

The Atom Bomb and the Sacred

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Hiroshima, Aug.6, 1945

How can
Satan
cast out
Satan?

Albert Camus,
L'Etranger, 1942

William
Golding, *The
Lord of the
Flies*, 1954

How can Satan cast out Satan?



Jesus responds to scribes who accuse him of expelling Satan by Beelzebub, the prince of demons:

“How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, it cannot be maintained. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot endure and is finished.” [Mark 3: 23-26]



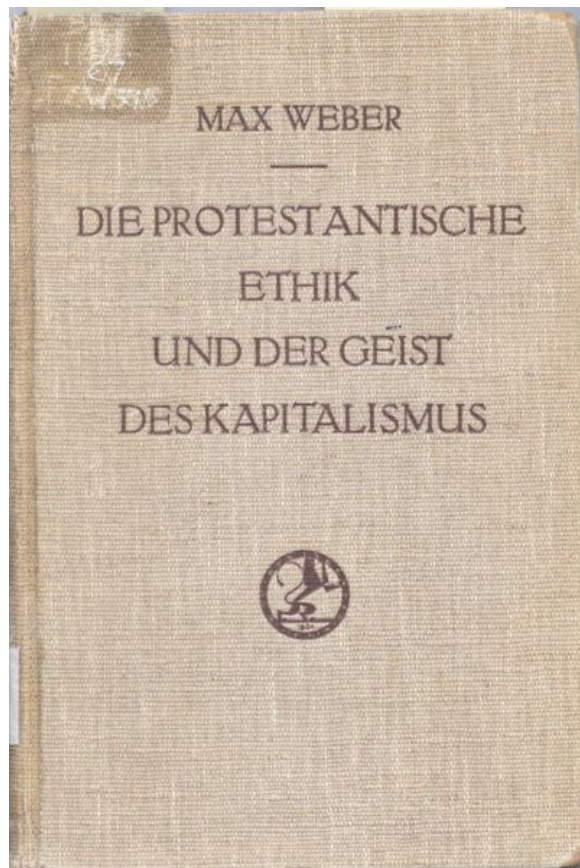
Hiroshima, Aug.6, 1945

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Lord of the
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Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1904-05



Entzauberung der Welt

= Dis-enchantment of the world

= Desacralization of the world

Max Weber (1854-1920)

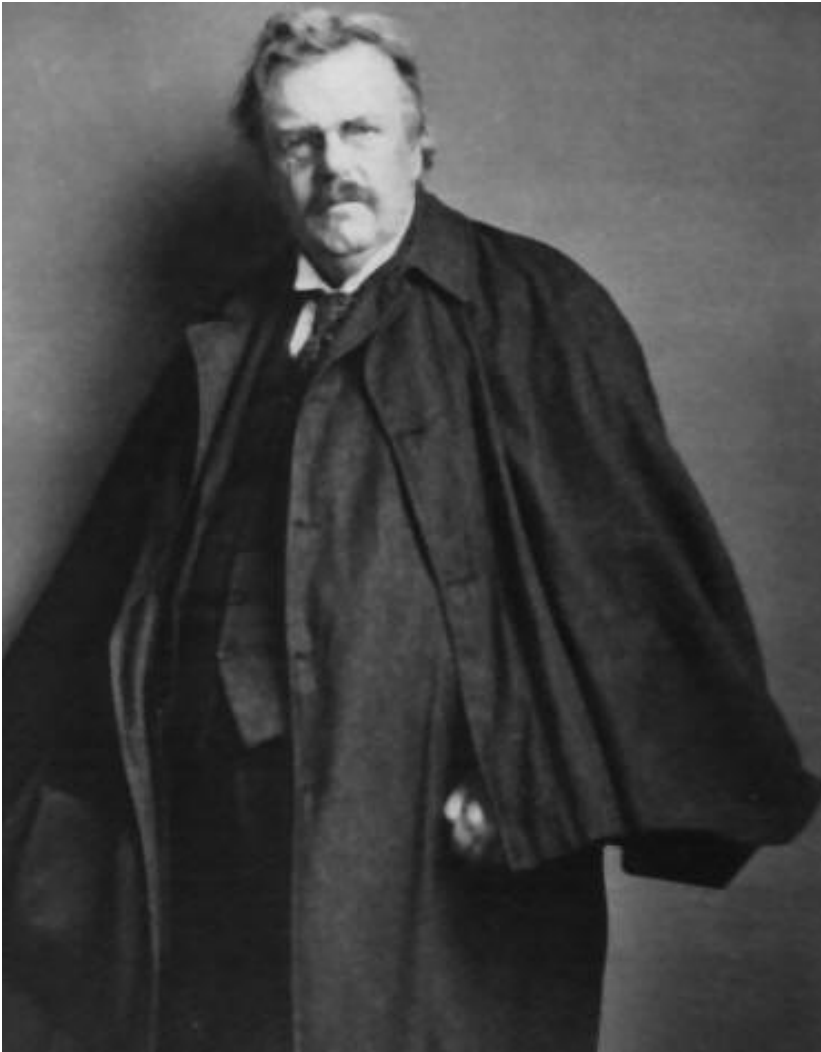
Christianity is
the religion
that puts an
end to
religions.



Fighting to be the victim



- **Nietzsche**: Christianity is a morality for the slaves.
- **G.K. Chesterton**: "The modern world is full of Christian ideas ... gone berserk."
- **Sacrifice** = Self-sacrifice.



“The modern world
is full of
Christian ideas ...
gone berserk.”

G. K. Chesterton

« We are planning to carry out a Hiroshima against America. »



Osama bin Laden, August 10, 2000

February 5, 2002, ABC

- **Reporter:** « What was your role in those terrorist attacks? »
- **Bin Laden:** « America has made numerous accusations against us and many other Muslims around the world. Its charge that we are carrying out acts of terrorism is unwarranted [...] If killing those who kill our sons is terrorism, then let history be witness that we are terrorists. [...] We kill the kings of the infidels, kings of the crusaders and civilian infidels in exchange for those of our children they kill. **This is permissible in Islamic law and logically.** »
- **Reporter:** « So what you are saying is that this is a type of **reciprocal** treatment. They kill our innocents, so we kill their innocents? »
- **Bin Laden:** « So we kill their innocents, and I say **it is permissible in Islamic law and logically.** »

Did 9/11 mark the end of victimary ideology?

« Just as the Holocaust inaugurated the postmodern era by making **victimary resentment** the preeminent criterion of political change, September 11 ended it by demonstrating the horrors such resentment can produce. [...]

Does the end of victimary thinking mean that we should no longer seek justice? Of course not. But it does mean that **justice cannot be sought simply by "taking the side of the victim."** »

Eric Gans, "Window of opportunity", *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*, 20 October 2001.

Günther *Anders*

with Hannah Arendt



Günther Anders
Hiroshima
ist
überall

Tagebuch aus
Hiroshima und Nagasaki
Briefwechsel
mit dem Hiroshima-Piloten
Claude Eatherly
Rede über
die drei Weltkriege

Becksche Reihe

Blindness to the Apocalypse

"When Mrs. Glü peered down from the highest lookout tower, her son appeared in the street, like a tiny little toy. She recognized him by the color of his coat. The next moment a toy truck hit that little toy.

But that event of a minute ago was no more than an unreal, brief accident, involving a broken toy. 'I don't want to come down!' she screamed, resisting fiercely as she was being led down the stairway. 'I don't want to go down! I'll go crazy down there!'"

Günther Anders, *Der Blick vom Turm*, 1932



Günther Anders,

*Hiroshima ist
überall*, 1982

« As the world
becomes apocalyptic,
it presents itself to us
as a paradise
inhabited by criminals
without wickedness
and by victims without
hatred. »

**The invisibility of evil
and our blindness to
the Apocalypse.**

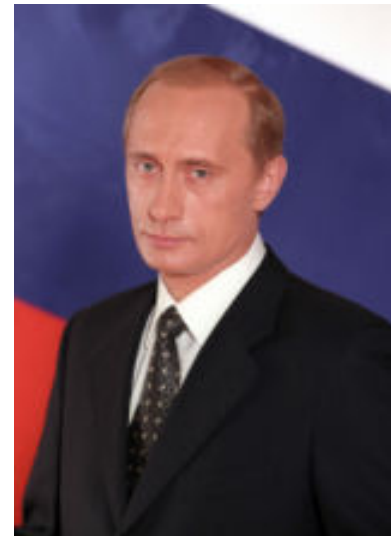
Necessary Evil

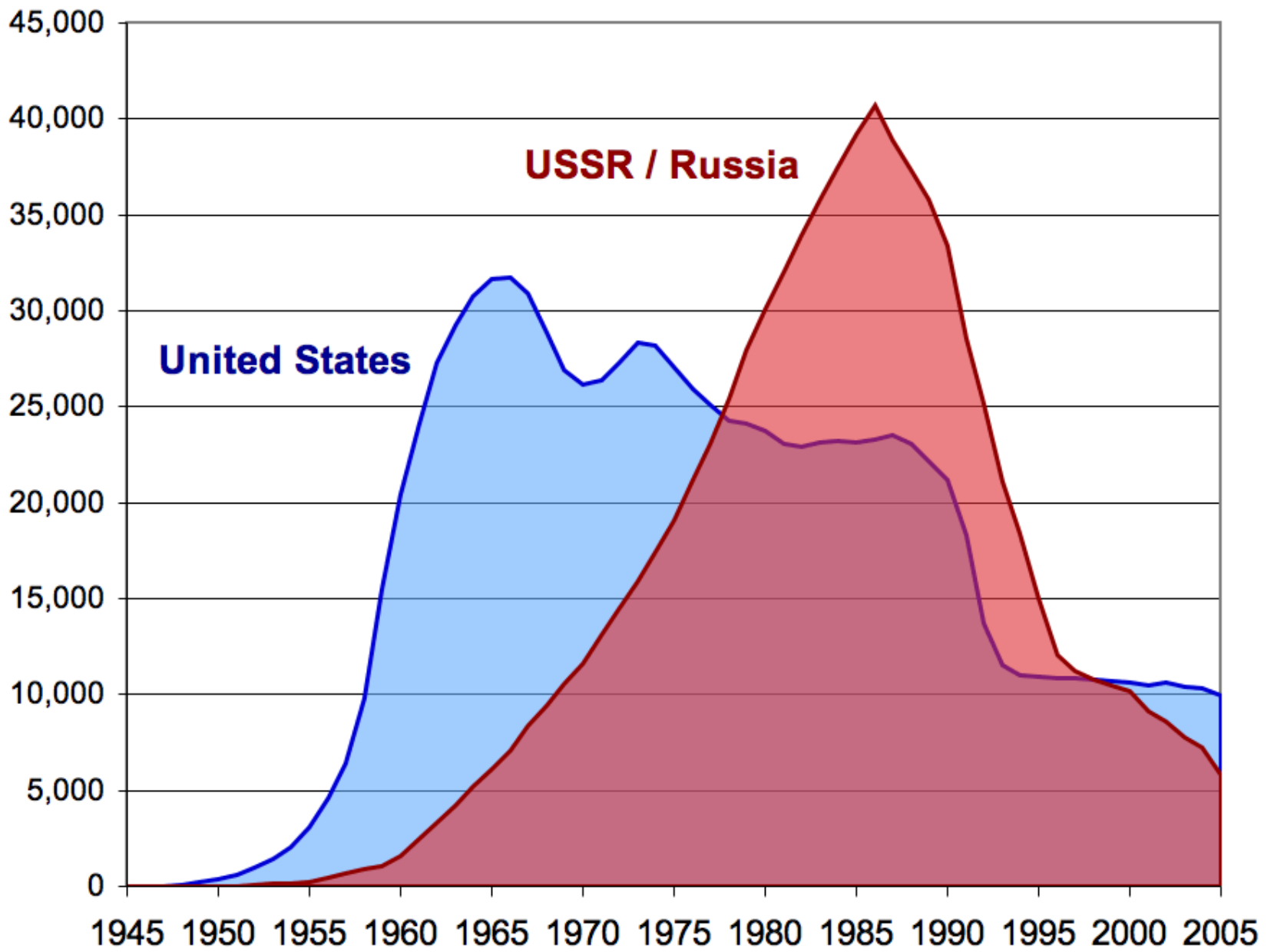


Bill Clinton to Vladimir Putin, Moscow, June 6, 2000

The anti-missile shield that the US is planning on building will be thick enough to stop ballistic missiles launched by rogue states or terrorist groups, but thin enough to be easily penetrated by *your* missiles.

Don't worry. The shield will not prevent you from being able to destroy America if you had to.





US and USSR nuclear stockpiles

Nuclear Arsenals 1945-2002

Année	U.S.A	Russie	G-B	France	Chine	Total
1945	6	-	-	-	-	6
1949	235	1	-	-	-	236
1953	1.436	120	1	-	-	1.557
1955	3.057	200	10	-	-	3.267
1960	20.434	1.605	30	-	-	22.069
1964	30.751	5.221	310	4	1	36.287
1966	31.700	7.089	270	20	36	39.115
1970	26.119	11.643	280	36	75	38.153
1975	27.052	19.055	350	188	185	46.830
1980	23.764	30.062	350	250	280	54.706
1986	23.254	40.723	300	355	425	65.057
1990	21.211	33.417	300	505	430	55.863
1995	10.953	14.978	300	500	400	27.131
2000	10.615	10.201	185	470	400	21.871
2002	10.600	8.600	200	350	400	20.150

Source: Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, November/ December 2002

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Robert Corio, TIME MAGAZINE

"SPLENDID! A MASTERPIECE!"

Roger Iber, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

(BEST DIRECTOR)
DGA AWARD NOMINEE

(BEST EDITING)
ACE AWARD NOMINEE

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Robert S. McNamara. A whole new story.

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General Curtis LeMay (1906-1990)



Errol Morris: "Didn't nuclear deterrence protect us against nuclear holocaust?"



We lucked
out !

Robert McNamara

**“A guy called Vasili Arkhipov
saved the world.”**

October 26, 1962



How the Devil can MAD work?

- The deterrent threat is **not credible**.
- Perfect deterrence is **self-defeating**.
 - *Qualitative Analysis*: The success of ordinary (e.g. legal) deterrence is dependent on its failure. However, "Nuclear deterrence is the only public arrangement that is a total failure if it is successful only 99.9 percent of the time." [Leo Wieseltier]
 - *Logical Analysis*:
 - (1) In order to be successful, nuclear deterrence must be absolutely successful;
 - (2) If it were absolutely successful, nuclear deterrence would be a total failure.

Ethics of MAD

The Problem of Immoral Threats

- p = "kill 60 millions of innocent people."
- (1) *It is right to intend to p*
Consequentialist argument, almost unavoidable when the stakes are high.
- (2) *It is wrong to p*
Deep-seated moral intuition.
- (3) *If it is wrong to x, then it is wrong to intend to x, for all x*
- Uncontroversial, albeit non-consequentialist, tenet of moral theory.

The Immorality of Nuclear Deterrence

John Bennett: "How can a nation live with its conscience, and know that it is preparing to kill twenty million children in another nation if the worst should come to the worst?"

Ramsey: "Whatever is wrong to do is wrong to threaten, if the latter means 'mean to do'. If counter-population warfare is murder, then counter-population deterrent threats are murderous."

Ethical Way Out?

- The intention to retaliate is merely *conditional*.
- ==> The moral paradox does not disappear.

- However, the intention to retaliate is not conditional in the ordinary sense of the word. Our nuclear arsenal is not there to liquidate 60 millions of innocent lives, it is there to make it so that the conditions that would lead us to liquidate 60 millions of innocent lives will **never** obtain.

- ==> The intention to retaliate is *self-stultifying* [Gregory Kavka].

- ==> "So, you will **never** press the button?" The ethical problem is solved at the cost of the inefficiency of nuclear deterrence.

Moral Luck

« If I had lost the war, I would have been tried as a war criminal. »

General Curtis LeMay



Existential Deterrence

Getting Rid of Intentions, Abandoning Strategy

The kind of rationality at work here is not a calculating rationality, but rather the kind of rationality in which the agent contemplates the abyss and simply decides never to get too close to the edge.

David Lewis: "You don't tangle with tigers - it's that simple."

Ramsey: "[Nuclear weapons] may be used either against strategic forces or against centers of population. [...] That means that *apart from intention, their capacity to deter cannot be removed from them.* [...] No matter how often we declare, and quite sincerely declare, that our targets are an enemy's forces, *he can never be quite certain that in the fury or the fog of war his cities may not be destroyed.*"

Bernard Brodie: "We do not need to threaten that we will use [nuclear weapons] in case of attack. We do not need to threaten anything. *Their being there is quite enough.*"

Existential Deterrence



"You don't tangle
with tigers - it's
that simple."

David K. Lewis

How Existential Deterrence works

"It is a curious paradox of our time that one of the foremost factors making deterrence really work and work well is the lurking fear that in some massive confrontation crisis it may fail. Under these circumstances **one does not tempt fate.**"

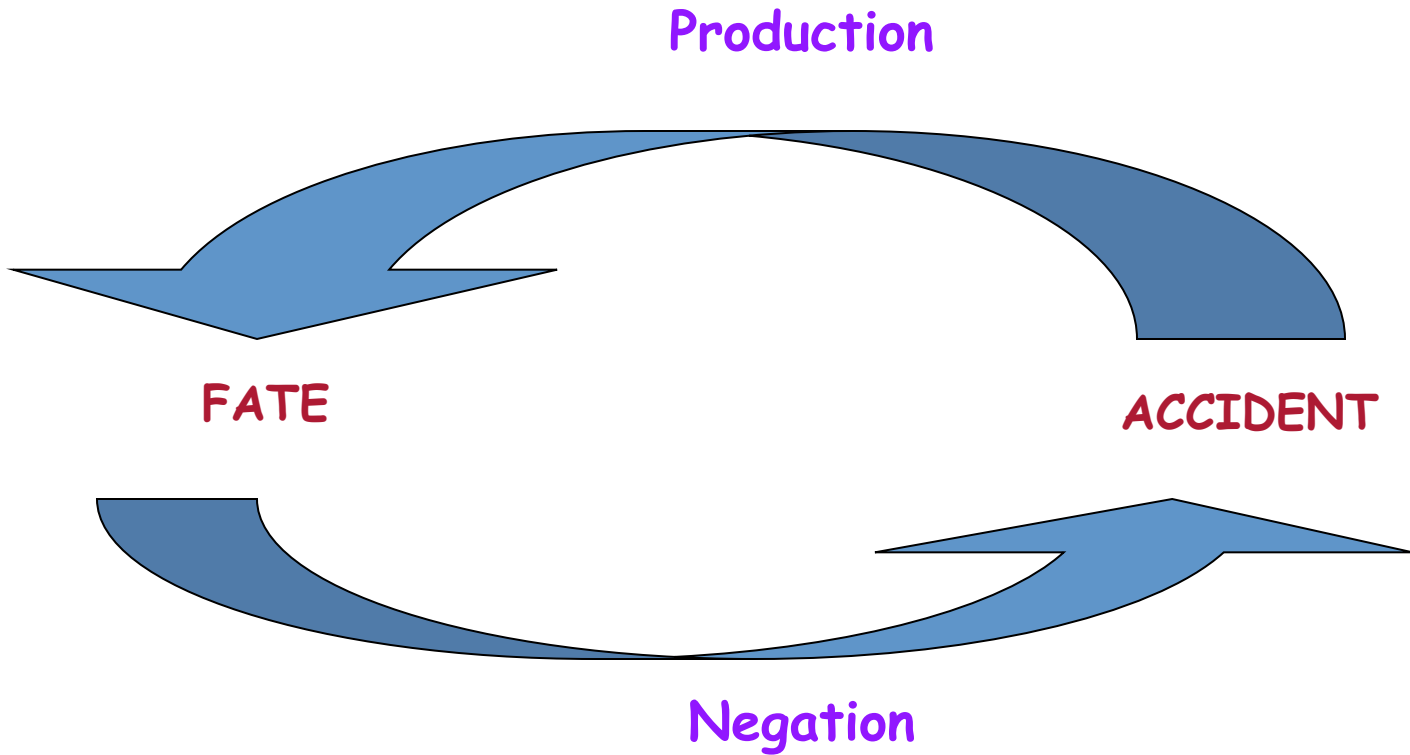
Bernard Brodie, 1973

"The future is inevitable,
but it may not occur."



"El porvenir es
inevitable,
pero puede no
acontecer."

Jorge Luis Borges,
La Creación y P. H. Goss



Accident [Chance] as the *Supplement* of Fate [Necessity]

Prophecy of Doom and the Tragic

The metaphysics that must serve as a foundation for prudence adapted to the time of catastrophes consists in *projecting oneself* into a time that follows the catastrophe, and in seeing it retrospectively as an event *at once necessary and accidental*.



Oedipus

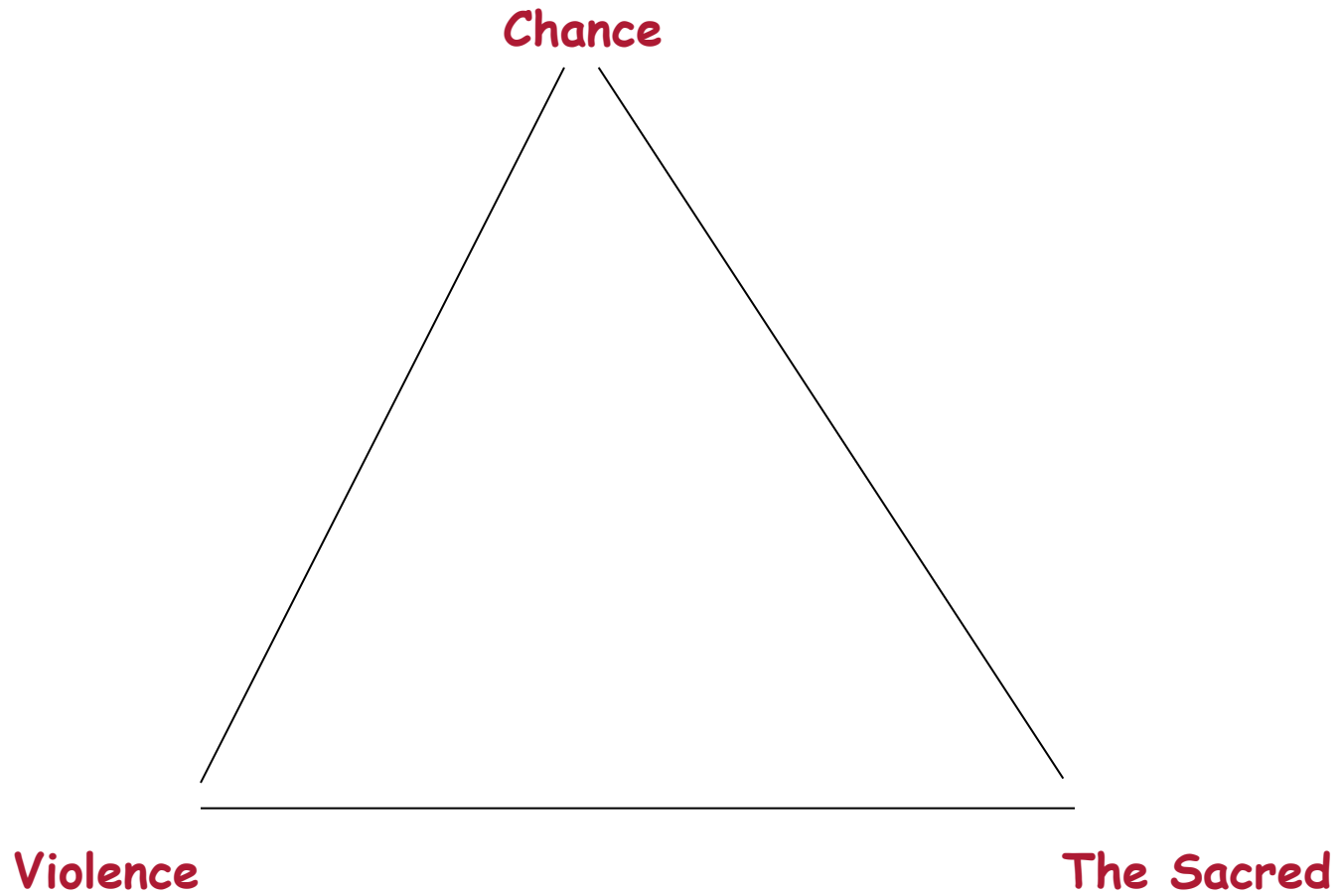


L'Etranger

Chance is fused with Destiny

Playing with fire

- Our salvation depends on **our playing constantly with fire**.
 - *Not too close* lest we should perish in it [Existential Deterrence];
 - *Not too far* lest we should forget about the danger [Jonah Paradox].
- Exactly the same structure as primitive societies' relationship to the Sacred [René Girard]:
 - Not too close [**Danger**];
 - Not too far [**Protection**].
- The dialectic between Fate and Accident permits just that:
 - Our **Fate** is Doom [= not too far];
 - However, Fate requires **Accident**'s helping hand [= not too close].



Etymologies of "Risk"

*Risco --
Resecum*

Rixare



Accident

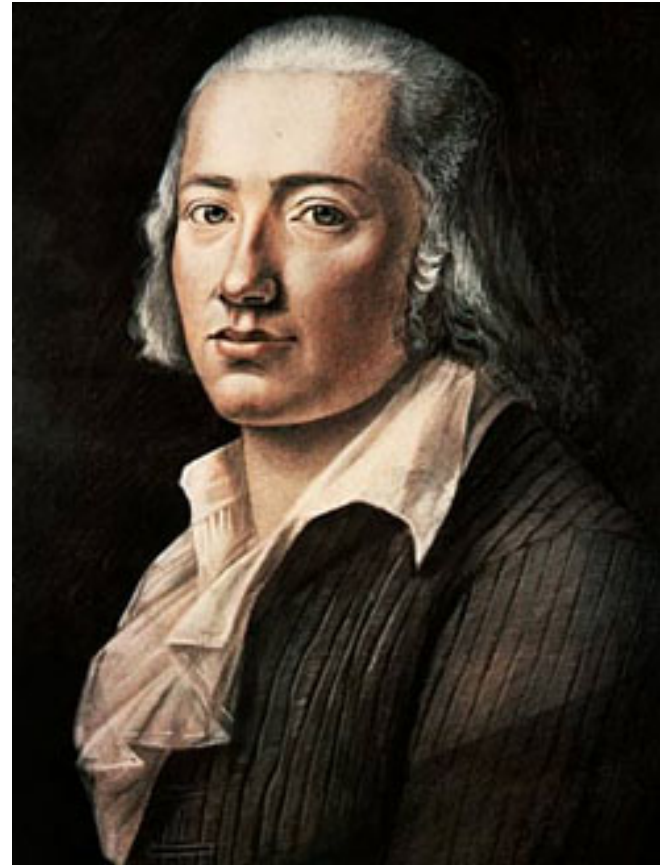


**Battling to the end
is our Fate**

Hölderlin, *Patmos*, 1803

"Wo aber die
Gefahr ist,
wächst das
Rettende auch."

"But where danger is,
grows the saving power also."



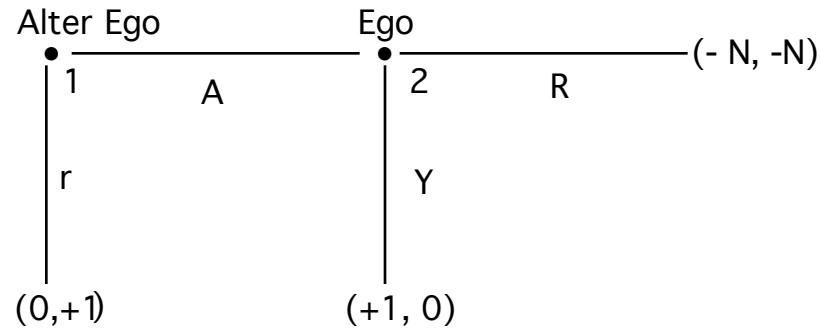
Metaphysical Logic of Existential Deterrence

The Status of *Unbestimmtheit* in "Projected Time"

Not to be confused with **strategic randomness**: President Nixon's *Madman Theory*.

==> Nixon to Robert Haldeman (1970): "I call it the Madman Theory, Bob. I want the North Vietnamese to believe I've reached the point where I might do *anything* to stop the war. We'll just slip the word to them that, 'for God sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about Communism. We can't restrain him when he's angry - and he has his hand on the nuclear button' - and Ho Chi Minh himself will be in Paris in two days begging for peace . . ."

MAD or the Powerlessness of Nuclear Deterrence



r: renounces

R: retaliates

A: attacks

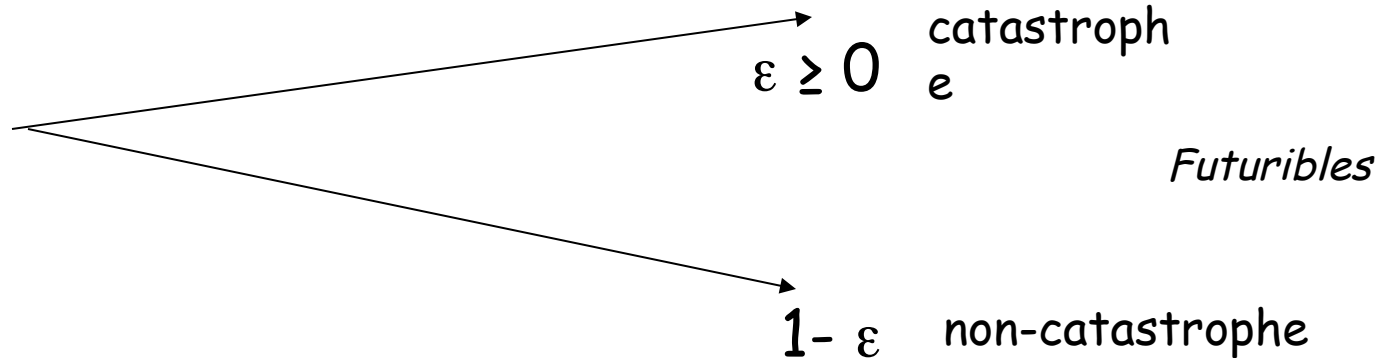
Y: yields

N: very large number

Left number: Alter Ego's payoff

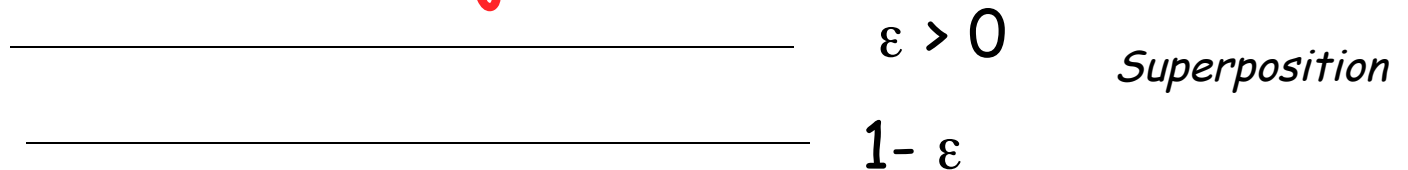
Right number: Ego's payoff

Randomness



It is because there is a probability e that the deterrence will not work that it works with a probability $1 - e$.

Unbestimmtheit in Projected Time



The fact that the deterrence will not work with a strictly positive probability e is what allows for the inscription of the catastrophe in the future, and it is this inscription that makes the deterrence effective, with a margin of error e .

MAD



Is the logic of nuclear deterrence still relevant today in a nuclear world marked by **terrorism** and **proliferation**? **MAD** entails the abandonment of the military defense of one's nation: the policy of deterrence does not contemplate doing anything in defense of the homeland. In fact, the policy positively requires that each side leave its population open to attack, and make no serious effort to protect it. The safety can be only as great as the terror is. If the terror were to be diminished - by, for example, building anti-ballistic shields that protected some significant part of the population - then safety would be diminished, too, because the protected side might be tempted to launch a holocaust, in the belief that it could "win" the hostilities. In MAD "destruction" must, perversely, be "assured", as though our aim were to destroy, and not to save, mankind.

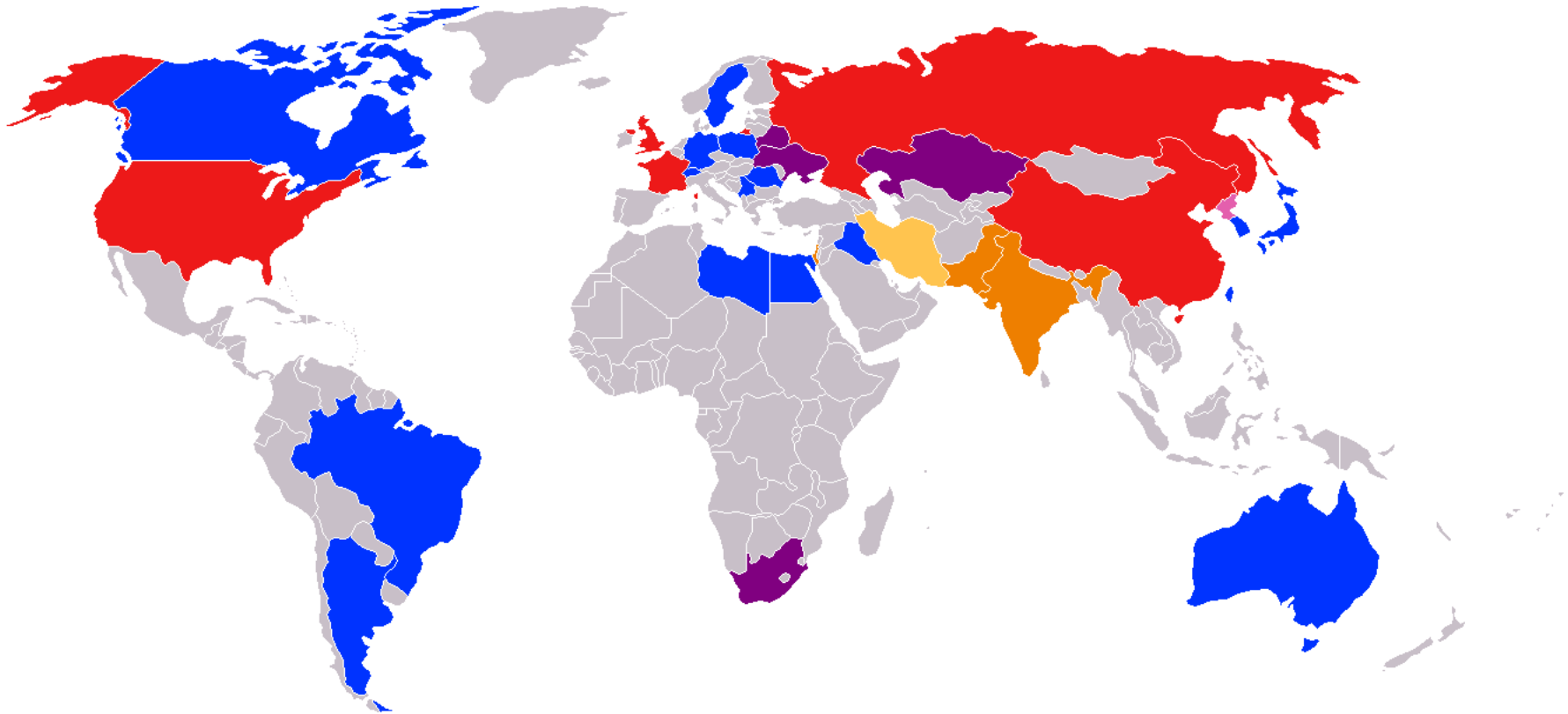
SEPTEMBER 24, 2009
Newsweek

LEARNING TO LOVE THE BOMB

HOW NUCLEAR WEAPONS MAY MAKE THE WORLD A SAFER PLACE BY JONATHAN TEPPERMAN



SEPTEMBER 24, 2009



Nuclear weapons development status as of October 31, 2006.

- Five "nuclear weapons states" from the NPT
- Other known nuclear powers
- States formerly possessing nuclear weapons
- States suspected of being in the process of developing nuclear programs
- States which at one point had nuclear weapons and/or nuclear weapons research programs
- States that claim to possess nuclear weapons

Carrying the Box with the Plutonium for the First Nuclear Bomb



This photograph shows Sergeant Herb Lehr carrying a box of plutonium for the first-ever nuclear bomb, tested in New Mexico in 1945.

As can be seen, **the material needed for a nuclear bomb is small enough to fit in a breadbox, and not radioactive enough to require special equipment to carry it.**

As a result, with hundreds of millions of people and vehicles crossing U.S. borders every year, **stopping nuclear smuggling is an almost insurmountable challenge.**
[NTI]

Violence and the Energy Equation

In 1994, U.S. nuclear power plants were not protected against the risk of a shock provoked by a truck loaded with explosives hitting them head on.



The year after, it was thus that Timothy McVeigh blew up a U.S. government office complex in downtown Oklahoma City. The attack claimed 168 lives and left over 800 injured. Until the September 11, 2001 attacks, it was the deadliest act of terrorism on U.S. soil.



MAD

Mutually Assured Destruction

versus

NUTS

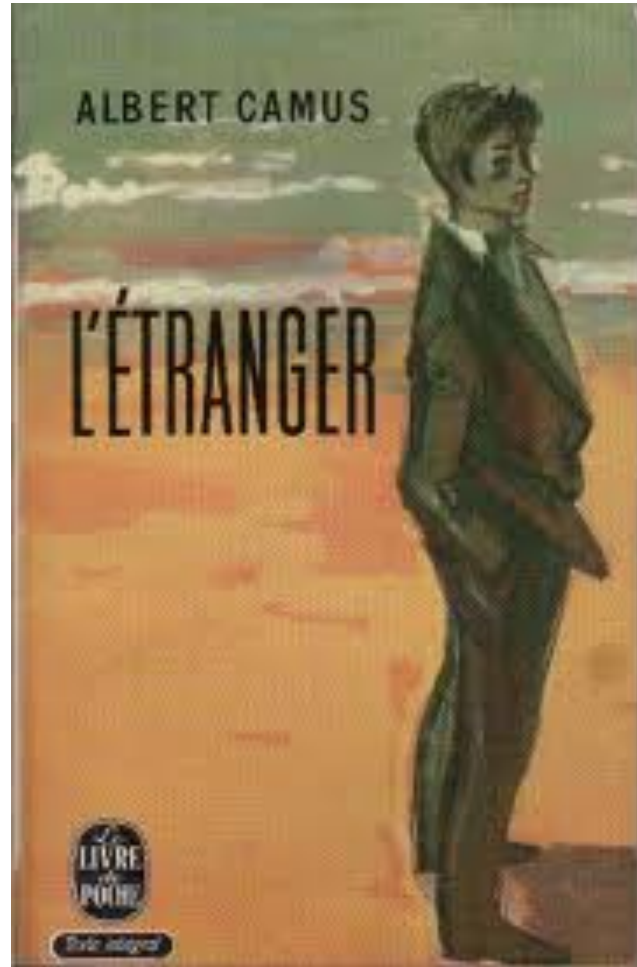
Nuclear Utilization Target Selection

ALBERT CAMUS

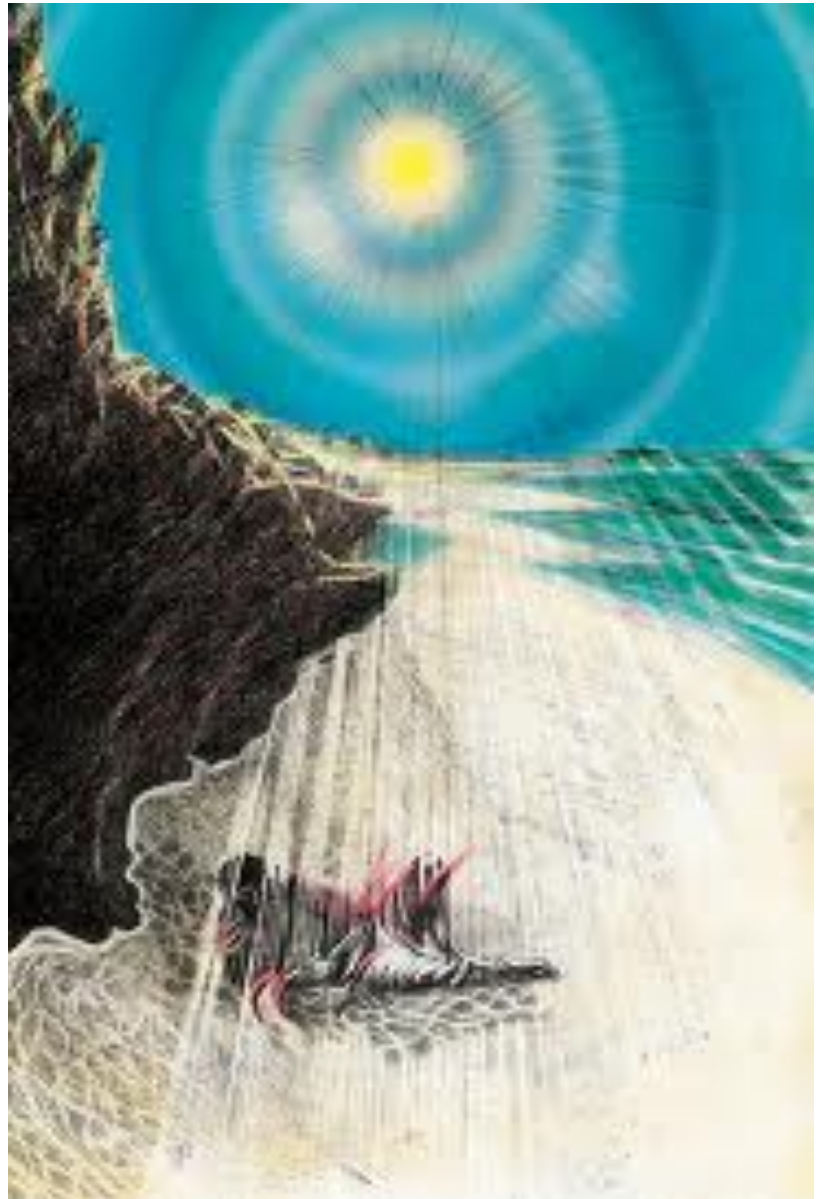
L'ÉTRANGER



Émile Zola



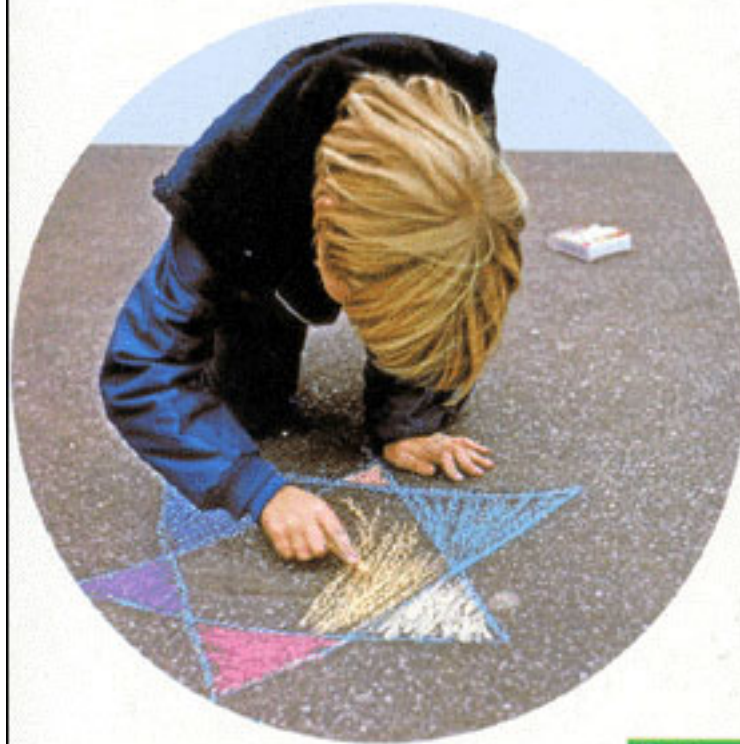
**A senseless
murder?**



Alain Finkielkraut

Points

Le Juif imaginaire



Essais

« Soustraits à un destin tragique par une prévenance de la chronologie, n'avons-nous pas, nous tous, enfants juifs de l'après-génocide, mal géré la schizophrénie qui s'en est suivie ? D'un côté, le legs d'une souffrance qui n'est plus, quoi qu'on en dise, d'actualité, et de l'autre, une existence classique de petit-bourgeois surprotégés; d'un côté, le plaisir narcissique d'être, par le seul miracle de notre naissance juive, l'étalon-or de l'oppression universelle, et de l'autre, une vie quotidienne où l'expérience de l'anti-sémitisme se réduit le plus souvent aux injures d'une cour de récréation. [...]

J'avais été juif pourqu'on me regarde, et puis, ce judaïsme ornemental et fastueux m'a fait honte. Comme Pierre Goldman, j'ai eu honte de ressembler aussi peu aux héros de ma mémoire, produits par l'extermination, et dont la légitimité fondait la mienne. J'ai eu honte d'être un *juif vide*, de flotter dans un vêtement de malheur trop large puisque taillé à la mesure de mon père, de ma mère, polaks de la grande époque.

Pour ne plus pérorer sur sa singularité, Goldman avait été obligé d'aller chercher dans la délinquance les prestiges d'une marginalisation que le judaïsme ne lui offrait plus; **il était devenu l'autre de la société** - qui l'avait, finalement, acquitté - **pour mériter l'altérité radicale que sa condition de juif lui avait, en même temps, promise et refusée.** »

Alain Finkielkraut, *Le juif imaginaire*, Paris, 1980