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The Holocaust Paradigm as Paradoxical Imperative in the Century of Anthropogenic Omnicide

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Prologue by Way of A Media Scandal

In November 2019, climate activist, Roger Hallam, in the course of an interview with the prestigious German newspaper, *Die Zeit*, sparked a public storm with remarks he made on the Holocaust.¹ Hallam, largely unknown on the wider public scene until the previous year, shot to prominence as co-founder and, to a critical degree, driving force, if not prophetic voice, behind Extinction Rebellion—XR—the grass-roots, non-violent direct action movement that, from 2018, has mounted global protests demanding that governments act with urgency and immediacy to avert the existential threat to humanity and bio-diversity caused by anthropogenic (human-induced) climate change.² Hallam's Holocaust comments, however, had XR groups in Germany, Britain, and elsewhere, rushing to disavow him. Hallam's fall from grace was swift and seemingly irreversible.

Interrogating what it was about what Hallam said to cause such offence is necessarily relevant to our discussion here. However, more importantly for this piece is the more searching question as to why Hallam felt it necessary to invoke the Holocaust at all, when otherwise speaking about climate change. On the first score, by Hallam's own account, he was unnecessarily drawn into a discussion by the interviewer about where the Holocaust sits in terms of genocides in history. His response at this point was spectacularly inept—the use of an expletive to suggest that the human scale of the Holocaust was comparable with other incidents of mass murder within the last 500 years being at the nub of the ensuing controversy.³ Hallam's strenuous efforts to admit to and apologize for his crass insensitivity, however, proved insufficient to assuage his detractors. Yet paradoxically, far from seeking to diminish its significance, Hallam had actually “referenced the Holocaust several times” during the course of the interview to underscore the much greater scale of, and governmental complicity in, the “global holocaust... already underway” as a consequence of “lethal levels of CO₂” being pumped into the atmosphere by “the Global North.”⁴ Nor were these remarks inconsistent with what Hallam had been arguing in written form. For instance, in *Common Sense for the 21st Century*, for which the *Die Zeit* interview was meant to herald its German publication, Hallam states:

A moral analysis might go like this: one recent scientific opinion stated that at 5C above the pre-industrial mean temperature, we are looking at an ecological system capable of sustaining just one billion people. That means 6–7 billion people will have died within the next generation or two. Even if this figure is wrong by 90%, that means 600 million people

¹ Kate Connolly and Matthew Taylor, “Extinction Rebellion Founder's Holocaust Remarks Spark Fury,” *Guardian*, November 20, 2019, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/20/extinction-rebellion-founders-holocaust-remarks-spark-fury>.

² Extinction Rebellion (website, n.d.), accessed December 1, 2021, <https://rebellion.global>.

³ “Extinction Rebellion: Co-Founder Apologises for Holocaust Remarks,” *BBC News*, November 21, 2019, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-50501941>.

⁴ Chris Baynes, “Extinction Rebellion Founder told he is ‘Not Welcome’ in Movement after Holocaust Comments,” *Independent*, November 21 2019, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/extinction-rebellion-founder-roger-hallam-holocaust-genocide-nazis-a9211781.html>.

face starvation and death in the next 40 years. This is 12 times worse than the death toll (civilians and soldiers) of World War Two and many times the death toll of every genocide known to history. It is 12 times worse than the horror of Nazism and Fascism in the Twentieth Century.⁵

To be sure, Hallam, notwithstanding his doctoral research, is not a Holocaust nor a genocide scholar while some, who are, on the one hand might legitimately take issue with his assumptions as to the historic scale of genocide fatalities and, on the other, his seeming elision of specifically Nazi-perpetrated Jewish suffering. Yet what cannot be gainsaid is that Hallam's public and written utterances have been both consistent and insistent in drawing an affective linkage between the failure of the international community to act to stop Hitler committing mass murder then, and its failure to prevent the perpetration of what he argues will be mass murder of an entirely greater order of magnitude now, and the immediate victims, to be sure, primarily peoples of the Global South but ultimately embracing all humanity. In short, Hallam has taken the Holocaust mantra of "never again" at face value in order to quite consciously mobilize moral outrage against the indifference, or worse, of criminal irresponsibility of political leaders who do nothing in the face of climate catastrophe.

This think-piece is not about Roger Hallam as such but rather seeks to explore what we here refer to as the Holocaust paradigm—more precisely, the way the historic reality of Nazi-led Jewish destruction has become embedded in late 20th and early 21st century Western culture—may or may not offer a guide as to how we confront the accelerating and overwhelming threat of self-destruction as a consequence of anthropogenic climate change. Our brief answer is paradoxically affirmative. There is a purposefulness in making the linkage as Hallam has done. To arrive at this conclusion, our aim is to interrogate something about the nature of the paradigm both of itself and in terms of its applicability to the climate emergency. Then, we will briefly restate the gravity of the latter in terms of our diminishing options for collective survival and societal well-being. Finally, we will suggest how elements of the paradigm might alert us to the potentiality for an exponential wave of crimes against humanity if national and international society persists in its systemic "business as usual" refusal to confront our existential crisis.

Objections and Caveats to the Argument

But first, let us start by raising some of the pertinent objections and caveats to this line of enquiry. "It is easier to feel, conceptualize, and narrate the immediate, spectacular violence of war or genocide than the glacial, silent, violence wrought by carbon emissions."⁶ Though this statement from an environmentally focused historian is certainly challengeable, it does rather throw into relief the problem of comparing the ostensibly (if inaccurately) creeping process of climate breakdown with anything quite as viscerally gut-wrenching as an Auschwitz or Treblinka.

Actually, Hallam, in his *Die Zeit* interview, offered an altogether more compelling historical thread connecting war and climate change by way of late 19th and early 20th century Belgian colonial mass murder in the Congo. The first cause of what the Congolese speak of as the *Lokeli*, "the overwhelming"—with an overall death toll through direct atrocity, starvation, and disease as high as 10 million people, half the region's population—lies in the voracious Western demand for natural rubber on the cusp of the age of the combustion engine.⁷ Add to this, an almost exact hundred years on, a series of overlapping resource wars

⁵ Roger Hallam, *Common Sense for the 21st Century: Only Nonviolent Rebellion Can Now Stop Climate Breakdown and Social Collapse* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2019), 14.

⁶ Chris Otter et al., "Roundtable: The Anthropocene in British History," *Journal of British Studies* 57, no. 3 (2018), 571.

⁷ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 233.

centered on eastern Congo, not least for control of tantalum, the rare but essential metal we commonly associate with making capacitors for mobile phones—this time with an estimated 5.4 million death toll, making it the single most devastating conflict since World War II⁸—and we might posit that the three-sided relationship between violence, Western rapacity, and the origins of catastrophic climate change, hardly requires Holocaust signposting. All the basic building blocks are instead available in an African, colonial and post-colonial, heart of darkness.

Moreover, if the potential scale of avoidable death in the high age of the Anthropocene is the primary issue at stake, then there is an even more obvious climate change parallel. When Daniel Ellsberg, after much effort, laid eyes, in spring 1961, on the top-secret Pentagon document estimating likely fatalities from a nuclear war, the approximate number stated was 600 million.⁹ But that was only on the basis of a US first strike on the Warsaw Pact, not a full-scale superpower nuclear exchange. Two decades later, scientists proceeded to factor in the effects of a post-exchange “nuclear winter,” turning the prospect of mega-genocide into omnicide. More recently, the relationship between nuclear Armageddon and climate catastrophe has been further reinforced by some earth scientists who contend that the most appropriate stratigraphical marker for the onset of the Anthropocene should be set at Trinity, the first July 1945 nuclear test, preceding Hiroshima and Nagasaki.¹⁰

So, the question might arise, if we have to make climate change comparisons with other historical events at all, why do we need the Holocaust when there are others with which the former, in causative terms, is more closely intermeshed? Peter Novick famously argued some two decades ago that the Holocaust was an entirely unsatisfactory benchmark by which to “learn lessons” about slavery, prejudice, or, for that matter, other genocides.¹¹ If we want to explore systemic abnegations of political responsibility, as they cross-relate to biospheric breakdown, the capitalist-driven, imperial urge to conquer, subjugate and gobble up peoples and their eco-systems in all hemispheres,¹² and then, to envisage, as did post-1945 nuclear planners, their total extermination, arguably offer far more coruscating insights. And if we wanted to take this a step further, to highlight how the boomerang effects of systemic dysfunction has runaway ecological and thus zoonotic consequences too, we need go no further than cross-reference climatic stress with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.¹³ True, it is more difficult to become outraged against a viral blob of ribonucleic acid than willful human perpetrators. By contrast, both the peace movement and Black Lives Matter, as heirs of earlier racial and social justice movements, have been equally empowered by way of a profound sense of shock and rage at what some human beings are capable of doing to other human beings. Yet on this score, in the first two decades of the 21st century, neither have had the same degree of association, or traction in the broader public sphere, as has the Holocaust.

The Holocaust Paradigm in its Various Formulations

It is not our purpose here to reprise how this has happened. It is enough to concur that it is not only treated in contemporary Western consciousness “as an embodiment of the most

⁸ Les Roberts, “Mortality in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Results from Five Mortality Studies” (New York: International Committee of the Rescue Committee, 2000).

⁹ Daniel Ellsberg, *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 1–3.

¹⁰ Jan Zalasiewicz et al., “When did the Anthropocene Begin? A Mid-Twentieth Century Boundary Level is Stratigraphically Optimal,” *Quaternary International* 383 (2015), 196–203.

¹¹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 12–15.

¹² See notably Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts, El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001).

¹³ Andreas Malm, *Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency: War Communism in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2020).

horrible and radical evil in modern history”¹⁴ but “a benchmark against which other events are judged”¹⁵ even to the point “where the destruction of European Jewry gradually has become the story of the destruction of life in general.”¹⁶ This “foundational past”¹⁷ that Western society has fashioned for itself in the last three decades thus holds the Holocaust as *the* moral compass for its own political and societal behavior as that too of the wider world.¹⁸ Not surprisingly then, it has also become “an echo chamber of contemporary anxiety, a ready symbol, often a symbol that circulates out of any planned control or deployment, embedded in the sites, cycles of events and language of our public discourse.”¹⁹ This, in turn, might explain why those who claim themselves as its gatekeepers have been so ready to cry anathema against those, including Hallam, charged with offending against its hallowed status.

However, this further problematizes the very issue of instrumental value that Hallam seeks to draw from the paradigm. After all, in its most orthodox mainstream rendering, the Holocaust is deemed incomparable to anything else. It is an event of “unique evil”²⁰ lending itself to a form of ritualized priestly incantation, even to the point, as Jeffrey Alexander has suggested, of turning it into a sacralized “trauma drama.”²¹ Making connections across to other events in this strictest of commemorative formulae—as arguably best exemplified by the Yad Vashem memorial museum in Israel—is neither solicited, nor urged as a basis for solidarity or empathy with today's powerless, let alone as a requirement for “real moral action.”²² Instead, the insistent requirement on ourselves as commemorants is to remember what was done to Jews and thus yet might be done—if we are not vigilant against antisemitism—to Jews *alone*.

To be sure, there is a more universalizing tendency, more familiarly associated with the Stockholm Forum initiative. This tendency, which takes Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) as its starting point, does seek to promote cosmopolitan values of “diversity and tolerance... a society free from prejudice and racism and in which all members have a sense of belonging.”²³ Even then, what is interesting about this more ostensibly empathetic direction of travel is the degree to which it is essentially top-down, certainly offering a pointer to what the “benign” state, founded on notions of “integration, citizenship and community engagement”²⁴ might

¹⁴ Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, “Introduction,” in *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 4; in turn referring to Dan Diner, *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

¹⁵ Angi Buettnner, *Holocaust Images and Picturing Catastrophe: The Cultural Politics of Seeing* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁷ Alon Confino, *Foundational Pasts: The Holocaust as Historical Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁸ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

¹⁹ Robert S. C. Gordon and Emiliano Perra, “Holocaust Intersections in the 21st Century: An Introduction,” in “Holocaust Intersections in the 21st Century,” ed. Robert S. C. Gordon and Emiliano Perra, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, 10 (2016), x, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/download?id=8223>.

²⁰ The Department for Education UK, *The National Curriculum in England: Framework Document*, July 2013, 210.

²¹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, “On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The ‘Holocaust’ from War Crime to Trauma Drama,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002), 45.

²² Amos Goldberg, “The ‘Jewish Narrative’ in the Yad Vashem Global Holocaust Museum,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 2 (2012), 204.

²³ Department of Education and Employment, *Holocaust Memorial Day: Remembering Genocides, Lessons for the Future, Education Pack* (London: Department of Education and Employment, 2000), 1.

²⁴ Quoted in Kara Critchell, “Remembering and Forgetting: The Holocaust in 21st Century Britain,” in “Holocaust Intersections in the 21st Century,” ed. Robert S. C. Gordon and Emiliano Perra, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, 10 (2016), 36, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/download?id=8223>.

be, but one, nevertheless, for all its nods at supranational ethics, is determined and curated according to the imperatives of the (powerful) nation-state. This is reflected, for instance, in the selectivity with which other pre-, or post-Holocaust genocides and instances of mass murder are, or are not, embraced within the pantheon of HMD celebration each year, as usually dependent on either ephemeral or ongoing foreign policy considerations. Similarly, the “rightness” of combatting contemporary wrongdoing may be intoned by way of uplifting personal stories of Holocaust resistance and rescue. Yet, here too the subliminal message is to encourage us, as HMD lay congregants, to affirm the moral high ground upon which our own contemporary society ostensibly stands, thereby deflecting from, or worse, acting as alibi for its *political* complicity in actual or structural violence.²⁵

The Holocaust paradigm thus, in its conservative but mainstream persona, offers a screen through which the public are encouraged to identify with an event of the most acute and exceptional past suffering and atrocity but minus any real requirement to act on this as if this were relatable to egregious injustices in the world we actually inhabit. On the contrary, the very “liturgy” of this priestly voice with its pathos,²⁶ melancholic, “quasi-sublime catharsis,”²⁷ solemn ceremony, often “sanctimonious” public speeches,²⁸ and, year on year, increasingly hollow iterations of “never again,” is little short of a recipe for reducing the public’s role in, or more importantly through it, to that of compliant “bystanders.” To be sure, as a public relations exercise—by way of seeking us to be “nice” and virtuous to one another—it may serve to buttress the public persona of the neo-liberal order. But set against the dysfunctional reality of that order as prime driver of ecological breakdown—and hence mass omniscidal violence—the paradigm in this form is more than simply inadequate. It could also be perceived as malignant.

So, is there a voice through which we might envisage the paradigm as neither priestly, passive nor redundant, but prophetic, active, and purposeful, that is, for an age of biospheric emergency? Hallam, amongst others, believes so. But that would require drawing on an alternative current of Holocaust thought, largely marginalized or diluted by the mainstream orthodoxy. Hannah Arendt wrote towards the end of her life: “the sad truth of the matter is that most evil is done by people who never made up their minds to be or do either evil or good.”²⁹ Need we be reminded that it was rarely, if ever, the normative state or its institutions, whether Axis, subjugated to, or belligerent with Nazi Germany, who actively resisted the Holocaust? People who did so almost invariably acted out of their own individual or collective volition, mostly from the grassroots and almost always against their own society’s hegemonic norms and wisdoms. It is this very reality that makes problematic today’s mainstream appropriation of such resisters into its celebratory canon. The alternative, active voice, by contrast, as applied by climate change resisters in the Hallam mode, would enlist those historic resisters not only as virtuous forbears, but their acts of resistance exemplars for how to drive a wedge into the inertia, the paralysis of non-doing, or, again, “thinking” Arendt, the “banality of evil,” which prevents contemporary Western society from confronting its own self-induced dystopia.³⁰

To be sure, the imminence of this dystopia, albeit on a shrinking timescale, is still at one small remove from most of us in the West, or, more broadly, Global North (indigenous, marginalized, and poor people most obviously excepted), the weight of biospheric

²⁵ Mark Levene, “Britain’s Holocaust Memorial Day: A Case of Post-Cold War Wish Fulfilment or Brazen Hypocrisy?,” *Human Rights Review* 7, no. 3 (2006), 34.

²⁶ Donald Bloxham, “Britain’s Holocaust Memorial Days: Reshaping the Past in the Service of the Present,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 21, no. 1–2 (2002), 47.

²⁷ Goldberg, *Jewish Narrative*, 205.

²⁸ Critchell, *Remembering*, 33, referring to a Frank Furedi newspaper article.

²⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1. *Thinking* (New York: Harcourt Books, 1977), 180.

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem; A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), for the classic study.

breakdown instead falling on peoples of the Global South. This, in itself, might underscore the lacuna in the orthodox version of the Holocaust paradigm, through its inability, unwillingness, or both, to draw out the bonds between Jewish (and other) genocides committed in a 20th century European and near-European arena, and those perpetrated in the colonial sphere. Granted, the blind spot has never been total. Arendt, for instance, may not have drawn a causal link but at least she brought European imperialism and antisemitism into the same orbit.³¹ Other more contemporary commentators, such as Michael Rothberg, have explored how liberationist movements in their decolonial struggles, as well as black civil rights activists closer to home, have not waited for a hegemonic Western cue to link their experiences with that of the Holocaust.³² Even so, Amos Goldberg has been right to lament how post-Holocaust and post-colonial discourses have rarely coincided.³³ Perhaps this may go some way to explain the seeming inability of the Holocaust paradigm mainstream to effectively highlight or censure the abject failure of Western governments to come to the aid of Jewish refugees as they fled Nazi Germany, and then Nazi Europe; instead, blocking off escape routes in the face of an emerging “final solution,” when there is such a glaring contemporary resonance in the failure of the hegemonic Global North—Western liberal states included—to protect the conditions of life in a Global South from a wholly more gargantuan refugee fate. Indeed, we might ironically borrow here from mainstream Holocaust discourse itself to note that intent is not required to charge culpability or complicity in such contemporary crimes against humanity. Complicity can be structurally as well as functionally built-in to an elite *modus operandi*, in this case founded in the way the vulnerable and exposed in the Global South have been doubly displaced, first by global capitalism, second by its even more far-reaching climate consequences.

To summarize the argument thus far, the Holocaust paradigm’s active voice is predicated on a human catastrophe that was preventable *before the event* but which liberal elites failed to halt, the historical memory of which offers due warning as to what will happen on a global scale if nothing *tangible* is done in the face of today’s clear and present danger. Certainly, then as now, a complicity of avoidance and inaction can be levelled against society at large. But if the nub of the failing then lay with a powerful liberal order’s impotence in the face of Hitler, what is at issue today is that order’s failure to confront the fact that its entire global system—as founded, above all, on corporate interests’ accelerated emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere—will lead to human catastrophe *tout ensemble*. There most certainly is a singular paradox in this latter instance in that the burning of fossil fuels, not to say intensive, livestock-centered, hence methane-producing agribusiness, are corporately touted and normatively treated as beneficial to human wellbeing—albeit willfully ignoring the structural, quotidian violence against the world’s poorest, who are dispossessed, made ill and hungry, psychically if not actually displaced, and prematurely die as a consequence.³⁴ Nevertheless, the conjuring trick involved is ultimately at all our expense. As the leading climate scientist, Michael Mann, puts it:

³¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Books, [1951] 1994). However, see Dan Stone, “Defending the Plural: Hannah Arendt and Genocide Studies,” *New Formations* 71 (2011), 53, for a cautious corrective on issues of linkage and continuity between colonial violence and the Holocaust in Arendt’s oeuvre. More recently, Dirk Moses has been more sceptical still of Arendt’s credentials on this score. See A. Dirk Moses, *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 405–416.

³² Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

³³ Goldberg, *Jewish Narrative*, 204–205.

³⁴ See Rebecca Ratcliffe, “‘This Place Used to be Green’: the Brutal Impact of Oil in the Niger Delta,” *Guardian*, December 6, 2019, accessed March 25, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/06/this-place-used-to-be-green-the-brutal-impact-of-oil-in-the-niger-delta> for the collapse of health, wellbeing, and longevity for the two million mostly fishing and farming communities in the oil polluted, ecologically devastated region of Bayelsa. It is just one example among a multitude.

The great tragedy of the climate crisis is that seven and a half billion people must pay the price—in the form of a degraded planet—so that a couple of dozen polluting interests can continue to make record profits. It is a great moral failing of our political system that we have allowed this to happen.³⁵

The active voice thus reaches back to the Holocaust in order to mobilize non-violent rebellion in the present to ensure that “our political system” is forced to act to prevent our contemporary moral failing *before it is too late*. But before we explore Holocaust-climate change linkages a little further, there is a missing piece in this jigsaw. Rhetorically put, are we really talking about global mass murder?

The Path to Biospheric Collapse

This essay is not about the science of anthropogenic climate change per se. But just as with Covid, lay people, myself included, will continue to ask the same, insistent question: how bad is it? For the more than thirty years now that earth scientists have been intensively plotting its trajectory and modelling potential outcomes, the fulcrum of the debate has revolved around how much increasing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions into the atmosphere above pre-industrial levels, CO₂ in particular, will push up temperatures beyond what is considered a “safe” limit and within which “civilization,” as we know it, can continue to “normatively” function.³⁶ However, we might note that just as with the Holocaust paradigm, climate science too, on the temperature rise issue, has its own orthodox, mainstream versus radical minority fault-line.

The more conventional wisdom—as framed through the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—seeks a hold of 1.5-degree temperature rise above pre-industrial levels or failing that, no higher than 2 degrees. The thinking, as reflected in ongoing UN-organized fora, most significantly the 2016 Paris International Agreement on Climate Change, is founded on calculations as to a global carbon budget still available before that 1.5- or 2-degree limit is irreversibly breached.³⁷ In other words, the implicit proposition is that a dramatic but nevertheless incremental curtailment in carbon and other emissions over coming decades to ‘net’ zero by 2050, can yet avert a complete systemic breakdown.

But putting to one side the highly vexed issue as to whether there is such a scientifically quantifiable thing as a safe—or alternatively dangerous—climate boundary (not to say the utter sophistry of ‘net’ zero pronouncements),³⁸ such orthodox prognostications have been seriously challenged by other cutting-edge researchers such as Kevin Anderson who have argued that failure to properly factor in the time-lag before pre-existing cumulative emissions—primarily from the Global North—kick into the atmosphere, will scupper any notional 2-degree limit even if it were possible to instantly turn off the entire fossil-fuel

³⁵ Quoted in Matthew Taylor and Jonathan Watts, “Revealed: The 20 Firms Behind a Third of All Carbon Emissions,” *Guardian*, October 9, 2019, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/09/revealed-20-firms-third-carbon-emissions>.

³⁶ See for one benchmark example, James Hansen et al., “Assessing ‘Dangerous Climate Change:’ Required Reduction of Carbon Emissions to Protect Young People, Future Generations and Nature.” *PLoS ONE* 8, no. 12 (2013), accessed December 1, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0081648>.

³⁷ Axel Dalman, “Carbon Budgets. Where are we Now?,” *Carbon Tracker Initiative* (blog), May 11, 2020, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://carbontracker.org/carbon-budgets-where-are-we-now/>, for recent update.

³⁸ Chris Shaw, “Dangerous Limits; Climate Change and Modernity,” in *History at the End of the World?: History, Climate Change and the Possibility of Closure*, ed. Mark Levene et al. (Penrith: Humanities Ebooks, 2010), 94–112; Teresa Anderson, “Net Zero: Good Slogan, Dodgy Target,” presentation for fourth session “Boiling Point, 4: The Big Issues in Climate Politics,” YouTube video, 00:18:36, uploaded October 8, 2020, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://youtu.be/wCogseRWja0>.

engine.³⁹ Indeed, moving away from a linear approach to one where the amplification effects from the feedback dynamics of the natural world provide a fuller picture of climate sensitivity, and the whole idea of being able to technocratically “manage” climate change rise while at the same time essentially carrying on a somehow near normal fossil fuel economy entirely, collapses in on itself. The awareness of this yet even bleaker reality has begun to seep into a more active wing of political thinking. For example, the drafters of the private members Climate Ecological and Emergency Bill, before the British parliament as of late 2020, assume that even if all Paris pledges were implemented, a *radicalized* derangement of biogeochemical cycles would lead to at least a 3 degrees temperature rise. As the Bill’s executive summary states:

... current policies will lead to around 3°C of warming by the end of the century—but it could easily be 4°C or more. These levels of global heating would open us up to unacceptable risks, including the loss of the Amazon rainforest, simultaneous failures of staple crops and multi-meter sea level rise. Many scientists believe 4°C would be incompatible with any reasonable characterisation of an organised, equitable and civilised global community.⁴⁰

Actually, even this sangfroid understatement may be a radical shortfall in what could be before us. The independent systems analyst, David Wasdell, for instance, who specializes in combining the various earth sub-system feedback mechanisms amplifying the effects of anthropogenic disturbances into a macro-picture, has recently revised an earlier, already grim forecast upwards to a “baked in” temperature something in the region of *10 degrees* above the pre-industrial level.⁴¹ Such a shift would be so off the geological scale that a mass extinction event, as at the end of the Permian period 251 million ago, when 95 per cent of then species on earth were wiped out, would be a dead certainty.⁴²

But whether it is the cautious, conservative IPCC modelers, or the radical dissenters whose scenarios ultimately prove more accurate, it should not require proficiency in the language of CO2 forcing, feedback loops, tipping points, or indeed rocket science, to agree with Greta Thunberg that “our world is on fire.”⁴³ A more arresting analogy still might be Shoshana Zuboff’s narrative of when her house was struck by lightning. In what she describes as a “powerful lesson in the comprehension-defying power of the unprecedented,” she recalls how she ran upstairs to close doors in order to protect the bedrooms from encroaching smoke damage only to be yanked out the front door by an arriving fire marshal

³⁹ Kevin Anderson and Alice Bows, “Beyond ‘Dangerous’ Climate Change: Emission Scenarios for a New World,” *Philosophical Transactions of The Royal Society* 369 no. 1934 (2011), 20–44.

⁴⁰ Zero Hour, Climate Ecological and Emergency Bill: Executive Summary. On the 4 degrees shift, see also Xiaoxin Wang et al., “Climate Change of 4C Global Warming above Pre-Industrial Levels,” *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences* 35, no. 7 (July 2019), 757–770.

⁴¹ Meridian Project, Annual Letter, December 2020 (private circulation); David Wasdell, “Climate Dynamics: Facing the Harsh Realities of Now,” *The World in Crisis*, September 2015, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://theworldincrisis.com/climate-dynamics-facing-the-harsh-realities-of-now/> for his previous 7.8 degree estimate.

⁴² Michael J. Benton and Richard J. Twitchett, “How to Kill (Almost) All Life: The End-Permian Extinction Event,” *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 18, no. 7 (2003), 358–385; Mark Lynas, *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), both of which link the Permian boundary extinction with a 6-degree temperature rise above present levels. Wasdell’s latest projection is 4 degrees *beyond* this worse-case scenario.

⁴³ Greta Thunberg, “‘Our House is on Fire,’ Greta Thunberg, 16, Urges Leaders to Act on Climate,” *Guardian*, January 25, 2019, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/25/our-house-is-on-fire-greta-thunberg16-urges-leaders-to-act-on-climate>.

as the house exploded in flames.⁴⁴ In the last few years we have all seen on our computer or TV screens the wild mega-fires in Amazonia, Siberia, California, southern Europe, perhaps, above all, in Australia. The “black summer” of 2019–2020 is estimated there to have incinerated, mutilated, or displaced some three billion *animals* in the process.⁴⁵ The word holocaust comes to mind. Yet, none of these sequences can any longer be treated as once in a lifetime blips, any more than can the accelerating range of hurricanes, typhoons, floods, or other extreme weather events. Nor can even air-conditioned-insulated city dwellers claim they have not experienced some aspect of climate change, even if it is simply rocketing summer temperatures. For those alert to the more far-reaching derangement, distant rumblings from rapidly heating Arctic and sub-Arctic regions in eco-system freefall, may lead them to voice the same dread as scientists who have been plotting permafrost retreat⁴⁶ and with it the potential mass release from below of millions of tons not just of carbon but altogether more toxic methane hydrates and nitrous oxide, the occasion of which could well herald a Permian-style mass extinction.

The climate emergency thus, is not simply another addition to a growing list of 21st century crises. It is the existential crisis of our time, the one that subsumes all others: a species survival matter, a life on earth matter. And indeed, its truly apocalyptic scale makes comparison with almost any other historical catastrophe, however overwhelming and compelling in its own terms, utterly inadequate. Even the Holocaust. Yet what is being argued here is that there is a paradoxical imperative in pursuing the historical relationship between the two, over and beyond the Hallamesque *cri de coeur* enjoining us to resistance. Certainly, the imperative only serves in terms of intra-human relationships. It has little or nothing to offer, at least not directly, to addressing, let alone healing the ecocidal relationship between ourselves and all other living organisms on this precious planet. Some other route, some other narrative on that score is needed “to change the story.”⁴⁷ But that does not discount nor reduce to nothing the historical thread between the human world that made the Holocaust and a human world in its twilight. Less than a hundred years apart, the system dysfunction is essentially the same, with the same proclivities to extreme violence built into it. However, the key to unravelling the probable trajectory of that violence is unlikely to lie in the shift across the biogeochemical threshold intimated in the previous paragraph. By that point it is case of game over. What matters is the intermediate phase, the one we currently inhabit, for that is where the human consequences of biospheric breakdown exponentially magnify, save for the possibility of the warning from the Hitlerian moment being heeded and acted upon.

Holocaust-Climate Change Interconnectivity

There is insufficient space here to fully develop the contours of this Holocaust-climate change interconnectivity. However, in this section we attempt to outline some of its most salient

⁴⁴ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (London: Profile Books, 2019), 12–13.

⁴⁵ World Wide Fund for Nature Australia, “Australia’s 2019–2020 Bushfires: The Wildlife Toll,” Interim Report, July 28, 2020, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.wwf.org.au/news/news/2020/3-billion-animals-impacted-by-australia-bushfire-crisis#gs.ubzkqn>. As I re-edited this article, in summer 2021, not only was the immediate news the devastating floods in Europe’s Low Countries and western Germany but the altogether even more extraordinary temperature spike to almost 50 degree Celsius in an otherwise gently temperate region of British Columbia. The fireborn incineration of the entire small town of Lytton was ephemerally reported worldwide, the heatwave mass death of over a billion aquatic animals, around the Salish sea, hardly at all. See Aila Slisco, “A Billion Seashore Animals Cooked Alive During Pacific Northwest Heat wave,” *Newsweek*, May 7, 2021, accessed December 1, <https://www.newsweek.com/billion-seashore-animals-cooked-alive-during-pacific-northwest-heat-wave-1606973>.

⁴⁶ See for example, Jannik Martens, et al., “Remobilization of Dormant Carbon from Siberian-Arctic Permafrost During Three Past Warming Events,” *Science Advances* 6, no. 42 (2020), accessed December 1, 2021, <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/6/42/eabb6546>.

⁴⁷ Donna J. Haraway, “Staying with the Trouble: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene,” in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*, ed. Jason W. Moore (Oakland: PM Press, 2016), 45.

features even if we begin with its most dramatic disjuncture. Climate change, in the intermediate term, is likely to have a twofold set of major impacts on entire human populations. Firstly, sustained intense heat, over and beyond killing people directly, is likely to lead to a breakdown of the parametric conditions that allow for cereal grasses to grow. Agriculture, in other words, will not continue to effectively function, at least not in large parts of the globe, radically destabilizing a relatively stable feature of the Holocene.⁴⁸ Secondly, as a consequence of particularly Greenland and Antarctic glacier melt, there is likely to be major sea level rise. How much will be determined by the rate of global warming. Nevertheless, recent studies, in line with worse-case IPCC reports, all confirm permanent salination and or inundation of deltaic and coastal regions, as well as many island archipelagos across the globe.⁴⁹

The first impact, magnified by freshwater scarcity, thus augurs mass starvation, the second, given that most human beings live in coastal regions, mass starvation *and* displacement. In a worse case (intermediate phase) scenario, the combined effects of these impacts could see a significant part of the species *homo sapiens*, to the tune of hundreds of millions of people, if not billions, on the move as environmental refugees. In the most immediate future, however, geography, as for instance presented in Christian Parenti's *Tropic of Chaos*,⁵⁰ plus the embedded, structurally unequal nature of a received, hegemonic world system, ensure that the worst effects will fall on the already poorest and most vulnerable, primarily though *not* exclusively in the Global South. The current situation thus bears no direct relationship or cross-over with the essentially First World, European phenomenon which was the Holocaust. But this would be to elide the historic significance of *the* event that mostly keenly illuminates the starkest realities of state-person relations on the one hand, the collective psychopathology and behavior of modern societal formations in extremis, on the other.

In a nutshell, we might narrow down the fundamental issue at stake here to what Giorgio Agamben has described as the distinction between the *bios* of the good life, a life of value, and one reduced to mere *zo'í*, bare life.⁵¹ In the contemporary context, starvation and or displacement through climate change offer variables to state erasure of the person as the way this might happen. Nevertheless, "the right to have rights," à la Arendt,⁵² and the deprivation thereof, by way of Agamben, return us to the most likely direction of human travel in this intermediate condition. Put otherwise, not so much a deranged nature, but rather radically deranged if still national, majoritarian-based polities operating through perpetual emergency powers; in other words, Schmittian states of exception as the ultimate arbiters of life or death.⁵³

The Nazi rise, accumulation and then instrumentalization of power on the European stage culminating in the Holocaust, provides our most germane historical touchstone. The briefest iteration should suffice. Worldwide conditions of acute economic distress, and downward spiraling life conditions for millions of ordinary people, facilitated the rise to power of a fringe, far-right, nationalist, overtly authoritarian and racist party in Germany, which both reflected back and then built upon already embedded popular, grass-roots anxieties about the nature and causes of the underlying malaise. National integrity and power

⁴⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009), 217–218.

⁴⁹ See most recently, Tom Slater et al., "Ice-Sheet Losses Track High-End Sea-Level Rise Projections," *Nature Climate Change* 10, no. 879–881 (2020), accessed December 1, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-020-0893-y>.

⁵⁰ Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence* (New York: Nation Books, 2011).

⁵¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 66–67, 182–183. For critical extension and development, see also Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

⁵² Arendt, *Origins*, chapter 9.

⁵³ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), chapter 1; Gabriella Slomp, *Carl Schmitt and the Politics of Hostility, Violence and Terror* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Alison Kesby, *The Right to have Rights: Citizenship, Humanity, and International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

were to be restored through a führer ruling by way of a permanent state of exception, the guarantee of his legitimacy, wisdom and purpose being that his actions would be on behalf of all true Germans, bar those excluded on grounds of racial, social, or genetic unworthiness. Discrimination against Jews, as the particular group charged with malevolent sabotage as well as racial contamination of the national mission, was by degrees ratcheted up into open, overt violence aimed at vomiting them out from body-politic and society.

In this pre-war period, a liberal, rules-based, Western-led, international system failed to respond robustly either to Nazi aggression against other states, or to the specificity of the growing Jewish refugee crisis. Nor did a totalitarian Soviet Union. Western state fears hinged on the relatively small numbers of Jewish refugees from greater Germany turning into a flood from neighboring east European states. This collective failure to agree on a rescue plan reached its nadir at the Evian conference, in summer 1938. As the Zionist leader, Chaim Weizmann, acidly summarized, the world had become divided “into two camps, one of countries expelling Jews, and the other of countries which did not admit them.”⁵⁴ The accuracy of this statement was put to the test soon afterwards when Poland passed a law effectively denationalizing German-resident Jews with Polish passports, to which the Nazis retaliated by deporting thousands of them to the Polish border. The subsequent no-mans-land at Zbąszyń, where the majority were dumped, became indicative of the reduction to nothingness that denial of citizenship entailed. International abandonment also paved the way for the Nazis—under the cover of ensuing war, and more precisely a no holds barred war of colonial expansion in the east—to “solve” Jewish, Roma, and other alleged population “problems” in the subjugated territories by unilateral and lethal method. Planned mass starvation of Slavic *Untermenschen* (sic.) and the evolving formulation of a continent-wide Jewish “final solution” by shooting, starvation, slave labor, and mass industrial-scale gassing, in turn engendered other Nazi aligned polities to organize and initiate their own removal-cum-extermination programs, not only against Jews but other unwanted “minority” peoples.⁵⁵

If this shorthand summary confirms that Hitlerism was at the extreme end of a spectrum of political violence and atrocity, looked at through a 21st century climate change prism, what is however significant is that it was not alone in devising policies to keep unwanted people out of states, vomit out those already in them, or failing either, disappearing them into the furthest reaches of nowhere. Synchronically, the Soviet system was genocidally deporting all manner of peoples into its Central Asian and Siberian “wastelands.”⁵⁶ On paper, if not in practice, the US too was researching grand projects of problematic population “resettlement”—European Jews again at the top of the list—in remote, far-flung places.⁵⁷ Nor, at the very time that it and its Western allies were sowing the embryonic seeds of the United Nations’ declaration on human rights, was it averse to agreeing to the wholesale eructation of millions of Germans and other peoples from central and eastern Europe. The notion that this could be done by some sort of intelligent and humane design, as urged by Winston Churchill to the British parliament in 1944, is belied by what actually took place in practice,⁵⁸ the fallacy being even more monumental and catastrophic when an imperial Britain, in retreat from the Indian subcontinent, hastily devised

⁵⁴ Quoted in S. Adler Rudel, “The Evian Conference and the Refugee Question,” *Leo Baeck Year Book* 13, no. 1 (1968), 236, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/leobaeck/13.1.235>.

⁵⁵ Mark Levene, *The Crisis of Genocide: Annihilation: The European Rimlands, 1939–1953*, vol II. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), chapters 3 and 4.

⁵⁶ Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003).

⁵⁷ Steve Usdin, “New Documents Reveal FDR’s Eugenic Project to ‘Resettle’ Jews during WWII,” *Tablet*, 30 April 30, 2018, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/m-project-franklin-delano-roosevelt-jews>.

⁵⁸ Matthew Frank, *Expelling the Germans: British Opinion and Post-1945 Population Transfer in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 75. More generally, see Pertti Ahonen et al., eds., *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and its Aftermath* (New York: Berg, 2008).

boundary lines to divide a newly minted India from a newly minted Pakistan. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions paid the ultimate price for being on the “wrong” side of the lines, while even more millions fled or were ethnically cleansed.⁵⁹

These aspects of what one might describe as a Holocaust hinterland do not sit comfortably within a Holocaust paradigm, at least not in its mainstream formulation. Yet, what they should forcefully remind us of is that the destruction of Nazism in 1945 did not remove the embedded dysfunctional underpinnings of a global system that enabled its most horrendous outcome in the first place. The normative basis for human existence and wellbeing, then, as now, continues to be grounded in the notion of rights bestowed through citizenship within a universally-accepted system of nation-states, each of whose sovereign writ and hence discharge of responsibilities to its citizens—its universe of obligation⁶⁰—is founded on an absolute territorial control and cohesion. The nation-state is equally understood as such by way of clearly defined, internationally recognized borders. Putting aside the small matter of whether a state fulfils its obligations equally across its citizen population, and the entirely greater sophistry of sovereignty within an international political economy where real power, then as now, is disposed of by a small handful of hegemonic players, any process or event that breaches the territorial boundaries of any given state is likely to render its citizens exposed and vulnerable. In worse-case scenarios, denial or loss of citizenship in the modern world renders the person, as Arendt clearly understood, and as Agamben pursued, rightless, nothingless, a subject for erasure.

Thus, with or without the actuality of Nazism, latent conditions for a reassertion of some variant of the same exist in the collision between the assumed monopoly of violence of the universalized nation-state to guarantee its integrity and borders on behalf of its “national” citizen cohort (as determined by itself), and the time-honored urge of *people*, as of other species, to move to some other safer place as worsening conditions, such as complete inundation, or an existential threat to life demand. We might wish to remind ourselves that in contemporary international law, a polity must have a defined territory to exist as a state and so enter into relations with other states.⁶¹ To restate the dialectic otherwise: there is a UN refugee convention but the condition of refugee in today’s world is entirely anomalous.

The Plight of Refugees

The last statement is not expressed as an abstraction. Whereas in 2010 the number of displaced people globally was estimated by UNHCR at 41 million, it has surged to today’s figure of close to 80 million; or, put another way, one per cent of the world’s population. Of these, 4.2 million are classed as “stateless.” Perhaps even more significantly, though UNHCR does not refer to environmental or climate refugees as such, it does acknowledge that “the interplay between climate, conflict, hunger, poverty and persecution”⁶² is responsible in 80 per cent of cases, nearly all in the Global South. Indeed, studies on internal displacement or refugeedom from war zones increasingly confirm a climate signature.⁶³ As the wheels come off the planetary train, we can expect exponentially escalating numbers of such displaced

⁵⁹ Ian Talbot, “The 1947 Partition of India,” in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 420, notes the estimated range for casualties between 200,000 and 2 million, with the “conventional” reckoning at one million deaths.

⁶⁰ Helen Fein, “Genocide: A Sociological Perspective,” *Current Sociology* 38, no. 1 (1990), 24.

⁶¹ Nick Mabey, *Delivering Climate Security, International Security Responses to a Climate Changed World, Whitehall Papers 69* (London: Routledge, Royal United Services Institute, 2008), 57.

⁶² United National High Commissioner for Refugees, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019,” (Copenhagen: UNHCR, Statistics and Demographics Section, 2020) 4, 6, and 56, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/be/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2020/07/Global-Trends-Report-2019.pdf>.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 12. For discrete studies see, for example, Colin P. Kelly et al., “Climate Change in the Fertile Crescent and Implications of the Recent Syrian Drought,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 11 (2015), 3241–3246. See also Marwa Daoudy, *The Origins of the Syrian Conflict: Climate Change and Human Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), for wider contextual analysis.

humanity—again disproportionately from the Global South—to become the most emphatic feature of the climate emergency. What this in turn infers is the creation of the most gigantic and extraordinary stress test for how human interactions, as normatively founded on the idea of immutable “national” space, can cope with not just people from other “national” spaces abandoning theirs to move to, across or within yours, but even as this same space environmentally degrades, desiccates, or is water-inundated.

Harbingers of how this dystopian near future may develop have been already signaled in the rise of contemporary nativism. Brexit Britain, Trump’s America, Bolsonaro’s Brazil, Modi’s India, plus a slew of increasingly strident, populist administrations, or would-be-ones, in Europe and elsewhere, have all found degrees of majoritarian support either in their hardly concealed xenophobia and desire to deny or disbar refugees and asylum seekers, again primarily from the Global South, or alternatively, through legislation and state enactment, implicitly or explicitly designed to enfeeble indigenous or other ethnic groups who do not fit their conception of the “authentic” ethno-national type.⁶⁴ A renewed acceptability of racist chauvinism, combined with what has been described as a hierarchic individualism,⁶⁵ usually expressed by those most aggrieved by a real or perceived loss of traditional socio-economic status in the face of globalization, provide a ready seedbed for others who claim to speak for a *sacro egoismo*. In a world of climate uncertainty and food shortages, one can envisage how these resentments might easily translate into a popular clamor to keep the “barbarians at the gate” through ever more draconian border controls, or by vomiting out excess “alien” mouths to feed.

In fact, though not widely reported in the world’s media, climate events are fueling these sorts of tendencies right now. In the wake of super-hurricane Dorian, for instance, which devastated the Bahamas in September 2019, an unelected but vocal “patriotic” group calling itself Operation Sovereign Bahamas, acted as goad to the Bahamian authorities to clear out Haitian shanty towns, especially from the most wrecked island of Great Abaco, and “repatriate” their inhabitants back to Haiti. Resonances from the 1930s, and its Zbąszyń-like destinations, are all too apparent. Like Jews then, Haitians today, though critical to the Bahamian economy, are anathematized as the lowest of the low: criminals, drug dealers, child traffickers, and, of course, *clandestins*. Usually lacking either passports or papers to “prove” their residence, and with no protection either for their Bahamian-born children, they have no “right to rights.” Nor is anybody elsewhere willing to either provide them with sanctuary or offer succor.⁶⁶ Back in 2007, in a report co-published by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, former CIA chief, R. James Woolsey, warned that on a much warmer planet “altruism and generosity would likely be blunted.”⁶⁷ Presumably he part had in mind the way, two years previously, the primarily white, comfortable suburbanites of New Orleans abandoned their mostly black, impoverished co-residents, as Hurricane Katrina overwhelmed the city’s levees.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Catherine Fieschi, *Populocracy: The Tyranny of Authenticity and the Rise of Populism* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing, 2019); Eirikur Bergmann, *Neo-Nationalism: The Rise of Nativist Populism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

⁶⁵ Josh Eagle, “Climate Change and the Confluence of Natural and Human History, A Lawyer’s Perspective,” in “Whose Anthropocene? Revisiting Dipesh Chakrabarty’s ‘Four Theses,’” ed. Robert Emmett and Thomas Lekan, *RCC Perspectives: Transformations in Environment and Society* 2 (2016), 25, accessed December 1, 2021, doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7421.

⁶⁶ See Sonia Shah, “First Came the Hurricane, Then Came the Campaign of Terror,” *The Nation*, September 22, 2020, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.thenation.com/article/environment/hurricane-bahamas-climate/>. Significantly Shah adumbrates serious efforts around 2015 to develop robust international frameworks “to manage climate-driven migration” but which, she notes, rapidly collapsed “amid the global rise of anti-migrant political movements.”

⁶⁷ Quoted in Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), 53.

⁶⁸ Esri, “Aftermath of Katrina: A Time of Environmental Racism,” accessed December 1, 2021, https://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2018/04/new_orleans_housing_racism_rep.html. URL provided may have been archived by service provider but was active during last access date.

What is even more alarming, however, is the way climate change is now creating opportunities to socially engineer whole groups of historically marginalized people out of the frame. As a further example, while Haitian “evacuees” (sic.) can be potentially numbered in their tens of thousands, the so-called Chars of Indian Assam are under the cosh in their potential millions. The Bengali speaking and mostly Muslim Chars take their name from the riverine islands of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, where they attempt to eke out a transient existence as subsistence farmers. Migrants into the region from British imperial times, their ecological niche has always been a fragile one, the Chars regularly washed away by seasonal floods, though much worsened in recent decades by the entirely throttling effect of more “efficient” dams, embankments and canals developed by their wealthier Assamese neighbors. Climate change’s “threat multiplier” effect comes through altogether more cataclysmic floods, not least as a consequence of Himalayan glacial melt. But the potential *coup de grace* for the Chars emanates not from this source, but through the federal government’s decisions, on the one hand, in 2019, to pass a Citizenship Amendment Bill, on the other, to create a National Register of Citizens. Both are seen as stratagems to delegitimize Muslims. But in the case of the latter, the onus on alleged “illegal immigrants” to present documents proving long-term residence represents a political tool to strip an estimated two million Chars of citizenship. Consequently, it has been seized upon by Assamese nationalists knowing that most do not have the documents or indeed have lost them in the floods.⁶⁹ The Chars thus face a not dissimilar prospect to the better-known case of the Rohingyas but with the Char trajectory largely dependent on the degree to which encroaching climate disaster offers politicians the excuse for mandating a state of siege by way of a supposed “general will.”⁷⁰

Societal fears about a vastly uncertain future might thus explain in part the popular basis for the “strong leader” taking effective action against terrifying hordes of dangerous outsiders, or, alternatively, supposedly parasitic insiders soiling the carpet of one’s beloved home. Trump’s wall may be the current apotheosis of this sort of *mentalité*, but as with the rise of Hitler, national intolerance is hardly the monopoly of the crowd. On the contrary, what Holocaust analysis reinforces is its structural embeddedness. Daniele Conversi asserts, “wherever nation-states have become hegemonic institutions, nationalism pervades governmental public policies.”⁷¹ To be sure, elites in their more unconsidered utterances can be entirely capable of inhabiting the wilder shores of lunacy. In January 2008, for instance, five of the most senior, retired NATO strategists and chiefs of staff issued a manifesto urging the Alliance to maintain its ongoing commitment to a nuclear first strike option, citing amongst other things the critical threat from “potential ‘environmental’ migration on a mass scale.”⁷² Yet a few months later, a distinguished group of military, state, and corporate policy makers representing leading industrialized countries, in a US think-tank, devised and filmed “war game” that envisaged a future climate-related mass environmental exodus from poor countries, and only the matter of immediate mass obliteration proved less remorseless. Their

⁶⁹ Chandrani Sinha et al., “The Indian Government is Trying to Erase the Citizenship of Millions. Climate Change Might Get There First,” *Vice*, October 4, 2019, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/a35npb/the-indian-government-is-trying-to-erase-the-citizenship-of-millions-climate-change-might-get-there-first>. For further background, see Mitul Baruah, “(Un)natural Disasters and the Role of the State in the Brahmaputra Valley, Assam,” in *Northeast India: A Place of Relations*, ed. Yasmin Saikia and Amit R. Baishya (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 68–90.

⁷⁰ Paradoxically, thousands of Rohingyas have recently been moved to a repeatedly cyclone-threatened char in the Bay of Bengal by the Bangladeshi authorities where their future remains vastly uncertain. See Saleh Norman, “Rohingya Refugees Live in Fear of Cyclones on Bangladesh Island,” *The Third Pole*, June 3, 2021, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.thethirdpole.net/en/climate/rohingya-refugees-fear-cyclones-bhashan-char-bangladesh/>.

⁷¹ Daniele Conversi, “The Ultimate Challenge: Nationalism and Climate Change,” *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 48, no. 4 (2020), 627.

⁷² Ian Traynor, “Pre-Emptive Nuclear Strike a Key Option, NATO Told,” *Guardian*, January 22, 2008, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jan/22/nato.nuclear>.

preferred solution: refugee repatriation by “non-coercive means,” even while failing to elucidate how this might be applied to islanders whose islands were already inundated.⁷³

Remarkably, the outcome of the 2008 Centre for a New American Security (CNAS) “game” is entirely consistent with the sort of strategic forward planning among the security apparatuses of every advanced country, certainly in the Western world.⁷⁴ Such planning goes back to at least the Pentagon report on climate change of 2004.⁷⁵ It is also confirmed in the billions of dollars that have been pumped into US and other advanced government research and development high-tech perimeter control system programs geared towards the “immobilization” of waves of border trespassers, long before Trump’s wall become iconic.⁷⁶

Further Dystopias

However, if the increasing lift, sophistication, and national (or intra-national as in the European Union) spend on surveillance, fences, minefields, and patrolling of the seas, offers some measure of the heightened anxiety and hence lengths to which the richest, most powerful, most fossil-fuel addicted polities in the 21st century world system will go to defend their sovereign “home” space entitlement against homeless, starving, and immiserated climate refugees, there is a further dark shadow from the Nazi past to be noted. Namely, blocking in unwanted people on the inside. This may take various forms. It may mean literal ghettoization with intercourse between different controlled zones heavily regulated by security forces plus social and economic access to the hegemonic space equally restricted or denied: Israeli-occupied Palestine an obvious exemplar.⁷⁷ It may mean turning the entire restricted space into a biopolitical experiment with the aim of genocidally reducing the population therein; for which Beijing’s campaign against Uighurs and other peoples in Xinjiang both hark back to the Nazi camps and equally represents a truly Orwellian foretaste of things to come.⁷⁸ And it may also infer keeping the reservoir of human cheap labor, that is, poor, marginalized, shanty-town, or more accurately mega-city slum inhabitants, isolated from their nationally bona-fide (sic.) mainstream neighbors, with the option, where the former might collectively dispute the received terms and conditions, that the state responds with the full force of its “counter-terrorist” arsenal. According to researchers in this field, the city is assumed, by US and other Western military think-tanks, to be the major terrain of future warfare, “urbicide” included.⁷⁹

If all this is dystopian enough, there is a further dimension still. On a planet in which, according to a late 2007 UN Environment Program, reports water, land, air, plants, animals, and fish stocks are all in “inexorable decline,”⁸⁰ it should be self-evident that not only will this

⁷³ The Centre for New American Security (CNAS), “War Game: Clout and Climate Change,” July 28–30, 2008, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.cnas.org/events/war-game-clout-and-climate-change>.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Ministry of Defence, “Global Strategic Trends, The Future Starts Today,” 6th ed. (London: Ministry of Defence, UK government, Oct 2018) accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-strategic-trends>. With thanks to Fiona Ranson for the reference.

⁷⁵ Dave Webb, “Thinking the Worst: The Pentagon Report,” in *Surviving Climate Change: The Struggle to Avert Global Catastrophe*, ed. David Cromwell and Mark Levene (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 59–81.

⁷⁶ Steve Wright, “Preparing for Mass Refugee Flows: The Corporate-Military Sector,” in *Surviving Climate Change: The Struggle to Avert Global Catastrophe*, ed. David Cromwell and Mark Levene (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 82–101; Carole Nagengast, “Inoculations of Evil in the U.S.-Mexican Border Region: Reflections on the Genocidal Potential of Symbolic Violence,” in *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide* ed. Alexander Laban Hinton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 325–347; Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2008), 302–304.

⁷⁷ Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).

⁷⁸ Sean R. Roberts, *The War on the Uighurs: China’s Internal Campaign against a Muslim Minority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

⁷⁹ Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006), 302–304; Stephen Graham, ed., *Cities, War and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

⁸⁰ Catherine Brahic, “Unsustainable Development ‘Puts Humanity at Risk,’” *New Scientist*, October 25, 2007, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn12834-unsustainable-development-puts-humanity-at-risk/>.

fall most calamitously on subsistence societies, but with the double whammy that powerful states will grab from these societies what remains of these precious items for themselves. In a remarkable leap towards linking the Holocaust to precisely these aspects of the world of climate change, Timothy Snyder's 2015 tome, *Black Earth*, argued that the driving force behind Hitler's *Lebensraum* agenda and subsequent onslaught on Poland and Russia was a fundamental anxiety about food scarcity leading to starvation. These same fears, proposed Snyder, could equally drive ecologically panicked states to make their own latter-day, colonial-style land grabs. Snyder went on to offer a small list of actual or likely contenders, China, Russia, Islamicist-inclined Middle Eastern regimes, corrupt African ones, included.⁸¹ China, correctly, is already far down this route, for example in Sudan—a country one might consider challenged to amply feed itself—leased to the tune of millions of acres, to provide Chinese—not Sudanese—food requirements. But then a great many other countries, some of which Snyder mentions, such as South Korea and United Arab Emirates, are also involved in this latter-day “scramble,” or more precisely rape of an already environmentally devastated, genocidally scarred Sudan, others of which, including Turkey and Jordan, he does not.⁸² South Korea's voracity elsewhere one might add, offers its own dark Nazi resonances. The thankfully Malagasy people-defeated efforts of the corporate giant Daewoo Logistics, in 2008, to buy up 1.3 million hectares of a vastly ecologically fragile Madagascar to feed people back home,⁸³ hardly more than the flip side of late 1930s and early 1940s German, Romanian, and Polish efforts to expel their excess Jewish “mouths” there.⁸⁴

What Snyder omits from his litany, however, is that some of the largest present and future envisaged land grabs at the expense of indigenous and peasant communities come from European Union and other Western polities working in collusion with weak, and/or corrupt governments in the Global South. And they do so fully legitimized under the terms of two decades or more of international climate change agreements that mandate the monocultural production and harvesting of plantation-style flex crops for biofuels as alternatives to fossil fuels.⁸⁵ Putting aside the entirely dubious value of this sort of activity as a mitigant to climate change, the vast encroachments that this entails on what are the planet's last residual commons, often involving massive deforestation, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, south-east Asia and central and south America, are nothing more than a case of taking the food out of the mouths of billions of poor peasants and pastoralists and forest and fisher communities who depend absolutely on these commons for their sheer existence, in order to enable rich people in the Global North to continue their unsustainable lifestyles and grotesquely excessive carbon footprints.⁸⁶ And the situation can only get worse as corporate transnationals make their last great bid for *more* bioenergy—now for supposed carbon capture

⁸¹ Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (London: Vintage Books, 2015), 327–334.

⁸² Louise Wise, “The Genocide-Ecocide Nexus in Sudan: Violent ‘Development’ and the Racial-Spatial Dynamics of (Neo)Colonial-Capitalist Extraction,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 23, no. 2 (2021), 189–211; Jörg Gertel et al., eds., *Disrupting Territories: Land, Commodification & Conflict in Sudan* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2014). For the wider picture, see Fred Pearce, *The Land Grabbers: The New Fight over Who Owns the Earth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

⁸³ Tany Grain, “The Daewoo-Madagascar Land Grab: Ten Years On,” Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt, 19 November 2018, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.cadtm.org/The-Daewoo-Madagascar-land-grab-Ten-years-on>.

⁸⁴ Magnus Brechtken, “*Madagaskar Für Die Juden: Antisemitische Idee und Politische Praxis, 1885–1945* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 1997), 32–52, 81–164.

⁸⁵ James Fairhead et al., “Green Grabbing; a New Appropriation of Nature?,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39, no. 2 (2012), 237–261; Saturnino M. Borrás Jr. et al., *Towards Understanding the Politics of Flex Crops and Commodities: Implications for Research and Policy Advocacy* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, Agrarian Justice Program, 2014).

⁸⁶ Tim Gore, “Confronting Carbon Inequality,” *Oxfam International*, September 21, 2020, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/confronting-carbon-inequality>.

(BECCS)—in order to ensure their pole position in the hegemon's drive towards the chimera of carbon 'net' zero.⁸⁷

We have almost come full circle from our starting point. Snyder argues that "understanding the Holocaust is our chance, perhaps our last one, to preserve humanity."⁸⁸ Putting aside the extravagance of the claim, his reading of the climate crisis and its cure through a Holocaust prism is to say the least problematic. The "totalitarian utopias" of the 20th century, and their colonial drive for land and resource, no more offer a grounding as to why we are here and now facing near-end game, any more than his proposition that the sort of science that gave us the "green revolution" (sic.) and an end to the prospect of hunger—certainly not for subsistence communities in the Global South—can offer us redemption from planetary catastrophe.⁸⁹

Indeed, the critical blind spot within Snyder's approach is the same one that is at the heart of the orthodox version of the Holocaust paradigm. The "us," a Western "us," may freely gaze at either catastrophe but always with the assumption that the "evil" is nothing to do with ourselves, or "our" history but something at distance; something that consequently can only retrospectively or contemporaneously be put to rights within the essentially humanitarian framework of our decent, rational, liberal order. Proposing instead that that order is anything but rational, that it is driven by predatory and entirely suicidal drives for growth, out of synch with the carrying capacity of the planet, not to say a disaster for intra-human relations and all life forms, is, to be sure, a rather difficult pill to swallow. Yet there is a connecting thread linking European past to climate-change present. It is to be found in the processes by which a small group of particularly aggressive "national" Western polities conquered, colonized, encompassed, and commodified the rest of the planet, set up a model for development founded on the idea of the nation-state on the one hand, hegemonic resource control, imperial or otherwise, on the other, and proceeded to strip the commons of everything, dispossessing, and dissolving the global ethnographic mosaic of subsistence societies who had been dependent on them.⁹⁰ And now we are reaching the culmination of that process: not a drawing back, nor rational retreat, but precisely more resource nationalism and carbon colonialism in order to ensure the Global North has control of what remains of the Global South, until such time, that is, that total collapse intervenes, yet in that interregnum with ever more weaponized and insurmountable barriers to keep the peoples of the Global South firmly outside the North's metropolitan boundaries. Caught in this preordained vice, great swathes of Global South peoples will find themselves, like Jewish refugees on the cusp of the "final solution," with nowhere to rest or go, no safe haven, nor sanctuary. A world-wide Zbąszyń. One does not have to call it genocide. But it is a recipe for mass murder all the same.

The warning from history should be self-evident. Three years on from Zbąszyń, after Hungarians and Romanians had dumped thousands of their unwanted, "stateless" (sic.) Jews across borders into a Nazi-occupied Ukrainian war zone, the SS responded by murdering them en masse. The Kamenets-Podolsk massacre in late August 1941 was the first five-figure slaughter of Jews in the course of Operation Barbarossa, and the first premeditated one involving men, women, and children.⁹¹ The rest is history as one might say. And certainly, by that point there was no stopping the killing.

⁸⁷ Sara Shaw et al., "A Leap in the Dark: The Dangers of Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS)," *Friends of the Earth International*, January 20, 2021, accessed December 1, 2021, https://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Friends-of-the-Earth-International_BECCS_English.pdf.

⁸⁸ Snyder, *Black Earth*, 342.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 341–342; Raz Segal, "The Modern State, the Question of Genocide and Holocaust Scholarship," *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, no. 1 (2018), 123–129, for a coruscating critique.

⁹⁰ See Damien Short, *Redefining Genocide: Settler Colonialism, Social Death and Ecocide* (London: Zed Books, 2016).

⁹¹ Emphasis added. See George Eisen and Tamás Stark, "The 1941 Galician Deportation and the Kamenets-Podolsky Massacre: A Prologue to the Hungarian Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27, no. 2 (2013), 207–241.

Today, there is no precise equivalent of Hitler or the Nazis. Indeed, in some sense the criminality of our current carbon-emitting trajectory towards global mass murder—over and above the specific, ongoing, murderous but indirectly climate-related range of conflicts, nearly all in the Global South—is diffuse. It would seem counter-intuitive, thus, to hold the urbane executives of the major fossil fuel transnationals criminally accountable for destroying the planet when all of us in the Global North are to greater or lesser extents complicit. And yet, it is above all the leaderships of these companies who have knowingly taken us on this path to hell. Knowingly, because they were from as early as 1959, among the very first to be aware of the death sentence extracting ever more fossil fuels would spell for ourselves and the planet.⁹² Knowingly, because they have poured millions of dollars annually into public relations campaigns denying and covering up that truth, and equally so in order “to delay, block, or control policies to tackle climate change”⁹³—the parallel here with Holocaust denial surely not requiring further elaboration. Knowingly, because in spite of all the scientific warnings that further exploitation of fossil fuel reserves must cease forthwith, they have continued “through an intricate plan of deception, of deceit, of manipulation”⁹⁴—not least by making spurious claims to billions of consumers that they are cleaning up their act—to getting yet more oil, gas, even coal out of the ground with full knowledge “that their use *as intended* will worsen the climate crisis,”⁹⁵ even as we pass all thresholds en route to runaway climate chaos. And knowingly too, in the way that “they systematically uphold violence, exploitation and impunity against black, brown, indigenous peoples and frontline communities” in order to achieve these goals.⁹⁶

Let there be no mistake or obfuscation on the political and societal consequences of this corporate-led trajectory. It must *necessarily* take human “civilization” as we know it—again, primarily meaning that as created and determined by the hegemonic Global North—into a final, twilight era of totalitarianism, whether fascist, eco-fascist, or otherwise. It will necessarily be so because, as ecological breakdown accelerates, the national body-politic will seek to protect its “own” as best it can, with its inevitable corollary, a majoritarian clamor for the state to “save our souls.” A state of exception thereby legitimized by popular acclaim, making of coronavirus clampdowns, on the one hand, vaccine nationalism on the other, the most feeble and ephemeral precedents, powerful states, doubtless led by the USA, will accelerate their efforts to hold climate breakdown at bay with gargantuan but ultimately pyrrhic geo-engineering projects. Meanwhile, with the drawbridge now firmly and irrevocably shut tight, the billions of poor and racially unwanted on the far side will have to sink or swim as best they can, but “never again” at the Global North’s expense. Geopolitically, this will inevitably lead to a breakdown of the international system, as weak states collapse in on themselves and the surviving still unsubmerged ones, more territorially defensive and belligerent than ever, turn—where they have them—to their nuclear arsenals as weapons of last resort.

⁹² Jonathan Watts et al., “Half a Century of Dither and Denial: A Climate Crisis Timeline,” *Guardian*, October 9, 2019, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2019/oct/09/half-century-dither-denial-climate-crisis-timeline>.

⁹³ Sandra Laville, “Top Oil Firms Spending Millions Lobbying to Block Climate Change Policies, Says Report,” *Guardian*, March 22, 2019, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/mar/22/top-oil-firms-spending-millions-lobbying-to-block-climate-change-policies-says-report>.

⁹⁴ Rachel Rose Jackson, “People not Polluters: Ending Corporate Capture at the UNFCCC,” presentation for fourth session “Boiling Point 4: The Big Issues in Climate Politics,” YouTube video, 00:33:35, uploaded 8 October 2020, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://youtu.be/wCogseRWja0>.

⁹⁵ Emphasis added. See Richard Heede, “Carbon Majors: Updates of Top Twenty Companies, 1965–2017,” *Climate Accountability Institute* (Press Release), October 9, 2019, accessed December 1, 2021, <http://climateaccountability.org/pdf/CAI%20PressRelease%20Top20%20Oct19.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0QiwIS0txOkU3s9z3IAxMlZfVrHtFmUcliDDT6wV0308uj6ioBAuRbw>.

⁹⁶ Jackson, *People not Polluters*.

Conclusion

And so, finally, we have arrived at our paradoxical imperative for the century of anthropogenic omnicide. Snyder in this respect offers valuable insight. What Hitler loathed above all else about the Jews was not their supposed racial worthlessness, it was what they represented in terms of worldview. In complete antithesis to his own, as founded on a perpetually violent, zero-sum, social Darwinian struggle for existence, Jewish universalism, or as Saul Friedlander might put it, “the Jewish spirit” involved a moral appreciation of *all* human worth.⁹⁷ Humans beings thus are not simply created in the same image, but to destroy a human life is to desecrate God’s holiness in the world.⁹⁸ Thus, the Judaic injunction of *piku’ah nefesh*, to save life at all costs, is necessarily an active one. So too are notions of empathy, compassion, loving-kindness, all of which feed into social justice. It is no accident that love for the stranger is mentioned thirty-six times in the Old Testament.⁹⁹ To work for social justice with the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized, the asylum seeker and refugee, in this sense is integral to how we heal a broken world and restore it to its harmony.¹⁰⁰ But to do so in the Jewish tradition requires one other critical, active, insistently prophetic ingredient: to speak truth to power.

Hitler sought to erase the Jews not only because they were Jews but because communally, they were bearers of the Judaic message. The value of the Holocaust paradigm in the here and now must have as its starting point the remembrance of what can happen to whole peoples when “radical evil” arises. But its value is specious if it simply ends up as a rhetorical device to bolster what in reality is an abnegation of responsibility by those who could have done something about it. That is what happened when the supposedly great and good met at Evian in 1938 to resolve the Jewish refugee crisis and then did precisely nothing. The failing would prove all the more egregious and calamitous at the Bermuda conference in 1943. Faced today with an exponentially far greater threat “and after years of orchestrated neglect verging on censorship”¹⁰¹ the obligation on international leaders to act on climate change is beyond urgent. True, many are now lining up to make all the right noises. But as in 1938, as in 1943, the gap between rhetoric and genuine concerted action amounts to a gaping chasm. Truth to power demands that governments must recognize their own complicity in this signal failing of globally calamitous proportions. Truth to power demands not fine words but systemic change—and with it a rapid foreclosure on the fossil fuel industries, beginning with the hundreds of billions of dollars gifted to them annually in government subsidies, which are at the heart of today’s biosphere-destroying radical evil.¹⁰² Truth to power speaking through the people, and for the people, demands “never again” will we allow ourselves to be bystanders as the hubris of the economically and politically powerful take us hurtling towards planetary nemesis.¹⁰³ To break with the path of this inevitable trajectory demands the Holocaust paradigm in active, purposeful mode. It is effectively the same thing as the Judaic prophetic voice. In 2018, when Extinction Rebellion was co-founded by Roger Hallam to call out government inaction on

⁹⁷ Snyder, *Black Earth*, 4–6; Saul Friedlander, “On the Possibility of the Holocaust: An Approach to a Historical Synthesis,” in *The Holocaust as Historical Experience: Essays and a Discussion*, ed. Yehuda Bauer and Nathan Rotenstreich (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 2.

⁹⁸ Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 37a.

⁹⁹ Talmud, *Bava M’tzia*, 59b.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Lerner, *Revolutionary Love: A Political Manifesto to Heal and Transform the World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), for an encapsulation of these values, as practice.

¹⁰¹ Conversi, *Ultimate Challenge*, 625.

¹⁰² Anna Geddes et al., “Doubling Back and Doubling Down: G20 Scorecard on Fossil Fuel Funding,” (Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development, November 2020), accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.iisd.org/publications/g20-scorecard>.

¹⁰³ Alastair McIntosh, *Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008), see esp. Chapter 5, “Pride and Ecocide,” for climate change hubris through the lens of deep history.

climate change and to demand, through nonviolent direct action, that they change course, its first guiding principle was “to tell the truth and to act as if the truth is real.”¹⁰⁴

Coda

This piece was written in the months leading up to COP 26, the international summit on Climate Change held in Glasgow in November 2021. Its result confirms that the international community is as systemically incapable and unwilling to act to halt catastrophic climate change as it was equally incapable and unwilling, in the lead up to Jewish catastrophe, to act to halt Hitler's drive to mass murder.

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¹⁰⁴ Extinction Rebellion, Facebook post, uploaded August 18, 2020, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/ExtinctionRebellion/posts/659003531382425>.

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