

THE **DAMAGE** WE DO OURSELVES WHEN WE **DEMONIZE** OTHERS

OCCASION: How do I know when I should do a Thinksheet? I'm nudged to it, by my spirt and I hope God's, when a number of things converge-cohere-congeal. In the present case, three things: (1) A Jew's dare that I, on paper, says some nice things about Hitler. (When he made the dare, he deliberately knocked the restaurant table's vase of flowers to the floor, so intense was his rage as he said, "Don't you ever expect me to be rational about Hitler!") (2) As I write this, the W. German chancellor is meeting in NYC with Jewish leaders--a few days after requesting the resignation of the Bundestag's president for a Kristallnacht speech the latter had made only hours before to parliament. (3) Reflections on monomania, esp. the case of Herman Melville's Captain Ahab, to whom the safety of his ship and the lives of his crew meant nothing in comparison with his vengeful rage against MOBY DICK....So here I go on one more of my many Thinsheets on the psychology-pathology-theology of attention. I pray you to attend unto my point, stated in the Thinksheet's title. I leave it to you to reflect on the damage we do others when we put all the evil eggs in one basket, commit the ultimate moralistic crime against reason and thus also against hope. Ironic reflex: we deepen our evil by exonerating-divinizing ourselves.

1. I got to thank Hannah Arendt face to face for her to-become-famous phrase, vis-a-vis Nazi monster Adolf Eichmann, "the banality of evil." She was at his trial in Israel and was impressed with his ordinary, everyday, commonsensical rationality in the service of a monstrous paradigm. **Reason is a servant of paradigm**, a truth too sophisticated for the 18th-c. Enlightenment and for those today under the Enlightenment illusion. Germans are outstanding for clear thinking, and they were thinking clearly when, in both Germany & Austria, they voted 99% for Hitler (the electorate in both countries including Jews). Human beings can't think without assumptions, and the Bundestag president was right in saying that in that case the assumptions + the reasoning added up, though few saw it at the time, to public & private **criminality**.

2. Melville's mastery of psychology-pathology-theology (ie, in order, how we attend-&-think, how we can go sick in the head & heart, and how we make gods/demons after being ourselves made in the image of God) puts him in the uppermost tier of literati worthy of the attention of those whose central workworld concern is the human soul. Where better than to MOBY DICK could you turn to learn the roots & fruits of **misdefining the enemy**: "how large a forest can be set on fire by a tiny flame!" (Jas.35; the letter pleads that we "keep on paying attention" to "the perfect law that sets people free"; that, understanding that enmity & strife rise out of egocentric frustrations, you "resist the devil and he will flee from you, come near to God and he will come near to you"). Now hear Melville on Ahab's failure to resist the devil and draw near to God: "All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evils to crazy Ahab were visibly personified and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it." (Underlining mine.)

3. The Bundestag president didn't know what hit him. Let's call what hit him **the Moby Dick syndrome**. Because the Holocaust was a technologically unprecedented genocidal horror, the world's "rage and hate" has been concentrated on Adolf Hitler as Moby Dick; and some of this got transferred to the speaker when, trying to explain the thinking that produced Hitler, he seemed to be exculpating, though the full text of the speech showed he was doing the opposite. Daniel Schorr (NPR day before yesterday) said, "I am a Jew and the speaker was guilty of committing truth. He told the Germans what they still refuse to hear": Hitler was not an aberration, a demon who victimized us; no, he was one of us, he was us....The syndrome anguishes the earth--Cyprus, Belfast, S.Africa. But yesterday the PLO, accepting the UN resolutions creating the State of Israel, took the first step in dedemonizing Israel. One step away from **denial**, public & private roadblock against reality.