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Understanding Nationalism

Hogan, Patrick Colm

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SACRIFICIAL NATIONALISM AND ITS VICTIMS

Sin and Death in Germany and India

THE SECOND OF OUR three universal narrative prototypes is sacrificial tragicomedy. In this structure, the in-group is suffering some sort of devastation—prototypically, drought and famine (or, less often, epidemic disease). The devastation so exceeds our usual experience that it requires some sort of moral explanation. The alignment of values in the heroic plot sets God on our side as His special people. Devastation suggests that we have been abandoned by God. Specifically, divine punishment is visited upon a group for sin committed either collectively or by some individual who is representative of the group as a whole (e.g., in being an ancestor or a leader of the group). Most commonly, the punishments of famine and epidemic disease are associated with sins of eating and/or sexuality. In keeping with this, the primary virtues of the sacrificial plot—after self-sacrifice—are self-denial in food and sex (just as the primary virtues in the heroic plot are loyalty, obedience, and bravery). In the fullest version of the sacrificial narrative, the sin was prompted by some out-group tempter, usually identified with the spiritual opposite of God (e.g., Satan). Since the devastation is a form of moral

retribution for a communal sin, the way to regain divine preference, and thus restore normality, is to do penance for that sin. This penance is invariably a matter of sacrifice. Most often, someone must die to prevent the death of the entire community. The story of the Fall of humankind through Adam and Eve, then our eventual salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus, is an obvious case of this sort of plot.

But what determines the identity of the victim? There are two ways in which this may be approached. In one, the sacrifice is itself a retribution and an attempt to rid society of the guilty parties. Someone is sacrificed because he or she has sinned. The guilty parties include one or more members of the in-group and tempters from some out-group. Either may be the primary sacrificial victims. However, this version invariably emphasizes that the origin of the guilt is in the acts of out-group tempters, who are commonly associated with demonic evil. This is the attitude associated with “religious terrorism,” at least in the interpretation of Jessica Stern, who argues that the purpose of such terrorism is “to purify the world of . . . corrupting influences” (xix). In its most extreme form, the entire out-group may be seen as guilty and thus the sacrificial narrative may lead to genocide. I have sometimes referred to this as the “secularized” version of the sacrificial plot, since it imitates normal processes of law in claiming to find and punish the guilty parties. However, it is perhaps better referred to as “purgative,” for it is still based on ideas of spiritual causality (not quotidian physical or psychological causality) and it shows little concern for due process, reasonable determination of guilt, or anything else we associate with a system of justice. This version in effect seeks to end devastation by sacrificing the enemy who destroyed the home society from within and the collaborators who allowed that destruction. As we will see, this is the prototype that guided Nazism.

The second approach to sacrifice is precisely the opposite. In this version, members of the in-group cannot atone for their guilt by sacrificing members of the out-group. After all, if God has withdrawn from our side, divine punishment is aimed at us, not at our enemy. Penance must be performed by the home society itself. (This is consistent with versions of the sacrificial plot in which the tempter is actually associated with God—as when, in Yoruba belief, Èṣù tempts humans into sin in order to provoke the need for some compensatory sacrificial offering [see Awolalu 29].) There are two ways in which this is likely to be developed. In one, the sacrificial victim is an innocent member of the in-group, a pure soul untainted by sin. The other common variant requires that everyone in the in-group—or some representative selection from the in-group—atone for the sin. Most

often, the two variants are interwoven, with the self-sacrifice of one or more innocents complementing the broader self-punishment of the home society. We might refer to this type generally as the “penitential” sacrificial plot.

This division of the sacrificial plot should not be taken to suggest that the tempter is irrelevant to the penitential version. Indeed, both types of sacrificial plot tend to share the view that the tempter should not be part of the national society, though this is not usually stressed in the penitential version. In nationalist uses of the sacrificial prototype, the difference in attitudes toward the tempter is often at least in part a matter of the degree to which the tempter out-group has become integrated into or pervades the home society. In the case of colonial India, the British, commonly cast in the tempter role (implicitly or explicitly), were likely to leave following Indian independence. In this way, exclusion was not a special problem beyond independence. In contrast, fascist movements tend to focus on groups that, to some degree, pervade the population.

Having just distinguished these varieties, I have to note immediately that they are often combined, both in explicit stories and in implicit, nationalistic uses. Sacrificial narratives do tend to stress one form of sacrifice. However, that emphasis need not be exclusive. For example, in a particular story, the only way to purge society of the tempter may involve the death of some innocent in-group member. Though a story of this sort is oriented toward a purgative sacrifice, it includes the sacrifice of an innocent victim.

As I have already emphasized, the heroic prototype is the default form for plotting nationalism. In conditions where heroic triumph is impossible—most obviously, conditions of devastating defeat and foreign domination—the sacrificial plot may be triggered. This is all the more likely when the group has experienced such prototypical sacrificial conditions as famine. Nonetheless, even in these cases, the heroic plot remains the national standard. It can be taken up whenever circumstances alter appropriately. Moreover, the heroic prototype, so to speak, interferes with the sacrificial plot, altering its development or specification. This is an ordinary cognitive phenomenon. It is often the case that different prototypes affect our response to individuals or to situations. For example, if I meet a cognitive scientist and learn that he or she is also a ballet dancer, my prototype for a ballet dancer may displace certain aspects of my prototype of a cognitive scientist. This sort of interference is a prominent feature of the nationalist operation of sacrificial narratives.

Since the sacrificial plot has its greatest force in defeated and hungry nations, the United States does not provide prominent examples.¹ Striking cases are to be found in former European colonies, such as Ireland and India. The sacrificial plot played an important role in the anticolonial movements of both nations—anticolonial movements that have been highly influential. But to focus solely on India or Ireland would be misleading. The sacrificial plot is not at all confined to colonies. Nazi Germany provides an example from a powerful European country. I will therefore draw one example from German Nazism and one from colonial India.

Hitler's version of sacrificial nationalism is almost entirely purgative. Indeed, the Holocaust itself was inseparable from the sacrificial emplotment of German nationalism found in the works of Nazi writers and elsewhere in German culture after the First World War.² In connection with this, I will consider the sacrificial emplotment of nationalism found in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the most horribly consequential theorization of nationalism in human history.

In contrast Mohandas ("Mahatma") Gandhi is perhaps the political leader who represented the pure collective self-punishment approach most thoroughly. He may also be the national leader whose approach to nationalism contrasts most obviously with that of Hitler. Moreover, his paradigm for sacrifice was found, not first of all in Christian tradition (which invariably inflects Western versions of sacrificial nationalism), but in Hinduism. For all three reasons, it is useful to examine Gandhi's thought in this

1. This is not to say that the prototype is entirely absent from American nationalism. It turns up, but in somewhat peripheral areas. For example, this emplotment is found in much Christian nationalism. As Goldberg explains, many Christian nationalists believe that God became "angry" with the United States, largely because of sexual sins. As a result, He "began to withdraw his favor" so that "In the last decades of the twentieth century, the forces of darkness threatened to turn America into Sodom" (7). In keeping with this, Goldberg stresses the parallels between Christian nationalism and Nazism.

2. For example, it is clear in a film such as Murnau's *Nosferatu* (see my "Narrative Universals, Nationalism"). It is worth noting here that there is an interesting contrast between purgative sacrificial narratives such as this and such post-Nazi sacrificial narratives as Gerhard Lamprecht's 1946 *Somewhere in Berlin*. The latter emphasizes devastation and specifically hunger after the recent war. Perhaps most important, one young boy tries to relieve the hunger of a returning soldier. He initially fails. However, he later tumbles to his death from a shattered building. His death inspires the other young boys to try to change things, and the film ends with the small society being renewed through cooperative work. The film fairly clearly presents this as a microcosm of the larger society, advocating national cooperative renewal in keeping with East German socialist policy. In this case, the cooperative renewal is crucially enabled by the sacrifice of an innocent (and not through the purgation of an internal enemy).

context—not only for his differences from other sacrificial nationalists, but for his similarities as well, similarities that we may fail to understand, or even to notice, without recognizing their relation to sacrificial employment.³

PURGING THE SEDUCER

Hitler's *Kampf*

As just mentioned, the most destructively consequential sacrificial employment of nationalism was undoubtedly that of German fascism.⁴ It contributed to two of the most horrible events of world history—the Second World War and the genocide of European Jews. Though the scale of the terror remains unimaginable, this sort of dual result is broadly what one might have expected. World War II was a military struggle—among other things, a response to the Treaty of Versailles and an attempt to join all Germans in a single nation. It was, in effect, the continuation of a suspended heroic narrative. The Holocaust was an attempt of unprecedented magnitude and cruelty to purge the home society of a particular internal “enemy.”⁵ For our purposes, there is one obvious work to consider as exemplary, for German fascism had a central text—Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* or *My Battle*.⁶ The book is remarkable for our purposes as it directly expresses many of the concerns we have been addressing. It not only manifests a sacrificial narrative, but takes up the alignment of conflicting identity categories and develops standard metaphors of national unity. *Mein Kampf* is an enormous work (over one thousand pages in the English translation). In order to make the discussion more manageable, I will concentrate on the first of the

3. Both examples are clearly drawn from the modern period. For a detailed analysis of a premodern instance, in this case from China, see my “Narrative Universals, National Sacrifice.”

4. Consider, for example, the prosecution of the Second World War. As Evans explains, “There is plenty of evidence that the deep-seated identification of a majority of Germans with the nation—their nationalism, in a word—was more important than anything else in maintaining their commitment to the war effort.” In connection with this, Evans stresses “the cult of self-sacrifice . . . in the interests of nation and race” (28).

5. Obviously, there are many horrible instances of genocide, for example, that of Native Americans. My point in writing “unprecedented” is not to rank the suffering of oppressed groups. However—though I am not an expert on, say, the genocide of Native Americans—my sense is that these other horrific cases are not, for the most part, aptly characterized as “an attempt to purge the home society of an internal ‘enemy.’”

6. There has been considerable psychological discussion of Hitler (see, for example, chapter 13 of Fromm for a psychoanalytic approach). However, little or none of this work has been cognitive, nor has it taken up the topic of employment.

two volumes. More exactly, I will begin by outlining some of Hitler's main arguments and motifs. I will then go on to treat the work in somewhat more detail, proceeding chapter by chapter.

The book begins as a sort of autobiography. The early sections are most significant for treating Hitler's youthful concern over the separation of German communities in different states. He explains how he joined the pan-Germanists in lamenting the division of the "German race" and worried that non-Germans—especially Eastern Europeans—were coming to dominate Germans in countries such as Austria. In short, the opening sets up Hitler's approach to national identity. National identity should be aligned with "racial" or ethnic identity. All members of a particular ethnic group should be in one state. One might expect that he would advocate the converse of this as well—one state for one people, therefore one people for one state. Thus, one might expect him to advocate the expulsion of all other ethnic groups from a German state. Hitler is, of course, concerned with expulsion. But this concern is not general. It is focused on a single group, Jews. The narrowness of this concern partially fits the details of his argument, as we will see. But, more important for our purposes, it fits the sacrificial narrative. Hitler clearly places Jews in the role of tempter, the role of the out-group that seduces the in-group to destructive sin. In the sacrificial structure, it is specifically the tempter that must be expelled from the society.

After articulating his pan-Germanism (and considering a few other topics, such as deference to authority), Hitler goes on to his main concern, the First World War. In keeping with the general pattern, his treatment of the default mode of nationalism—the heroic—gives way to a sacrificial emplotment with the German defeat and the end of the war. In connection with this, Hitler spends a good deal of time treating a central concern of all sacrificial narratives—the Fall, the moment of sin that brought on collective misery. It is important to note that this misery prominently included hunger. As Schivelbusch points out, "the Allied food blockade" resulted in a "starving home front" with "numbers of [civilians] dead" that "bore comparison" to the numbers of combatants killed (235). The hunger, of course, preceded the loss of the war, thus the crucial moment of transition from the "normal" pursuit of national domination to a condition of hopeless devastation. In terms of strict causal analysis, this may seem to make it irrelevant to a sacrificial emplotment. But it fits cognitively. For many Germans, the experience of collective hunger almost certainly served to prime the sacrificial prototype, thus a narratively organized sense of sin, punishment, and the need for salvation through social penance in sacrifice.

It thus contributed importantly to the cognitive organization of subsequent events through that sacrificial structure.

Hitler directly blames the final loss of the war and the devastation of Germany on the behavior of the German people. Many of them gave up on the war. They failed in the national defense component of the heroic narrative. Indeed, there was even a usurpation—the 1918 revolution. In Hitler’s account, then, the First World War formed a sort of truncated heroic tragedy. The usurpation and invasion occurred, but the restoration of the true leader and defeat of the enemy did not come. Hitler clearly envisioned such a restoration through his own role as national leader or Führer. In connection with this (and in keeping with the heroic prototype), he envisioned a defeat of the enemy in a subsequent war under his leadership. But before this victory could occur, something else was necessary—or, rather, two things were necessary. First, Germans must have an unwavering willingness to sacrifice themselves for the good of the group. Second, there must be a complete elimination of the seductive enemy.

More exactly, in Hitler’s analysis, the great German sin—the sin that devastated nationalism—was internationalism, a form of identification reaching across national and racial divisions (most obviously in connection with class). Thus, the seductive enemy was not, say, France or England. It was not a rival national group. Rather, it was a specifically *international* group. The obvious candidate here was Communism, which explicitly advocated international proletarian solidarity against nationalism. Hitler spends a good deal of time denouncing Communism. However, in Hitler’s explanatory scheme, all political, economic, and other social developments must ultimately be understood in terms of race. For him, race is the underlying determinant of all social life, much as political economy is the ultimate determinant in Marxism or divine providence is the ultimate determinant in some forms of Christianity. As he puts it toward the middle of *Mein Kampf*, “All world historical events . . . are only the expression of the races’ instinct of self-preservation” (406). Thus, for Hitler, Communism, as an ideology or a social movement, could not be the ultimate cause, the final explanation of any social development, including the devastation of Germany following the First World War. Even Communism required a further explanation—specifically, a racial explanation. To account for an internationalist political movement, then, Hitler turned to an international “race”—Jews. Jews, he claims, were the ultimate source of the devastation of Germany.

In short, at the time when, in Hitler’s view, Germany should have expanded to encompass all “racial” Germans, it collapsed. It was humili-

ated, further fragmented, and impoverished because Germans lost their nationalistic commitment. They lost this commitment, he believed, because they were seduced by internationalists. The seduction was promulgated primarily by an international race, not by mere adherents of an internationalist ideology (though the two were, of course, related). That race was, again, the Jews. (I am not saying that Hitler arrived at his anti-Semitism through this chain of reasoning, however faulty. The genesis of Hitler's thoughts and feelings are no doubt much more complex. In part, the reasoning derived from and justified a prior anti-Semitism; in part, it extended that anti-Semitism. The point is simply that these are the ideas that face us in *Mein Kampf*, whatever their personal, psychological origin.)

As we would expect, we find Hitler specifying and developing the sacrificial narrative through the same racialist principles he used to interpret nationhood (and history). The same fundamental biologism governs his choice of metaphors for the nation as well. These metaphors, in turn, further guide his analysis of and response to the national situation, and his specification of the sacrificial prototype, prominently including his response to the tempter figures.

Though Hitler does sometimes use metaphors of plants or homes, his most common metaphor for the nation/race is the human body. The German people form a single body, which clearly should have a single home/state. It should also have a single head, the national leader. Perhaps most important, the tempter is typically viewed as an enemy that has entered the nation and wrought destruction from within. When the nation is assimilated to a human body, the alien invading that body is very likely to be assimilated to a parasite, a virus, a cancer—something that should not be in the body and that must be killed or cut out.

The body metaphor also contributes to the respecification of the standard sacrificial concern with sexual sin. Though the metaphor applies to the nation as a whole, it necessarily primes a concern with the literal bodies of citizens, just as the metaphor of disease primes a concern with actual disease. In other words, the operation of certain models for the nation tends to foster concern for the literal sources of those metaphors. Hitler's near obsession with syphilis fits here in an obvious way. Indeed, in Hitler's analysis, syphilis was an incidental cause of the great Fall of 1918. Moreover, it too is ultimately blamed on Jews.

Finally, and also in keeping with his biologism, it is worth noting that Hitler brings a sort of scientific or pseudoscientific discourse into his analysis as well. While many nationalists (e.g., Gandhi or, in Ireland, Pádraic Pearse) further specified their sacrificial ideas in religious terms, Hitler

tended to rely on scientific idioms. In connection with this, supernatural causality is much less clear in *Mein Kampf* than it is in most sacrificial emplotments of the nation. Hitler clearly isolates national sin and national devastation resulting from that sin. However, he does not usually treat the devastation as a punishment per se. Rather, he tends to represent it as the scientifically predictable outcome of the sin, in the way that illness is the scientifically predictable outcome of unhealthy practices. Of course, Hitler does not present scientific support for his claims. Insofar as they are accepted by readers, these claims operate, not logically and empirically, but narratively and metaphorically. In other words, the rhetorical force of Hitler's assertions derives from their conformity to and specification of emotionally compelling narrative prototypes and associated metaphors, crucially the sacrificial prototype.

Before turning to the first chapter, it is important to note that the book is dedicated to sixteen men who were executed. Though sacrificial themes do not appear until later, the broadly sacrificial orientation of the book is indicated by this opening dedication. The men were killed, Hitler insists, because of their "true belief in the resurrection of their people" (xiii *altered*; xxix⁷). In only a few words, Hitler manages to call up the entire sacrificial plot. Moreover, he implicitly relies on his standard metaphor of the nation as a human body. Germany, like a human body, is dead and must be resurrected. The resurrection will come from sacrifice—the sacrifice of not only these men, but of others in the "movement" as well. Thus, after listing their names, he explains that these "martyrs" or, literally, "blood witnesses," may serve to "light" the way for those who come after (xiii; xxix).

Hitler also uses the list to criticize implicitly the assertion of class identities—and thus the assertion of subnational class oppositions—that went along with internationalism. Specifically, he includes the occupations of the men. Four were salesmen or merchants; three were bank employees; three were engineers; one was a cavalry officer; one was a county court councilor; one was a headwaiter; one was a hat maker; one was a locksmith; one was a servant. All these are brought together, unified across their economic positions, by their national identity. He also gives the ages of the men. By showing the range, from under twenty to over fifty, he suggests the cross-generational unity of German national identity as well.

7. Here and below, when a citation of Hitler includes two page numbers, separated by a semicolon, the first refers to the English translation and the second to the German. If only one page number is given, it refers to the English translation, unless otherwise indicated.

These representations of diversity are parallel to the joining of warriors from different regions in standard heroic plots.

The cross-generational unity of the German race/nation bears at least indirectly on the opening chapters of *Mein Kampf*, where Hitler treats his own rebellious youth. These sections are curious in that they present a picture of young Hitler as fractious, as impatient with authority. In terms of his own personality, this fits well with his subsequent desire to dominate others. However, it does not seem at first to fit his argument, which ultimately insists on deference to the Leader. But, again, the structure here is a matter of narrative rather than logic. Specifically, the opening sections rely to a great extent on a romantic emplotment. This turns, in subsequent chapters, to a sacrificial emplotment—and, at certain points, to a more overt heroic emplotment—as conditions and topics change.⁸

The first chapter is entitled “In the Parental Home” (3 *altered*; 1). It concerns Hitler’s youth, thus the time at home with his parents. But this title also refers to a standard nationalist metaphor that assimilates one’s nation to one’s home, and particularly one’s parental or ancestral home. Again, this is not Hitler’s preferred metaphor. However, he does make use of it now and again. The metaphorical significance is signaled in the opening paragraph, where Hitler explains that he was born on the border between Germany and Austria and that the “reunion” of these two states is his “life’s work” (3 *altered*; 1). Later, Hitler uses the metaphor overtly when he refers to the entire people’s longing to return to the “paternal home” (18; 11). He also draws on the related, familial metaphors, referring to the “fatherland” and the “mother tongue” (see, for example, 15; 9).

The sacrificial narrative appears on the opening page as well, when Hitler asserts that “from the tears of war there grows the daily bread for generations to come” (3). The phrase clearly conjoins the heroic and sacrificial plots, just as one would expect in a nationalist context. The tears of war are the tears shed for “our” soldiers who have died (i.e., Hitler is presumably not concerned with the sufferings of the enemy). Their deaths constitute the sacrifice needed for the provision of food (the prototypical

8. As I have been arguing, a single narrative prototype often dominates the thought and action of an individual activist and of a group during a particular period. Thus, we find Hitler and his government relying primarily on a sacrificial prototype (with the usual underlying heroic structure). However, everyone has all three universal narrative prototypes, and other prototypes as well. These prototypes are likely to turn up and have consequences in particular contexts. Thus, in the case of Hitler, the separation of Germans in different nations triggers the romantic prototype, even though the sacrificial prototype generally dominated his emplotment of nationalism. Put differently, to say that one prototype is dominant for a given activist or group is not to say that it is absolute and all encompassing.

happiness goal for the sacrificial narrative). Moreover, the phrase he uses for food, “daily bread” (“tägliches Brot” 1) alludes to the “Lord’s Prayer.” This has several functions. First, it signals the Christian—thus both sacrificial and non-Jewish—provenance of the idea. Second, it calls to mind the single, beneficent deity, the Father who gives the daily bread, perhaps associated with the national Leader who commands the army. Finally, it implicitly points toward the following line in the prayer, “and forgive us our trespasses,” a crucial theme in the sacrificial narratives.

Again, the opening is largely romantic in orientation, with Germans who live outside Germany, like separated lovers, “dreaming” and “longing” (15) for union with the Reich. However, sacrificial concerns become prominent after the deaths of Hitler’s parents at the end of chapter 1. Specifically, the second chapter begins with Hitler’s own experience of penury and, in particular, hunger—which, he says, was “pitiless” and “never left me” (29). More important, he stresses the generality of this condition. Thus, he repeatedly emphasizes how the unemployed man “loiters about hungrily” (36), “going hungry in times of need” (37). In these cases, “hunger . . . overthrows every resolve”; “hunger conjures up . . . visions of a life of abundance”; after “meager” meals on some days, “lean days” follow, days “spent in hunger” (37).

These are, of course, the sorts of experience that are likely to incline someone toward sacrificial employment, not only of his or her own life, but of nationalism. This is true especially insofar as one explains hunger in nationalist terms—which is, of course, what Hitler does. For him, the problem was the result of not living in the “parental home” of a united Germany. In connection with this, Hitler emphasizes literal homelessness. Thus, he speaks about the “homeless” unemployed who slept in “the mud of the canals” (33); he explains that, in the most brutal season, winter, it was often “hard . . . if not impossible” to find “a new home” (35). He goes on to talk about how people “often” became “homeless” (36). He explains that, in general, unskilled workers experienced “dreadful” misery over “housing.” Even those who had places to stay frequently found themselves in “sinister pictures of dirt and repugnant filth” (38). Though asserted literally, these statements clearly have metaphorical resonance as well. They refer implicitly to the German people exiled from the parental home of the Reich.

Hitler actually makes a quite reasonable argument that these conditions should not be eliminated by patronizing generosity from the wealthy. The condition of the homeless and hungry should be ameliorated by the return of their social and economic rights (34). Unfortunately, this reasonableness

is not sustained. Hitler's idea of those social and economic rights was, first, a matter of a return to the paternal home, which is to say, a union of all Germans in one state, and, second, an elimination of what caused the loss of these rights. Here, the body metaphor becomes consequential. Hitler's solution to these problems is "the ruthless resolution to destroy the incurable social tumors" (39). On the next page, he takes up the soil/plant metaphor to similar ends, explaining that a race must "brutally . . . pull up the weeds" (40).

The reasons for Hitler's insistence on improving the conditions of the impoverished become clear over the following pages. His concerns are not humanistic, but nationalistic. Specifically, he indicates that the poor tend to understand themselves individualistically or as members of a class, rather than as part of a nation. For them, the nation is represented by the wealthy—precisely the people who seem to prosper at the expense of the poor. The proper response to this is improving the conditions of the poor so that they can join with the bourgeoisie, sharing a sense of national unity.

He goes on to denounce socialists who foster class identification, thus division within the nation and internationalism in foreign relations. Returning to metaphors of the body—but altering them slightly, in anticipation of his subsequent concern with syphilis—he refers to the Social Democratic Party as "a pestilential whore" (52). Like the tumors and the weeds mentioned earlier, this disease-bearing prostitute must be eliminated if Germany is to survive.

In the course of this chapter, Hitler repeatedly discusses nationalism in terms of love (see 44, 55, 56). But the chapter is more directly guided by sacrificial emplotment. Indeed, in keeping with his representation of Social Democracy as a prostitute, he characterizes Social Democrats as "seducers." He views their urging of class identification and internationalism as "seductions" (59). Here, we find the standard sacrificial interpretation of the enemy as tempter.

But, of course, for Hitler, this is only part of the story. He goes on to claim that one can understand Social Democracy only if one understands "Jewry" (66). Again, race must be the ultimate cause of all social phenomena in Hitler's view. Here, Hitler insists that he was a strong supporter of the Jews until the weight of evidence (not presented in this book, of course) forced him to realize the truth. To explain this "truth," he returns to his standard models. Any "filth or shamelessness" of "cultural life" is like a "tumor"; "cutting open such a tumor," one invariably finds "a little Jew . . . like a maggot in a rotting corpse" (75 *altered*; 61). Returning to

the metaphor of the prostitute, he then goes on to link Jews with prostitution and “the white slave traffic” (78).

The chapter culminates in a repetition of the sacrificial themes, but this time regarding Jews rather than Social Democrats. Hitler asserts that “the Jew was no German”; rather, the Jews were “the seducers of our people.” He then explains that it is “possible to save the great masses, but only after the greatest sacrifices” (80). He repeats the accusation that Jews are seducers, linking their seduction with the devil (“*teuflischen*” 67)—a standard part of the characterization of the seducer.

The chapter ends with a brief invocation of the heroic plot. Hitler claims that Jews are in the process of conquering all the nations of the world. Thus, Jews pose a danger not only to Germans, but to all humankind—an intensified version of the heroic threat scenario. He also insists that his fight against “the Jews” is “fighting for the Lord’s work” (84), thus taking up the alignment of national and religious values as well as the divine election of the national in-group.

In the third chapter, Hitler begins with the issue of ethnic conflict in the multiethnic state of Austria. He goes on to antidemocratic arguments. These are certainly consistent with the strict hierarchization of both sacrificial and heroic narratives. But authoritarianism is not distinctive of these structures, and one need not invoke them in explaining Hitler’s views here. The chapter has some heroic elements, especially in its repeated condemnation of cowardice (see 105, 123), its advocacy of courage (132), its stress on “tough fighting strength” (128), and so forth. However, this advocacy of martial virtues is linked with an emphasis on “sacrifice” (128, 131, 132). This combination prepares the reader for the discussion of the military campaigns of World War I as well as the sacrifice-requiring devastation that followed. This is particularly clear when he condemns the pan-German movement for having “lost the force to oppose a catastrophic destiny with the defiance of martyrdom” (135).

Just as the preceding chapter opposed class divisions in the nation, this chapter opposes religious divisions within the nation. Specifically, Hitler treats the possibility of Catholics being German nationalists. He insists on this point, opposing those who wish to align German nationality with religious confession. This advocacy of religious tolerance makes sense, given his fundamental principle that biological race (thus not class or religion) is the determinative factor in social explanation and national definition.

In an interesting passage, Hitler argues that the leader must make it seem that there is one great enemy of the nation. If, in fact, there are numerous enemies, the leader should nonetheless present them as if they

were one enemy (152–53). This raises the question of whether Hitler actually believed his racialist account or merely adopted it as an effective way of polarizing in-group/out-group divisions. In any case, his reduction of all enemies to one—the Jews—does have the effect of maximizing oppositionality for the national identity category. Again, one obstacle to elevating the national categorial identity above others is that its force is diffused by multiple oppositions. The potential for such diffusion was clear in the case of Germany, which could be understood in opposition to France, England, the United States, and other nations, as distinct out-groups. Hitler sweeps all these aside with the insistence that there is only one crucial out-group, Jews.

The conclusion of this chapter returns to the romantic structure, as it reemphasizes the importance of uniting the separated Austrian Germans with Germany. Thus, Hitler explains that—like a lover far from his beloved—though he was in Austria, his “heart dwelt somewhere else” (160). He represents his feelings for Germany as “secret wishes and secret love.” He speaks of how the “wish of [his] heart” would be “fulfilled” in the “union” of Germany and German Austria. He expresses “the intensity of such a longing.” The reason for this sudden shift back to the romantic structure is straightforward. He is leaving Austria for Germany. His personal separation ends with this chapter.

The fourth chapter takes up the central sacrificial concern with food, thus the issue of “feeding” the nation and the “impending danger of hunger” (168). It considers how agricultural production could be increased to avoid “hunger” (172) and the possibility of “famine” (173). As one would expect, Hitler treats the topic in a superficially scientific way, arguing that increases in population require increases in available land, thus conquest. In subsequent years, Nazi policy did indeed involve considerable attention to food and the elimination of hunger, in connection with conquest. Thus, during the war, “foodstuffs were seized in vast quantities from the granaries of the Ukraine to feed the population at home”; similar policies were followed in Greece, and there were plans along these lines for Russia, as “food supplies at home constantly needed to be replenished from abroad” (Evans 26). Hitler’s advocacy of conquest here leads in an obvious way to heroic motifs, and Hitler does stress “heroic virtues” (197) in this chapter. But the focus on hunger and famine is, of course, bound up with sacrifice. Unsurprisingly, then, Hitler emphasizes sacrifice as well. Thus, he celebrates “the individual’s willingness to sacrifice itself” (197) and “the sacrifice of the personal existence” to preserve the group (198). He even goes so far as to claim that “the forces forming or otherwise

preserving a State . . . can be summed up with one single characterization: the individual's ability and willingness to sacrifice himself for the community" (199–200).

The chapter ends with the heroic structure once again. Hitler asserts that "heroic virtues" characterize "Aryan States" (in contrast with the "cunning" that characterizes "Jewish colonies of parasites"; 200–201). Yet, in looking at recent German history, he finds a growth of pacifism and a loss of martial commitment. He then returns to the metaphor of the body, asking how the "German people's political instincts" could "become so morbid"; how "the national body" could be inflicted with "poisonous ulcers"; how "a continuous flow of poison" could run through the "blood vessels of this one-time heroic body," leading to "paralysis" (201). These questions prepare for the following chapter, which treats the great war.

Over the next three chapters, Hitler tells the story of the heroism shown by German soldiers in the First World War, their bravery in prosecuting battle after battle "against a force superior in number and weapons" (215)—a standard heroic motif, as we have seen. He insists that Germany was not at all responsible for the outbreak of the war; it was entirely the fault of Germany's enemies (236). Here, too, his account is fully in keeping with the usual heroic structure. But, rather than the expected victory, earned (in Hitler's view) by the German troops, the whole enterprise was undermined by a sort of usurpation: "at the moment when the German divisions received their last instructions for the great attack, the general strike broke out in Germany" (257). This did not finish the heroic narrative, but instead put Germany in a position of devastation. Hitler's subsequent program involves ending the usurpation through the establishment of the proper leader (i.e., himself) and ending the devastation through sacrifice (especially the elimination of the putative seducers), then taking up the interrupted war and marching to victory.

In these chapters, in keeping with the sacrificial emplotment, Hitler does not fail to bring up hunger. For example, he says that "distress was very great everywhere" in Berlin; "The city of millions suffered hunger" (249). In keeping with this, the eighth chapter, which (along with the ninth) considers Hitler's early political activities, turns again to "the possible bases of a feeding of the German people" (281), his "fight" to secure "nourishment" for the people (288–89).

Chapter 10 brings us at last to the main concern of the book—the causes of the devastation of Germany, its "fall" (302), as he calls it, drawing on the body metaphor ("the fall of a body" [302]) and alluding to the central sacrificial narrative of Christianity. In discussing the topic, Hitler

elaborates on the bodily metaphor, referring to “the cure of an illness” and the necessity of finding the cause of that illness. In keeping with this, Hitler rejects the Marxist idea that “economy” is crucial, insisting instead that “factors of blood and race” are most important. (Hitler mentions “political” and “ethical-moral” factors as important as well. But, by the end of the analysis, he makes it clear that race is the definitive, fundamental factor.)

The first thing Hitler feels he has to establish is that the collapse of Germany was not due to a military defeat, but was “a consequence of other causes” (307). The crucial point here is that these other causes involve a fault on the part of the in-group. Thus, the devastation is the result of sin. Though Hitler often tries to recast his sacrificial narrative in plausibly scientific terms, toward the beginning of this chapter, he sets out the issue straightforwardly in terms of ethical causality (i.e., a causality of sin and punishment for sin): “the military defeat of the German people is not an undeserved catastrophe, but rather a deserved punishment by eternal retribution” (309). He goes on to contend that the “bottomless lying of Jewry and its Marxist fighting organization” (312) seduced the people. Hitler imputes to Jews what later came to be called the “big lie” technique, a central Nazi propaganda device, exemplified perfectly by Hitler’s statements about Jews. Specifically, Hitler claims that Jews were able to seduce people because “the great masses of a people may be more corrupt in the bottom of their hearts than they will be consciously and intentionally bad, therefore with the primitive simplicity of their minds they will more easily fall victims to a great lie than to a small one” (313).

By this point, readers will not be surprised to find that Hitler almost immediately turns to the metaphor of “national bodies” and their “diseases” (314). Once again, he insists that one must isolate the “causes” of the illness, the “contagious matter” in the “nation’s body” (314). He develops the metaphor in a peculiar way, saying that a particular problem arises when “an absolutely noxious poison” has been in the body too long. At a certain point, one no longer recognizes that it is “alien,” and instead “tolerates it” (315). This takes us to Hitler’s concern that Jews have become integrated into German society. Thus, they are difficult to recognize, difficult to distinguish and resist in their seductions, difficult to remove. As I have discussed in *The Culture of Conformism*, this sense of the out-group’s dangerous invisibility is regularly bound up with the assimilation of the out-group to Satan and with policies of expulsion and extermination (thus, in the terms of the present study, policies of nonelective alignment). The connection of this with purgative sacrificial employment should be clear.

The following section recurs to the issue of “daily bread” (315, 316). The image is, again, appropriate for sacrificial emplotment because of its emphasis on the basic necessity of food and its allusion to the Lord’s Prayer with its reference to “our sins.” This section also indicates what the first sin of the German people was—a sin denounced by Jesus himself. Specifically, “money became the god whom now everybody had to serve and to worship” (316). Along with this, the “hero” declined and the “Jew banker” rose (318). Hitler develops the point by drawing on a common motif from heroic tragicomedy. He sees one sign of social decline in the replacement of true heroes by fawning courtiers. The true heroes gave honest, critical advice to the monarch (see 323–24). With their replacement by bankers, that bravely disinterested honesty is lost. He goes on to discuss the importance of being willing to die for one’s master (327)—in this context, a heroic virtue, which had declined in Germany.

Hitler returns to the topic of food (330), opposing it to poison (330, 335), specifically, the “terrible poisoning of the health of the national body” (336). This allows Hitler to discuss the next cause of national decline—syphilis. Indeed, it turns out that syphilis is a part of the same complex, for syphilis results from “the mammonization of our mating impulse” in prostitution (337). It therefore takes part in the elevation of money to the status of God, characterized by Hitler as the “Judaization of our spiritual life” (337). He even goes so far as to say that the children produced by mammonized love are not “vigorous children of natural feeling”—presumably the children who would develop into valiant heroes. Rather, the children of the money worshipers and prostitutes are “miserable specimens of financial expedience” (337; this reasoning may suggest one source of Nazi views on the disabled).

On the other hand, however bound up with monetary considerations, the source of syphilis is a sexual sin—a widespread sexual sin of just the sort one expects to find in a sacrificial narrative. Hitler goes on to maintain that the struggle against syphilis is crucial to the future of the nation (339, 341). It will require “sacrificial measures . . . enormous sacrifices” (342).

But syphilis cannot be considered a true cause of the fall. In keeping with his racialist principles, Hitler maintains that “the illness of the body is here only the result of an illness of moral, social, and racial instincts” (349). The last are, of course, the most important in his scheme.

The following pages speak of various sorts of degeneration, emphasizing again “the service of money” and asserting directly that this service undermines “heroism” (364). He maintains that the Reichstag “sinned” in relation to the army (373), specifically in “the defense of the fatherland”

(375). Again, the two key narrative structures are intertwined. The cause of the fall in Hitler's sacrificial narrative is precisely what interrupts the heroic tragicomedy in the (tragic) middle. In this case, the sins were individualism (378), one of the great dangers facing in-group solidarity at all times, and internationalism—thus forms of sub- and supranational allegiance. Individualism was, in effect, a form of usurpation as it concerned political self-advancement and “the way towards the minister's seat” (378). In contrast with those who were seduced into these sins, the army, Hitler insists, retained its heroic “value” (383), taught “courage in a time” of “cowardice” (384), rejected the common commitment to one's “own ‘ego’” (384), and repudiated international “fraternity” (385). In other words, the army was the source of heroic ethics, and the enemy of threats against national identity, both supranational (class solidarity) and subnational/ usurping (egoism). Finally, the army was the one weapon in the fight for the “nourishment” of Germany (386). In short, the army alone did not sin.

Up to this point, Hitler has been addressing superficial reasons for the fall. At the end of this chapter, he announces that the “deepest and the ultimate cause” of the “ruin” was a matter of race, particularly a lack of attention to race “and its importance for the historical development of the people” (388). This leads to the culminating chapter of the first volume, the chapter treating nation and race.

Hitler begins this chapter with a sort of evolutionary view, insisting that Nature tends to “breed life . . . towards a higher level” (390). But in some instances this tendency is blocked by perverse interbreeding of species. This interbreeding includes that of races, which results in a “lowering” of the “higher race” along with “physical and mental regression” and, of course, “illness.” Once more, despite the general attempt to give his claims a scientific presentation, Hitler returns to ethical causality. Miscegenation, he claims, is “nothing less than sinning against the will of the Eternal Creator. This action, then, is also rewarded as a sin” (392). Here, the seduction by the alien tempter is extended from a seduction in belief (i.e., a seduction toward internationalism), then a seduction through prostitution, to a seduction into “interbreeding.” Later, in discussing colonial conquest, he returns to the same idea. He explains that the conquerors eventually “mix with the subjected inhabitants,” thereby ending “their own existence.” He goes on to invoke the Judeo-Christian paradigm of the sacrificial prototype. Specifically, he comments on the colonizer's loss of existence through miscegenation, stating that “the fall of man in Paradise has always been followed by expulsion from it” (400). The same image recurs a few pages

later, when Hitler writes that “The Aryan gave up the purity of his blood” and thus “also lost his place in the Paradise” (406).

Unsurprisingly, Hitler turns from this discussion of sin to a discussion of sacrifice. He begins by speaking of the parents’ “readiness to sacrifice . . . themselves” for their children, connecting this with their work seeking “food . . . for the young ones” (407). In the context of sacrificial narratives, the conjunction is clearly appropriate. Hitler goes on to celebrate the “will to sacrifice” (407) over against the concern with one’s “own ego” (408). He discusses “giving up one’s life for the existence of the community” as the “fulfillment of duty” (410) and explains that the triumph of “egoism” in a nation has the result that “people fall . . . out of heaven into hell” (412). By this point, the ethical causality is so obvious that it does not require comment.

At this stage in his argument, Hitler is faced with the problem of explaining just how Jews are to blame if Germans become egoistic. He solves the problem by sharply opposing Jews and Aryans in terms of self-sacrifice. The “will to sacrifice . . . his own life for others, is most powerfully developed in the Aryan” (408). In contrast, Jews are entirely individualistic (414). The seduction of the Aryan by the Jew is thus, in part, a seduction into “Jewish” individualism. (The point is made explicit only in the second volume; see 591.)

From this point, Hitler returns to body metaphors. He characterizes “the Jew” as “a *parasite* in the body of other peoples” (419), a “*bacillus*” that kills the “host people” from within (420), a “plague” (426), a “blood-sucker” who practices usury (426) and who takes the “blood” of the Aryan race. In collaborating with these foreign seducers, “German monarchs . . . sold themselves to the Devil” (428). This linking of Jews with devils is repeated in the subsequent pages (441, 447, 448). Hitler also elaborates on the ways in which Jews putatively defile the racial purity of Aryans—through rape, as well as prostitution, the importing of Africans, and so forth (448–49).

Hitler concludes the chapter with a restatement of his basic thesis, that the devastation of Germany was the result of “the non-recognition of the race problem and especially of the Jewish danger” (451). It was, in other words, an unwitting collaboration with “the internal enemy” (454). This resulted in a “sin against the will of eternal Providence” (452).

But what is one to do now? How was one to reverse the situation?

In the course of the chapter, Hitler suggests some responses to the devastation caused by the people’s sin. Most significantly, he refers to “making the acquisition of soil legally impossible” for Jews (427), which is to

say, excluding them from the national territory—just what the sacrificial narrative appears to require for the seducer. However, his development of the body metaphors and his account of miscegenation indicate that this is not a sufficient response. The final chapter of the first volume and the bulk of the second volume treat the development of the Nazi party, clearly intended as the solution to the problem, the way of achieving “the resurrection of our people” (500). But the current chapter ends with indications of the “final solution,” indications that follow directly from Hitler’s particular development of the sacrificial narrative.

First, continuing with the body metaphor, Hitler refers to “the various political doctrines which doctored about the German national body.” These treated only “the symptomatic forms of our general sickness, but passed blindly by the germ” (453). The implication here is clearly that the Nazi party will treat the true cause, the “germ” that has been isolated in the preceding pages. Insofar as the Satanic seducer is understood as this germ, there is, of course, only one “solution.” Though unnamed here, it is precisely the policy followed by the Nazis when they came to power—extermination. As Hitler puts it in the final chapter, the “international poisoners” of the German people must be “extirpated” (469).

But what of the other side? This is clearly a purgative version of the sacrificial narrative. Nonetheless, there are indications throughout that the in-group must sacrifice itself as well as the seducer. For example, the reader is prepared for this by Hitler’s emphasis on the Aryan’s innate capacity for self-sacrifice in service of the group. The penultimate section of the chapter ends with a suggestion of such self-sacrifice and its consequences. Referring to “the peoples oppressed by the Jew,” Hitler writes that “With the death of the victim this peoples’ vampire”—thus, the (Jewish) blood-sucker who causes their death—“will also die” (451). In short, the text suggests that the extermination of the seducer and the self-sacrifice of the victim must and will be combined to reverse the fall, thereby restoring and “resurrecting” Germany.

The chapter ends with a Nazi slogan, “One German State of the German Nation” (455 *altered*; 362). This is the alignment of state and “race” that will result, first, from the extermination of the tempter and national self-sacrifice, then from the completion of the heroic plot, which had been interrupted by temptation, sin, and punishment.

Through these chapters, then, the sacrificial structure is firmly established. Specified through bodily metaphors and Hitler’s fundamental explanatory principle—racial determination of all historical events—it has helped to shape the interpretation of history given in the book. Moreover, it

has helped to suggest particular actions as a response to that history—with terrible results, too well known to require reiteration.

GANDHI, FASTING, AND THE HEROISM OF COLLECTIVE SELF-SACRIFICE

Around the time I was writing the preceding analysis of *Mein Kampf*, I attended a talk by the influential political and cognitive literary critic, Elaine Scarry. Scarry mentioned that Gandhi had once made the following remark: “Among the many misdeeds of the British Rule in India, history will look upon the Act depriving a whole nation of arms as the blackest” (*Autobiography* 446). The worst thing the British did to India was to deprive Indians of weapons. I was distressed to hear this and felt that Scarry must be misrepresenting Gandhi. After all, even if he said such a thing, it seemed wildly inconsistent with his trademark advocacy of *ahimsā* or nonviolence. But I was teaching Gandhi that semester as well and, as I read more of his work and as I thought more about his life and practice, I realized that Scarry was right. This statement was not entirely anomalous or decontextualized. Moreover, this was not the only strangeness in Gandhi’s thought and work; it was not the only point that seemed difficult to integrate into an understanding of his politics.

Consider, for example, his obsession with chastity.⁹ Perhaps the strangest manifestation of this were his “brahmacharya experiments,” in which, in his late seventies, he slept naked with young women—most often his assistant, Manu—in order to test his ability to avoid sexual arousal (see Judith Brown 377–78). At least at the conscious level, his motivations for sleeping with Manu seem to have been antisexual, rather than sexual. Thus, in defending the practice, he affirmed the value of becoming a “eunuch,” not through surgery, but through “prayer” (Wolpert, *Gandhi’s* 229). Moreover, he seems to have believed that this practice would have beneficial social consequences. As Wolpert explains, “He appears to have hoped that sleeping naked with Manu, without arousing in himself the slightest sexual desire, might help him to douse raging fires of communal hatred in the ocean of India” (228). Related to this, there was his obsession with diet, his

9. Again, chastity is one of the primary virtues associated with the sacrificial narrative. In keeping with this, a virtual obsession with chastity is shared by some sacrificially oriented groups. Consider, for example, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), which pioneered suicide bombing. They forbid their members from having sex before the age of 25 (for women) or 28 (for men), and punish adultery by execution (Kennedy and Power 23).

concern about what foods contribute to lust and what foods have a cooling effect on the passions.

Of course, these are personal matters. Many political leaders have had peculiar sexual attitudes and many have had a complex relation to food. But, in Gandhi's case, these did not remain private. They pervaded his political life also, as his political use of fasting shows. Or consider his Satyagraha Ashram, established to embody the principles of Indian independence (see Judith Brown 100). Members of the ashram had to take six vows (see Wolpert, *Gandhi's* 84). Four have obvious bearing on social order and/or the struggle against colonialism: Truth, nonviolence, nonstealing, and nonpossession. The others, however, are less clearly relevant. These were "celibacy (even for married couples) and self-denial over food" (Judith Brown 100).

Then, there was his apparent superstition, at least what many people would consider superstition. Gandhi objected to scriptures when their claims were "opposed to trained reason" (quoted in Jordens 91). Yet he often made claims that would seem to stand against most views of "trained reason." We have already seen an instance of this in his peculiar contention that sleeping naked with young women would help end Hindu-Muslim violence. A claim such as this may seem to be a self-justifying pretense. But it is consistent with his proclamations on a range of other matters. For example, thinking of this sort was one basis of a well-known conflict between Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. As Ashis Nandy explains, the "best known of the controversies between Tagore and Gandhi centered around the Bihar earthquake of 1936, which killed thousands. Gandhi declared that the natural disaster was a punishment for the sin of untouchability" (280n.9; see also Das Gupta 45).

Gandhi was one of the most influential and effective political leaders of the modern period. He was a man of great intelligence and great practical ability. What, then, are we to make of the points just mentioned? Considered in reference to Gandhi himself, are they merely personal quirks, irrelevant to the larger structure of his political thought and action? Again, they seem to have been worked into that political thought and action too thoroughly to be dismissed in this way. Considered in reference to Gandhi's followers and his general success, are they mere incidentals that had no impact on the masses? This, too, seems implausible, given their pervasiveness in Gandhi's public discourse and his political practices.

As is no doubt already obvious, these apparent anomalies in Gandhi's statements and activities are not mere incidentals. Rather, they show us something about the way Gandhi thought through nationalism. They also

suggest part of the reason why his statements and activities resonated with ordinary people. Specifically, they show us that Gandhi's politics manifest an implicit sacrificial tragicomedy, in its collective self-punishment version.¹⁰

To discuss this, it is helpful to focus on a single text. But the choice is not simple. Though constantly busy with his political work, Gandhi was nonetheless a prolific writer. His collected writings, published by the government of India, sum to ninety fat volumes. Clearly, it makes no sense to try to cover even a representative portion of this. The question is—what would constitute an appropriate selection? An ideal work would be extended, but not too diffuse. It would treat his central concerns in a way that may be generalized to a range of political activities and connected to the thought and feelings of his followers. Indeed, we would not want a work that was private to Gandhi, but a work that had an impact on the people who made the independence movement—for, after all, it is that impact that makes Gandhi significant. For these purposes, no work could be superior to Gandhi's commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, initially delivered as a series of public lectures at his Satyagraha Ashram between February 24 and November 27, 1926. As I have already noted, Gandhi established the ashram on the basis of his principles for Indian independence. As Judith Brown puts it, through this ashram, Gandhi “tried to create an environment . . . where people could grow into servants of God and thus into servants of India” (199).

The *Bhagavad Gītā* was (and is) one of the most important works of Hindu scripture. It was particularly important among anticolonial authors, and some had already written about the book in a nationalist context—most notably Bal Gangadhar Tilak, “the greatest leader of the extremist wing of the Indian nationalist movement, which advocated militant overthrow of the British” (Minor 8; on Tilak's commentary on the *Gītā*, see Stevenson). It was a familiar and revered text for Gandhi's Hindu followers outside a nationalistic context as well. Moreover, it was a work that was specially important to Gandhi himself. As Jordens explains, “No book was more central to Gandhi's life and thought than the *Bhagavad Gita*. He constantly referred to it as his ‘spiritual dictionary’” (88). He brought this enthusiasm to his followers as well. “Communal recitation of the *Gita* was a regular

10. Like Hitler, Gandhi has been examined psychologically, and his nationalism has been treated by historians and political scientists. As with Hitler, the psychological approaches tend to be psychoanalytic, not cognitive, and the treatments of his nationalism do not touch on narrative. The most influential psychoanalytic treatment is that of Erikson. Useful mainstream accounts of his nationalism may be found in Wolpert (*Gandhi's*) and Judith Brown.

feature of life in his ashrams; in fact it was the principal religious ritual” (88). Indeed, Gandhi went so far as to argue that “schools should incorporate the study of the *Gita* into their curriculums” (90).

In this section, then, I shall focus on Gandhi’s lectures on this important scripture. However, before going on to this, we need to consider some of the cultural background that Gandhi brought to his reading of this text—in other words, some of what went into his cultural specification of the sacrificial emplotment of nationalism. In developing the sacrificial prototype, Gandhi drew particularly on Hindu ethical theory, the theory of dharma or duty.

National Dharma and Violence: Cultural Backgrounds to Gandhism

Traditional Hindu ethical theory divides ethical duties or dharmas into a number of broad categories. The largest or most encompassing division in Hindu ethical theory is between *swadharma* or self-dharma, the dharma that is particular to one as an individual, and *sādhāraṇadharmā*, universal dharma that applies to everyone. Swadharma includes several subcategories, such as “stage of life” dharma (e.g., the obligations of a student are not the same as those of a “householder” or family man/woman). Perhaps the most important of these subcategories is *varṇadharmā* or caste dharma, the duty that goes along with one’s caste. For example, a priest has the duty of performing rituals. Two sets of caste duties are particularly important for Gandhi—the dharma of the lowest caste, *śūdras* or servants, and the dharma of what might be called the political class, the *kṣatriyas* or warriors/rulers.

In effect, Gandhi generalized the duties of both *śūdras* and *kṣatriyas* to the entire population. In both cases, this gave rise to difficulties. *Śūdras* were supposed to serve the upper castes. But, if everyone is a servant, whom might they serve? This problem is easily solved in a nationalist context, for they are clearly supposed to serve the nation. Indeed, even within the traditional caste system, *śūdras*’ lives of service may be seen as a sort of ongoing self-sacrifice for the good of the society. In that way, there is a loose connection between this *śūdradharmā* and sacrificial narratives. Had Gandhi stopped with the generalization of *śūdradharmā*, then we might also expect him to repudiate caste, leveling everyone down to *śūdras*, eliminating the very idea of upper castes. In fact, Gandhi did no such thing. Rather, he strongly affirmed the importance of caste, as we will see. This

is in some ways unsurprising, if one keeps in mind the strict hierarchical ethics of both the heroic and sacrificial plots.

The generalization of *kṣatriyadharmā* created other, less easily resolved difficulties. The “*kṣatriyazation*” of nationalism—its transformation into a “warrior” movement—was advocated, explicitly or implicitly, by many Hindu nationalist leaders at the time. It was bound up with militarism and with what Ashis Nandy refers to as “impotent” violence, “such as the immensely courageous but ineffective terrorism of Bengal, Maharashtra and Panjab.” As Nandy explains, “Many nineteenth-century Indian movements of social, religious and political reform . . . tried to make *Kṣatriyahood* the . . . nearly exclusive indicator of authentic Indianness” (*Intimate* 7; on *kṣatriyazing* developments in Hinduism, developments that are inseparable from Indian acceptance of European colonialist ideas, see 24). The problem here is that *kṣatriyadharmā* is the *dharma* of violence, the *dharma* of warfare. Specifically, it is the duty of warriors/rulers to protect the nation against threats and to keep order in society. In other words, *kṣatriyadharmā* is the *dharma* of the heroic prototype. But, of course, Gandhi is most renowned for his advocacy of and strict adherence to nonviolence. This would seem to place him at the opposite pole from anything having to do with *kṣatriyadharmā*.

This apparent conflict is not new with Gandhi. It has one important source in Hindu ethical ideas themselves. Specifically, in addition to *varṇadharmā*, the other main source of Gandhi’s ethical development of nationalism was *sādhāraṇadharmā* or universal *dharma*. The two primary components of universal *dharma* are *ahiṃsā* (nonviolence) and truth (cf. O’Flaherty 96). As is well known, these were the two main pillars of Gandhi’s political thought and activism. Moreover, they are directly opposed to the violence and often deceitful tactical strategies that operate in *kṣatriyadharmā*. The point is obvious not only from a contemporary perspective. The conflict of universal *dharma* with self-*dharma* has been clear from early on in Hindu tradition. The opposition between *sādhāraṇadharmā* and *kṣatriyadharmā* has been recognized as particularly sharp.

Indeed, conflict in *dharma* is precisely what frames the *Bhagavad Gītā*, which is no doubt one reason it was so important for Gandhi. Specifically, the *Gītā* is a section of a long heroic epic, the *Mahābhārata*. In this epic, two families of cousins—the Pāṇḍavas (the “good guys,” at least superficially) and the Kauravas (the “bad guys”)—are about to engage in a war over their kingdom. Arjuna, one of the Pāṇḍavas, is ready to begin the battle. But suddenly he hesitates. He feels that it is a violation of his familial *dharma* to kill his cousins. His charioteer is Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of

the savior god, Viṣṇu. Kṛṣṇa responds to Arjuna's doubts by presenting a detailed treatment of metaphysics and ethics, the final conclusion of which is that Arjuna must follow his kṣatriyadharmā over all other dharmas.

Whatever one thinks of Kṛṣṇa's argument, it would still seem not to solve Gandhi's problem, since the issue addressed by Kṛṣṇa is not specifically that of universal dharma. Nor did Kṛṣṇa establish ahimsā as the foundation of his politics. This is precisely where the sacrificial narrative comes in. Gandhi can value and even generalize kṣatriyadharmā on the assumption that successful warfare is impossible in current circumstances. In that context, the generalization of kṣatriyadharmā becomes a matter of generalizing defense of one's nation and its structure through whatever means are likely to succeed. In a collective self-punishment narrative, those means are a matter of general and ongoing self-sacrifice. But how does ahimsā enter here? Again, in the collective self-punishment version, the out-group is irrelevant. Their supremacy is merely the byproduct of one's own sin. The penance for that sin must be entirely one's own. A rigorous form of self-punishment would strictly avoid pushing the blame onto the out-group and punishing them. Gandhi's insistence on ahimsā is, I believe, a development of this sacrificial idea through the Hindu notion of universal dharma. To affirm kṣatriyadharmā and nonviolence is, then, simply to take up a rigorous form of the collective self-punishment version of the sacrificial narrative. But, at the same time, this sacrificial emplotment does not entirely abandon the heroic emplotment that is so intimately bound up with kṣatriyadharmā. Specifically, Gandhi's sacrificial emplotment asserts a way of defending the nation in a context where the default heroic narrative cannot be pursued. Once again, in nationalism, the sacrificial narrative presupposes the heroic structure. Nationalists repudiate the heroic structure when they see victory as impossible—which returns us again to Gandhi's idea that the worst thing the British did to Indians was to disarm them.

*Starving for Freedom:
Understanding Gandhi Understanding War*

Again, Kṛṣṇa's task in the *Bhagavad Gītā* is to convince Arjuna that his dharma requires him to participate in a violent war. Given the usual understanding of Gandhi, one might expect him to begin his commentary with a strong statement against the militaristic conclusions of the book. In fact, Gandhi begins by apparently diverting the entire issue of real war.

Specifically, he claims to interpret the *Mahābhārata* battle as an inner or spiritual conflict between impulses toward dharma and impulses toward adharmā (the violation or opposite of duty). In connection with this, he indicates that the Kauravas are “evil” and the Pāṇḍavas are “good” (95).¹¹ Of course, such a polarization of values is just what one would expect from a heroic emplotment of this conflict. This already begins to suggest the presence of a heroic model. The relation of Gandhi’s interpretation to the heroic prototype, and the relation of both to his own nationalistic commitments, become clearer when, two pages later, he directly connects the Kauravas with the British colonial government (97). Indeed, here it becomes impossible to take seriously the idea that Gandhi is interpreting the *Gītā* as an allegory for struggles within an individual soul. He is, in fact, reading it as a text that bears directly on nationalism, on the colonial status of India and the aspirations of its people for political liberation. Given the historical context in which the talks were delivered, and given Gandhi’s own political career, most listeners would have tacitly understood this political context even without such an explicit connection.

Gandhi goes on to say that he will “leave aside” the issue of violence (95), hardly what one would expect. Moreover, he admits directly that the *Gītā* does not “prohibit physical fighting” (96). This apparent indifference to the issue of violence suggests that *ahimsā* is not the fundamental principle of his politics. However strongly held, Gandhi’s advocacy of nonviolence appears to have rested on some other principle. Perhaps this is the principle enunciated in Gandhi’s 1929 work on the *Gītā*. There, he asserts that “The author of the Mahabharata has not established the necessity of physical warfare; on the contrary he has proved its futility” (*CW* XLI 93). In this case, Gandhi’s objection to violence is not moral, but practical. Warfare fails; it is futile—precisely the view one would expect to lie behind a sacrificial nationalism. The notion echoes a passage in Gandhi’s widely influential *Hind Swaraj* of 1909. There, Gandhi draws on the usual heroic alignment of spiritual and moral values, characterizing the conflict between the British colonial government and the Indian people as a conflict between “the Kingdom of Satan” and the “Kingdom of God.” He goes on to explain that Indians who take up “modern methods of violence to drive out the English . . . are following a suicidal policy” (*CW* X 189).

Returning to our main text (Gandhi’s 1926 commentary on the *Gītā*), we find that his apparent acceptance of war in principle, if not in practice,

11. Unless otherwise noted, citations of Gandhi refer to Discourses on the “Gita,” *Collected Works* XXXII, 94–376.

is not confined to a few ambiguous statements at the outset. The first chapter ends with what certainly seems to be an advocacy of *kṣatriyadharmā* and war, at least in certain cases. Specifically, Gandhi concludes that “Arjuna . . . had no choice but to fight” (101).

Before continuing on to chapter 2, it is important to remark on one other passage in the opening chapter. When discussing the parallel between the Kauravas and the British, Gandhi also treats several characters who were fundamentally good and thus who should have been on the side of the Pāṇḍavas, but who joined the Kauravas. These characters, he argues, are parallel to the Indians who have given their support to the British. He concludes that evil cannot succeed on its own. Rather, it requires the cooperation of good men and women (see 97). Here, we see the fundamental characteristic of the sacrificial sin. We have been devastated by the out-group, but the out-group succeeded only because of the sin of the in-group, their error in accepting the seductions of the out-group.

Again, this view could develop in different ways, emphasizing the guilt of the enemy or that of the home society. Gandhi chose the latter. The departure of the English, who filled the tempter role here, remained crucial, as the slogan “Quit India” indicates. Nonetheless, Gandhi’s focus was on the in-group and the version of the sacrificial narrative that guided his work was consistent with that focus. In keeping with this, early in the second chapter, Gandhi explains that “If one must kill, one should kill one’s own people first” (103).

This hint of sacrificial concerns does not mean that Gandhi has left aside the heroic narrative. In fact, the second chapter elaborates on and generalizes Gandhi’s conclusion that it was necessary for Arjuna to take up arms and fight the battle. For instance, he explains that if one’s enemies “deserve to be killed, they ought to be killed; and one must not hesitate even if the entire world were likely to be destroyed in consequence” (106). More generally, “A Kshatriya has no duty higher than that of fighting in a righteous war” (116).

The *Gītā* stresses that Arjuna’s hesitation on the battlefield is the result of attachment—for example, his attachment to the people he would have to attack and possibly kill. Gandhi takes the extreme stand of the heroic narrative on this, insisting that, “Should it become necessary to cut off, with a sword, one’s father’s head, one must do so if one has a sword and is a Kshatriya” (103). In keeping with this, Gandhi stresses the importance of eliminating egoistic attachment. Indeed, this is precisely what makes violence morally acceptable: “If a person remains unconcerned with defeat or victory . . . he commits no sin in fighting” (116).

Gandhi elaborates on the changes in attitude and emotion that result from ending egoistic attachment. Given common views on Gandhi's politics, one might expect these changes to be a matter of fostering, say, peace and empathy. In fact, he says nothing of the sort. He could be speaking either to a warrior or to a sacrificial victim when he explains that detachment should lead to "submission" (105) and the elimination of "fear" (108). Just after this, he urges that we should behave mechanically, allowing Kṛṣṇa to act through us as his instruments. This is, of course, the same Kṛṣṇa who, in the *Gītā*, is arguing that Arjuna should begin the massively destructive *Mahābhārata* war.

Gandhi goes on to indicate that we not only need to rid ourselves of egoistic attachments and to have faith in God. We also need to "have faith" in the "spinning-wheel movement" (121). The instance is specific, but the implication is general. Gandhi is suggesting that the abandonment of egoistic attachment should be accompanied by a commitment to nationalistic activity—including a pragmatic commitment to the success of that activity. In "Anasaktiyoga," he perhaps makes the point more clearly. There, he insists that one must renounce the fruit of one's actions, but one should absolutely not be indifferent to the results of one's actions (*CW* XLI 97). At first, this may seem contradictory. However, the point is that, like a soldier or a sacrificial victim, one must renounce any individual gain, but one must be fully committed to achieving the goals of one's actions, for the goals benefit the entire group.

As the preceding discussion indicates, the early passages of Gandhi's commentary are oriented more toward heroic than toward sacrificial narratives. There are, however, a few suggestions that the heroic emplotment is merely background to the sacrificial narrative. We have already noted one good instance of this, when Gandhi says, "If one must kill, one should kill one's own people first" (103). The comment makes perfect sense in a sacrificial context, but would otherwise appear obscure. Subsequently, Gandhi makes a more directly sacrificial comment when he remarks that "We shall breathe life into the Ashram [a sort of synecdoche for India] by laying down our own lives" (110). He also alludes to the Judeo-Christian myth of the Fall, the first part of the paradigmatic Christian sacrificial narrative. Specifically, Gandhi says that we must renounce the fruit of our work because God has ordered us not to "pluck a fruit from the garden" (124).

More significant, Gandhi goes on to discuss at length a verse that refers to someone who fasts. (The English version misleadingly translates the Sanskrit *nirāhārasya* [see Sargeant 144] as "starves his senses" [131]). It is

not clear from the verse whether Kṛṣṇa is or is not a proponent of fasting. It is clear that, in Kṛṣṇa's view, fasting is an inadequate or insufficient spiritual practice, since it eliminates experience of sense objects without eliminating the taste for those objects. The taste is eliminated only by the experience of "the Supreme." Gandhi, however, sees Kṛṣṇa as stating that we should fast, that it is a crucial part of striving to experience the Supreme. Though this is a possible meaning of the passage, Gandhi's interpretation is clearly influenced by his prior conceptions—specifically, the narrative prototype through which he is implicitly structuring his ideas about nationalism. Thus, Gandhi says that fasting should help free us from desire and should wither our appetite. He even represents the enlightened person as one who is indifferent as to "whether he eats or does not eat" (132). The ethics of self-deprivation, specifically self-deprivation of food—thus one important part of the ethics of the sacrificial narrative—could hardly be clearer. Gandhi connects self-indulgence in food with sexual self-indulgence as well, thereby interrelating the two most standard sins of the sacrificial narrative. In commenting on the immediately preceding verses, Gandhi had introduced the issue of food, though it had no evident bearing on the verses then being explicated. He stated that one should not eat too much, explaining that "a boy who eats till he is full cannot preserve celibacy" (130).

Gandhi develops the discussion of fasting to some rather extreme conclusions. Once egoistic attachment vanishes—a liberation to which fasting contributes powerfully—then, he tells us, "the body" will "cease to exist" (136). Indeed, if we find it impossible to control our senses "we should give up food altogether" (131). One should even be willing "to stake one's all and perish" in a fast (135). While not literally urging suicide, Gandhi's orientation in these passages is clearly moving in the direction of suicide. The discussion is perhaps influenced by Jain self-starvation or *sallekhana*, a religious practice aimed at spiritual purification and liberation in death (for a discussion of this practice, see Dundas 155–56). In any case, this is just the sort of idea one would expect to find in a writer relying on sacrificial emplotment.

The connection between fasting and nationalist sacrificial emplotment becomes more explicit in the concluding pages of the chapter. Gandhi discusses "the ideal for the Satyagraha Ashram," thus the ideal, not only for spiritual achievement, but for political activism on behalf of India. This ideal is precisely the ideal he has been discussing, the ideal of those who "eat sparingly" (143), the ideal of those who take on "voluntary suffering" (142n.4). More significant, Gandhi refers to the activism and ultimate success of the nationalist movement in clearly sacrificial narrative terms.

Skeptics, he explains, claim that “we cannot win liberty by keeping fasts.” But, Gandhi affirms, “we shall get” liberty by those fasts (142). On the next page, he repeats the point, claiming that “we can achieve self-realization through fasting and spinning” and that “self-realization necessarily implies swaraj” (143), that is, national independence.

In connection with this emphasis on fasting, it is important to recall that hunger was a pressing issue in India. Moreover, the extent and intensity of hunger were bound up with the political condition of the nation. On the relation of famine in India to British colonialism, consider two brief examples. In 1879, when Gandhi was a child, the viceroy removed import duties on British cotton, “despite India’s desperate need for more revenue in a year of widespread famine” (Wolpert, *New* 248). In 1895, when Gandhi was a young man, famine began to spread “to virtually all of the Deccan.” This was a result in part of monsoon failures, but it was equally a result of “grossly inflated home charges [that] had consumed all of India’s grain surplus” (Wolpert, *New* 267). In an analysis of colonialism and hunger written in Gandhi’s own time, Dutt argues that, under the colonial practices of British rule, “any nation on earth would suffer from . . . recurring famines” (vol. I, xvi). Thus, here too the sacrificial emplotment of nationalism is bound up, not only with a sense of military despair but with a history of widespread hunger as well.

The chapter ends with a return to hints of suicide with the assertion—again, good advice to a soldier or a sacrificial victim—that “our bodily existence is not a thing to be cherished” (146).

The third chapter takes up the theme of service, thus shifting away from *ksatriyadharmā* to *śūdradharmā*. In keeping with this, there is a corresponding shift from talk about war to talk about sacrifice. The theme is broached first in the introduction to the chapter. There is a brief return to the heroic when he comments that “There can be no hypocrisy in ceaselessly fighting the enemy who holds us in his grip” (149). But the following page takes up sacrifice (*yajña*) and the theme is developed through the rest of the chapter. Perhaps the most important assertion comes right at the outset. Gandhi gives a perfect statement of the collective self-punishment version of the sacrificial plot when he writes that “it is not a true sacrifice in which we kill other creatures” (153).¹² This is, of course, a perfectly logical point, and one that radically separates self-punitive sacrificial emplotment from its purgative counterpart.

12. This particular sentence refers to animal sacrifices. But the encompassing paragraph refers to the killing of humans. Thus, the general principle is clearly meant to apply to all other creatures, not merely animals.

Later, in a remarkable passage, Gandhi indicates his acceptance of moral causality and he does so in connection with drought and famine. He begins with a quotation from the *Gītā*: “From food springs all life, from rain is born food; from sacrifice comes rain” (160). He then says that “there would be no rains if people did not perform *yajna* [sacrifice]” (160). He goes on to discuss earthquakes, maintaining that “If a nation is sunk in sin and God wants to save it, He might send an earthquake with that aim” (165). He ends this part of the discussion by considering the possibility of rain having a “connection . . . with whether we lead sinful or virtuous lives” (167).

In the course of this chapter, Gandhi recapitulates some of the themes we have already treated—restricted eating (169), the necessity of Arjuna fighting the battle (172–73), acting without fear (178), and so on. He stresses the importance of sexual abstinence as well, even establishing as an ideal the “man who has made himself a eunuch” (150). In keeping with the underlying heroic structure, he in effect supports violence, in part by equivocating on the term *violence*, when he claims that “Violence does not consist in the act of cutting off someone’s head; it consists in the motive behind the act” (179). At one point, he returns to the topic of making oneself into an instrument or tool. Interestingly, he uses the image of a spinning wheel. Given the nationalistic associations of that piece of equipment, the image suggests that one should be like a tool, not only for God, but for the nationalist movement as well. He also repeats the connections among sacrificial self-denial, self-realization, and political independence.

Toward the end of the chapter, Gandhi turns from issues of food and sacrifice to sexuality. In a pun, he directly opposes the rule of *kāma* or sexual pleasure to the rule of *Rāma* (184–85). *Rāma* is, like *Kṛṣṇa*, an incarnation of *Viṣṇu*. The perfection of his rule is proverbial and “the rule of *Rāma*” is widely used to refer to the ideal society. Gandhi’s pun, then, not only associates sexuality with sin, but opposes such sin to social well-being—once again, a standard theme in sacrificial thought. Following this, he identifies the “baser . . . impulses” as “demonic” (186).

The main sacrificial themes are all present at this point, and the rest of the book more or less recapitulates these points. This fits with Gandhi’s own assessment of the *Gītā* itself—specifically, that, after the early chapters, “Krishna had nothing further to add” (quoted in Jordens 94). It is nonetheless worth following out some variations and extensions of these themes.

Early in the fourth chapter, Gandhi returns to moral causality, when he explains that he was eager to undertake “penance” that would put an end

to Hindu/Muslim conflict (190). He extends the point a few pages later, maintaining that, when adharmic behavior spreads throughout society, some people begin to practice austerities and through their self-mortification “generate goodness in the world” (193). This is, of course, the positive side of moral causality and the culmination of the sacrificial plot. While sin leads to communal devastation, self-sacrifice leads to communal well-being.

Subsequently, Gandhi turns again to sacrifice and the relation of sacrifice to self-denial. He particularly stresses chastity, thus reintroducing the antisexual theme. He even goes so far as to claim that “It is not natural for human beings to violate *brahmacharya*” (210; *brahmacharya* is sexual abstinence in devotion to study). He implicitly addresses suicide when he refers to how someone may become “desperate” in his or her struggle against desire, especially sexual desire, and undertake “an indefinite fast” in order “to stop all organs from functioning” (214). (Being a prudent political organizer, he does go on to mention “the *yajna* of money,” which may be performed by people who wish to “let their wealth be shared by others” [214].) Toward the end of the chapter, he returns to the topic of food, saying that animals live by food, but “Man does not live by bread alone.” Rather, humans live by performing sacrifice (219). Gandhi links the performance of sacrifice with nationalism two sentences later by referring to the spinning wheel, a central symbol of Indian nationalism and a central part of Gandhi’s nationalist program.

Chapter 5 opens with a long meditation on eating. Gandhi presents this as if it were a comment on the opening verse of the fifth chapter of the *Gītā*. But there is only the most general connection between the two. It seems clear that Gandhi has brought to the text his own presuppositions about the centrality of food to self-discipline, presuppositions that are bound up with the sacrificial prototype. Unsurprisingly, he argues that one must detach oneself from eating, eat only as if one were performing a sacrifice, and so on (222). He subsequently connects this with the self-punitive theme, though in a much more positive way than is common. Specifically, he explains that, if one must choose between giving food to an enemy and to a friend, one must give food to the enemy (231). This is the positive correlate of the self-punitive sacrificial injunction that one’s in-group must sacrifice from itself, not punish the out-group.

Chapter 6 continues the theme of food. Gandhi has to deal with a passage from the *Gītā* in which Kṛṣṇa says that one must neither eat too much nor fast too much (243). This seems to be perfectly reasonable advice. But it does not entirely fit the sacrificial approach adopted by Gandhi in the

rest of the work. Gandhi begins by accepting Kṛṣṇa's statement. But he then immediately denies it, urging his audience to undertake ascetical practices. He tells them, "you should not spare yourself any harshness in striving for self-purification" (244). Indeed, he explicitly brings up suicide here. Speaking of a person "who, however hard he tries, cannot acquire control over his senses," Gandhi says, "let such a person certainly undertake long fasts, even if his body should perish in consequence" (243).

Toward the end of the chapter, Gandhi takes up the theme of obedience to God, here in a way that relates it directly to the submerged heroic plot. Specifically, he refers to the dutiful devotee as "a soldier in God's army" (252). The image may initially seem odd, given Gandhi's emphasis on such matters as fasting. But in the broader context, it suggests once again that the nationalistic sacrificial narrative presupposes a nationalistic heroic narrative.

Chapter 7 stresses the relation between national and individual suffering, a crucial link in sacrificial emplotment. In connection with this, chapter 8 lays particular stress on individual liberation. Most significantly for our purposes, in discussing this topic, Gandhi uses imagery that bears on the independence struggle. For example, he compares ordinary life to "one long imprisonment" (270). Thus, sacrifice is what releases one from imprisonment—presumably both individual and national.

More important, this chapter returns to the topic of moral causality, which Gandhi accepts unequivocally. Thus, he writes that "If we get a disease, we should believe that we ourselves are the cause of it." He goes on to say that we should "believe that our illness is the result of our sins" (265). Though he is apparently speaking of individuals with medical conditions, the relation to collective suffering is clear. In a fascinating passage, Gandhi connects this directly with, of all things, fear. "If we have any fear whatever in our heart," he claims, "that too is a form of evil and we suffer from many serious diseases because of it" (265). It is as if a sort of cowardice in battle is the sin of the nation, the sin that has made the heroic solution impossible and requires a sacrificial solution. Gandhi goes on to link this to suicide as well. Specifically, he argues that anyone who has "overcome his evil desires . . . will refuse to be cured" by physicians. Rather, he will insist that "when the evil in him has disappeared, he will be all right." Gandhi concludes, "If, as a result of this attitude, he dies, he will welcome death" (266).

Chapter 9 takes up a corollary of the identity between ātman (the individual soul) and brahman (the ultimate spiritual reality), an identity affirmed in certain schools of Hindu philosophy. This corollary is the

ultimate unity of good and evil. Gandhi, following traditional Hindu principles, explains that God must encompass not only all good, but all evil as well (282). In consequence, we should not view “even the most wicked of men as wicked” (285). In the first chapter, Gandhi had separated good and evil rather clearly. He linked evil with the Kauravas and the British government. Correlatively, he linked good with the Pāṇḍavas and, by implication, the Indian nationalists. That was tacitly within the context of the heroic prototype. Having shifted to the sacrificial prototype, the issue of wickedness changes. It is now important to set aside ideas about British evil, because here the nation needs a sacrifice. As we have already seen, for Gandhi, a “true” sacrifice is not a sacrifice of others. Rather, it is a sacrifice of ourselves. As such, it is not based on identifying others as the source of evil. Rather, it is based on a recognition of our own sinfulness.

Here, one might wonder about the precise relation between the heroic emplotment that seemed to characterize Gandhi’s discussion at the outset and the sacrificial emplotment that appears prominent at this point. Unsurprisingly, it is the cross-culturally standard relation. Specifically, Gandhi writes that “Knowing that there is no limit to the power of God, we should submit to violence if anyone attacks us, without offering violence in return.” This seems to be a matter of pure ethical principle. But, in fact, it is a barely concealed expression of despair over the possibility of military victory. In the next sentence, Gandhi tells his audience, “If we attempt to resist Him with violence, God will humble our pride” (292). In case this still seems to be a matter of general principle, one need only recognize that Gandhi’s claim cannot possibly apply to both sides. The clear implication is that the enemies who attack “us” (i.e., India) will win if we try to engage in a war. Gandhi does not say that God will humble the pride of both the attackers and the people attacked. He does not say that the pride of the British will be humbled in a battle. Logically, the point does not seem to make much sense. But, once again, it makes perfect narrative sense. We have sinned. Thus, we need to make amends, not fight a war that we will certainly lose. Here, we see the basic principle of the shift from the heroic to the sacrificial plot—not only in Gandhi’s thought, but generally. The heroic plot assumes that God is on our side. The sacrificial plot assumes that, however special we are to God, He has (temporarily) withdrawn His support due to our sin.

Chapter 11 treats Gandhi’s decision not to flee a predicted flood (see 295). He allows other people to leave, but he does not undertake an evacuation. The practice here is a concrete illustration of his acceptance of moral causality. Fleeing the projected flood would, presumably, be even worse than accepting medicine when one is sick. It would seem that one should

rather work on purifying oneself so that the flood is not necessitated by one's inner evil. Unsurprisingly, at this point, Gandhi's first advice to his followers is that they should observe restraint in eating, that they should not eat "to gratify your palate" (295).

Chapter 12 emphasizes nonviolence, but it does so in a peculiar way, a way that is more consistent with warfare than one might initially imagine. Specifically, Gandhi adjures his followers to free themselves "from all thoughts of violence" (302). *Prima facie*, it seems that nothing could be more opposed to violence and warfare. But, in fact, it is precisely this absence of violent thoughts that allows Arjuna to engage in the battle. By freeing himself from all *thoughts* of violence, he frees himself from attachment to violence. He is thereby able to fulfill his *kṣatriyadharmā* with purity. Once again, Gandhi's stance against violence is more consistent with the narrative presuppositions of sacrificial narrative than with the pure logic of moral imperatives. In keeping with this, the chapter ends with another affirmation of caste *dharma*: "All of us have our appointed tasks, as Brahmins or Kshatriyas, Vaisyas or Sudras. Anyone who does his work without hope of reward and in a disinterested spirit is a *bhakta* [devotee] of God" (305). It is important to note in this context that the specific form of attachment decried in the *Gītā* is attachment that *inhibits* acting violently; it is the attachment that initially leads Arjuna to set down his weapons and refuse to fight.

Chapter 13 in effect takes up the sorts of argument that the priest might make to the a sacrificial victim.¹³ This is unsurprising, as all Indians are potential sacrificial victims in a collective self-punishment version of the sacrificial narrative. Indeed, some of Gandhi's statements hardly make sense outside that context. For example, what is one to make of the notion that a person who realizes some basic principles of nonattachment necessarily "starts with the thought, 'I am sin'" (307)—not "I have sinned" or "I do sin," but "I am sin"? The only one who "is" sin is the sacrificial victim, for one of the standard functions of the scapegoat is to represent all the sins of the community. For example, in some Yoruba ceremonies, the scapegoat carries the sins out of the community by being driven into the bush (see, for example, the ritual represented in Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*). In other cases, the scapegoat may be killed in a symbolic destruction of the sins he or she represents. In any event, it seems to be only in the context of

13. On arguments of this sort, consider, for example, the Kondh, one of the "tribal" peoples of India, who practiced human sacrifice into the nineteenth century. In the Kondh ritual, the priest would try to convince the sacrificial victim of the necessity of the sacrificial death (see Mahapatra xix–xx).

sacrificial narrative that one can reasonably think of oneself as being sin. Indeed, Gandhi immediately connects this idea that “I am sin” with moral causality, asking “Why is it, we should ask ourselves, that we are afflicted with all manner of diseases?” (307).

Gandhi goes on to make some metaphysical sense of the idea that “I am sin” by maintaining that egoism is the source of sin. As a consequence of this, “There is no sin where there is no consciousness of the ‘I’” (310). What is interesting here is the ambiguity of the statement. Selfless detachment—precisely what one desires in a soldier or sacrificial victim—presumably results in this absence of ego-consciousness and ends one’s selfish, thus sinful behavior. However, the absence of ego-consciousness, and the absence of sinful behavior, are produced even more fully by death, the end and goal of the scapegoat.

Gandhi concludes the chapter by connecting the theme of egoism with moral causality. A person who is “free from egotism . . . does not suffer because of old age and disease” (313). Indeed, such a person turns out to be the perfect sacrificial victim, for he “is not attached to his son or wife or home” (313). At the same time, such a person is a perfect soldier—recall that Arjuna’s hesitation before the war was an aversion to harming his own relatives.

The fourteenth chapter reiterates many of these ideas, stressing three “virtues.” One is “sincerity.” This seems to bear more on political leadership and the danger of hypocrisy than any issues we have been considering. However, the other virtues fit the present account nicely. Outside a discussion of heroic and sacrificial narrative, one might expect Gandhi’s prime virtues to be, say, compassion and generosity or something of that sort. Instead, he names “fearlessness” and “humility” (320). Fearlessness is the most obviously crucial virtue for both the soldier and the sacrificial victim. But it must be conjoined with humility, for humility is what guarantees obedience to one’s superiors. Pride, in this context, is almost as grievous a fault as cowardice.

Chapter 15 further extends some of the preceding points. In keeping with the idea that the sacrificial narrative presupposes an underlying heroic narrative, Gandhi suggestively refers to “the weapon of non-cooperation” (322). More significant, he explains that the perfectly detached person is one who is “not fear-struck but serene at the moment of death” (323)—in effect, a description of the perfect sacrificial victim.

Chapter 16 plunges us back into moral causality. Toward the beginning of the chapter, Gandhi tells his audience, “I would ask every person who suffered from a disease if he was free from attachments and aversions” (327). He goes on to make the link between sexual sin and communal

suffering more explicit, stating that “Sexual indulgence necessarily leads to death” (328). He explains that the point is not merely individual, but has broad, social consequences. “If people gave themselves up to [sexual indulgence], God’s rule in the world would end and Satan’s prevail.” In contrast, chastity “leads to immortality” (327).

In chapter 17, he connects sexual sin with food and fasting. Specifically, he explains that the eating of sweets is not conducive to chastity. He then urges his followers to eat “bitter, sour and saltish foods” instead (333). The chapter ends with a repetition of Gandhi’s advocacy of extreme selflessness. Speaking once again as if he is addressing a sacrificial victim, he urges his listeners to think of themselves as “ciphers” (336).

The eighteenth chapter reiterates many of the main sacrificial themes. For example, in keeping with a pattern we have come to expect at this point, he takes up a series of verses that treat a range of topics, such as meditation, solitude, restraint in speech, and so forth. One item in this list bears on diet. Gandhi virtually ignores everything on the list except diet. He discusses at length the importance of limiting one’s intake of food. In a particularly striking passage, he criticizes himself bitterly for having eaten a date that very day (346).

Gandhi ends this chapter by affirming that Arjuna is right to take up his weapons again and fight. He writes that “he who has pure knowledge and the necessary energy to act upon it, that is, has taken up a bow and arrow, will never depart from the path of morality” (350). The passage seems odd if we take Gandhi to be advocating nonviolence as a foundational moral principle. But it makes perfect sense when we understand his advocacy of nonviolence as deriving from a sacrificial employment of anticolonial nationalism and when we recall that this sacrificial employment is merely a conditional deviation from an underlying default mode of heroic employment.

The Conclusion goes over some of the main themes more systematically. Toward the beginning, Gandhi again takes up the issue of violence, treating it in a manner consistent with the sacrificial narrative. Thus, he claims that “violence committed for the sake of *yajna* [sacrifice] is not violence” and he allows for forms of violence that do not involve “the intention . . . to give pain” (353). The second point suggests the usual defensive stance of the home society in heroic employments. It is, after all, only the invader who intends to give pain. Our side is engaged in self-defense and merely wishes to end the unprovoked attack from the enemy. When we give pain, it is an unfortunate side effect of self-protection.

In the following pages, Gandhi pays particular attention to hierarchy, in a manner directly recalling the military discipline of the heroic plot and its

valorization of obedience. Gandhi's ideal person "will not even think what his duty is." How, then, will such a person act? Will he or she be filled with spontaneous compassion or driven by a repulsion toward violence? No. Such a person will act "only as directed by others" (354). Here, Gandhi considers the difference between Protestants and Catholics. He explains that the Pope may be immoral. In consequence, a Protestant would urge Christians not to follow the corrupt Pope, following instead their own conscience. But Gandhi opts for following the orders of the spiritual leader. Following one's own conscience is not consistent with living as a "cipher" (355). It may no longer come as a surprise that when living as a cipher and following the direction of one's spiritual leader, one's acts are, by definition, nonviolent (354–55). In a revealing metaphor, which he had already used in an earlier talk, Gandhi explains that, when we do something as sacrifice, we "enlist ourselves as soldiers in God's army" (355). He goes on to explain that, if we have no ego-involvement in what we do, then "even the most dreadful-seeming act may be regarded as an act of ahimsa" (356). He subsequently connects this with varṇadharmā, caste dharma. He insists once again that swadharmā—a person's own dharma, which includes caste dharma—should not be violated. He explains that "Our duty is what society assigns to us" and the "definition" of swadharmā is that "one must do the work assigned to one by one's superior" (369). This is true even for work that "smells of violence" (370). The Conclusion does, however, include a brief reference to the futility of warfare (360), in keeping with the sacrificial preference of the lectures as a whole.

In short, the final section of Gandhi's commentary not only recapitulates the sacrificial themes, but reemphasizes the close connection between a sacrificial politics and a heroic politics. Indeed, in keeping with an analysis in terms of narrative prototypes, it indicates that, to alter von Clausewitz's famous phrase, sacrifice is the continuation of war by other means.

Before concluding, it is worth remarking briefly on a case of Gandhi's practical activism. Gandhi's satyagraha campaign against the regulations governing salt provides a perfect illustration. As Wolpert points out, this was "Gandhi's most famous and difficult struggle against" the British empire (*Gandhi's* 144). Judith Brown explains that, after Gandhi's death, Jawaharlal Nehru considered it the "episode which best recalled the nature and impact" of Gandhi's work (237). Less than four years after the lectures we have been considering, Gandhi set aside many oppressive British laws and practices to focus on one that concerned food—the regulation of salt. (Recall that Gandhi found salty foods less objectionable than sweet foods, on the grounds that they are more conducive to chastity [333].) Brown

explains that he announced the campaign against these regulations at the Satyagraha Ashram, stating that “he and a column of satyagrahis would march from the ashram, carrying copies of the *Gita*” (236). In discussing the campaign, he made direct reference to the hunger that triggers sacrificial narratives, maintaining that the salt regulations “reach even the starving millions” (quoted in Wolpert, *Gandhi’s* 143). The campaign involved the sorts of suicidal self-sacrifice that are definitive of the sacrificial narrative and that require the reduction of the self to a cipher. But it did so in a manner that is reminiscent of a war. For example, before the campaign, Gandhi explained that they “may have to see . . . hundreds and thousands being done to death during the campaign” (quoted in Wolpert, *Gandhi’s* 147)—a comment that one might expect more before a battle than before a sacrifice. Subsequently, he said that “My heart now is as hard as stone. I am . . . ready to sacrifice thousands and hundreds of thousands of men if necessary” (148). When people did die, he implicitly revealed the reliance of a nationalistic sacrificial narrative on a nationalistic heroic narrative. For example, when two young men were killed, Gandhi “congratulated their parents ‘for the finished sacrifices of their sons,’” going on to explain that “A warrior’s death is never a matter for sorrow” (149). The culmination of this campaign was reached at Dharasana on May 21, 1930, when a group of Gandhi’s followers marched to “the giant salt depot protected by armed constables and helmeted British police officers” (151). In one of the most famous events of the Indian independence struggle, the marchers offered no resistance, not even raising their arms in self-protection as the police cracked their skulls. As one protestor collapsed, another would march into the vacated space, showing no fear during this “brutal massacre of innocents” (151), this perfect, self-punitive sacrificial offering.

In this chapter, I hope to have shown something about Hitler and Gandhi. Specifically, I hope to have shown the internal consistency of their thought and action, even at those points where it seems contradictory. This is not the consistency of strict normative principles and inferential logic. It is, rather, the consistency of a sacrificial narrative prototype, embedded in a (frustrated) heroic prototype, and specified through cultural principles. For example, Gandhi’s apparent inconsistency on the issue of military strength, his strange statements about an earthquake as punishment for sin, his technique of fasting, and a range of other seemingly disparate ideas and tactics all fit together in this context. In short, I hope to have increased our understanding of these political figures.

At the same time, I hope to have explained something about the success of these figures. Hitler and Gandhi had mass, nationalist followings. Needless to say, different individuals were attracted by different aspects of their thought and action. But to some extent, the many elements that made up their political programs and strategies must have resonated fairly widely. In both cases, this resonance derived, at least in part, from the universal narrative prototypes on which they drew. Moreover, in both cases, those prototypes and their specific relation to one another were triggered by a particular history, a history marked by hunger and inseparable from a sense of military despair. In this way, I hope that the analysis contributes to our understanding of these nationalist movements.

Finally, I hope to have advanced our knowledge about this profoundly important form of nationalism, beyond these particular cases. Specifically, I hope to have demonstrated that nationalist activists and ordinary people regularly emplot nationalism in terms of the sacrificial prototype. They commonly do this in the context of a national history marked by salient instances of famine or faminelike hunger. Even more important, sacrificial emplotment becomes dominant among activists and ordinary people in conditions of social devastation and military despair, thus despair over successful heroic emplotment, with its comic conclusion aided by divine preference. Despite that despair, this emplotment does not entirely repudiate the heroic prototype. Rather, politicians and citizens continue to draw on heroic narrative as an underlying or default structure. In connection with this, I hope to have clarified the two opposed versions of sacrificial emplotment—purgative and penitential—which are themselves fostered in part by particular historical conditions. In each of these versions, and in their combination, sacrificial emplotment is highly consequential, not only for the expression of nationalism in fiction, but, far more important, for nationalist thought and action in real, worldly politics. Indeed, within the past century, specifications of the sacrificial prototype have helped transform the lives, and have contributed to the terrible deaths, of millions of people around the world.