according to Michael, it is exactly these Godly virtues and an authentic relationship with God that are

lacking in the then-contemporary Germany: "Honor? Work? The flag? What do I hear? Do these concepts still exist in this nation, from which God has withdrawn his blessing hand?" (p. 82). Indeed, Michael claims that "[i]f Christ came back" today, "he would take a whip and drive false servants out of the temple" (pp. 47–8). In this passage, there is no mention of Jews. Michael's focus is exclusively on those "false servants" who have perverted Christianity. There are many Germans, according to Michael, who have lost their "true cohesion with God" (p. 120), and consequently, they have set themselves against God and, implicitly, against their nation. For Michael, what is at stake is "true Christianity." Since the "religious menials" have perverted and distorted Christ and his message, the people should bypass the churches and go straight to Christ.

Like Chamberlain, Hitler, and the Party Program, Goebbels defines Christianity in terms of Christian idealism, which we see most clearly when Michael suggests that Christianity implicitly negates materialistic Judaism. Central to Michael's political philosophy is his conviction that for a political party to be legitimate and enduring, it must be built on a religious foundation. In a diary entry, Michael makes this point forcefully in his nuanced critique of then-contemporary politics:

> Politics is anxiety about bread. Bread is not given by God; it is fought for and defended.
>
> Give us this day our daily bread. No, give us your blessing on our bread, so that we may build and conquer today and always (p. 72).

The logic of Michael's position is this: Politics today has been reduced to ephemeral things, such as bread. But what political leaders should actually be striving to establish is a "true cohesion with God," a project that would earn the political leaders God's blessing. In other words, God bestows on political leaders and their regimes blessings, not bread, and if the body politic wants to receive God's blessing, then it must focus on a spiritual foundation (idealism) rather than an ephemeral (materialism) one.

But before political leaders and the nation would receive God's blessing, they must first come to an understanding of "true Christianity," and it is this true understanding that Michael seeks

to discover and articulate in and through his play. As he says after completing the work:

> Christ died, Christ lives! I have seen him anew. As he is. Now I have said everything.
>
> Five acts are on paper. I am finished (p. 77).

No longer corrupted by the churches' "religious menials" and "false servants," who have disseminated a distorted or repellent version of Christ, Michael now sees Christ "anew," as he really is. Ralf Georg Reuth, author of *Goebbels*, interprets Michael's journey of faith in the novel as an abandonment of Christianity, arguing that in the character of Michael "Goebbels anticipated the pseudoreligious, bombastic rhetoric of the National Socialist cult that suggested with its help people could free themselves from the shackles of reality."[106] But actually, Goebbels follows Chamberlain, who claims that "the figure of Jesus Christ has, by the historical development of the Churches, been dimmed and relegated to the background, rather than unveiled to the clear sight of our eyes" (p. I.174). It is only when Christianity would be re-centered in the person of Christ that Germany could recover true Christianity, and it was Kant's idealism that represented Christ and Christianity as they really are. To put this in Chamberlain's words, what Christ gave to humanity in his person is freedom, "the conviction that he himself is not merely and not even predominantly a mechanism," for he "discovers in himself what Kant calls 'the spontaneity of freedom,' something utterly unmechanical and anti-mechanical" (p. 480). In essence, Christ incarnates negative and positive freedom.

Michael articulates the nature of the new but real Christianity when he defines it in opposition to the Jews in the same way point 24 of the Nazi Party Program did. In the same tradition as Kant, Chamberlain, and Hitler, Goebbels's Michael claims that Christ is not the logical product of his Jewish heritage, but rather, the negation of the Jew and Judaism: "Christ is the genius of love, as such the most diametrical opposite of Judaism, which is the incarnation of hate" (p. 65). Streicher makes a similar claim when he

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[106] Ralf Georg Reuth (1993), *Goebbels*. New York: Harcourt Brace: 47.

says that "Christ was the greatest antisemite of all time."[107] What leads all of these writers to draw this conclusion is their conviction that Christ, as an embodiment of moral freedom, signifies the triumph over materialism and determinism. The Jew is solely interested in political domination ("future international power" [p. 65]), says Michael, which is why "Christ is the first great enemy of the Jews" (p. 65). One of the primary things that differentiates Christians from Jews is negative freedom, the ability to sacrifice individual inclination for the good of the larger community. Therefore, Michael claims:

> The idea of sacrifice first gained visible shape in Christ. Sacrifice is intrinsic to socialism. Sacrifice oneself for others. The Jew, however, does not understand this at all. His socialism consists of sacrificing others for himself (p. 66).

In essence, Christ is an idealist, while the Jew is a materialist, which explains why Jews cannot form a legitimate or lasting nation. Note how Michael defines Christian idealists in opposition to materialist Jews, who are equated with Marxists: "Christ Socialists: That means voluntarily and willingly doing what the run-of-the-mill socialists do out of pity or for reasons of state" (p. 66). Christians are not motivated by personal self-interest or political power. They, like Christ, do things "voluntarily and willingly" for the sake of good. By stark contrast, Jews are motivated by material rewards and political power. To bring into sharp focus the distinction between Christians and Jews, Michael says: "Moral necessity versus political insight" (p. 66). Christians are governed by the idealism of Christ, who embodies the negative freedom of moral necessity, while Marxists are governed by the materialism of the Jews, who embody the selfish inclination of a political agenda. This is clearly a version of point 24 of the Party Program, which defines Christianity in opposition to Jewish materialism.

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[107] Quoted in Steigmann-Gall (2003): 126.

VI

What Chamberlain, Hitler, Rosenberg, the Party Program, and Goebbels share in common is a vision of Christianity that derives from Kant's moral idealism, a religious philosophy that gives objective validity to the belief in a transcendent God. Based on my findings in this chapter, we could say that the links between Kant and the Nazis are neither superficial nor accidental; rather, they are so substantial that it is literally impossible to understand National Socialism without tracing its religious-political framework back to Kant's Christ-based philosophy of freedom, which functions to supersede and even negate Judaism and the Jew. Chamberlain certainly drew a clear line of connection between Kant and Christ:

> Who could fail to be at once struck with the affinity between the religious philosophy of Kant—won by faithful, critical study of nature—and the living heart of the teaching of Christ? Did not the latter say, the Kingdom of God is not outside you, but within you? But the resemblance is not limited to this central point. Whoever studies Kant's many writings on religion and moral law will find the resemblance in many places (p. II.490).

Indeed, so popular was Kant's religious philosophy with the Germans that Rosenberg says that ""Kant's words" about "the starry heavens above us and the moral law within us" (an allusion to the conclusion of *Critique of Practical Reason*) are in danger of being "reduced to triviality."[108] Adolf Eichmann provides additional support for understanding Kant's influence on the Nazis. During a police examination, Eichmann "declared with great emphasis that he had lived his whole life according to Kant's moral precepts, and especially according to a Kantian definition of duty." I quote this passage from Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Significant is Arendt's response to Eichmann's claim: "This was outrageous, on the face of it, and also incomprehensible, since Kant's moral philosophy is so closely bound up with man's faculty of judgment,

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[108] Rosenberg (1993): 197.

which rules out blind obedience."[109] Arendt's contemptuous dismissal of Eichmann's assertion about Kant and her subsequent defense of Kant's moral philosophy reflect the unfortunate trend among scholars. Instead of rigorously analyzing Eichmann's logic in relation to Kant's moral philosophy, many scholars have casually dismissed such assertions as ignorant, incoherent, and/or absurd. The result has been a failure to understand some of the crucial intellectual sources of National Socialism.

Let me be clear at this point. I am not saying that National Socialists adopted Christian idealism exactly as Kant conceived it—the transmission through Chamberlain and the emergence of competing ideas certainly impacted Hitler's and the Nazis' understanding of Christian idealism. Nor should we say that Kant was the only influence on Chamberlain, Hitler, and the Nazis. But we can say that Kant, via Chamberlain, was certainly one of the most important influences on National Socialism, which is something that Paul Gilroy notes: "we can interpret Chamberlain's work as he wanted it to be understood: as a strong bridge between Kant and Hitler."[110] The problem, however, is that Gilroy interprets post-Enlightenment intellectual and political history through the lens of the secularization hypothesis, which is why he refers to Chamberlain's work as "a full-fledged racial science."[111] As I have been trying to demonstrate throughout this chapter, a careful reading of the works of Chamberlain, Hitler and prominent Nazis suggests that it was primarily a Christian idealist framework and foundation that enabled Nazis to identify a common enemy, the materialistic Jew. If my interpretation of Hitler and the Nazis proves convincing, then the consequences are staggering. At stake in the Christian idealist interpretation of Hitler and the Nazis is more than just the theological origin of a particular political movement; it is the legitimacy of the secularization hypothesis itself. To conclude this chapter, I want to briefly explain why secularization models have not only distorted our understanding of twentieth-century political history, but have also prevented

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[109] Arendt (2006), *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Penguin Books: 135–6.
[110] Gilroy (2001), *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*. Harvard University Press: 63.
[111] Gilroy (2001): 138.

scholars from seeing much less understanding the theological origins of Hitler and the Nazis.

In essence, to understand Hitler and the Nazis, we need to reject those approaches that treat religion, and specifically Christianity, as a transcendental signifier. To date, one of the most consistent approaches to Hitler and the Nazis could be summarized thus: Hitler and the Nazis did not adhere to "true Christianity," which is a traditional conception of Christianity. Therefore, Hitler and the Nazis were not Christian; they were secular. Scholars and theorists as varied as Voegelin, Arendt, Philippe Burrin, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, Weikart, Adorno, Horkheimer, Ziolkowski, and Charles Taylor, to name only a few, have adopted this approach, and as a consequence, instead of quoting and analyzing the passages in which Hitler and the Nazis profess themselves Christians, instead of doing a careful and systematic analysis of the way Hitler and the Nazis understood Christianity, they glibly assert that National Socialism is the antithesis of Christianity. However, their approach fails to take into account the fact that Hitler and many Nazis not only believed that National Socialism was based on Christianity, but that it was also based on "true Christianity." If we reject the transcendental-signifier approach (and it would be advisable to do so, since this is actually the approach that Hitler and the Nazis adopted), then we would have to admit that Hitler and the Nazis considered themselves and their movement to be based on Christianity, a phenomenological fact that would function to refute the secularization hypothesis. Put simply, the twentieth-century body politic was not becoming increasingly more secular, as we formerly thought. Rather, it was becoming religious in a new and different way. The task now is to clarify precisely how Christian idealism functioned at the level of the subconscious to determine the anti-Semitic behavior of ordinary citizens, and to do this, I want to turn now to William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice*, for it is in the fiction that abstract theories take on a specific and individual form, thus enabling us to glimpse the interior religious psychology that led everyday Christians to justify atrocities against Jews on behalf of and in the name of the sacred imagined nation.

7

William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*: locating the Christian theology of the Nazi's genocidal anti-Semitism

In the crucial scene from William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*, the SS doctor Fritz Jemand von Niemand crudely propositions Sophie. Initially ignoring him, Sophie tightly embraces her children, an intuitive act of parental protection when faced with an inexplicable menace. Persistent, the doctor asks if Sophie is a Communist. Terrified that she and her two children might be undergoing a "selection," a process about which she has heard vague rumors while living in Warsaw, Sophie tells the doctor that she and her children are not Jewish. In fact, she goes on to claim that the

children are "'racially pure'" and "'speak German.'" To conclude her implicit defense of herself and her children, Sophie declares: "'I'm a Christian. I'm a devout Catholic.'"[1] It is at this point that the doctor literally and figuratively turns on Sophie by forcing her to make a choice: she can keep one child, but the other must go to his or her death.

Given that Styron has been strategically building towards this "choice" and that the title of the novel specifically alludes to it, scholars consider this scene the most important. But as I intend to demonstrate in the following pages, the scholarly approaches thus far have done more to muddle and confuse rather than illuminate and clarify. The problem is this. Readers are given two separate and largely irreconcilable interpretations of the Nazi doctor, something that scholars consistently overlook. The obvious interpretation is Stingo's, which defines the doctor, and therewith Nazi totalitarianism, as primarily secular. The less obvious interpretation is Sophie's, which defines the doctor, and therewith Nazi totalitarianism, as primarily religious, specifically Christian.

Let me be more specific. According to Stingo's interpretation, what allowed von Niemand to commit his horrid deed was the fact that he "rejected Christianity," which is why he was able to commit acts that were "a mockery and a denial of God" (p. 531). In the grip of secularization, the doctor lives "in a vacuum of sinless and businesslike godlessness" (p. 532). Having become inured to this de-theologized and, therefore, de-humanized framework, the doctor no longer has a sense of the distinctly human mysteries of sin, freedom, and redemption, which is why he has "no sense of sin from the bestial crimes he had been party to, nor had he felt that in sending thousands of wretched innocent to oblivion he had transgressed against divine law" (p. 532). He has become an emotionless automaton who is merely fulfilling his mindless duty to the secular state. To re-enter the world of the human, therefore, he must find a way to jolt himself out of the secular realm of mechanical mindlessness, and it is "by committing the most intolerable sin" (532) imaginable that he could achieve such a redemption. It is this desire for redemption from the secular "omnipotence of business"

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[1] Styron (1992), *Sophie's Choice*. New York: Vintage Books: 528. Hereafter cited in text.

(p. 531) that motivates the doctor, according to Stingo's interpretation of his behavior.

Sophie does not explicitly offer an interpretation of the doctor's motivation after his horrid deed, but given the way she interacts with him during the selection process, we can make some inferences about her interpretation of his character. We know that Sophie would do anything to save her children, so when she professes herself a Christian to the doctor, we can assume that she is not trying to take a martyr's stance in defense of her faith. Rather, she is flaunting her Christian faith for a pragmatic reason, to save her children. This means that she assumes the doctor to be a Christian, who will sympathize with her as a fellow Christian. This only makes sense, for if she thought that declaring herself Christian would have jeopardized her children's lives, she would not have made such a declaration. In essence, readers are given irreconcilable interpretations of the Nazi doctor: Sophie's interpretation, which assumes the doctor to be a committed Christian, and Stingo's, which assumes the doctor to be a thoroughgoing secularist. While the novel never actually tells us what von Niemand really is (we only get him through the lenses of Sophie and Stingo), it does suggest that one interpretation would make more sense than the other. But to understand that more logical interpretation, we must first define the nature of Nazi anti-Semitism, as defined in *Sophie's Choice*.

I

That Styron is concerned with anti-Semitism is clear from his various depictions of it throughout the novel. For instance, after scolding Nathan for making generalizations about all Southerners, Stingo tells Nathan: "'Suppose I told you that somebody with a name like Landau couldn't be anything but a fat, hook-nosed, miserly pawnbroker out to cheat trusting Gentiles. It'd make *you* mad'" (p. 61, Styron's emphasis). Later, during a heated debate with Nathan, Stingo references another anti-Semitic argument, a religious one in which Jews have "'been unjustly persecuted for centuries for having allegedly crucified Chist'" (p. 78). This argument anticipates Lotte, a Jehovah's Witness whom Sophie

meets in Auschwitz. The description of her is very telling: "A simple soul, utterly devout, practically illiterate, Lotte seemed to weather the unholy winds of Auschwitz like a crude, sturdy ship, serene in her terrible faith." Her faith is terrible, because, when smelling the Jews being incinerated, Lotte says: "those Jews deserved it," because they "were Jehovah's first betrayers." She even refers to the Jews as the "'[r]oot of all evil'" (p. 276).

The most obvious example of Christian anti-Semitism in the novel, however, is Sophie's father. As "a practicing Catholic" (p. 259), Sophie's father characterizes Communism in religious terms ("the Communist antichrist" [p. 259]) and rejects it wholeheartedly. A "superconservative [university professor] in a faculty of right-wingers" (p. 259), he is the logical product of Poland's "entrenched religious hegemony" (p. 269), which is described as "authoritarian and puritanical in spirit" (p. 269). Moreover, in "his magnum opus" (261), which is ominously titled "*Poland's Jewish Problem: Does National Socialism Have the Answer?*" (p. 261), he develops a theory "about the necessity of eliminating Jews from all walks of life" (p. 260). Significant are the sources for his views. Sophie tells Stingo about "this English writer Chamberlain that my father was using in the essay everywhere to support his own philosophy" (p. 265), claiming: "My father had for this Chamberlain such great admiration" (pp. 265–6). Indeed, she even specifies Chamberlain's *Foundations* as a primary source of influence: "I don't know if you have heard of him, he write a book called *Die Grundlagen des*—Oh well, in English I think it have the name *Foundation of the Nineteenth Century*, and it is filled with love of Germany and worship of Richard Wagner and this very bitter hatred of Jews, saying they contaminate the culture of Europe and such as that" (p. 265). As I have argued in Chapter 6, Chamberlain's Christian idealism enabled Hitler and the Nazis to justify the negation of "the spirit of Jewish materialism within us and without us," as point 24 of the Nazi Party Program stipulates. According to the logic of Christian idealism, the negation of Judaism and the Jew is necessary for the construction of a Christian God state. Or, conversely, in so far as Judaism and the Jew remain present, it is impossible for the Christian God state to come into being.

If Chamberlain is the ideological architect of the Nazis' Jewish-free God state, Julius Streicher is the man who made such a state possible, for in his newspaper *Der Stürmer* Streicher produced

powerful anti-Semitic images that clearly articulated the Nazis' distinctive view of Christianity, and not surprisingly Sophie notes that her "father was a great admirer of Julius Streicher" (p. 301). Styron's reference to Streicher gives readers some insight into the nature of the Christian anti-Semitism of Sophie's father, which Streicher depicts throughout *Der Stürmer*. To define Streicher's anti-Semitism, let me briefly discuss a few images from "his newspaper" (p. 302). A March 1937 issue pictures Albrecht Dürer's version of the head of Christ (see Figure 7.1), and the accompanying caption reads: "No feature in his face is Jewish" (my translation). Within supersessionist terms, Christ symbolizes the total overcoming and negation of the Jew, so in an April 1927 issue (see Figure 7.2) Christ is pictured on the Cross and an accompanying commentary asserts: "The Galilean, Jesus Christ, declared himself before all the world a mortal enemy of the Jews" (my translation). In an April 1933 issue (see Figure 7.3), Christ is pictured on the Cross with a devout Nazi praying at his feet. In the background are numerous evil-looking Jews, and the attending caption at the bottom of the page reads: "Lord, they want me to betray my nation, as they have betrayed you" (my translation). In an April 1933 Easter image (see Figure 4), a Nazi soldier is pictured with a German woman before the Cross, and in the background, the swastika blazes like the sun illuminating the scene. The attending caption reads: "The Jews have crucified Christ on the Cross and believed him to be dead. He has risen. They have crucified Germany on the Cross and called Germany dead and Germany has risen more majestic than before" (my translation). Given the specific references to Chamberlain and Streicher as primary influences on Sophie's father, it should be clear that the professor's justification for the extermination of the Jews in his magnum opus is based on a particular version of Christianity. So that there is no confusion about the nature of the professor's disciplinary approach, Sophie specifically mentions how she was "immersed like a drowning creature in the very midst of the poisonous wellspring of his theology" (p. 264). That theology was Chamberlain's Christian idealism, the same theology that led Hitler and many prominent Nazis to draw an identical conclusion about the Jews.

What has been a stumbling block for Styron scholars is the relationship between Sophie and her father. In an effort to make Sophie exclusively a victim and almost never a perpetrator, scholars

Christuskopf (gezeichnet von Albrecht Dürer)
kein Zug in seinem Gesicht ist jüdisch. Albrecht Dürer, der Künstler und große Seher, zeichnete in tüchtigem Gefühl einen Helden nordischen Blutes

tend to distance her from her father and his anti-Semitism. For instance, John Lang claims that "Sophie detests her father's anti-Semitism,"[2] while Richard G. Law says that Sophie "does not share

[2] Lang (2007), "God's Averted Face: Styron's *Sophie's Choice*," in Rhoda Sirlin and L. W. West III (eds) *Sophie's Choice: A Contemporary Casebook*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing: 104.

Der Galiläer Jesus Christus bekannte sich vor aller Welt als Todfeind der Juden. Er hat es ihnen auf die Stirne zu gesagt, was er von ihnen hielt: „Ihr seid Kinder des Teufels! Euer Vater ist ein Mörder von Anfang an. Und nach Eures Vaters Gelüsten wollet Ihr tun." Sein Kampf galt der Befreiung. Der Befreiung eines eingesessenen Bauernvolkes aus der Zinsknechtschaft und Blutherrschaft des fremdrassigen Juden. Darum mußte Christus sterben. Sterben am Kreuze. Weil er nicht Händler war und Pharisäer und Schriftverdreher. Weil er den Mut besaß, sich für sein Volk und gegen den Juden zu bekennen. Das gelobte Land ging zu Grunde. Was übrig blieb ist ein Leichenstein.

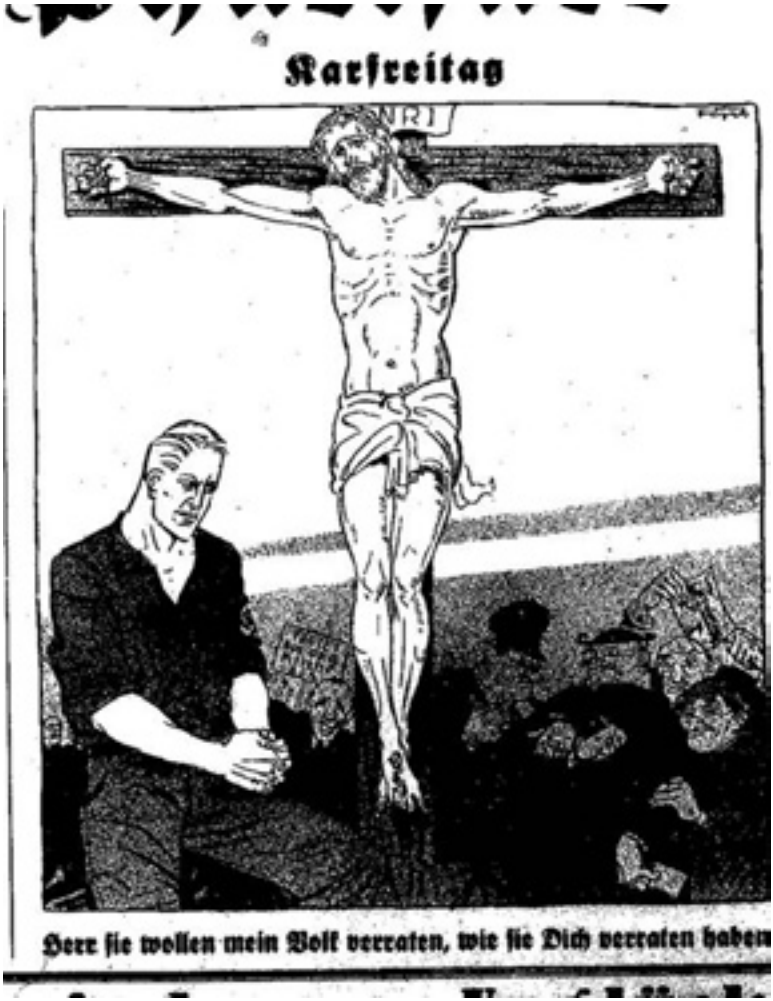
Aber die Christusmörder leben. Sie leben inmitten des deutschen Volkes. Und trachten nach seinem Untergang. Die Hand Juda liegt schwer auf ihm. Es ist zinsbar gemacht. Zerfressen und geschändet an Leib und Seele. Das deutsche Volk ist auf dem Wege nach Golgatha. Alljuda will seinen Tod. Weil sein Vater ein Mörder ist von Anfang an. Und weil der Jude tun will nach seines Vaters Gelüsten. Deutschland soll untergehen in einem Rassenchaos der Menschheit. Soll ausgelöscht werden aus dem Heldentum seiner Geschichte.

Deutschland erwache!
Es ist zwölfte Stunde....

Die Juden sind unser

her father's extreme views."[3] But given Sophie's background, which is "all bound up in her Polish Catholicism, in which veneration of a father seemed appropriate and necessary" (p. 261), it would be

[3] Law (1995), "The Reach of Fiction: Narrative Technique in Styron's *Sophie's Choice*," in Daniel Ross ed. *The Critical Response to William Styron*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press: 251.



safe to assume that she inherited some of her father's Christian anti-Semitism. In fact, in an interview, Styron admits to Michel Braudeau, after some resistance and evasion, that Sophie is anti-Semitic. To get some insight into Sophie's character, Braudeau crafts a confusing question that has a disorienting effect on Styron: "the Sophie of your novel is Polish, Christian, and raised in an educated,

middle-class, seemingly liberal environment. How does she arrive at 'hating Jews passionately'?"[4] There are two separate problems with Braudeau's comment and question: First, Sophie was not raised

[4] Styron (1985), "Why I Wrote *Sophie's Choice*," in James L. W. West III ed. *Conversations with William Styron*. Jackson & London: University Press of Mississippi: 247.

in a seemingly liberal environment—her father was a superconservative among right-wingers. Second, the way Braudeau frames the question, he suggests that being Christian is incompatible with anti-Semitism, but Styron supplies numerous examples within the novel to suggest that the exact opposite is the case.

Ironically, Braudeau's confusing question elicits a revealing response from Styron:

> She does not hate them [Jews], at least in the beginning, and I really don't believe the character to be antisemitic. She must sometimes play that role because she works in the house of Höss, the commander at Auschwitz. I know, role-playing and truth, all that's ambiguous. She also has outbursts of antisemitism against Nathan when he rejects her. In any case, I didn't intend to paint her white as snow. You must consider the antisemitism of her environment, of her father, and, to be honest, of Poland at that time. One cannot conceive of someone totally untarnished by antisemitism within that context.[5]

Rhoda Sirlin, certainly one of the most insightful readers of *Sophie's Choice*, cites the first half of this passage in order justify her claim that "Styron feels that her [Sophie's] character is not anti-Semitic."[6] But if we quote the whole passage, one notes a progression in Styron's response that ultimately functions to incriminate his heroine. He starts by defending Sophie, initially claiming that she does not hate Jews and that she is not anti-Semitic. But then, after indicating that Sophie plays the role of an anti-Semite with Höss, he concedes that there is some ambiguity. This leads Styron to acknowledge Sophie's anti-Semitic outburst against Nathan, which forces him to confess—finally, grudgingly—that Sophie is an anti-Semite because of her environment. Based on Styron's representation, one could conclude that he has some ambivalence about Sophie. But the ambivalence actually stems from the difficulties of picturing a character whose subconscious is in conflict with his or her conscious sense of self.

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[5] Styron (1985): 247.

[6] Sirlin (1990), *William Styron's* Sophie's Choice*: Crime and Self-Punishment*. Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press: 22.

To get a more thorough understanding of Sophie's anti-Semitism, let me briefly examine her vicious remarks about Nathan to Stingo. In this rant, her comments disclose a fully formed anti-Semitism that could be found in Chamberlain's *Foundations*, Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Streicher's *Der Stürmer*, or the Nazis' Party Program. In short, her full-bodied anti-Semitism stands in stark contrast to Stingo's simplistic, cliché-ridden representations of anti-Semitism. For instance, while Stingo mouths single-sentence anti-Semitic platitudes, Sophie spends 19 sentences denouncing Jews. In her diatribe, the Jews are crass materialists, people committed exclusively to worldly prosperity, but also incapable of rising above selfish inclination for the good of the larger community:

> "Jews!" she exclaimed. "It's really true, in the end they are all exactly alike *sous la peau*, under the skin, you understand. My father was really right when he said that he had never known a Jew who could give something in a free way, without asking for something in return." (p. 383).

The free way of giving is premised on Kant's moral idealism, which holds that an action can only be free in so far as it is not based on individual inclination. This is the main point in the Nazis' Party Program, which defines Jews in terms of a materialism that leads to "private greed." In other words, Jews are only materialists, and can never be idealists, because they are governed from within by materialistic inclination rather than idealistic freedom.

Reprehensible as Sophie's comments are, they are merely preparatory for her most virulent attack. After detailing Nathan's abuses of her, Sophie expands on her materialistic critique of Jews:

> "he done such a thing [helped Sophie in her time of need] only so he could use me, have me, fuck me, beat me, have some object to possess! That's all, some *object*. Oh, it was so very Jewish of Nathan to do that—he wasn't giving me his love, he was *buying* me with it, like all Jews. No wonder the Jews were so hated in Europe, thinking they could get anything they wished just by paying a little money, a little *Geld*. Even *love* they think they can buy!" (p. 383, Styron's emphasis)

If traditional love implies altruism, then Jews cannot love, because

they are dominated by materialism, whether that is a worldly materialism based on money and goods or a philosophical materialism based on inclination and self-interest. In short, Jews are fundamentally incapable of behaving as meta-materialistic beings, which is why they cannot behave in an idealistic (that is, Kantian idealism through the filter of Chamberlain and Hitler) manner. In essence, this passage directly supports one of the key claims in Chamberlain's *Foundations*, the Party Program, and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, that Jews are crass materialists.

Given the logic of Chamberlain's and Hitler's Christian idealism, the Jews are responsible for the evils they have suffered, and, therefore, deserve the punishment they experienced. As Sophie claims:

> "Jews! God, how I hate them! Oh, the lies I have told you, Stingo. Everything I told you about Cracow was a lie. All my childhood, all my life I really hated Jews. They deserved it, this hate. I *hate* them, dirty Jewish *cochons!*" (p. 384, Styron's emphasis)

More disturbing than the racist content of this passage is its similarity to Lotte's depiction, which sanctions the extermination of the Jews. Both women make a derogatory reference about Jews and claim that the Jews got what they "deserved." For someone unaware of what occurred in Auschwitz to say that the Jews "deserved" to be hated would be simple ignorance. But for someone with Sophie's first-hand knowledge of the Nazi death camps to suggest that the Jews "deserved" the intense "hate" they experienced only years before is more horrific than inexcusable. Moreover, Sophie's reference to Jews as pigs (*cochons*) is a shocking usage of the kind of Nazi discourse that was calculated to underscore the Jews' materialist (non- or anti-idealist) nature. Significantly, after justifying the European hatred of the Jews, Sophie *confesses* that this is the view of the Jews that she has had "[a]ll my childhood, all my life."

While it is important to note Sophie's intimate knowledge of anti-Semitism, it is just as crucial to take into account the degree to which religion shaped her character, specifically her anti-Semitism. Having grown up within the context of the "entrenched religious hegemony" of Poland under the tutelage of a father who

is "a practicing Catholic," Sophie is raised to be "a good sweet Catholic girl" (p. 213). Within this environment, she adopts a view of Christianity that condemns Jews for having "committed" the "blasphemy" of posing as the Chosen People "in the sight of Christians" (p. 299), a view that her father obviously inherited from Chamberlain's *Foundations*. Given the supersessionist logic of Chamberlain's Christian idealism, the full manifestation of Christ within the nation state can only occur through the negation of the materialistic Jew, which is why Sophie tells the Nazi commandant, Höss, that she endorses National Socialism's "sacred war against Jews and Jewry" (p. 300). After all, this is her father's view of Christian anti-Semitic politics as articulated in his final-solution magnum opus, a document that both Sophie and her father believe to be an early version of the Nazis' solution to the Jewish problem. Since Sophie was immersed in the "wellspring" of her father's "theology," she would have considered his Christianity to be the very Christianity that everyday Nazis would have accepted.

It is this internal consistency between Christian anti-Semitism and the Nazis' political agenda that explains the most poignant scene in the novel, when the Nazi doctor forces Sophie to choose one child to be liquidated. After the Nazi doctor asks Sophie if she is Polish, she responds:

> "I'm not Jewish! Or my children—they're not Jewish either." And added, "They are racially pure. They speak German." Finally she announced, "I'm a Christian. I'm a devout Catholic." (p. 528)

What motivates Sophie to profess herself Christian at this point is her conviction that National Socialism is based on Chamberlain's supersessionist Christian theology, so when she professes herself Christian, she is in essence saying: I am a Christian, like you Nazis, and, therefore, I am also an anti-Semite, who believes in the Final Solution. This interpretation only makes sense: we know that Sophie would do anything to secure freedom for herself and her children, and the best way to do that, she believes, is to claim to be Christian, like the Nazi doctor.

If this interpretation of Sophie's intrusive claim to be Christian is right, then how can we explain the Nazi doctor's response? After all, it appears that her profession of faith is precisely what seals

her doom, which suggests that the Nazi doctor is anti-Christian. Note the link between Sophie's profession of faith and the doctor's response:

> "*Ja, mein Hauptmann*. I believe in Christ." What folly! She sensed from his manner, his gaze—the new look in his eye of luminous intensity—that everything she was saying, far from helping her, from protecting her, was leading somehow to her swift undoing (p. 528).

Immediately after Sophie's declaration the doctor asks her if she believes "in Christ the Redeemer," and then forces her to make a choice between her children.

To comprehend the doctor's viciousness, it is first important to understand the people with Sophie when she arrives at Auschwitz. Sophie was arrested because she tried to smuggle meat, a delicacy reserved for Nazis, to her ailing mother. In the apartment building where she resides were many "Home Army members," a resistance group whose goal was to disrupt Nazi operations in Poland and to protect Jews. When Sophie is arrested, she is put on the same train as many of the "Home Army members." Realizing who is on the train with her, Sophie thinks to herself:

> If she had not had the misfortune of being taken prisoner at the same time as so many of the Home Army members […], she might have been adjudged guilty of the serious crime of meat smuggling but not of the infinitely more grave crime of subversion, and hence might not be headed for a destination so forbiddingly malign (p. 523).

Styron had to include this detail about the resistance members because it significantly affects the way we should understand the Nazi doctor's vicious treatment of Sophie. Indeed, had he not included this detail, the scene with von Niemand would not make sense. When Sophie claims that she is not a Jew, the doctor, we can assume, infers that she has been part of an anti-Nazi insurgency that has been defending Jews. Such a fact explains the nature of his hostility towards Sophie, but only partially. What is still confusing is the fact that he turns on Sophie, not when she announces that

she is a Pole, but that she is a Christian, a response that gives the impression that the Nazi doctor is anti-Christian.

But there is another way of understanding his seemingly anti-Christian response. For Chamberlain and Hitler, there is only one true Christianity, and that is Christian idealism, which presupposes negative and positive freedom. Jews, as materialists, are the antithesis of Christ, so removing them from a Christian polity is absolutely necessary. Given the logic of Christian idealism, a leader who is committed to the formation of a Christian political order must remove Jews from the society, because they infect the culture "with fundamental views of a materialistic kind."[7] Therefore, to be a Christian who not only tolerates but also defends materialistic Jews would be a contradiction in terms.

Significantly, this is the same position Hitler espouses. For instance, in a 1922 speech, Hitler refers to Count Lerchenfeld, who argued before the German Landtag that "his feeling 'as a man and a Christian' prevented him from being an anti-Semite." Enraged and indignant, Hitler denounces Lerchenfeld's approach to Christianity and therefore counters: "*my feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Saviour as a fighter.* In boundless love as a Christian and as a man I read through the [biblical] passage which tells us how the Lord at last rose in His might and seized the scourge to drive out of the Temple the brood of vipers and adders. How terrific was His fight for the world against the Jewish poison."[8] When German "Christians" align themselves with Jews, they are necessarily opposing the formation of their own nation, for the very essence of materialistic Jews and Judaism is in irreconcilable conflict with Christian idealism, which is the basis and foundation of National Socialism. Hence, to institute a nation based on Christian idealism, the Nazis must not only fight against but also eliminate "the spirit of Jewish materialism within us and without us."

Given Chamberlain's and Hitler's view that Christianity entails the negation of the Jew, a theology that implicitly leads to the Final Solution, the Nazi doctor's response to Sophie's declaration

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[7] Chamberlain (1912), *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. New York: John Lane Company: I:422.

[8] Hitler (1941), *My New Order*. Raoul de Roussy de Sales ed. New York: Reynal and Hitchcock: April 12, 1922: 26. Hitler's emphasis.

of faith makes much more sense. When Sophie proclaims herself a Christian, the Nazi doctor would assume, given that she is on a train with anti-Nazi and pro-Jew insurgents, that she is one of those "Christians" who believes that defending Jews is consistent with her faith. Sophie's supposed defense of Jews would disqualify her as a Christian. To be Christian mandates opposition to "the spirit of Jewish materialism within us and without us," according to the official Nazi view of "positive Christianity" as stipulated in point 24 of the Party Program. And the novel supports this reading of the doctor, for after Sophie is placed in a concentration camp, she discovers from one of the doctor's neighbors that he "was a steadfast churchgoer and that he had always planned to enter the ministry." The only reason he didn't was because his "mercenary father forced him into medicine" (p. 531). These details significantly alter the way we understand the doctor's treatment of Sophie. He is not punishing Sophie for being Christian, but for being a "Christian," like Count Lerchenfeld, who tolerates and defends Jews, which disqualifies her as a Christian. This split in Christianity is precisely what is at stake in Germany during the Nazi era, according to Chamberlain, Hitler, Streicher, Goebbels, and Rosenberg.

II

As readers, why should we trust Sophie's Christian interpretation more than Stingo's secular interpretation? There are three stages to my answer. In the first, I demonstrate that readers are invited to cast suspicion on Stingo's interpretation of Sophie and therewith the Holocaust. In the second, I argue that Nathan is able to see two things that Stingo cannot: that Sophie is in some measure an anti-Semite and that, therefore, she is as much a perpetrator as a victim. Finally, I offer an interpretation of Sophie that sheds new light on the von Niemand scene and therewith the theological origins of Nazi totalitarianism.

Styron's admission that Sophie is anti-Semitic significantly impacts the way the reader should respond to the narrator. Law makes a smart and useful distinction between the young and the mature narrators in the novel, claiming that the young

"Stingo's point of view provides a direct though naïve experience, approaching Auschwitz more or less accidentally and unwillingly,"[9] while "the mature narrator, even in his retrospective account, is not readily able to follow the track of Sophie's experience to her nightmare encounter on the platform either."[10] We get a clear sense of the mature narrator's limitations through his response to Sophie's anti-Semitism. When Sophie first confesses to Stingo that her father was an anti-Semite, she tells him that "her attitude in regard to Jews, the greater part of whom were in the Cracow ghetto, wraiths barely visible, was at most one of indifference. Sophie insisted on this; I still believe her" (p. 262). The mature Stingo may believe her, but Styron does not. She was more than just indifferent to Jews; she was, at some level, an anti-Semite. ("You must consider the antisemitism of her environment, of her father, and, to be honest, of Poland at that time. One cannot conceive of someone totally untarnished by antisemitism within that context.")

What should give readers most pause about Stingo's account is his secular interpretation of the Nazis' crimes against humanity, specifically mass murder. Stingo derives his interpretation primarily from Richard Rubenstein's "masterful little book *The Cunning of History*" (p. 255). Of this book, Law rightly concludes that it "profoundly affects the manner of the telling of *Sophie's Choice* as well as its content."[11] But it is important to note that Stingo focuses on only one dimension of Rubenstein's book, which is secularization. Ironically, for Rubenstein, the originators of secularization are not Enlightenment rationalists, Marxist materialists, or Nietzschean Übermenschen. Rather, the primary parent of secularization is "the author of Genesis." By secularization, Rubenstein means the Weberian disenchantment of the world, a view in which "'there are no mysterious forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation.'" According to this model, the religious person conceives of God and the world through the lens of magical and mysterious forces. By contrast, the secularist reduces God and/or the world to a calculable system of knowledge, a rationalist approach that implicitly supplants

[9] Law (1995): 235.
[10] Law (1995): 240.
[11] Law (1995): 246.

mystery. Because the author of Genesis does not reduce God to a calculable concept, we could say that the writer is deeply religious. But because the author depicts the "Creation [...] as devoid of independent divine or magical forces which men had to appease,"[12] we could say that the writer is profoundly secular. Put starkly, the writer of Genesis is religious in relation to God but secular in relation to the world.

Secularization, taken to its Weberian logical end, entails a systematic and rational reduction of the world to the principles of bureaucratic objectivity. And yet, within the West, it is Judeo-Christians who have engaged the world in the most secular manner, which is why Rubenstein claims: "the process of secularization that led to the bureaucratic objectivity required for the death camps was an essential and perhaps inevitable outcome of the *religious* traditions of the Judeo-Christian west."[13] In essence, there is a profound religious/secular split at the core of the Judeo-Christian tradition: "One mistake often made by those who appeal to the humanistic ideals of the Judeo-Christian tradition is the failure to distinguish between the *manifest values* a tradition asserts to be binding and the *ethos* generated by that same tradition. The Judeo-Christian tradition is said to proclaim an ethic in which every man is possessed of an irreducible element of human dignity as a child of God. Nevertheless, beyond all conscious intent, it has produced a secularization of consciousness involving an abstract, dehumanized, calculating rationality that can eradicate every vestige of that same human dignity in all areas of human interchange."[14] The "*manifest ideals*" of Christianity entail respect for humans, but the "*ethos*" that the tradition generates is the exact opposite.

At this point, let me specify precisely how this religious/secular split created the conditions for the formation of the death camps, according to Rubenstein. With regard to human rights, the Judeo-Christian tradition holds that all people possess an inherent "human dignity as a child of God." Whether the state recognizes a people and their rights or not, the fact remains that they

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[12] Rubenstein (1987), *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future*. New York: Harper & Row: 28.
[13] Rubenstein (1987): 30. Rubenstein's emphasis.
[14] Rubenstein (1987): 31. Rubenstein's emphasis.

have dignity and, therefore, certain inalienable rights which God guarantees. But with the growing separation of church and state during the Enlightenment, it was the secular state rather than the religious church that defined the human and determined what, if any, rights a person possessed. According to this model, there are two reasons why the Nazi extermination camps are the logical product of secularization. First, it is only the state that determines whether humans have dignity or rights: "We are sadly forced to conclude that we live in a world that is *functionally* godless and that human rights and dignity depend upon the power of one's community to grant or withhold them from its members."[15] Since there are no rights other than what the state confers on people, a Nazi soldier can violate those who do not possess state rights with impunity. In other words, were a Nazi solider to violate a stateless person, he or she would not necessarily feel compunction, because there is no meta-state right that would suggest that a crime has been committed.

In addition to the absence of meta-state rights is a condition of alienation that accompanies Weberian disenchantment. Instead of conceiving of the human as an essentially mysterious or unknowable being that cannot be reduced to an idea, concept, or number, the bureaucratic process of classifying, systematizing, and defining the human and human societies, which the author of Genesis initiated and instituted, became the dominant mode of organizing modern societies. The "calculating rationality" of this bureaucratic model rendered human connection and feeling irrelevant and unnecessary. Therefore, alienated bureaucratic officials, instead of feeling compassion for fellow humans whom they were ordered to violate, would have little or no feeling for their victims. More specifically, having been structured within a disenchanted bureaucratic society, a Nazi soldier, who would be asked to violate someone, would not feel like he has committed a crime against an indefinable, mysterious, and meaningful human being, but would rather feel that he has performed an unpleasant duty. The problem is not just that the state, with seeming "bureaucratic objectivity," defines victims as beings without rights, but that the state presupposes the existence of bureaucratic objectivity. And the moment

[15] Rubenstein (1987): 91. Rubenstein's emphasis.

such a calculating rationality becomes the dominant mode of organizing society, humans undergo a process of alienation that enables them to convert the feeling of having violated someone into the unfeeling act of having performed a necessary duty. For the most part, this is the interpretation that Stingo derives from Rubenstein's book.

Despite the fact that Rubenstein characterizes Auschwitz as a logical product of secularization, he also considers it the logical product of the Judeo-Christian tradition. When discussing why "the Judeo-Christian tradition is itself part of the problem" plaguing the West, Rubenstein claims: "the world of the death camps and the society it engenders reveals the progressively intensifying nightside of Judeo-Christian civilization." Indeed, when it comes to religion, Rubenstein is emphatic: "Even, nay especially, religion has its night side,"[16] which is why Rubenstein claims in another book that the "roots of the death camps must be sought in the mythic structure of Christianity."[17] Why is Rubenstein so negative about religion? While critical of secularization, Rubenstein considers it something that only allowed things to happen rather than initiated events. In essence, secularization removed the prohibitions against murder: since the state, not God, determines human rights, Nazis do not violate a divine law when they kill Jews; and since the bureaucratic objectivity of the state reduces humans to emotionless automatons and meaningless numbers, Nazis feel like they are merely fulfilling an unpleasant duty when they kill Jews. But it is the "night side" of "religion" that provides the impetus for identifying victims and for taking annihilating action against them. In *The Cunning of History*, Rubenstein rightly references Martin Luther to illustrate his point: "It is fashionable to see anticipations of Nazi anti-Semitism in Germany's greatest religious figure, Martin Luther, but it is seldom acknowledged that Luther's intolerance and hatred was thoroughly biblical in its rejection of those who do not maintain whatever is construed to be fidelity to the only true word of the Lord."[18] Susannah Heschel notes how many Germans considered

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[16] Rubenstein (1987): 92.
[17] Rubenstein (1966), *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill: 3.
[18] Rubenstein (1987): 93.

National Socialism to be the fulfillment of Luther's theological project:

> Hitler did not achieve most of his political and military goals, but on the Jewish question he succeeded remarkably. If his antisemitic propaganda found resonance, its success can be credited in large measure to the unrelenting anti-Jewish Christian theological discourse that linked Nazi propaganda with the traditions and moral authority of the churches. That link was proclaimed with enthusiasm by Nazi Christians: 'In the Nazi treatment of the Jews and its ideological stance, Luther's intentions, after centuries, are being fulfilled.'[19]

Put simply, to understand the nature of Nazi anti-Semitism, it is necessary to identify one of its key sources, which is Luther, according to Rubenstein.

In *On the Jews and their Lies*, Luther argues that Jews have lost the title of the Chosen People and are now the enemies of God. As he develops his position in favor of Christianity and against Judaism and the Jew, his rage escalates so much that he begins to formulate a more absolute and final solution to the Jewish problem, one that frighteningly anticipates Nazi Germany. He encourages political leaders to act like a physician, "who, when gangrene has set in, proceeds without mercy to cut, saw, and burn flesh, veins, bone, and marrow." When it comes to this merciless action towards the Jews, he is very specific and direct:

> Burn down their synagogues, […], force them to work, and deal harshly with them, as Moses did in the wilderness, slaying three thousand lest the whole people perish. They surely do not know what they are doing; moreover, as people possessed, they do not wish to know it, hear it, or learn it. Therefore it would be wrong to be merciful and confirm them in their conduct. If this does not help we must drive them out like mad dogs, so that we do not become partakers of their abominable blasphemy and

[19] Heschel (2008), *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press: 6–7.

> all their other vices and thus merit god's wrath and be damned with them.[20]

As ominous as this passage is, it becomes even more so if one attends to the not so subtle allusions to Deuteronomy 20, in which God does not just authorize but actually mandates genocide: "But in the cities of those nations which the Lord, your God, is giving you as your heritage, you shall not leave a single soul alive. You must doom them all—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the Lord, your God, has commanded you, lest they teach you to make any such abominable offerings as they make to their gods, and you thus sin against the Lord, your God" (20.15–18). These two passages do not just suggest that genocidal action is acceptable. They actually say that failure to take extreme and decisive action would be a sin against God. If the believers do not eliminate the non-believers, there is the danger that the believers will become as corrupt as the non-believers, so it is the believers' moral obligation to dispense with the non-believers. By strategically alluding to Deuteronomy 20, Luther subtly encourages his readers to consider the ultimate solution of not leaving "a single soul alive." It should come as no surprise that Streicher foregrounds Luther's book in *Der Stürmer* with a full-page image of the German text (see Figure 7.5) and that he strategically cites Luther's recommendations regarding Jews.

Though Rubenstein does not discuss Luther's work directly, it is the violently anti-Semitic passages from *On the Jews and their Lies* that must have led him to claim that "a religious tradition that insists upon the dichotomous division of mankind into the elect and the reprobate" has contributed to the Nazi concentration camps. Indeed, it is this religious tradition that produces within the culture an "ethos of exclusivism and intolerance."[21] According to this model, Christians, as the elect, have exclusive rights to the society's goods, while Jews, as the reprobate, do not. Moreover, since reprobate Jews infect the Christian polis by virtue of their presence, the Christian elect have no choice but to eliminate them,

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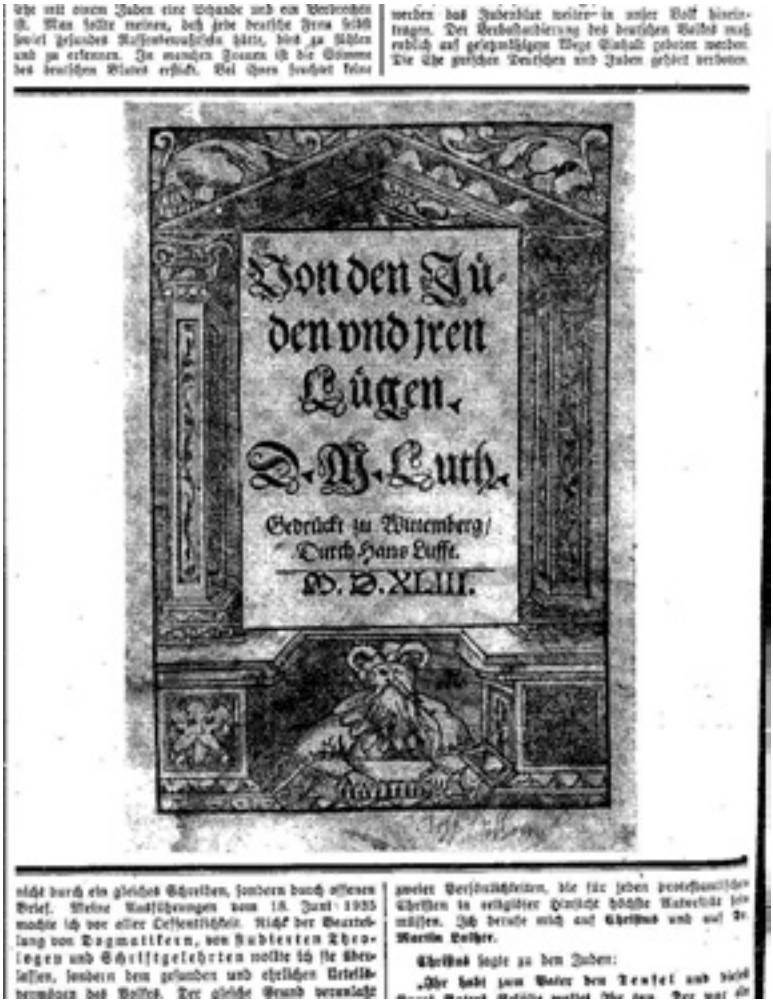
[20] Luther (1971), *On the Jews and their Lies*, in *Luther's Works*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press: 292.
[21] Rubenstein (1987): 93.


Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen.
D. M. Luth.
Gedruckt zu Wittemberg/ Durch Hans Luffft.
M. D. XLIII.

which is why Luther advocates exclusionary policies that the Nazis would eventually make into formal and informal laws in Germany. In stark contrast to the secular state, therefore, the Christian church enables believers to identify the reprobates and provides the Christian elect with the necessary justification for taking violent action against them. Given the logic of Rubenstein's model, therefore, what made the concentration camps possible is the

simultaneous intensification of secularization and Christianization. One did not rule out the other. Rather, they worked in tandem to create the conditions for the death camps.

Significantly, Stingo, in focusing exclusively on Rubenstein's secular arguments, fails to take into account the religious justifications for criminal behavior, including murder. In essence, Stingo approaches the Holocaust primarily through the lens of secularization, which is why he claims that the Nazis were able to institute the final solution—they were not "under Christian constraint." Ironically, on the very next page, Sophie tells Stingo about her father's magnum opus, which, she slowly discloses throughout the novel, contains Christian arguments justifying National Socialism's answer to "*Poland's Jewish Problem*" (p. 256). This ironic juxtaposition underscores Stingo's limitations as a narrator, for Sophie's narrative implicitly exposes Stingo's approach to and interpretation of the Holocaust as either limited or false.

III

We get a clearer sense of Stingo's limitations as a narrator when we compare and contrast his understanding of Sophie and the Holocaust with Nathan's, for it is Nathan who actually has most insight into Sophie's character, especially when it comes to her anti-Semitism. Central to the novel is Nathan's exceptional ability to perceive and interpret people and the world. For instance, Nathan tells Stingo in 1947 about "the truly pernicious effect of cigarette smoking on the health" (pp. 59–60), and Stingo, writing many years later, acknowledges how "weirdly prescient" Nathan's comment was. When Nathan first meets Sophie, "he guessed, with dead accuracy as it turned out, that her appearance was the result of a deficiency anemia" (p. 70). Later, he accurately predicts that there will be records "'made so that you can play an entire symphony, say, or a whole Bach cantata on one side of a single record'" (p. 127). Most significant, however, are Nathan's comments about Sophie's anti-Semitic upbringing in Poland. Sophie tells Stingo how Nathan would tease her about her childhood in Cracow, asking her: "'What did you do for fun on Sunday?' he says to me. 'Throw rotten potatoes at Jews?'" (p. 85). In defense of her family and

herself, Sophie lies to Stingo: "'But I told Nathan that yes, it is true, quite true about this bad history in Poland, but he must understood—*vraiment*, he must comprehend that not all Polish people was like that, there are good decent people like my family'" (p. 86). We later learn that Sophie actually considers her father one of the ideological architects of Nazi extermination camps.

What sends Nathan spiraling out of control is his heart-wrenching discovery that the woman of his dreams is anti-Semitic, something that Stingo fails to understand and/or appreciate. Nathan's most decisive turn on Sophie occurs when a philosopher by the name of Harold Schoenthal identifies what he considers the real perpetrators of Nazi atrocities. Commenting on "the hangings in Nuremberg" (p. 356), Schoenthal does not direct his rage at Joachim von Ribbentrop, Alfred Jodl, or Streicher, who had just been hanged. Rather, he pursues a Daniel-Goldhagen approach by targeting everyday Germans: "'It is the German people who should be themselves exterminated—they who allowed these men to rule them and kill Jews'" (p. 357). According to this approach, ordinary Germans bear as much responsibility for the atrocities against the Jews as the Nazi leaders. To illustrate his point, Schoenthal mentions the example of Jews who "escaped from one of the camps in Poland," but who were then killed, an event that Nathan also uses against Sophie:

> "Not so many months ago," he [Nathan] persisted, "in the depths of the war in Poland, several hundred Jews who escaped from one of the death camps sought refuge at the homes of some fine Polish citizens like yourself. These darling people refused them shelter. Not only this. They murdered practically all the rest they could get their hands on. I have brought this to your attention before. So please answer again. Did the anti-Semitism for which Poland has gained such world-wide renown—did a similar anti-Semitism guide your own destiny, help you along, *protect* you, in a manner of speaking, so that you became one of the minuscule handful of people who lived while *the millions died?*" (p. 227, Styron's emphasis)

It would not be fair to suggest, as Nathan does, that Sophie was protected from the machinery of Nazi destruction (after all, she lost her mother, father, husband, and both of her children) through

her anti-Semitism, but we can say that she tried to use Christian anti-Semitism to save her children and herself. Again, Nathan perceives things correctly.

What Nathan ultimately discovers about Sophie is that she has internalized a binary model of thinking that is calculated to objectify and demonize the other, the Jew in this case, while it simultaneously functions to legitimize and valorize the dominant power. Nathan indicates that he suspects Sophie of having internalized this model when he asks her if she used anti-Semitism to escape Auschwitz. Significantly, the novel itself confirms Nathan's suspicions about Sophie. For instance, after arriving in Auschwitz, she flagrantly uses her Christianity in an attempt to secure freedom for herself and her children, and in the process, she implicitly demonizes the Jews. Later, in an effort to secure her freedom, she tries to form an alliance with Höss by spouting Christian anti-Semitic arguments that she derived from Chamberlain, Streicher, and her father. She even makes use of this oppositional model after coming to the United States. When she turns against Nathan, she does not just attack him for being an abusive lover; she uses a sophisticated form of anti-Semitic discourse to condemn him and all Jews, which functions to unify her and Stingo against Nathan and Jews.

So effective is this binary model in demonizing the marginalized other (Jews) and unifying the dominant power (Christians) that Sophie, when making use of it in order to demonize Nathan and all Jews, inspires Stingo to make use of it as well. For instance, just after Sophie makes her case against Nathan and all Jews, Stingo *confesses*: "the power of suggestion is mighty, her savage bile touched in me some atavistic susceptibility" (p. 384). Not surprisingly, Stingo's thoughts "logically" turn to the fact that his apartment had just been robbed, and he can now identify the culprit, the Jewish caretaker in the house where he and Sophie live: "I found myself brooding blackly on my recent robbery. And Morris Fink. *Fink!* That fucking little hebe, I thought, trying vainly to belch" (p. 384, Styron's emphasis). The scene concludes with Sophie and Stingo coming together as Christians against Jews:

> "Nathan had everything that is bad in Jews," Sophie said, "nothing of the little bit that's good."
>
> "What's good about Jews at *all?*" I heard myself say loudly, garrulously. "It was that Jew Morris Fink that stole the money

> from my medicine cabinet. I'm *certain!* Money-mad, money-greedy Jewish bastard!" (pp. 384–5, Styron's emphasis).

There are two things worth noting about this scene. First, the oppositional model is referred to as an "atavistic susceptibility." It is atavistic because Stingo and Sophie have rejected Christianity at this point in the narrative, but it is a throwback to a pattern of behavior that Christians have used for centuries to unify themselves against Jews. In this instance, an atavistic susceptibility succeeds in bringing Sophie and Stingo together in direct proportion to their antagonism towards Jews. Second, the accusation against Fink will be exposed as false later in the novel, so the atavistic susceptibility effectively unifies Christians and marginalizes and demonizes Jews, even when it is premised on lies about Jews.

Despite Nathan's exceptional ability to perceive things correctly, the one thing he cannot figure out is the nature of Sophie's anti-Semitism. But the novel gives readers a clear reason why. Brilliant and insightful, Nathan is obsessed with racial oppression, which leads him in a conversation with Stingo to make an excellent distinction between "'a passive vessel for the poison [of racism] rather than a willing—how would you describe it?—a willing disseminator'" (p. 226). But Nathan is a man "who considered himself a dedicated scientist" (p. 341), and consequently, when developing theories about the racial poison leading to the Holocaust, he understands it through the narrow and reductive lens of science. Note how he formulates a biological interpretation of Nazi atrocities: "on the level of human behavior the Nazi phenomenon was analogous to a huge and crucial colony of cells going morally berserk, creating the same kind of danger to the body of humanity as does a virulently malignant tumor in a single human body?" (p. 351). As for religion, specifically Judeo-Christianity, Nathan has only a simplistic understanding, alternately condemning it for its prohibitions against suicide ("'it is pure sentimental rubbish embedded in the Judeo-Christian ethos that makes suicide morally wrong'" [p. 363]) and oral sex ("the victim of two thousand years of anti-sucking Judeo-Christian conditioning" [p. 369]). But in so far as Christianity functioned to justify Nazi atrocities, Nathan is clueless, which is why he fails so miserably in identifying and defining the nature of Sophie's as well as the Nazis' anti-Semitism. He knows that there are inconsistencies and gaps in her story, but he lacks the

knowledge of her Christian background to make sense of those inconsistencies and gaps.

So we could say that Nathan is right to suspect Sophie of being an anti-Semitic perpetrator, which is why he refers to her as Irma Griese (p. 364), but he fails to understand the religious logic that has justified her distinct brand of anti-Semitism. At this point, let me add another dimension of clarity regarding Sophie's Christian anti-Semitism. In an attempt to secure her freedom, Sophie appeals to the "atavistic susceptibility" of Commandant Höss, who "was brought up a Christian, nearly became a Catholic priest" (p. 161). The significant detail is that Höss has already told Sophie that he has "broken with Christianity" (p. 247). But this does not stop her from using a Christian argument to align herself with Höss and the Nazis against the Jews. As she says to the commandant: "'the Chosen People, if you'll permit me to say so, sir, may only at last be paying the just price for having arrogantly set themselves apart from the rest of the human race—for having posed as the only people worthy of salvation. I honestly do not see how they could expect to escape retribution when they have committed such a blasphemy for so many years in the sight of Christians'" (p. 299). Sophie's mocking reference to the Jews as the Chosen People suggests an awareness of a central premise in Christian anti-Semitism from Luther to Hitler. In *On the Jews and their Lies*, Luther rages against the Jews for claiming to be "the noblest, yes, the only noble people on earth." According to the logic of Jewish Chosen-People theology as Luther depicts it, "Gentiles (Goyim) are not human; in fact we hardly deserve to be considered poor worms by them."[22] The Jewish act of appropriating the Chosen People title functions to debunk and de-legitimize the Revelation of Christ, which is why Luther considers the Jewish claim to be the Chosen People an act of blasphemy against Christ and Christianity:

> This is certain, borne out by such an enduring and impressive testimony in all the world, that 'He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father,' and that he who does not have the Son cannot have the Father. The Jews ever blaspheme and curse

[22] Luther (1971): 140.

> God the Father, the Creator of us all, just by blaspheming and cursing his Son, Jesus of Nazareth.[23]

Chamberlain extends Luther's arguments by claiming that the Jews' Chosen-People theology is linked with the idea of a world empire: "Jehovah promises them the empire of the world—under certain conditions; and their historical work is such a marvel of ingenious structure that the Jews see their past in the most glowing colours, and everywhere perceive the protecting hand of God extended over His chosen people, 'over the only men in the true sense of the word.'"[24] In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler is less subtle. Given the degree to which Jews are corrupting the culture through "their activity in the press, art, literature, and the theater,"[25] he refers to them as a "spiritual pestilence, worse than the Black Death of olden time." After mentioning how Jews "poison men's souls like germ-carriers of the worse sort," he mockingly queries: "Is this why the Jews are called the 'chosen people'?"[26]

In essence, Sophie's anti-Semitism is totally steeped in a well-established tradition of Christian interpretation, and it is this tradition that she believes underwrites the Nazis' Final Solution to the Jewish problem. Immediately after condemning the Jews for posing as the Chosen People before Christians, Sophie offers another argument based on the way Christians feel in order to justify the Nazi treatment of Jews. For Sophie, "'it is easy to see why the Jews have inspired such hatred in Christians as well as in people like yourself [Höss]—*Gottgläubiger*, as you said to me just this morning—righteous and idealistic people who are only striving for a new order in a new world. Jews have threatened this order, and it is only just now that they finally suffer for it. Good riddance, I say'" (p. 299). Were this the only reference to idealism in the text, Sophie's depiction of Höss as a "righteous and idealistic" person would not be that significant. But Sophie also refers to her father as an idealist. After the invasion of Poland and Cracow

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[23] Luther (1971): 285.

[24] Chamberlain (1912), *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. New York: John Lane Company: I.232.

[25] Hitler (1971), *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin: 57.

[26] Hitler (1971): 58.

"became the seat of government for all Poland" (p. 271), the father offers "his services to the Governor General, Hitler's friend Hans Frank, but only as an advisor and expert in a field where Poles and Germans had a mutual adversary and a profound common interest—*die Judenfrage*" (p. 271). Significant here is the way the father's behavior is characterized: "There was doubtless even a certain idealism in his effort" (p. 271). Idealism in this instance is not just a general reference to a desirable state of affairs; it is a "certain idealism." And since we know that the father was heavily influenced by *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, we can conclude that he understands the Christian idealism that Hitler and the Nazis inherited from Chamberlain. It is this Christian idealism that clarifies her father's behavior, according to Sophie.

There is an even more compelling reason to understand the reference to a "certain idealism" as the Christian idealism of Hitler and the Nazis. When telling Stingo about her life in Warsaw, Sophie mentions her relationship with Jozef, who "worshipped the memory of Bakunin and was a complete atheist" (p. 387). As I argued in Chapter 5, Bakunin understood the degree to which nineteenth-century Germans and Germany had already appropriated and internalized "divine idealism," the very idealism that Hitler and the Nazis inherited from Kant via Chamberlain and incorporated into their Party Program. What Bakunin did not quite understand and/or anticipate was the way the Jew would figure within the framework of Christian idealism, but Nietzsche, writing in 1887, certainly did. As he claims in an eerily ominous passage from *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "I also do not like these latest speculators in idealism, the anti-Semites, who today roll their eyes in a Christian-Aryan-bourgeois manner and exhaust one's patience by trying to rouse up all the horned-beast elements in the people by a brazen abuse of the cheapest of all agitator's tricks, moral attitudinizing."[27] The Christian Aryans, who are "speculators in idealism," are anti-Semites on the basis of their capacity to behave as moral agents, which explains Nietzsche's reference to their "moral attitudinizing." According to this model, Germans, as Christians, are defined in relation to idealism, while

[27] Nietzsche (1989), *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House: 158.

Jews, as non-Christians, are defined in relation to materialism. While Bakunin understood that Germany "represents idealism in its most abstract, most pure, and most transcendental form" and realized that "religious or philosophical idealism, the one being but the more or less free translation of the other, serves to-day as the flag of material, bloody, and brutal force," he did not see how this model would allow German Christian idealists to justify a supersessionist project of negating Jewish secular materialists. But given Styron's strategic references to Bakunin and Chamberlain, whose books *God and the State* and *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* are simply incomprehensible without an understanding of a "certain idealism," it is clear that Styron grasps the significance of Christian idealism in relation to National Socialism.

According to the logic of Christian idealism, Jews are materialists, as point 24 of the Party Program stipulates, and as such, they stand in direct opposition to Christian idealists. Jews consider themselves Chosen People in a religious sense, but this is a mockery of religion, for as I have demonstrated in Chapter 6, the Jewish religion is based on materialism (statutory laws, material wealth, and earthly power) rather than idealism (law of the spirit, a meta-materialistic experience, and a spiritual foundation), so it does not qualify as a religion in the strict sense of the word, according to Kant, Chamberlain, Hitler and the Nazis. Put simply, Jewish materialists belong exclusively to the material world, while Christian idealists belong to the material and spiritual world. According to the supersessionist logic of this political model, if the Germans want to establish a truly Christian nation ("a new order in a new world"), then the Nazis have no choice but to eliminate the Jews, who "have threatened this order."

When Sophie mentions "idealistic people" to Höss, she is making extensive use of her father's arguments, which conclude with the genocidal mandate known as the Final Solution. Significant is the degree to which Conrad's model from *Heart of Darkness* sheds considerable light on the genocidal document in *Sophie's Choice*—one speculates that Kurtz's report is the model for Professor Biegański's magnum opus.[28] Marlow's apologia for colonization

[28] Styron was an admirer of Conrad, as he indicates by alluding to Conrad in *Sophie's Choice* (pp. 516–17) and claims in a 1963 interview: *Conversations with William Styron*. Jackson & London: University Press of Mississippi, 1985: 38

and Kurtz's report allow for horrible sacrifices in the name of civilization, but the moment Kurtz articulates how far people can go in order to justify civilization by filling the space of Marlow's ellipsis with a call for genocide, Marlow expresses reservations. He does not object to the actual genocidal behavior, for he dubs that a moral victory. But he does object to the articulation of the idea, which takes the form of exterminating all the brutes. Like Kurtz's report, the document written by Sophie's father is vague and misty and it concludes with a call for genocide, and just as Marlow has reservations about Kurtz's call for genocide, so too does Sophie. When taking careful dictation, Sophie notes that her father mentions the word "*Vernichtung*." At first, Sophie cannot recall the meaning of the word, but when she realizes that it means extermination, she turns against her father: "she was smitten with horror at what he had said and written and what she, in her complicity, had done. '*Vernichtung*,' she said aloud. He means, she thought with stupid belatedness, they should all be murdered" (p. 264). Up to this point, Sophie has performed her duties, certainly not enthusiastically, but at least with dutiful obedience. But once her father specifies his call for genocide, she rejects her father and his ideas.

Ironically, it is the indiscretion of mentioning genocide that alienates Sophie and her father from the Nazis. Both characters try to ingratiate themselves with Nazis in order to protect themselves and secure freedom for their families, but both fail miserably. What accounts for their failure is not their anti-Semitism, nor even their call for genocide, but their ignorance regarding the universal psychology that enables genocide to occur, the very psychology I outlined in Chapter 5. To give the reader a clear sense of professor Biegański's tendency for verbal indiscretion, Styron includes a scene with Dr Walter Dürrfeld, a director of IG Farbenindustrie. Professor Biegański wishes to impress Dürrfeld, so he flaunts his knowledge of "German industry and commerce" (p. 418). The professor certainly does make an impression, but as Sophie notes, "her father does not know when to stop" (p. 419). This failure to understand the tacit protocols of the rhetorical situation is of vital importance, specifically when it comes to the articulation of genocide. As I argued in Chapter 5, the most important signifier within genocidal consciousness is the ellipsis. If a person mentions genocide or an equivalent idea, then the exterminating-all-the-brutes philosophy would fall apart. Therefore, to make genocide

possible, it is important to know when to stop, which means not mentioning words such as extermination or *Vernichtung*.

Sophie rightly links herself with the Nazis by implicitly referring to herself as an "idealistic" person who is "striving for a new order in a new world," an order that "Jews have threatened" and against which they necessarily stand. In terms of the Nazi Party Program, that world order is based on Christian idealism, which stands in stark contrast to Jewish materialism, and since Styron specifically mentions Chamberlain, Bakunin, and a "certain idealism" in *Sophie's Choice*, it is likely that he understood the materialism/idealism philosophy that dominated Germany and became the foundational ideology of National Socialism. In the name of the redeeming idea of the new world order, the world of freedom that legitimizes belief in God and the soul, some horrible sacrifices must be made. But Sophie, like her father, fails to understand the tacit protocols of genocidal discourse when she specifies how far people should be willing to go on behalf of the redeeming idea. After giving Höss a copy of her father's document, she says:

> I want you to know that these few pages represent everything I stand for. I know from working with you that the 'final solution' has been a secret. But this is one of the earliest Polish documents suggesting a 'final solution' to the Jewish problem. I collaborated with my father—whom I mentioned to you before—in writing it (pp. 299–300).

It would seem that Sophie's admission that she is a Final-Solution anti-Semite and that she and her father collaborated on a justification for exterminating Jews would endear her to Höss, but actually, her disclosure has the exact opposite effect. "'This document means *nothing* to me'" (p. 302, Styron's emphasis), he says. Höss certainly cannot object to the ideas in this document—they are consistent with the Nazis' objectives. The problem is with the articulation. Like Kurtz, Sophie commits the unforgivable sin in the West, which is not genocide, but the acknowledgment of genocide. Genocide when implied through an ellipsis is acceptable, but genocide articulated is simply unacceptable. The "'final Solution' has been a secret," not because Nazis object to killing Jews (the novel is set in Auschwitz, after all), but because they realize that the moment one specifies how far people should be willing to go in the name

of the redeeming idea of Christian idealism, people would reject the idea, as does Sophie. To be more specific, Chamberlain's and Streicher's supersessionist Christian theology, which underscores the degree to which Christ symbolizes and necessitates the negation of Judaism and the Jew, implies and sometimes necessitates an exterminationist agenda. But had either made an explicit call for genocide, their particular brand of Christianity would have fallen apart. Put differently, by formulating a redeeming-idea theology which intimates genocide but resists the impulse to make a direct call for the extermination of the Jews, Chamberlain and Streicher actually make genocide more possible than someone such as Sophie's father. Acknowledging the "secret" of genocide by articulating it ("Exterminate all the brutes!" "*Vernichtung*") would effectively disable the redeeming-idea philosophy, and this is precisely what professor Biegański and Sophie do, which is why the Nazis ultimately reject them.

While Conrad's redeeming-idea model from *Heart of Darkness* can be used to illuminate *Sophie's Choice*, what differentiates the two works are Styron's explicit references to Christianity as the incarnation of the redeeming idea. By strategically including well-established Christian arguments that justify extreme anti-Semitism, the novel underscores a Christian anti-Semitic continuity that underwrites the Nazi agenda. While Sophie's Christian anti-Semitic arguments to Höss could be taken from Luther, Chamberlain, Streicher, the Party Program, or Hitler, it is ultimately "the image of her father" (p. 299) that haunts her after she provides a theological justification for "retribution" against Jews: "Suddenly the image of her father loomed, monstrous" (p. 299). For Stingo, this image of the father is haunting because Sophie is ashamed of her association with him. The logic of his interpretation of Sophie goes like this: her father was a vicious anti-Semite, but Sophie is not. Of course, she plays the role of an anti-Semite, but that is only for the pragmatic purpose of securing liberty for her son and herself, which is why Stingo refers to Sophie's anti-Semitic arguments as "another of her lies" (p. 299). But if we accept Styron's claim in his interview with Braudeau, then such a reading of Sophie would be naive and unrealistic, because she must have been tainted by the anti-Semitism of her time and place. Moreover, the nature of her anti-Semitism must be considered Christian in nature, which explains why Nathan, as a scientist, can neither understand nor explain it.

IV

The question, then, is this: In what sense is Sophie an anti-Semite? I am not arguing that Styron has created Sophie as a calculating and conscious anti-Semite. What I am arguing is that anti-Semitism inheres within her body as a subconscious structure of meaning that significantly determines her actions, whether she is aware of it or not. Nietzsche provides the most insightful framework for understanding the nature of Sophie's anti-Semitism. To quote a passage that I briefly discussed in Chapter 1: "all of us have, unconsciously, involuntarily in our bodies values, words, formulas, moralities of *opposite* descent—we are, physiologically considered, *false*." There exist in our bodies words, values, formulas, and moralities that frequently conflict with our rational conception of ourselves. For instance, on a conscious level, Sophie might say or believe that she is not anti-Semitic. But at the level of the subconscious, she has absorbed and internalized the anti-Semitic beliefs and assumptions inherent within her culture, which makes her anti-Semitic despite her intentions to the contrary. Nietzsche's model explains Styron's ambivalence regarding Sophie. On the one hand, it would be wrong to call Sophie a conscious anti-Semite, because she does not explicitly despise Jews, nor does she willfully desire them harm. Hence, Styron's claim: "I don't believe the character [of Sophie] to be antisemitic." On the other hand, it would be naive to think that she has completely avoided being infected by the social disease of Christian anti-Semitism, for she has been exposed to it through her father and her country her whole life. Hence Styron's claim: "You must consider the antisemitism of her environment, of her father, and, to be honest, of Poland at that time. One cannot conceive of someone totally untarnished by antisemitism within that context." For twentieth-century novelists, it is difficult to make unambiguous claims about their characters, because the reality of the subconscious oftentimes conflicts with the conscious formulations of the rational intellect. As for Nathan, with his exceptional capacity for perceiving and understanding, he can see in Sophie the subconscious words and values that make her anti-Semitic despite her rational and conscious intentions to the contrary.

Approaching Sophie as a character who slowly comes to understand that a death-bringing anti-Semitism inheres within her body

at the level of the subconscious explains her violent rage towards religion throughout the novel. As I have argued in Chapter 2, there are various stages of atheism, and what Styron scholars consistently overlook is Sophie's evolution as an atheist. For instance, while at Auschwitz, Sophie is euphoric when she hears part of Franz Joseph Haydn's "The Creation": "*Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes,/ Und seiner Hände Werk/ Zeigt an das Firmament*" (p. 251). Feeling immense gratitude for hearing the Haydn score, Sophie begins to recite the paternoster, but when the music stops, she finds that she cannot complete the prayer:

> I never finished the paternoster, the prayer I begun. I don't know any more, I think maybe it was that moment that I begun to lose my faith. But I don't know any more, about *when* God leave me. Or I left Him. Anyway, I felt this emptiness. It was like finding something precious in a dream where it is all so real—something or *someone*, I mean, unbelievably precious—only to wake up and realize the precious person is gone. (p. 252, Styron's emphasis)

At this early stage of development, God still means a great deal to her, as He must. After all, she was raised to be a devout believer. So the retreating sea of her faith afflicts her with melancholic mourning.

But how different is her response when she abandons Stingo at the end of the novel. In her final letter to Stingo, she alludes to Haydn by saying: "FUCK God and all his Hände Werk" (p. 545). In stark contrast to her earlier experience, when Sophie claims that the loss of God is like the realization that a precious person is gone, she responds with a blasphemous, upper-case denunciation of God. What explains her transformation is her realization that God, instead of being a caring Being who loves and comforts people, is actually a human construct that has justified one of the worst atrocities the world has ever known. Stingo cannot understand Sophie, because, even though he professes himself an agnostic (p. 551), he retains the belief that God, as a concept, is an essentially good being, so if people behave badly, he assumes that they are godless, which is why he characterizes the doctor's actions as "a mockery and a denial of God." But Sophie, who has not only witnessed how the God-concept could function to justify genocidal

action, but had also adopted such a mentality to some degree, no longer considers the death of God to be a negative thing.

This transformation in Sophie's character undermines the simplistic approach to her atheism. On the surface, Sophie despises religion because God did nothing to stop the Nazis from committing their barbaric atrocities. But the real reason for her impassioned hatred, I want to suggest, is her shame and guilt from having been indoctrinated since childhood with Christian anti-Semitism, an interpretation that totally overturns one of the standard readings of the role of religion in *Sophie's Choice*. Lang argues that Sophie "remains preoccupied with the problem of religious belief."[29] On the surface, she may be an atheist, but in reality, she has a secret yearning "for the divine,"[30] which is why "the person of Christ is never entirely absent from the novel."[31] Prominent scholars such as Law and Barbara Tepa Lupack[32] have reiterated this interpretation. But given the interpretation I am pursuing in this chapter, instead of seeing Sophie's intense hostility towards Christianity and God as emblematic of her secret desire for faith, it would make more sense to see it as an obsession with a death-bringing ideology that has destroyed her life and the lives of so many others, including her children. According to this reading, Christianity remains present in the novel, not as something to be desired, but as something that has poisoned and continues to poison people and culture, and it is her relationship with Nathan that forces her to confront this dimension of Christianity and its God. Prior to falling in love with Nathan, Sophie did not have to address or confront her anti-Semitism in an embodied manner. But her sudden and intense love for Nathan forces her to confront those forces from her past that have made her adopt and even disseminate a theology that was calculated to kill not just abstract Jews, but rather, a real living Jew, a character such as Nathan.

It is this relationship between her love of Nathan and her hatred of Christianity that explains an early scene in the novel, when Sophie lashes out at two Catholic nuns. The nuns first appear when

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[29] Lang (2007): 103.
[30] Lang (2007): 104.
[31] Lang (2007): 114.
[32] See Law (1995): 247 and Lupack (1995), *Insanity as Redemption in Contemporary American Fiction*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida: 185.

Sophie and Stingo are waiting for Nathan at their usual table at the Maple Court cocktail lounge. In search of donations, the nuns approach Sophie and Stingo, but Sophie "uttered a 'No!' with such vehemence that the nuns drew back with a concerted gasp" (p. 213). Surprised and even shocked, Stingo asks Sophie why she should respond so negatively. After all, Sophie told Stingo just a few weeks before that she was "'brought up a good sweet Catholic girl.'" Sophie responds that "'those nuns make me feel so *pourri*—rotten. Stinking,'" which is why she ultimately claims: "'I don't want to talk about religion. I hate religion'" (p. 213). At this point in the novel, we do not get real insight into the nature of Sophie's hatred of religion, but just before the scene erupts with Nathan's arrival, Stingo confirms the significance of the nuns when he goes to the restroom, which the nuns inadvertently enter. Stingo's response to their presence is more telling than even he knows: "Was it their entry—duplicating the bad omen Sophie had felt only a short while before—that presaged the evil contretemps of the next fifteen minutes or so?" (p. 216). The nuns are a painful reminder to Sophie of her Christian heritage, which has indoctrinated her with a death-bringing anti-Semitism. Hence, her passionate but negative response to religion: "I don't want to talk about religion. I hate religion." We can understand why she can't talk about her suffering at Auschwitz, the deaths of her children, and the choice she was forced to make. But why can't she talk about religion? The answer, I contend, is that religion, Christianity in particular, is what made all these other things possible.

On what basis can I make the claim that Christian anti-Semitism is responsible for the horrors of Auschwitz? Sophie tells Stingo about the Warsaw ghetto, which "'my father seemed to … *authorize*.'" Indeed, he "'not only authorize[d] it but *create*[d] it in some way'" (p. 510, Styron's emphasis). But more than just authorizing the creation of the Warsaw ghetto, the text suggests that his anti-Semitism implicitly led to mass deaths, for as Stingo claims: "It is hard to understand how he could have been blind to the fact that the great death-happening wrought upon the European Jews by the Nazis would descend like a smothering fog around his compatriots" (p. 411). Specifically, it is his own grandchildren who would become collateral damage: "I [Stingo] have often wondered what might have dwelt in Professor Biegański's thought had he lived to know that the fate of his daughter but especially his grandchildren was

ancillary to, yet inextricably bound up with, the accomplishment of the dream he shared with his National Socialist idols: the liquidation of the Jews" (p. 411). To underscore the logical consequences of his anti-Semitic ideology, Stingo reiterates this point: "It is impossible to speculate on the reaction of this tormented man had he survived to see Jan and Eva fall into that black pit which his imagination had fashioned for the Jews" (p. 412).

But if it is true that Sophie's father significantly influenced Sophie, then it would follow that she, as an inheritor of his Christian anti-Semitism, would have contributed to the extermination of her own children, and she would have done so primarily as a Christian. Such a revelation about herself could only result in irredeemable self-loathing. But what makes matters even worse is Sophie's relationship with Nathan. The tragic irony of their relationship is this: the more they come to know and love each other, the more they cannot help but to destroy each other, a situation that functions to underscore the novel's theme of cosmic absurdity ("the meaning of the Absurd, and its conclusive, unrevocable horror" [p. 509]). The fatal moment is their mutual experience of love at first sight. After fainting in a library, Sophie is "saved" by a man whom she believes to be a doctor. Even before she learns his name, she experiences something "close" to love at first sight (p. 145), an emotional response that will prove deadly. Given her anti-Semitism, one has to wonder if she would have fallen in love with Nathan had she known he was a Jew. And therein lies one of the major internal conflicts within the novel. Sophie, a woman raised to be a Final-Solution anti-Semite, has fallen madly and hopelessly in love with a Jew before she knows that he is a Jew, and not just any Jew, but one who is extremely sensitive to what Jews have suffered and who has an extraordinary capacity to read people and events. For his part, Nathan has fallen madly and hopelessly in love with a beautiful woman who has a number tattooed on her arm, obviously signaling that she was a concentration camp survivor and perhaps a Jew. Given his Jewish heritage and sensitivity to Jewish suffering, one has to wonder if he would have fallen in love with Sophie had he known she was once an anti-Semite, who—willingly or not—contributed to the Nazi extermination of the Jews. This is, to be sure, a toxic combination, which explains in part the nature of their destructive relationship. The more time Nathan spends with Sophie, the more he can discern what lives inside her.

Herein lies the tragic paradox of the novel. Before Sophie meets Nathan, she suffers for having made the choiceless choice of sending one of her children to the gas chamber. But after she falls in love with Nathan, in addition to confronting the fact that she sent one of her children to her death, she has to confront the fact that her subconscious anti-Semitism, which she is slowly but finally coming to understand, authorized, at least in part, the ideology of hate that has led to the extermination of Jews, and not just abstract Jews, but a real one, a character such as Nathan. Therefore, the more intensely Nathan and Sophie come to know and love each other, the more intensely do they tear each other apart, Sophie because she is forced to acknowledge the existence of a death-bringing anti-Semitism that lives within her despite her intentions to the contrary and Nathan because he can increasingly discern what inheres within Sophie's subconscious. The intensification of their knowledge of and love for each other can only result in an escalation of madness and destruction, ultimately resulting in their dual suicide.

This interpretation explains Sophie's violent rejection of her Christian faith. On the one hand, it could be argued that Sophie rejects God and Christianity because she cannot understand why bad things happen to good people. But this interpretation is only a superficial justification for Sophie to say "FUCK God." What is really behind her hatred of God and Christianity is her realization that she has been indoctrinated into a Final-Solution ideology through her Christian faith, and it is only through her knowledge of and love for a Jew that she can finally see and understand what she has done. Let me put this differently. Had Sophie never met and/or loved a Jew, she would never have had to confront or acknowledge the crime she has committed or the people she has wronged. But through her relationship with Nathan, Sophie must acknowledge that she did not contribute to the destruction of an abstract other, "Jehovah's first betrayers," or "dirty Jewish *cochons*"; she contributed to the extermination of flesh and blood human beings, characters such as Nathan.

We get a clear sense of the link between Sophie's love of Nathan and her hatred of Christianity in her closing letter to Stingo. She tells Stingo: "I love Nathan but now feel this Hate of Life and God" (p. 545). Let me rephrase Sophie's claim in a way that recalls the scene with the Catholic nuns: "Stingo, I love Nathan, who is on his way

here at this moment, which is why I feel this hatred of the nuns and their God." As Sophie has been slowly disclosing more and more of her story to Stingo, she has been forced to reflect on the events and ideas that led up to her experience with von Niemand. The more this story takes shape, the more intensely does she turn against God and Christianity, and there is a reason why. It was Christianity that indoctrinated her with a death-bringing anti-Semtisim, which has filled her with a (conscious and/or subconscious) hatred of Jews. Therefore, the more passionate her love for Nathan becomes, the more intensely does she despise Christianity and its God.

V

We are now in a position to better understand and appreciate why Styron considers the scene with von Niemand "to be the metaphor for the most horrible, tyrannical despotism in history."[33] As I argued in Chapter 1, writers such as Styron are concerned with universal themes, but they do not think of the universal in a traditional sense, as something that applies to all people in all places at all times. Rather, they provisionalize the universal, which is why Styron claims that the scene with von Niemand functions "to elucidate one of the major mysteries of the history of twentieth-century man."[34] Styron is not trying to depict a universal human nature, but rather, the "nature" of a "twentieth-century man." Specifically, he, like Kundera and Conrad, seeks to formulate a theory that would elucidate the conditions that led to "the victimization of people by life or by other human beings."[35] In other words, his goal is to picture and understand "what other people do to each other in the guise of idealism or of passion or of zealotry, whatever."[36]

But if we follow Styron by treating the von Niemand scene as "a poetic metaphor, in a gruesome way"[37] of the twentieth-century man, we are still left with the challenge of articulating the sense

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[33] Styron (1985): 258.
[34] Styron (1985): 254.
[35] Styron (1985): 234.
[36] Styron (1985): 235.
[37] Styron (1985): 258.

in which that scene functions as a metaphor. Perhaps the biggest dilemma is this: where do we locate Nazi totalitarianism? Should we follow Adorno and Horkheimer, who locate it in Enlightenment models of abstraction and industry, which negate and subsume whatever does not conform to the recognizable and established rule of reason? Should we follow Zygmunt Baumann, who locates it in the modern nation state, which operates according to the strict laws of instrumental reason and bureaucratic technology? Should we follow Richard Weikart, who locates it in social Darwinism, which treats the survival of the fittest as the governing principle of modern societies instead of morality? As I argued in Chapter 1, novelists generally reject such theories, because they locate the deepest realities within the subconscious. But within the context of the overarching claim of *The Modernist God State*, there are two separate but equally important subconscious realities: the subconscious of the ordinary person and the subconscious of the God state. With regard to the subconscious of ordinary men, Eliot and the Moot focus on "the substratum of collective temperament, ways of behaviour and unconscious values." Their position is basically this: to Christianize ordinary men, it is more important to determine their unconscious epistemological orientation than their conscious beliefs, because "the unconscious or underground level of mental life" significantly "governs the conscious or rational level." With regard to the subconscious of the state, Seeley claims that the church is the soul of the state. According to these two models, the Nazis' genocidal anti-Semitism exists within both the subconscious of the ordinary people and the concept of the Holy Reich, and we see this most clearly in the scene with von Niemand.

Von Niemand knows that Sophie is Polish, but that does not mean that she is not Jewish. As I argued in Chapter 4, within the context of supersessionist Christian theology, a person becomes a Jew simply by rejecting Christ—the Jew becomes the template for identifying those people who are anti-spiritual, anti-Christian, and anti-God, as Hurston, Sartre, and Baldwin argue. This explains the strange logic governing Sophie's response to von Niemand. The doctor asks Sophie: "'I know you're a Polack, but are you also another one of these filthy Communists?'" Given his assertion that he knows that she is Polish, it would seem that it would not be necessary for her to say that she is not Jewish. But in her response, this is exactly what she does: "'*Ich bin polnisch! In*

Krakow geboren!' Then she blurted helplessly, 'I'm not Jewish! Or my children—they're not Jewish either'" (p. 528). How do we explain the fact that, instead of denying that she is a Communist, she denies being Jewish? In his epic novel, *The Kindly Ones*, Jonathan Littell provides insight. The high-ranking SS official, Dr Otto Rasch, penned a report, which faulted the Nazis for making a false equation: "*The Bolshevik apparatus is by no means identical with the Jewish population*."[38] According to the logic of the Nazi propaganda ministry, being a Communist (Bolshevist) means being a Jew. So when von Niemand asks Sophie if she is a Communist, she immediately thinks of Jews. Therefore, in denying being Jewish, she believes that she is implicitly denying being a Communist.

But there are more tacit assumptions implicit in Sophie's response. After denying being Jewish, and hence, Communist, Sophie declares herself a Christian: "Finally she announced, 'I'm a Christian. I'm a devout Catholic'" (p. 528). The shift from not being a Communist (a Jew) to being a Christian might seem forced, except for the fact that Sophie's father clearly defines Communism as anti-Christian—he refers to "the barbarous Russians, who were now also in the grip of the Communist antichrist" (p. 259). Hitler makes this same equation, as I argued in Chapter 6, when he oppositionalized "Idealism—Materialism," "Christianity and Bolshevism." For Sophie, by declaring herself a Christian, she is implicitly but emphatically denying that she is either a Communist or a Jew. Of course, she never denies being a Communist, but given the way her father and like-minded people (the Nazis) have influenced her thinking, she believes that she does not have to. For Sophie, simply saying that she is a Christian necessarily implies opposition to "the Communist antichrist" and its earthly ministers, the Jews.

If being a Christian—implicitly and necessarily—means not being either a Communist or a Jew, then it also implies being a National Socialist, for the concept of Christianity inheres within the concept of National Socialism. This is actually the logic in the passage from *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler claims that the Jew's "spirit is inwardly as alien to true Christianity as his nature

[38] Littell (2009), *The Kindly Ones: A Novel*. Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Harper: 139. Littell's emphasis.

two thousand years previous was to the great founder of the new doctrine." Jews are essentially materialists, Communists, atheists, and therefore anti-Christs, which is why Hitler draws the following conclusion about those "Christians" who interact with or support Jews: "Christ was nailed to the cross, while our present-day party Christians debase themselves to begging for Jewish votes at elections and later try to arrange political swindles with atheistic Jewish parties—and this against their own nation."[39] "Christians" who align themselves with Jews have set themselves against Christ, for the Jews, by their very nature, are the antithesis of Christ. Given this logic, the very act of supporting Jews or Communism would function to undermine the sacred imagined nation, which, according to Hitler and the Nazis, can only be legitimate (and will, therefore, receive God's blessing) so long as it is based not just on Christianity but on "true Christianity" ("dem wahren Christentum"). In essence, National Socialism implies and even necessitates the negation of the materialistic, communistic, atheistic Jew, because Christian idealism inheres within National Socialism.

Therefore, when Sophie declares herself a Christian to von Niemand, she is trying to say to him that she is a fellow National Socialist, which is to say that Sophie implicitly understands the Christian logic of the sacred imagined nation as Chamberlain, Hitler, Rosenberg, Goebbels, Schemm, and Streicher conceive it. In essence, Sophie understands that the church is the soul of the state, that Christian idealism is the soul of National Socialism. This explains Sophie's intrusive references to Christianity. For instance, with no provocation from the doctor, Sophie introduces Christianity into her discussion with von Niemand in order to form an alliance with him, but she also uses that same discourse—wittingly or not—to justify the selection of Jews: "'I'm not Jewish!'" Sophie says. To the contrary, "'I'm a Christian'" (p. 528). Sophie is basically saying: you should not choose me, because I am not Jewish. Rather, I am Christian, so you should, therefore, treat me as one of your own, as a National Socialist, which presupposes Christianity. Conversely, she is saying: choose them (Jews), because they are not Christian, and are, therefore, the antithesis of Christ and National Socialism. Given Sophie's interactions with von Niemand, her experience

[39] Hitler (1971): 307.

earlier in the novel with Höss should make more sense. After rehearsing some of the Christian arguments justifying the persecution of the Jews, Sophie asks Höss to consider her "record not only as a Polish sympathizer with National Socialism but as an active and involved campaigner in the sacred war against Jews and Jewry'" (p. 300). Sophie's comments suggest intimate knowledge of point 24 of the Party Program, which defines Christian National Socialism in opposition to "Jewish materialism within us and without us." In essence, Sophie is claiming that she is a Christian and, therefore, a National Socialist, because she is anti-Jewish and, therefore, anti-Communist. And this war against the Communists and the Jews she considers religious in nature, which is why she refers to it as a "sacred war against Jews and Jewry." Of course, these links between National Socialism and Christianity or Jews and Communism are never stated outwardly or explicitly, but that is precisely the point. They function as a chain of linked signifiers within the subconscious of the characters and within the concept of National Socialism, and as such, they dictate individual action, whether the characters realize it or not.

This subconscious chain of linked signifiers explains why von Niemand refuses to honor Sophie with the appellation Christian, despite the fact that she explicitly and emphatically refers to herself as such. As a Christian Nazi, von Niemand would denounce and reject those Count Lerchenfeld-type "Christians," who disavow anti-Semitism, as non-Christians. Von Niemand acknowledges that Sophie calls herself a Christian: "'So you believe in Christ the Redeemer?'" (p. 528). But under no condition does he refer to her as a Christian. For instance, after telling Sophie that she must make a choice, he says to her: "'You're a Polack, not a Yid. That gives you a privilege—a choice'" (p. 529). Could von Niemand have said: "You're a Christian, not a Yid. That gives you a privilege—a choice"? The answer is no. The National Socialist's sacred imagined nation is based on "true Christianity," as Hitler claims, so it would not make sense to punish Sophie for being a Christian and, therefore, a National Socialist. If von Niemand were to punish Sophie for being a Christian, it would have to be in the same way that Hitler faulted Count Lerchenfeld, who has, according to Hitler, debased Christianity by defending atheistic, materialistic, Marxist Jews. In other words, von Niemand could punish Sophie for being a "Christian," what Hitler refers to as a theoretical Christian,

which would disqualify her as a Christian, but never for being a Christian, which is synonymous with being a Nazi.

What ultimately underwrites the whole scene with von Niemand is the supersessionist Christian theology of the Nazis' sacred imagined nation, and as a consequence, the horrid action in that scene can only be understood and appreciated when we take into account precisely how the Christian subconscious short-circuits straight into exterminationist action. This is not to say that Sophie realized what her Christian anti-Semitism entailed. The whole point of *Sophie's Choice* is that Sophie gradually comes to an understanding of the root causes of Auschwitz, and what she discovers is that a specific version of Christianity, one that she and her father espoused, made Hitler, the Nazis, and Auschwitz possible. What makes *Sophie's Choice* such a brilliant work, however, is the degree to which the novel replicates the way Christianity functioned within Nazi Germany. As I argued in Chapter 6, Hitler and the Nazis adopted a Kantian version of Christianity, Christian idealism. Central to Kant's conception of Christianity is that, for humans to have knowledge of God and/or immortality, a spiritual act of the soul is necessary. The logic is not: prove the existence of God and immortality, and then use the findings to determine how people should live. Rather, the logic is: given that humans behave as moral agents (perform acts of negative and positive freedom), we can deduce or presuppose the existence of God, immortality, and the soul. In other words, the existence of God, immortality, and the soul is a necessary condition for the possibility of behaving as an autonomous moral agent. If a person, a people, or a nation fails to behave as an autonomous moral agent, then there would be no evidence for the existence of God or immortality. Given the logic of this model, were Jews to rule and govern, religion, and therewith belief in God, immortality, heaven, and the soul, would come to an end, because Jews, as materialists, never exercise negative and/or positive freedom, which are necessary acts for presupposing the existence of a meta-materialistic (spiritual) reality. Therefore, to create the conditions for the Holy Reich to arise and flourish, which is based on Christian idealism, the Nazis must fight against "Jewish materialism within and without us."

According to the logic of Kant's Christian idealism, what is presupposed is far more important than what is stated, and this explains the nature of the dialogue between Sophie and von

Niemand, the *novel* approach to representing the Holocaust, and the scholarly propensity to misinterpret Sophie's character. Cynthia Ozick, for instance, faults Styron for choosing "as his protagonist an inmate of Auschwitz who is a Polish Catholic," not because there were no Polish Catholics killed in Auschwitz, but "because the murdered Jews voluminously outnumbered the murdered Polish Christians."[40] Moreover, Styron's "account of Sophie's Auschwitz tribulations" is problematic, because "*Sophie's Choice* has had an enduring reputation as a 'Holocaust novel.'"[41] Ozick's quotes obviously betray her conviction that Styron's novel should not be considered a "Holocaust novel." According to Ozick, for a work to qualify as a legitimate "Holocaust novel," it must accurately represent in its proportions the historical event, which means that it should, when it focuses on victims, identify the centrally targeted victims, who were *primarily* Jews.

Ozick's interpretation is problematic because she fails to understand the degree to which Sophie is a perpetrator and that Styron's novel is actually more concerned with documenting "a mind swept away in the rapture of totalitarianism" (p. 160) than it is in depicting the inner lives of Holocaust victims. The difficulty, however, is developing a reading strategy that is suited to the novel's distinctive approach to representing individual characters and, therefore, political realities. On the surface, it would seem that Ozick is right to criticize Styron's representation of Sophie and therewith the Holocaust, for in having von Niemand condemn one of Sophie's children to death immediately after she declares herself a Christian, it appears that Sophie is a victim because she is a Christian. But if we read the scene with Forster's approach to the novel in mind, that is, if we understand that the novelist allows readers to peer into the subconscious of its characters, then the Ozick approach would be exposed as seriously wanting. Why? Sophie was desperately trying to save her children's lives, and the way to do this, she believes, is to pose as a collaborator with the Nazis. To that end, she declares herself a Christian. And given the hints in the novel about the Nazis' Christian anti-Semitism, there

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[40] Ozick (2006), "The Rights of History and the Rights of Imagination," in *Obliged by Memory: Literature, Religion, Ethics*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press: 13.
[41] Ozick (2006): 12.

is good reason to think that Sophie has an accurate understanding of the Christian basis of National Socialism. Within the context of the novel, therefore, Sophie's dialogue with von Niemand does not represent Christians and Jews as equal victims of Nazi atrocities. Rather, it functions to expose Sophie's convictions that National Socialism is premised on Christianity and that she can save her children only in so far as she persuades von Niemand that she is, like him, an authentic Nazi, which implies being a "true Christian."

To bring into sharp focus my major claims about *Sophie's Choice* and the theology of the Nazis' Christian Reich, I want to briefly discuss two separate but equally important reasons why Ozick fails to understand what Styron accomplishes in the novel. Ozick clearly understands that a character functions to illuminate both a personal and a suprapersonal history, for she sees Sophie not just as an individual character, but as a symbol for Auschwitz. For instance, after Ozick briefly discusses "the rules of fiction" and "representative truth" in literature, she poses the following question: "why should William Styron's Sophie be representative of the preponderant female population of Auschwitz?"[42] Ozick is certainly right to read Sophie's personal character as symbolic of a suprapersonal reality, but her focus on Sophie as a Christian victim rather than a Christian perpetrator leads her to draw incorrect conclusions about Sophie and therefore Auschwitz. Sophie's personal character does not primarily illuminate "what it meant to endure days of torment and to live through one's own death" in Auschwitz. Rather, it mainly illuminates the religious politics that made Auschwitz possible. Given this shift in focus, let me revise one of Ozick's questions. Ozick asks: "what does it signify—does it signify at all—that the author of *Sophie's Choice* chooses as his protagonist an inmate of Auschwitz who is a Polish Catholic?"[43] Based on Styron's depiction of Sophie's Christian complicity with Nazi totalitarianism, the question should be: "what does it signify—does it signify at all—that the author of *Sophie's Choice* chooses as his protagonist a Christian who has contributed to the making of Auschwitz?"

What is really behind the Ozick misinterpretation is a surface reading strategy. Ozick clearly objects to Styron's characterization

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[42] Ozick (2006): 13.
[43] Ozick (2006): 13.

of Nathan, who is pictured in the novel as mentally unstable: "Nathan is Jewish and mad—a paranoid schizophrenic, erratic when lucid, brutal and suicidal otherwise."[44] A superficial reading of the novel would certainly support this reading, but what Ozick fails to address is noteworthy. As I have already argued, Nathan is extremely perceptive (he is proven to be the most perceptive character in the novel), and it is the nature of his perception and the intensity of his love that leads to his madness and eventual suicide. The more he comes to love and understand Sophie, the more does he realize that she was more an architect than a victim of Auschwitz—she is more an Irma Griese than an Ida Fink. Therefore, Nathan's madness should not be seen as evidence of Styron's anti-Semitism; rather, it should be seen as the logical consequence of having fallen in love with a woman, who continues to harbor within herself at the level of the subconscious the kind of anti-Semitism that gave birth to Hitler and the Nazis.

But to understand the nature of Nathan's mental collapse, it is important to note his ability to read beneath the surface. Readers only come to an understanding of Sophie's intimate knowledge and appropriation of Christian anti-Semitism, and the degree to which it continues to live inside her subconscious, through her lengthy diatribe denouncing Nathan and therewith all Jews. Significantly, it is through this anti-Semitic diatribe that Sophie (Catholic) and Stingo (Protestant) come together as Christians against Jews (Nathan and Fink). This Christian anti-Semitic structure determines the nature of the scene between von Niemand and Sophie, when she flaunts her Christian faith in order to curry favor with a Christian Nazi. Significantly, the more she confronts and understands the anti-Semitism that inheres within her body as a dominant structure of its meaning, the more she turns against Christianity. Not surprisingly, it is Nathan, with his extraordinary capacity to read people's subconscious, who forces Sophie to note the link between her anti-Semitism and the death camps when he asked her if she used anti-Semitism to save herself.

If my reading of the personal history of Sophie's character is right, then what is Styron trying to communicate about the suprapersonal history of Nazi totalitarianism? According to Ozick, the

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[44] Ozick (2006): 12.

novel's suprapersonal objective is to demonstrate how National Socialists persecuted Christians and Jews, which is why Ozick considers both Sophie and the novel profoundly misguided and irredeemably flawed:

> Sophie, then, is not so much an individual as she is a counter-individual. She is not so much a character in a novel as she is a softly polemical device to distract us from the epitome. The faith and culture of Catholic Poles were not the faith and culture targeted by the explicit dogmas of the German scheme of *Vernichtung*. Styron's Sophie deflects from the total rupture of Jewish cultural presence in a Poland that continues with its religion and institutions intact.[45]

However, Styron's point in *Sophie's Choice* is not that the Nazis targeted the faith of Catholic Poles. Rather, it is that many Catholic Poles, such as Sophie and her father, adopted an anti-Semitic faith that was consistent with the Christian Nazis' political ideology, a faith that significantly contributed to the formation of Auschwitz.

What ultimately determines the nature of the conversation between von Niemand and Sophie is the specific Christian content of the sacred imagined nation. To be a legitimate Nazi, a person must subscribe not just to Christianity but to "real Christianity," which, in the case of National Socialism, is committed to the project of combating "Jewish materialism within us and without us." Those Christians who, in the name of their faith, have failed to realize what their belief actually entails (anti-Semitism) Hitler refers to as only "theorectically Christian." But more than that, such Christians ultimately damage Christianity and, when the nation is supposed to be premised on Christianity, the nation itself, which is why Hitler denounces those political parties that cavort with atheistic Jews. The theology of the sacred imagined nation dictates to the people the very nature of their subjectivity. This explains not only why Sophie declared herself a Christian to von Niemand, but also why she emphatically declared that she is not Jewish, for the Nazis' Christian idealism is defined in opposition to Jewish materialism. In essence, Sophie's spontaneous declaration of Christian political faith, which arises from her subconscious understanding of

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[45] Ozick (2006): 17–18.

the Nazis' religious politics, is exactly right, and as such, it should have won her freedom for herself and her children.

But the world we inhabit, according to Styron, is premised on miscommunication, brokenness, and the absurd ("the meaning of the Absurd"), so von Niemand misinterprets Sophie's declaration of Christian faith in National Socialism. But Styron has carefully and strategically clarified why. Seeing her with a trainload of anti-Nazi and pro-Jew insurgents, he considers her a Count-Lerchenfeld type Christian, a theoretical Christian, who, in cavorting with or defending Jews, not only damages "real Christianity," but also those nations that are premised on "true Christianity." And as a loyal subject of the Nazi Christian Reich, who is committed to fighting against that which opposes "true Christianity," von Niemand decides to punish Sophie for undermining first Christianity and, as a necessary consequence, the Christian nation.

This scene, according to Styron, elucidates "one of the major mysteries of the history of twentieth-century man" because it clearly depicts the theological basis of Nazi totalitarianism. Christianity, instead of disappearing, has become embedded as a structure of meaning within the modern state, and as such, it dictates to people how they should interpret the world and act towards others. What this means is that, loyal subjects of the modernist God state, instead of being told by religious leaders how they should behave politically, are governed from within by a religious principle that coincides with the objectives of the nation state, because the modern nation state in the West is premised on a Christian conception of the legitimate political order.

Put simply, the action of von Niemand is incomprehensible without taking into account the Christian theology on which the Nazi God state is based. Put differently, embedded within National Socialism is a Christian conception of the ideal and legitimate nation, which means that National Socialism would be considered a modernist God state only in so far as it is premised on "true Christianity." Within this framework, Jews symbolize the antithesis of Jesus Christ and "real Christianity," which is why the Nazis, with their supersessionist Christian theology, feel and believe that they must negate the Jew within and without. Such is the subconscious religious politics that short-circuit into political action in *Sophie's Choice*, action that finds its fullest suprapersonal manifestation in the burning chimneys of Auschwitz.

Conclusion

The theological origins of Hitler and the Nazis: a question of method

This conclusion is merely a beginning, and to illustrate why, let me briefly discuss both the novel and film versions of *The Remains of the Day*. Set primarily in the years when the Nazis had power in Germany, both works examine the subtle psychology that allows seemingly good people to violate others with impunity. Significant is the difference between the two works when it comes to the justification for violating Jews, which is seen most clearly through Lord Darlington's dismissal of two Jewish maids. In Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, to portray Darlington arriving at his anti-Semitic policy, the narrator is vague and general, referring to a time when his employer came under the influence of Mrs. Carolyn Barnet, who persuades Darlington to adopt an anti-Semitic policy by taking him through the poorest parts of London. The implication is that either the Jews created the conditions for London's poverty or that Jews are stealing jobs from the English. Whatever the case, Darlington says to his head butler, Stevens: "'We cannot have Jews on the staff here at Darlington Hall.'"[1]

The film version is significantly different. To picture Darlington in the process of becoming an anti-Semite, we see him reading an anti-Semitic text and then glancing at the two Jewish servants. The implication is that the text he is reading informs his anti-Semitic

[1] Ishiguro (1988), *The Remains of the Day*. New York: Vintage Books: 146.

view, which will lead him to dismiss the Jewish women. Here is part of the passage he reads: "We certainly do the Jews no injustice when we say that the revelation of Christ is simply something incomprehensible and hateful to them. Although he apparently sprang from their midst, he embodies nevertheless the negation of their whole nature."[2] The title of the book is never mentioned in the film, but it is Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. This decision to cite Chamberlain is striking, because nowhere in the novel does Ishiguro mention Chamberlain, and in a letter to him, I asked whether he knew of Chamberlain's book when he wrote *The Remains of the Day*. He replied that he did not. What he did write to me was that Harold Pinter wrote the first two drafts of the screenplay, while Ruth Prawer Jhabvala "wrote the screenplay from which the movie was finally made." It was Prawer Jhabvala who included the Chamberlain passage, an inclusion that casts Darlington's coming-to-anti-Semitic consciousness in religious terms. Of Jewish descent, Prawer Jhabvala was born in Germany, but her family emigrated to England in 1939. Her brother was a well-regarded German professor at Oxford (now retired), where he focused on nineteenth-century literature. For someone so connected to Germany and the Holocaust (her brother would certainly know of Chamberlain's work and its importance), it only makes sense that she would include the Chamberlain passage, and specifically his theological justification for negating the Jews. My point is this: the shift from the 1988 novel to the 1993 film represents a change not just in our understanding of twentieth-century anti-Semitism and the origins of Nazi Germany, but also in our approach to twentieth-century intellectual and political history.

Put starkly, Ishiguro's novel pictures twentieth-century anti-Semitism in secular terms, while Prawer Jhabvala's screenplay pictures it in religious terms, and the difference between the two works is of monumental significance. Instead of accepting the standard view, that the twentieth century has been secularized, some prominent scholars and writers are starting to challenge the traditional secularization hypothesis, as Prawer Jhabvala does by inserting the Chamberlain passage into the narrative. But

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[2] Chamberlain (1912), *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. New York: John Lane Company: I.338.

it is important to take into account the content of the passage that Prawer Jhabvala includes. If Weikart, Gilroy, or Ziolkowski were writing the screenplay of Ishiguro's novel, they might have included a passage from Chamberlain, but it would have been one that would have focused on race and/or blood, and it would certainly not have referenced Christ or the Christian justification for negating Judaism and/or the Jew.

Reflecting on Prawer Jhabvala's decision to subtly correct Ishiguro by incorporating Chamberlain's flagrantly Christian justification for negating the Jew into *The Remains of the Day*, we have to wonder what enabled her to be so bold. The answer, I want to suggest, has something to do with a postmodern shift in our treatment of concepts. The pre-postmodern view holds that there are transcendental signifiers, such as true Christianity. For instance, in *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor, when discussing the twentieth-century paradigm of fascism, claims that "[t]here was no place left for the morality of Christianity."[3] For those who have read the writings of Hitler and many prominent Nazis, Taylor's claim simply infuriates, for as I have demonstrated in Chapter 6, Hitler announced that his political party regards "Christianity as the foundation of our national morality" and that "the Government of the Reich […] regards Christianity as the unshakable foundation of the morals and moral code of the nation." How is it possible for Taylor to claim that fascism precludes Christian morality, when we know that Hitler unambiguously asserts that National Socialism is premised on Christian morality? There are certainly many answers to this question, but let me focus on just a couple. One certainly suspects that Taylor has read very few primary sources from Hitler and the Nazis, which in part explains his comment. But I suspect that there is a larger philosophical issue at stake here. Let me briefly define the logic undergirding his approach. Like Erich Voegelin, Taylor believes that there is such a thing as true Christianity, and given the way Hitler and the Nazis behaved, he concludes that they were not Christian, as he defines the term. This, of course, implies that there is a transcendental signifier such as true Christianity and

[3] Taylor (2007), *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 418.

that Taylor is in a privileged epistemological position to know what true Christianity is.

Postmodernists reject the idea of a transcendental signifier, so instead of saying that certain versions of Christianity qualify as true Christianity while others do not, they examine the logic of various Christianities and they treat each version as legitimate in its own right. In other words, they do not use one version of Christianity to debunk or delegitimize other versions. Rather, they seek to understand the logic governing each specific version of Christianity. Given her treatment of Christianity in *The Remains of the Day*, we could say that Prawer Jhabvala is a postmodernist. By having Darlington specifically read a religious passage from Chamberlain's book, Prawer Jhabvala suggests that Darlington internalizes the Christian idealist view of the materialist Jew, a view that necessitates not just the release of the Jewish maids, but also their deaths. To underscore this exterminationist theme in the film, Prawer Jhabvala has Miss Kenton, the very capable head housekeeper, tell Stevens that the maids could be sent back to Germany if they are unemployed, thus suggesting their likely deaths. If the reference to Chamberlain and the potential deportation of the Jews are significant additions to the film (neither appear in the novel), Kenton's particular defense of the maids is just as important. In the novel, Kenton defends the maids, claiming that dismissing them for being Jewish "would be simply—*wrong*."[4] In the film, however, she does not just say that it would be wrong; she specifies that it would be "a sin, as any sin ever was one."[5] The decision to use the religious discourse of sin brilliantly underscores Kenton's conception of Christianity. Christianity for her entails respect for all people irrespective of race or religion, so Darlington's action towards the Jews she considers anti-Christian, a sin. It would be a mistake at this point to think that the film is suggesting that Kenton has the right Christianity. The film does not take a stand one way or the other. Rather, it depicts the split in Christianity that made the Nazi extermination of Jews in Germany possible. In essence, what

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[4] Ishiguro (1988): 149. Ishiguro's emphasis.

[5] *The Remains of the Day*. Dir. James Ivory. Perf. Anthony Hopkins, Emma Thompson, James Fox, and Christopher Reeve. Burbank, Calif.: Columbia TriStar Home Video, 1994.

we see in Darlington and Kenton is the identical debate between Hitler and Lerchenfeld that I discussed in Chapter 7, and just as Hitler's Christian view of the Jew ultimately triumphed, so too does Darlington's, for the maids are removed from their posts.

Today, we are better able to understand and appreciate the degree to which Hitler and the Nazis considered themselves Christian precisely because of the postmodern approach of an astute thinker such as Prawer Jhabvala. Establishment intellectuals such as Taylor consistently misrepresent National Socialism not just because they subscribe to the traditional secularization hypothesis, but also because they use outdated models, which significantly distort our understanding of intellectual and political history. This is not to say that we must interpret Hitler and the Nazis as Christians, as I do in this book. My work and approach entail a significantly different approach. Those who use a transcendental signifier to define Hitler and the Nazis have frequently deployed a bizarre form of logic, which goes like this: Hitler and the Nazis were not truly Christian. Therefore, they were secular humanists. Therefore, they were anti-Christian atheists—Voegelin formulated this approach in 1938, as I have discussed in Chapter 6, and it has dominated the scholarly community until only recently and still resonates among the general population. When I ask people who have adopted this approach to supply evidence that Hitler or prominent Nazis considered themselves secularists, humanists, or atheists, the response is never based on what Hitler and the Nazis said about themselves or considered themselves to be. Rather, it is based on what Hitler and the Nazis are. Their implicit logic runs as follows: we can infer that they were secularists, humanists, and atheists because the way they behaved is in irreconcilable conflict with the idea of God and Christianity in particular. In essence, what has enabled so many to arrive at this conclusion is their conviction that, if someone does not subscribe to their version of Christianity, then they are not Christian at all, even if they claim to be so.

But if we follow Prawer Jhabvala, then we need to pose a phenomenological rather than an ontological question, which could be stated thus: how did Hitler and the Nazis understand and define themselves? It is possible, of course, that Hitler and the Nazis merely used Christianity in order to enact their political agenda. I reject this interpretation, for I actually believe that they were sincere Christians. But if someone wants to claim that Hitler

and the Nazis did not believe what they said, then they need, at the minimum, to cite and analyze the thousands of passages in which Hitler and the Nazis unambiguously declare themselves to be Christian, and then demonstrate precisely why we should not take them at their word. This, to my mind, would be a totally legitimate study, and I would certainly welcome it, even if it debunks some of what I have said and argued in this book.

But for now, it is my contention that if we start doing twentieth-century intellectual and political history through a phenomenological rather than an ontological lens, we will have to conclude that secularization theory has significantly distorted our understanding of intellectual and political history, and that the Holocaust is simply incomprehensible without understanding the specific version of Christianity that made Hitler and the Nazis possible.

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