

SOME POSTMODERN EFFORTS TO REHALLOW HOLLOW MODERN LIFE:

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1. REGRESSION TO THE FOLK-MIND

Of all I've heard out of Bosnia since Serbia struck Croatia in 1990, nothing haunts me more than a Sarajevan's comment: "We (Serbs, Croats, Muslims) lived together almost unaware of historic differences, and then *this* happened." This Thinksheet is about this "this."

1 Reason enriches life, rationalism (reason's oppression of the nonrational) hollows it. Human nature can't tolerate a vacuum, so something hallowed pours into & fills the void. That something can be monstrously evil, as the intricately crafted, pagan-revival, Nazi **folk-mind**, *Volksbewusstsein* (national selfconsciousness) by blood-&-soil **consciousness-raising** (*Volkswerdung*, emergence & growth of national consciousness). This mythic body had a **spirit**, *Volksgeist* (the people-spirit, the German spirit (*deutscher Geist*) & priest of its cult (*Volksführer*, popular leader, demagogue), whose contagious fervor produced national **solidarity** (*Verbundenheit*), which by **folklore** (*Volkskunde*) rationalized the people, by the manipulation of **public opinion** (*Volksmeinung*), into a **race** (*Volksschlag*). The race concept exceeds national boundaries, so it was natural for the Nazis to claim sovereignty over the German-speaking **diaspora** (*Volksdeutsche*, all Germans living "abroad") &, in 1936, to seize the Rhineland. (At that point, the Nazi cancer could have been cured by immediate military action; but no military action was taken, & the cancer metastasized all over Europe.)....I have laid out the Nazi vocabulary as I heard it shortwave during WWII & as I've read it since. But I must add one more word, a distinctly Nazi term, *völkisch*, "pure German," necessarily negatively expressed as **antisemitism**.

The horrific fact is that Nazism was deeply satisfying because it consolidated human powers & needs both nonrational (*geistig*) & rational (*verständlich*). One of those needs is available enemies (not necessarily human beings), so there developed a fantastic-murderous hatred of unassimilables (Jews, gypsies, Nazism-rejecting Christians).

2 The **folk-mind** cannot assimilate challenges, active or passive, to its structural mythology. The Jewish, gypsy, & Christian folk-minds were indigestible in the Nazi gut. The modern mind, largely a product of German intellectual history, had not succeeded in demythologizing, hollowing out the soul of, any of these three --but Christianity was the most vulnerable, because (1) Christian scholars had developed modern intellectual disciplines (eg, lower [textual] & higher criticism of the Bible), (2) Christian leaders of church & state were trained in the German universities when the latter were captive to the modern mind, & (3) the German general populace was thinly Christian, its predispositions, including secondary antisemitism, available for Nazi manipulation.

3 Before I sketch the relevant German intellectual history, a note on "**secondary antisemitism**." By primary antisemitism I mean cultural resistance to Jews & their culture. It existed before Christianity. It exists where Christianity has no or little influence. And it has existed, & continues to exist, where Christianity has influence. It is a cultural phenomenon not primarily describable in religious terms. By secondary antisemitism I mean religious, mainly Christian & Muslim, resistance to Jews & their culture. (Eg, Muhammad was hard on Medina Jews who refused to convert to Islam as the completion of Abrahamic religion, as Jews were hard on Jews who did convert to Islam or Christianity, & Christians were hard on Jews who refused to convert to Christianity as the completion of Abrahamic religion.)

In Toledo when it was Spain's capital, Jews-Christians-Muslims lived together tolerantly, each group teaching its children its own angle on Abraham. After the Moors were expelled from the country, the Jews were exposed to Christian radicals' desire that Spain be more pronouncedly a Christian country (as now Israeli "settler" radicals preach Palestine for Jews only), & the Jews were expelled in 1492. Would Buddhists have been expelled? Probably not. Why not? Because Buddhist

existence, unlike Jewish existence, does not historically-religiously stand over against Christianity. Eg, early Christian literature contains nothing antiBuddhist, but its antisemitic rhetoric is an essential element in Christian scripture & the Christian religion. In the other direction, consider: Buddhists living among Christians need tell their children little against Christianity: Jews must tell their children that Christianity is essentially wrong, the resurrection a myth, & the incarnation blasphemous (all this not necessarily polemically, but by way of group self-definition). Christians always have & always will resent this jugular threat inherent in a Jewish presence among Christians. Some who continue to call themselves Christians no longer believe in the Christian distinctives & so have no grounds for secondary antisemitism: faithful Christians need to be taught that (1) the relation of Jewish & Christian existences is a mystery (Ro.9-11) not to be turned (as did the Nazis) into an ideology, (2) any primary or secondary prejudicial action against Jews is sinful, calling for repentance & reparation, (3) morally-ethically-politically Jews & Christians have more in common with each other than either has with any other group, & (4) Christians should (as in "Schindler's List") protect Jews against persecution.

4 Note on the **German intellectual history** behind-within Nazism: One has often heard the question "How could the Holocaust have happened in the most cultured nation on earth?" The answer is in the fourth word from the end of the question. The Nazis gave *Kultur* (culture, civilization) two perverse meanings, viz "folklore, race culture" & "decadent intellectualism" (including democracy). This was a choice of Rousseau & Nietzsche over against the rationalism of Socrates (who taught that truth is transhistorical, transcultural), the philosophical wing of the Renaissance, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke (who, however, preached reason in the service of passion). Rousseau absorbed & attacked the Enlightenment & so commenced a second renaissance (teaching that science [reason unlimited by human considerations] undermines virtue-&-thus-society)...Goethe (d.1832) wove together the rational-general-noumenal & the romantic-particular-phenomenal strands of the budding modern mind. The beginning of his classic, FAUST, has the protagonist struggling with the Greek to produce the best translation of Jn.1.1, "In the beginning was the....?" The Greek has *λόγος* *logos* "word," but he translates "feeling." That doesn't satisfy, so he ends up with "deed," which precedes word-feeling-knowledge (so G. converges action & theory, scholarship & commitment: freedom is created when action is given primacy over thought). This Goethean synthesis became possible as a continuation of the syntheses of Rousseau (d.1778) & Kant (d.1804), whose three Critiques illustrated, in addressing successively truth-beauty-goodness, his synthesis. Now, Schiller (d.1805) fathered the modern romantic-sentimental idea of "German culture," & this stream of intellectual consciousness led through Hegel (d.1831) & Nietzsche (d.1900, father of existentialism & phenomenology) & Max Weber's value-relativism (since Nietzsche, reason can't establish values) to Heidegger's (1) radical doubt of philosophy & science [cp. Hume] & (2) prostitution of philosophy to Hitler's political religion, Nazism, the culmination of Goethe's call to action with the highest development of the rational & romantic strands of "culture." This § is my answer to its opening question, "How could the Holocaust have happened in the most *cultured* nation on earth?"

Ancient pagan Greece is the mental homeland of the modern mind: Athens against Jerusalem (Judaism & Christianity). Antichristianism, as vicious as antisemitism, promulgates the lie that Nazism has a Christian base & therefore (!) Christians are responsible for the Holocaust. Problem: Those who attack this lie are accused of being antisemitic!

5 Ethnic consciousness, now called "**multiculturalism**," is more curse than blessing. In psychosociodynamic perspective, these movements are parallel: Nazism, the black "Nation of Islam," current academic black self-segregation, radical feminism, & world-wide tribal revivals (most conspicuously in black Africa). Worried about group fragmentation in the U.S.A., NEH is beginning, nation-wide, groups to discuss what we Americans have in common (What is an American?), our uniculturalism.

6 The early Christians called themselves "the third race [beyond Jews & Greeks]." What do we Christians have in common?