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The Dualisms of Capitalist Modernity

Reflections on History, the Holocaust, and Antisemitism

Moishe Postone

This chapter seeks to relate historical changes in public responses to the Holocaust and understandings of antisemitism, especially on the left, to the historically changing configurations of capitalist modernity since 1945.[1] Thinking about the two together can be clarifying: public responses to the Holocaust have tended to be structured by an opposition between abstract modes of universalism and concrete particularism – an opposition that also is constitutive of modern antisemitism. These responses have shifted with and are related to the changing configurations of capitalist modernity from the statist Fordist–Keynesian configuration of the 1950s and 1960s to a subsequent neoliberal one. Consideration of these large-scale configurations can illuminate the historical character of those responses; at the same time examination of those responses can shed light on these larger historical configurations. This problem complex can be fruitfully approached on the basis of a critical theory of capital, on the one hand, and one of antisemitism, on the other.

Within the framework of a critical theory of capital the opposition between abstract modes of universalism and concrete particularism is neither ontologically given nor historically contingent but is intrinsic to the fundamental forms that structure capitalism, namely, the commodity and capital.[2] Such an analysis grasps *both* terms of the opposition –

[1] I would like to thank Mark Loeffler and Fabian Arzuaga for important critical feedback.

[2] Although I cannot elaborate here, they can be related to the "double character" of those structuring forms as being both abstract/general and concrete/particular. Cf. Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

abstract universality and concrete particularity – as remaining bound within the framework of capitalist modernity, however much positions based on each of them have understood themselves to be fundamentally "critical" or "radical," pointing beyond the existing order.

This essay seeks to problematize such "critical" positions by highlighting the one-sided character of each and by drawing attention to a historical shift from the predominance of critiques based on abstract universalism, characteristic of classical liberal thought and, with important differences, working-class movements, to the ascendancy of positions focused on concrete particularity, such as those expressed by liberation struggles that can be deemed anticolonial in the broadest sense. By suggesting that both sorts of responses remain immanent to capitalism, to its double character, the approach presented here problematizes the relation of each to the Holocaust and to antisemitism while contributing to a reflexive critique of emancipatory theory.

Far from delineating issues of peripheral importance for critical theories of capitalism then, the problem complex of responses to the Holocaust and the changing configurations of capitalist modernity touches upon issues of fundamental importance for such theories. Within the framework outlined in this chapter consideration of those changing responses not only reveals their generally problematic character, but also illuminates the limits of the left in terms of its most fundamental self-understanding as a practical and theoretical critique of the capitalist order. What mediates these various moments, as I shall elaborate, is the issue of antisemitism.

I shall only be able to present a preliminary sketch of this argument here. To do so I shall briefly describe the main features of the two general historical configurations of postwar capitalist modernity and also outline an analysis of antisemitism that distinguishes it from racism in general while showing it to be deeply intertwined with history as constituted by capital. Such an analysis could help conceptually distinguish political terror and mass murder (as expressed metaphorically by Buchenwald and Hiroshima) from extermination (as represented by Auschwitz). These distinctions are important not because the one crime is "worse" than the other but because the left, which has had few problems dealing conceptually with political terror and mass murder, has had difficulty grasping extermination. This difficulty reveals an inadequate understanding of antisemitism and relatedly an underlying weakness in apprehending the fundamental object of the left's critique: capitalism.

Considering the contours of the twentieth century helps elaborate these contentions. The course of the past century can be described in terms of three overarching periods. The first, from the beginning of the century until after Second World War, was an "Age of Catastrophe" – to use Eric Hobsbawm's term[3] – marked by two world wars; the Great Depression; the rise of Fascism, Stalinism, and Nazism; and by the Holocaust. A Fordist "Golden Age" followed, lasting until the early 1970s, characterized by high rates of economic growth, the expansion of welfare states, relative political stability, and worldwide processes of decolonization. This period of high Fordism ended in the early 1970s, followed by a new crisis-ridden period marked by the increased mobility of capital and of labor, growing social differentiation and unemployment, the rise of new centers of capital accumulation, and catastrophic downturns in other parts of the world.[4]

The relation of state and economy has changed with each of these configurations. The first period witnessed a number of different, generally statist, attempts to react to the world crisis of nineteenth-century liberal capitalism. The second period was marked by an apparently successful state-centered synthesis in both East and West, which benefited the majority of metropolitan populations. In the final third of the century this configuration unraveled. Nation states were weakened as economically sovereign entities, welfare states in the West and bureaucratic party states in the East were undermined, and unchecked market capitalism reemerged, apparently triumphant.

Viewed retrospectively with reference to these changing configurations the rise and fall of the Soviet Union can be seen to have been closely related to those of state-centered capitalism. This suggests that the USSR should be understood with reference to a larger historical development of the capitalist social formation, however great the antagonism had been between the Soviet Union and Western capitalist countries.

[3] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994).

[4] For a cogent overview of these trends see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 121–197. Also see Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (New York: Verso, 2009 [1994]), pp. 309–370; Tony Smith, *Globalization: A Systematic Marxian Account* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009 [2005]). For an account with an emphasis on unemployment, see Stanley Aronowitz and William DiFazio, *The Jobless Future*, 2nd edn. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010 [1994]).

This pattern, I suggest, is not simply an imposition by historians on a reality that actually is formless, but delineates a historical actuality. David Harvey and others have noted that during the period of postwar prosperity Western states engineered stable economic growth and living standards through similar policies, although very different political parties were in power. Subsequently the welfare state synthesis unraveled and was rolled back in the course of the 1970s and 1980s in all Western states, regardless of which parties were in power. In both periods, the specific policies differed among states, but the tendency was general.[5]

The general character of this large-scale historical pattern suggests the existence of an overarching historical dynamic driven by a structure of imperatives and constraints that cannot be explained in local and contingent terms and that underlies the sorts of large-scale epochal changes outlined previously.

Recognizing the general historical patterns that characterize the twentieth century calls into question poststructuralist understandings of history as essentially contingent. It does not, however, necessarily involve ignoring the critical insight that informs such understandings – namely, that history, understood as the unfolding of an immanent necessity, constitutes a form of unfreedom.

This form of unfreedom, I suggest, is the object of a critical theory of capital. Rather than deny the existence of historical unfreedom by focusing on contingency, such a critical theory – which differs from more traditional socialist critiques inasmuch as it does not affirm history – takes the existence of a historical dynamic to be an expression of such unfreedom. It seeks to analyze the grounds of that unfreedom with reference to historically specific, abstract forms of domination expressed by categories such as "capital."[6]

[5] Despite their deep theoretical differences, the following accounts contain strikingly similar descriptions of this overwhelming confluence of state policies away from welfare models and toward a neoliberal regime: Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas and Sarah L. Babb, "The Rebirth of the Liberal Creed: Paths to Neoliberalism in Four Countries," *American Journal of Sociology*, CVIII, 3 (November 1, 2002), pp. 533–579; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 2–3, 5–38; and Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*. Leon de Mattis similarly refers to this general tendency, pointing out that in "some ... countries like France, it was 'socialists' who had to obey the capitalist injunction" referring to François Mitterand's dramatic reversal of his social campaign promises in 1983 (17). Leon De Mattis, "What Is Communisation?" *SIC: International Journal for Communisation* 1 (2011), pp. 11–30.

[6] The theory of capital with which I hope to illuminate changing responses to the Holocaust is not, moreover, narrowly economic, delineating a presumed "material base" of social life

The changing configurations of twentieth-century capitalist modernity outlined here can be related to changing public responses to the Holocaust, including those on the left, on the basis of such a theory of capital as well as of a determinate understanding of modern antisemitism. Antisemitism is frequently apprehended simply as a variant of racism. They differ in important ways, however, although both have in common as forms of essentializing discourse an understanding of social and historical phenomena in innate – biological or cultural – terms. Whereas most forms of racism attribute concrete physical and sexual power to an Other that is considered inferior, modern antisemitism does not treat Jews as inferior but as dangerous purveyors of evil. It attributes great power to Jews, but that power is not concrete and physical. Rather, it is abstract, universal, intangible, and global. The Jews within this framework constitute an immensely powerful international conspiracy. Modern antisemitism is not simply a form of prejudice directed against a minority group but provides a framework for understanding an extremely complex and historically dynamic world. Modern antisemitism then, is a worldview that, building on earlier forms of antisemitism, purports to explain critically the modern capitalist world. It is distinguished by its populist antihegemonic, and antiglobal character. As I have argued elsewhere, this worldview misrecognizes the abstract temporally dynamic global domination of capital – which subjects people to the compulsion of abstract historical forces they cannot grasp directly – as the domination of international Jewry.[7] Against the abstract domination of capital, reified in concretistic terms as the Jews, it posits concrete particularity as that which is authentically human.

Antisemitism then, does not treat the Jews as members of a racially inferior group who should be kept in their place (violently if necessary) but as constituting an evil destructive power – an antirace opposed to humanity. Within this Manichean worldview the struggle against the Jews

and focusing on forms of material interest. Rather, following (and modifying) Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), its categories seek to grasp historically specific forms of social being that are at once determinations of social objectivity and subjectivity, that is, forms that are both social and cultural.

[7] Moishe Postone, "Anti-Semitism and National Socialism," in *Germans and Jews since the Holocaust*, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Jack Zipes (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986). Also Moishe Postone, "The Holocaust and the Trajectory of the Twentieth Century," in *Catastrophe and Meaning: The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century*, ed. Moishe Postone and Eric Santner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

is a struggle for human emancipation. Freeing the world involves freeing it from the Jews. Extermination (which should not be conflated with mass murder) is a logical consequence of this Weltanschauung.[8]

Because antisemitism can appear to be antihegemonic and hence emancipatory, it can blur the differences between reactionary and progressive critiques of capitalism and lead to conceptual and political confusion, especially on the left. For this reason, a century ago the German Social Democratic leader August Bebel characterized it admonishingly as the socialism of fools. In its more recent manifestations it could be characterized as the anti-imperialism of fools.[9] Antisemitism fuses the deeply reactionary with the apparently emancipatory in an explosive amalgam.[10]

Since 1945 reactions by the left to the Holocaust, the most terrible and consistent expression of modern antisemitism, have tended to shift historically, from a position informed by abstract universalism to one

[8] Saul Friedländer describes this phenomenon as "redemptive anti-Semitism," which was understood as "a kind of crusade to redeem the world by eliminating the Jews," who were considered an *active* and *lethal* threat to "*all nations, to the Aryan race and to the German Volk*" (as opposed to the passive threats represented by other enemies of the Nazi regime including "the mentally ill, 'asocials,' and homosexuals, 'inferior' racial groups including Gypsies and Slavs" (his emphasis, xvii–xix) Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 2 vols. (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), Vol. 2: *The Years of Extermination, 1939–45*, pp. xviii–xxi. See also Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 2 vols. (New York: HarperCollins, 1997) Vol. 1: *The Years of Persecution, 1933–39*, pp. 73–112.

[9] Cf. M. Postone, "History and Helplessness: Mass Mobilization and Contemporary Forms of Anti-Capitalism," *Public Culture*, XVIII, 1 (Winter 2006); Paul Berman, "The Anti-Imperialism of Fools," *Dissent* (Winter 1987); Mick Hume, "The Anti-Imperialism of Fools," *New Statesman* (June 17, 2002).

[10] As an aside: it is a mistake to think that a reactionary critique of capitalism can be the first step in the constitution of a progressive critique. This has not happened historically – either in terms of mass movements or in terms of intellectuals. There have been very few if any reactionary critics of capitalism who have moved to the left; unfortunately history is replete with cases of people moving from the left to the radical right. For the example of Horst Mahler, the former Red Army Faction member who later joined the radical right National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) and founded a right-wing think tank (Deutsches Kolleg) associated with Holocaust denial, see George Michael "The Ideological Evolution of Horst Mahler: The Far Left–Extreme Right Synthesis," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, XXXII, 4 (2009), pp. 346–366.

As Slavoj Žižek noted in his critique of Ernesto Laclau: "In populism, the enemy is externalized or reified into a positive ontological entity (even if this entity is spectral) whose annihilation would restore balance and justice" (p. 555). "In populism proper, however, this 'abstract' character is always supplemented by the pseudoconcreteness of the figure that is selected as the enemy, the singular agent behind all threats to the people" (p. 556). Slavoj Žižek, "Against the Populist Temptation," *Critical Inquiry*, XXXII, 3 (March 1, 2006), pp. 551–574.

marked by a focus on qualitative specificity, including anti-imperialist affirmations of national liberation. Those reactions, however, have rarely grasped the specificity of the Holocaust or dealt with antisemitism adequately. Indeed, in various ways they have tended to occlude an adequate understanding. Yet if, as I suggest, antisemitism is a fetishized form of anticapitalism, apprehending it is especially important for critical approaches to the contemporary world since it indirectly illuminates the adequacy of determinate critical understandings of capitalism.

This pattern of changing responses to the Holocaust was not unique to the left. Indeed, it indicates the degree to which left conceptions were very much part of their larger historical contexts. To elaborate, let me begin by noting a sea change in interpretations of Nazism after 1945. During the first postwar period – that of the "Golden Age" of Fordism – National Socialism frequently was interpreted as a revolt against modernity.[11] Subsequently, after the early 1970s, however, Nazism became seen as fundamentally modern.[12]

This reversal was related to the general issue of how history was understood. I have argued that antisemitism understands the complex, impersonal, historical dynamic of capital in agentive terms as a Jewish conspiracy. As such it can be understood as an attempt to overcome processes of ongoing historical change that seem to be beyond the control of people. Having grasped history as constituted by capital in agentive terms (the Jews), modern antisemitic movements seek to overcome that abstract history, misrecognized in terms of a global invisible conspiracy, by means of "another" concrete will – in order to assert political control over the forces of history. The struggle against (misrecognized) capital becomes cast as a world historical struggle of two different kinds of wills:

[11] On an intellectual historical level, see George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964). The postwar tradition of *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, embodied in the works of Wehler among others, expressed similar tendencies in its appropriation of modernization theory and its explanation of Nazism with reference to the persistence of "feudal" elites with "pre-" or "anti-modern" values. For a characterization and critique of the tradition, see David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of Germany History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Hannah Arendt's focus on bureaucratization and technologies of power in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (revised edition, Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1994) was an exception to this more general tendency, perhaps because it, arguably, overlapped with Heidegger's critique of modernity in terms of technological domination.

[12] See, for example, Zygmunt Baumann, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

one operates abstractly, is intangible, and is fundamentally inhuman; the other is concrete, tangible, and authentically human.

This worldview waned during the postwar "Golden Age" of Fordism. Following a transition period marked by increased repression (the show trials in Eastern Europe, the McCarthy period in the United States) the rapid economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s in both the Fordist/Keynesian West and the post-Stalinist East appeared to indicate that the long crisis of liberal capitalism had finally been overcome by a successful state-centered synthesis. People, it seemed, had learned to control history (i.e., capitalism's dynamic) without having recourse to terror in ways that benefited the majority of the population. An age of universal progress seemed to have dawned.

During this era history seemed to have been tamed; it no longer posed a threat but appeared positive, as modern progress. Consequently Nazism's revolt against history could be regarded as antimodern, as a regression, a German aberration.[13] The wartime Allied representation of Nazism as an expression of Germany's historically unique essence then, was later buttressed and rendered credible by a postwar configuration in which historical development appeared benign and under control.

The apparently linear triumph of modernity in the 1950s and 1960s was undermined at the beginning of the 1970s. With the crises of that decade the historical dynamic of capitalism began to reemerge overtly beyond the control of what had been regarded as the primacy of the political, of national state structures. As the putatively universalist forms of the postwar decades reached their limits, an intellectual shift also occurred entailing a critique of the "master narratives" of modernity. History – whether understood in terms of progress, of processes of modernization, or as dialectical – became revalued as an expression of domination. This shift was accompanied by a critique of the universal and an affirmative turn to particularism. Within the framework of this shift Nazism once again became seen as the Other of critical discourse – this time as an extreme example of rationalized bureaucratized modernity.

What is striking about these two widespread understandings is that although opposed to one another, both grasp Nazism as the one-sided opposite of dominant discourse – as antimodern during the period when affirmations of modernity and modernization were hegemonic and as

[13] For a strong example of treating German history as aberrant, see A. J. P. Taylor, *The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of Germany since 1815* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1946).

modern during the subsequent "postmodern" period. This shift, it should be noted, reveals the inadequacy of the concept of modernity for grasping National Socialism (either as antimodern or as an expression of modernity). It indicates that the discourses of both modernity and postmodernity are as one-sided as are – relatedly – those of abstract universality and concrete particularity.[14]

Like interpretations of Nazism the nonlinear trajectory of Holocaust discourse can be related to the two overarching historical configurations of social life since Second World War. As is well known the Holocaust was discursively marginalized for several decades after 1945.[15] This slowly changed in the course of the 1960s. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s the Holocaust in particular and issues of historical memory in general have become increasingly central to public discourse.

Let me begin problematizing the relation of this discursive shift to large-scale historical transformations since 1945 by briefly examining the marginalization of discourse on the Holocaust and on antisemitism in the first two postwar decades. I have argued elsewhere that processes of denial and repression played an important role in such marginalization, especially in Germany and Austria. Rather than dealing with the recent past and their responsibility most Germans and Austrians sought to begin anew by working hard and moving forward as if the past and the wildly popular Nazi regime had never really existed.[16]

The Cold War contributed to this marginalization. The recent past was quickly submerged by the new global struggle. Moreover former Nazis and collaborators had become partners of the West in its historical struggle against Communism and of the East in its historical struggle against imperialism. Under those circumstances focusing on the Holocaust would have weakened the legitimating ideologies of those struggles.

Yet however important such processes and developments were, they do not fully account for the general discursive situation in both East and West – namely, that after 1945 the attempted extermination of Jews *as Jews* was almost universally ignored.

[14] Neither of these discourses, moreover, is reflexive, in the sense that they cannot explain the interpretive reversal outlined previously. This marks a fundamental difference between the one-sided and descriptive term "modernity" and the two-sided analytic concept "capitalism" – a difference that cannot be fully elaborated here.

[15] See Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); David B. MacDonald, *Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide: The Holocaust and Historical Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[16] Moishe Postone, "The Holocaust and the Trajectory of the Twentieth Century."

In Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union the centrality of antisemitism to Nazism was completely bracketed. Instead the official ideology regarded Nazism simply as Fascism, which, in turn, was understood merely as a tool of capitalism directed against the working classes and against Communism.[17] Antisemitism was viewed as a secondary problem, a diversionary tactic. This understanding of Nazism afforded little conceptual space for dealing with the Holocaust. Hence not only was antisemitism downplayed in the postwar Communist world but, relatedly, the victimization of Jews as Jews. It is remarkable that although many monuments to the victims of Nazism were later erected in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, almost none of them mention the Jews. Hence, for example, the massacre of thirty-three thousand Jews in two days in September 1941 by the Nazis and Ukrainian irregulars at Babi Yar just outside Kiev, was not commemorated for years. When a monument was erected in 1976 it referred to the execution by "the German Fascist invaders" of "citizens of Kiev and Prisoners of War"[18] but did not mention that the victims were Jews. In Soviet documents Jewish victims were frequently only referred to as "peaceful Soviet citizens."[19] Even the memorial at Auschwitz erected in 1967 was titled "International Monument to the Victims of Fascism,"[20] thereby eradicating the specificity of the Holocaust and of the Jews as victims of attempted extermination by dissolving that specificity in abstractly universal categories.[21]

[17] Zvi Gitelman, "The Soviet Union," in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[18] William Korey, "A Monument over Babi Yar?" in *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1993).

[19] The substitution of "peaceful Soviet citizens" for Jews in Soviet documents was common, beginning at the latest with a 1943–1944 Extraordinary State Commission to Examine and Investigate German–Fascist Crimes Committed by the Invaders and Their Accomplices on Soviet Territory. See John Gerrard, "The Nazi Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Interpreting Newly Opened Russian Archives," *East European Jewish Affairs*, XXV, 2 (Winter 1995), pp. 3–40.

[20] Katie Young, "Auschwitz–Birkenau: The Challenges of Heritage Management Following the Cold War," in *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with "Difficult Heritage,"* ed. William Logan and Keir Reeves (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 52.

[21] It is telling that, when monuments were erected in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1960s and in the 1970s, they remained within the framework of abstract universalism. This could provide insight into the crisis of Soviet Communism. Having run up against its limits in the late 1960s and early 1970s – as did the Fordist/Keynesian configurations in the West – the Soviet Union proved incapable of transforming itself from within. The abstractly universal nature of the monuments can be taken as an indication of an attempted response to historical change within constraints that limited that response.

When specific categories of victims were named in such memorials it was either in political terms ("anti-Fascists") or in national terms (Poles, Russians, Czechs, etc.). Both either excluded the category "Jews" or at best included it as one of many nationalities that had suffered under the Nazis.[22] Focusing on antisemitism and the specificity of the Holocaust was avoided.

One could point to many factors that might help explain this situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, including the abstract universalism of Communist ideology, according to which a specific focus on the victimization of the Jews would be particularistic, and the strong hostility toward any expression of Jewish identity on the part of many Communists, as well as a willingness on the part of Communist ruling elites to curry favor with populations that they suspected remained antisemitic.

This bracketing of the specificity of the Holocaust, however, was not restricted to the Communist East. The fact that the Jews were particular targets of genocide was generally also not publicly recognized in the West in the immediate postwar decades. This suggests that various local and contingent factors do not sufficiently explain the marginalization of Holocaust discourse during those decades. Neither Churchill nor De Gaulle, for example, took cognizance of the centrality of antisemitism to Nazism; nor did they pay particular attention to the Jews as Nazism's victims. Instead they treated the Third Reich as the ultimate expression of Prussian militarism.[23] In France in 1948 *Le Monde* wrote of the 280,000 deportees from France without mentioning the Jews. A law was passed that year according to which the term "deportee" was applicable only to those who were deported for political reasons. In fact the term was also applied to Jews – so that surreally Jewish children sent to Auschwitz were described as "political deportees."[24] In Alain Resnais's award-winning film *Night and Fog* (1955) political deportees, deportees sent to do forced labor, and Jewish deportees sent to their death are conflated. The film shows the piles of shoes and other articles taken from Jews at Auschwitz – but does so without mentioning the Jews or the Holocaust.[25]

[22] See, for example James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1993).

[23] Consequently, they insisted on dismantling Prussia. See, for example, Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006).

[24] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), p. 805.

[25] Joan Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 28.

It could be argued that this complete submergence of the specificity of the Holocaust, that the Jews were killed as Jews, was the expression of a certain form of universalism that understood itself as the opposite of Nazism and regarded any mention of the Jews as Jews to be unacceptably particularistic. Ironically it served to eradicate the Jews from history again.

In the immediate postwar period, however, the affirmation of universalism was not yet generally hegemonic. During the most virulent phase of the Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s each side viewed itself as threatened by a shadowy global conspiracy; each camp viewed its foe as pervasive and intangible, that is, as abstract. This reaction *against* the universal was expressed by the show trials in Eastern Europe, the so-called doctors' plot in the USSR, and McCarthyism in the United States.

In the most famous show trial in East/Central Europe – that held in Prague in 1952 – eleven of the fourteen accused Communist functionaries were Jews including Rudolf Slansky, the secretary general of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. The charges were classically antisemitic. The accused were characterized as rootless cosmopolitans, agents of nefarious international forces, namely, the CIA and Zionism.[26] Unable for ideological reasons to refer explicitly to "international Jewry," the Communist regime used "Zionism" to fulfill the same function. Such antisemitic, anticosmopolitan accusations became widespread in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1948 and 1953,[27] culminating in the "uncovering" of the doctors' plot in Moscow – a purportedly international Zionist plot that aimed to poison the Soviet leadership. The Soviet regime began making plans for the mass roundup of Soviet Jews and for the construction of gigantic camps for them. These plans were then abruptly dropped with the death of Stalin in March 1953.[28]

Having first bracketed the Holocaust in the name of universality Communist regimes now recapitulated the antiuniversalism of antisemitism,

[26] For overviews, see Me'ir Ḳoṭiḳ, *The Prague Trial: The First Anti-Zionist Show Trial in the Communist Bloc* (New York: Herzl Press, Cornwall Books, 1987) and Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 185–189.

Igor Lukes points out that one dominant interpretation has been that Stalin "intended to present the defendants as rootless cosmopolitans who were uncharacteristic of communists in general" (162). "The Rudolf Slánský Affair: New Evidence," *Slavic Review*, LVIII, 1 (April 1, 1999), pp. 160–187.

[27] Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P. S. Falla (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), p. 903.

[28] Jonathon Brent and Vladimir Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot against the Jewish Doctors, 1948–1953* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

attacking the Jews as constituting an international conspiracy that posed a danger to humanity. The accusations made were not contingently directed against Jews, but against Jews as agents of an abstract universal conspiracy that would undermine the people's community. The authorities now termed this conspiracy "Zionism." It should be clear that this form of "anti-Zionism" had very little in common with earlier socialist and communist critiques of Zionism.[29] At this point at the latest, at its end point, Stalin's "socialism in one country" revealed itself as essentially a form of National Socialism. (The revival of the late Stalinist usage of "Zionism" in recent decades and the resulting conflation of anti-Zionism as a critique of actually existing Israeli policies and institutions, and anti-Zionism as antisemitism by another name, has deeply distorted discussions of the contemporary Middle East.)

Yet this turn against cosmopolitanism was not restricted to the Soviet bloc. On a much less terroristic level with less openly antisemitic language McCarthyism in the United States signaled a similar turn against cosmopolitanism, against "international Communism," which frequently was associated with Jews.[30]

This anticosmopolitanism abated or was pushed underground, however, after the mid-1950s. With the regularization of the Cold War after 1953 the universal threat perceived by each side diminished. What emerged was a global order structured by competing international "blocs" of nations states, each of which promoted a set of fetishized abstract universal values – liberty vs. equality. With all of their differences both camps based themselves on linear conceptions of progress associated with productivist visions of development in which large-scale bureaucratic organizations mediated production and distribution. That is, in

[29] Cf. Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and "the Jewish Question" after Marx* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); Enzo Traverso, *The Marxists and the Jewish Question; The History of a Debate (1843–1943)*, trans. Bernard Gibbons (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1994); Iring Fetscher, *Marxisten gegen Antisemitismus* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1974).

[30] "McCarthyism" is being used here as a general term for the anti-Communism that swept the United States, beginning in the late 1940s. Although Joseph McCarthy's own anti-Communist campaign was not particularly antisemitic (being largely directed against the Eastern WASP establishment), the larger wave of anti-Communism – as represented for example by the House Un-American Activities Committee – had a strong antisemitic component. See Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fatal Embrace: Jews and the State. The Politics of Anti-Semitism in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 119–120.

both cases social organization was seen to be rationally organized according to universal general principles.

The postwar synthesis then, became associated with purportedly universal values. This began to be called into question in the late 1960s and early 1970s as Fordist–Keynesianism and post-Stalinism, pushing up against their limits, began to unravel. One dimension of this historical shift was political and cultural – expressed by the rise of new political movements and new social movements of racial minorities, students, youth, women, and gays. At first such movements – such as the civil rights movements in the United States, student movements in West and East, reform Communism in Czechoslovakia, and the early phases of second wave feminism – operated very much within a universalist framework, criticizing the extant order as insufficiently universalist. However, by the end of the 1960s many such movements began increasingly to criticize in the name of qualitative specificity, characterizing abstract universality as a mode of domination. It was within this shifting historical context that public discourse began to address the specificity of the Holocaust. This shift began to occur in the early and mid-1960s, signaled by the appearance of such works as *The Deputy* by Rolf Hochhuth in 1963, *The Painted Bird* by Jerzy Kosinski in 1965, and *Treblinka* by Jean-François Steiner in 1966, and gained strength in subsequent years. This suggests that the growing concern with the Holocaust's specificity cannot be grasped adequately with reference to the 1967 war, as an instrumental attempt to marshal support for Israel, as some have argued,[31] but should be seen with reference to a more general historical shift entailing the rise of the politics of identity and recognition.[32] This shift in turn can be understood as one facet of a general transformation that began to point beyond the extant order in multiple social, economic, and cultural ways and rendered imaginable the overcoming of the antinomy of abstract universalism and concrete particularism and its supersession by a form of universality that could encompass difference. Yet at the

[31] Cf. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, 2nd edn. (London: Verso Books, 2003).

[32] For an account of how the shift to the politics of identity was strongly expressed in the New Left (with a focus on the United Kingdom and United States), see Grant Farred "Endgame Identity? Mapping the New Left Roots of Identity Politics," *New Literary History*, XXXI, 4 (October 1, 2000), pp. 627–648.

same time the structural logic of the existing order tended to perpetuate the antinomy of abstract universalism and particularism.[33]

These various possibilities were expressed in newer discourses on the Holocaust, which have ranged from positions that suggest, at least implicitly, a different form of universality, beyond the antinomy of abstract universalism and particularistic specificity, to discourses that have been very particularistic in their focus on the Holocaust's specificity (and that have been used, for example, as an ideology of legitimation for Israeli policies).

A similar tension can also be found among a range of newer movements that emerged at the time. Some, such as socialist feminist movements, sought to pass beyond the dichotomy, however implicitly;[34] others – such as black nationalist and many radical feminist groups – tended to reproduce the dichotomy, coming down on the side of particularism.[35] This arguably became the case with many varieties of anti-imperialism, which, converging increasingly with what Gilbert Achcar has termed left-wing "orientalism in reverse," tended to valorize the nationalism or religious "fundamentalism" of groups deemed Other as a revolt of authentic concrete particularity against the homogenizing dynamism of abstract domination.[36] At the same time such domination was frequently reified, understood in concretistic terms, as the domination of the United States, or of "The West" and, in many cases, of "Zionism."

[33] For an account of that structural logic, see M. Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, pp. 289–293, 347–350, 366–373.

[34] Sophisticated accounts calling into question this dichotomy include Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988) and Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[35] For an overview of feminist literature that attempts to privilege particularity to the extreme of "separatism" (e.g., critiquing liberalism from the standpoint of "traditional female virtues" such as "care, nurturance, empathy, and emotive reasoning"), see Clare Colebrook, "Feminist Political and Social Theory," in *Routledge International Handbook of Contemporary Social and Political Theory*, ed. G. Delanty and S. Turner (Abingdon: Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 177–188. For an overview of the politics of race and ethnicity – including those embracing particularism – see Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994 [1986]), esp. pp. 95–112. For a serious attempt to wrestle with the problematic of abstract universalism, particularism, and attempts to pass beyond that opposition with reference to the politics of race and progressive change in the United States, see Michael C. Dawson, *Blacks in and out of the Left* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.)

[36] Gilbert Achcar, *Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013), pp. 40–67.

The historical context of outgoing Fordism, then, was one within which the qualitative specificity of historical and social phenomena became emphasized. At first – in discourse on the Holocaust, for example – such an emphasis implied the possible overcoming of the dichotomy of the universal and the particular. However, the discourse of specificity quickly became particularistic – both with reference to the Holocaust and more generally as expressed by a wide range of identitarian movements. The irony is that consequently, just as the Holocaust was becoming a significant historical theme, movements arose that, veering back to a glorification of the concrete, began to reproduce antisemitic motifs. The relation of capitalism, "anticapitalism," and the Holocaust was not adequately thematized, thereby contributing to a more general blurring of the differences between a populism that frequently can be reactionary and emancipatory anticapitalism.

Let me begin to elaborate this complex of issues. The emergence of a broad spectrum of oppositional movements and the sensibilities they expressed as well as the efflorescence of critical social theory in the late 1960s and early 1970s were related, I would argue, to a historical transformation of the overarching organization of social and economic life. The late 1960s was a crucial historical moment in this regard, one when the necessity of the current social order was fundamentally called into question. Viewed retrospectively it was a moment when the order that had superseded laissez-faire capitalism – state-centered Fordist capitalism and its statist "actually existing socialist" equivalent – ran up against its historical limits. Utopian hopes emerged, yet conceptual as well as political attempts to get beyond those historical limits remained singularly unsuccessful.

In this period students and youth were not so much reacting against exploitation as they were against bureaucratization and what they experienced as alienation. Classical workers' movements seemed unable to address what for many young radicals were the burning issues. Moreover those movements – as well as the "actually existing socialist" regimes – seemed to be deeply implicated in precisely that against which the students and youth were rebelling. On a general level such shifts expressed a growing distance from and critique of the affirmation of labor at the heart of traditional working class movements. On a more directly political level such shifts were in part expressions of disillusionment with Soviet Communism (especially after the invasion of Prague in 1968) and dissatisfaction with Social Democracy, both of which were deeply intertwined with the productivist, statist, Fordist order.

The late 1960s and early 1970s then, saw a break with the affirmation of abstract universality, especially in its bureaucratic Fordist form. This new historical situation suggested the need for a critique of both market-mediated and state-mediated capitalism; it implied that a fundamental critique of the existing order, of capitalism, could no longer be based on a traditional Marxist affirmation of (alienated) labor and had to extend beyond the dichotomous opposition of abstract universality and concrete particularity. That is, it implied that the conditions for a postcapitalist society had to be fundamentally rethought.

Yet few oppositional movements tried to conceptualize explicitly what they arguably already implicitly expressed – the possibility of a social order beyond capitalism in both of its twentieth-century forms. In the absence of a critique of the two-sidedness of capitalist social mediation that could seek to advance beyond the opposition of abstract generality and concrete particularity, a strong tendency existed to grasp the world in concretistic terms; rather than trying to think beyond capitalism, many oppositional movements took a turn to the conceptually familiar and focused on concrete expressions of domination, such as military violence or bureaucratic police-state political domination. Examples of this turn are concretistic forms of anti-imperialism as well as the growing focus by some on concrete domination in the Communist East.[37] As different and even opposed as these political responses may have appeared at the time, both focused on domination in its most immediate, concrete forms and thereby helped occlude the nature of capital's domination just when its regime was becoming less statecentric and in a sense even more abstract, a regime that then emerged as neoliberal global capitalism.

By focusing on concrete expressions of domination such modes of oppositional politics remained fixated on the Fordist configuration of global capital even after it had begun to crumble[38] and did so in ways that reified that configuration. This reification of the abstract went hand in hand with a conception of oppositional politics that was itself concrete

[37] For example, see Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Social Regime in Russia," *Telos*, 38 (December 21, 1978), pp. 32–47 and Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller, Gyorgy Markus, *Dictatorship over Needs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983). For an informative debate over these types of analyses at the time, see Tim Luke, G. L. Ulmen, Ivan Szelenyi, Zygmunt Bauman, Gabor T. Rittersporn, and Graeme Gill, "Review-Symposium on Soviet-Type Societies," *Telos*, 60 (June 20, 1984), pp. 155–191.

[38] Focusing critically on the Fordist configuration of global capital was, arguably, on a very different level, also the case of the major theorists writing in the 1970s and 1980s (with all of their considerable differences): Habermas, Foucault, Derrida.

and frequently particularistic. Against the historical background of decolonization and anticolonial wars, especially in Vietnam, anticolonial struggles became the primary focus for much of the New Left. The concrete nature of such struggles was easy to grasp. Moreover, the struggle of colonized peoples for independence was felt to have an elective affinity with movements that demanded the recognition of particularity – such as those of minorities and women. In this situation, anticolonialism moved away from its universalist origins and increasingly also became a displaced way of expressing a radical critique of Western capitalist society, translated into nationalist and culturalist terms.[39]

This was related to a significant change in the character of anti-imperialism. During the Vietnam War opposition to the American war was considered by many to be related to a larger struggle for progressive political and social change. American opposition to movements of national liberation was criticized particularly strongly precisely because such movements were regarded positively. The Vietnamese National Liberation Front was seen not only as an anticolonial movement, seeking to assert national independence, but also as socialist, struggling for a progressive future. Regardless of how one judges such positive evaluations today, what characterized the antiwar movements of a generation ago was that opposition to American policy was, for many, one expression of a more general struggle for progressive change.

The more recent antiwar mobilizations against the conflict in Iraq appear at first glance to be similar. But closer consideration reveals that, in this case, opposition to the United States has not been in the name of a more progressive alternative. On the contrary, the Ba'ath regime in Iraq could not be considered progressive or even potentially progressive. Yet that regime was not and had not been the object of sustained political analysis and critique by the Western Left. Rather than trying to come to terms with a problem – a conflict between a global imperial power and a brutal, oppressive regime – the antiwar mobilization tended to ignore the negative character of the latter. This suggests that mobilizations against the war in Iraq did not have the same sort of political meaning that the antiwar movement had earlier; they did not express a movement for progressive change.

[39] Partha Chatterjee discusses this phenomenon in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1986). For the culturalist dimension of this shift, see Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 2009), especially "Culturalism, Grand Narrative of Capitalism Exultant" (pp. 17–39) and "Postmodern Obscurantism and the 'Muslim Question'" (pp. 196–222).

If a generation ago, opposition to American policy entailed supporting struggles for liberation considered progressive, today opposition to American policy, in and of itself, is all too frequently deemed antihegemonic. Yet, in spite of the political differences between the antiwar movements of a generation ago and those of today, this shift, paradoxically, is, in part, an unfortunate legacy of the dualistic worldview associated with the Cold War. The Cold War category of "camp" substituted a spatial category for historical ones, which helped blur the idea of socialism as the historical beyond of capitalism.[40]

This spatial, essentially dualistic framework helped eradicate from memory the experience of the first half of the twentieth century, which showed that opposition to an imperial power is not necessarily progressive; there were fascist "anti-imperialisms" as well.[41] This distinction was blurred during the Cold War in part because the USSR aligned itself with authoritarian regimes, for example, in the Middle East, which had little in common with socialist and communist movements and, indeed, frequently sought to liquidate their own left.[42] In this situation anti-Americanism per se became coded as progressive, although there had and have been deeply reactionary as well as progressive forms of anti-Americanism.

A central feature of this newer anti-imperialism has been a reified conflation of the abstract and dynamic domination of global capital with the United States – or at times the United States and Israel. This conflation should not be confused with a fundamental critique of American (or Israeli) policies and actions. It attributes to concrete actors the overarching developments effected by global capital and ironically recapitulates an ideology of a hundred years ago in which the subject positions occupied today by the United States and Israel in some forms of "antiglobalization" were occupied by Britain and the Jews. This latter ideology, however, was

[40] See Loren Goldner, "Loren Goldner, "'Socialism in One Country' before Stalin, and the Origins of Reactionary 'Anti-Imperialism': The Case of Turkey, 1917–1925," Socialism in One Country' before Stalin, and the Origins of Reactionary 'Anti-Imperialism': The Case of Turkey, 1917–1925," (2009), http://home.earthlink.net/~lrgoldner/turkey.html (accessed April 2, 2014).

[41] One only need recall the Imperial Japanese slogan of "Asia for the Asiatics." See, for example, John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire 1936–1945* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 449. For a more general discussion see Loren Goldner, "Anti-Capitalism or Anti-Imperialism? Interwar Authoritarian and Fascist Sources of a Reactionary Ideology: The Case of the Bolivian MNR," *Insurgent Notes*, 7 (October 2011).

[42] See Danny Postel, "Who Is Responsible? An Interview with Fred Halliday," *Salmagundi*, 150/151 (Spring–Summer, 2006).

a discourse of the European right. The similarity between what had been a rightist critique of hegemony and what regards itself as a critique from the left reveals similar fetishized understandings of the world.

I am suggesting then, that, with the fading of a conceptual horizon of possible fundamental transformation the concretistic anti-imperialism of the New Left (fused with a concretistic form of antiglobalization) began increasingly to recapitulate earlier antisemitic motifs. I cannot in this chapter adequately discuss this development but can only outline a number of considerations.

For parts of the New Left the Palestinian struggle, beginning after 1967, became regarded as *the* central anticolonial struggle.[43] What was and is noteworthy is not support for the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and criticisms of Israeli policies and institutions. Rather it is the degree to which much contemporary discourse on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict exceeds the bounds of political and critical analysis. One does not necessarily call into question Palestinian struggles when one notes the degree to which they have become emotionally invested for anti-imperialist groups (especially in Europe) and relatedly how invested the critique of Zionism has become.[44] "Zionism" is frequently treated as a malevolent global force so immensely powerful that it can even determine the policies of the American superpower.[45]

[43] Peter Ullrich, *Die Linke, Israel und Palästina: Nahostdiskurse in Großbritannien und Deutschland* [The Left, Israel and Palestine: Discourses on the Middle East in the UK and Germany] (Berlin: Dietz, 2008). Hans Kundnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz? Germany's 1968 Generation and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 49. By the late sixties, Kundnani writes, concerning the West German student movement, that the Palestinian struggle "would replace the war in Vietnam as its cause célebre and become an obsession for some of its members" [Kundani, *Utopia or Auschwitz?*, p. 49].

[44] Doron Rabinovici, Ulrich Speck, and Natan Sznaider, eds., *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine globale Debatte* [New Antisemitism? A Global Debate] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004). For a treatment of this trend in the German student movement, see Kundnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz?* He writes that by 1969, "some members of the student movement had come to regard Zionism as a conspiracy – one of the key features of modern anti-Semitism" (p. 93). Relatedly, he writes that very soon after "US imperialism ... became synonymous with fascism," then "Zionism had in turn become synonymous with both" (pp. 60–61).

[45] One of many examples: On October 16, 2003, the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohammed, drew a standing ovation at the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which has fifty-seven member states, for a speech in which he said: "Today the Jews rule this world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them ... They invented socialism, communism, human rights and democracy so that persecuting them would appear to be wrong, so that they can enjoy equal rights with others. With these they have gained control of the most powerful countries and they, this tiny community, have become a world power" [CNN.com, October 17, 2003].

Historically this form of "anti-Zionism" has several sources. In part it can be related to the situation after 1967, when the Soviet Union, reacting to the defeat of its client states (Egypt and Syria) in the June war, lashed out at Israel by drawing on the antisemitic motifs formulated earlier during the show trials. The USSR began promulgating a form of anti-Zionism that was essentially antisemitic: Zionism as singularly evil, as constituting a global conspiracy.[46] This became adopted by many Arab nationalists as well as Western anti-imperialists.[47]

A further factor has been the spread and growing importance of the antisemitic worldview in the Middle East. Israeli policies and actions can certainly account for very strong anti-Israel sentiments but are not sufficient to explain the emergence of a classically antisemitic version of anti-Zionism, of Israel and the Jews as constituting a powerful global demonic power.[48] I would suggest that these more recent developments could be

See also the (more cautious) argument by John Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Middle East Policy*, XIII, 3 (September 1, 2006), pp. 29–87 and in *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 2007) essentially blaming Israel and the Israel lobby for unleashing the American invasion of Iraq.

[46] In his *A History of the Jews in the Modern World* (New York: Knopf, 2005) Howard Sachar wrote, "In late July 1967, Moscow launched an unprecedented propaganda campaign against Zionism as a 'world threat.' Defeat was attributed ... to an 'all-powerful international force.'... In its flagrant vulgarity, the new propaganda assault soon achieved Nazi-era characteristics. The Soviet public was saturated with racist canards. Extracts from Trofim Kichko's notorious 1963 volume, *Judaism without Embellishment*, were extensively republished in the Soviet media. Yuri Ivanov's *Beware: Zionism*, which essentially replicated the infamous czarist forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, was given nationwide coverage" (p. 722).
See, also, for example, Dariusz Stola, "Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967–1968," *Journal of Israeli History*, XXV, 1 (March 2006), pp. 175–201.

[47] The same trend can be seen in certain strands of Islamist discourse. See Jeffrey T. Kenney, "Enemies Near and Far: The Image of the Jews in Islamist Discourse in Egypt," *Religion*, XXIV, 3 (1994), pp. 253–270.
Referring to the West German context, Kundnani argues that the "attack on the Jewish community centre [in Berlin in 1969] was a logical development, albeit in extreme form, of ideas that had been at the centre of the student movement since its beginnings" (p. 92). Specifically, by conflating Nazism with Fascism and the United States with Fascism, he argues, "they universalized the specifically German phenomenon of National Socialism and 'normalized' Germany" (p. 92).

[48] For example, in 1986, Defense Minister of Syria Mustafa Tlass's book, *The Matzah of Zion*, renews the medieval Christian anti-Jewish ritual murder accusations that reappeared in the 1840 Damascus affair and alleges that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a factual document [Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder," Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press,

related to the differential effect globally of the newest configuration of capitalism, of neoliberal globalization. Whereas some countries and areas – especially in East and South Asia – have prospered, others, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, have declined dramatically. Less well known is that the Arabic-speaking Middle East has also suffered precipitous economic decline.[49] This regional crisis, I suggest, constitutes the background for the growing spread of antisemitic ideas in that region. The notion that Israel and the United States are responsible for the *misére* of the Middle East helps make sense of the experience of helplessness in the face of protracted regional decline, reinforced by an awareness that some former "Third World" countries in other parts of the world have experienced rapid economic growth. This widespread ideology conflates the differential effects on the Middle East of global capital with the policies of the United States and Israel and with the Jews.

Another dimension of the shift toward de facto antisemitism among sections of the "anti-imperialist" left, especially in Europe, can be analyzed as the "return of the repressed."[50] It could be argued that precisely because the Holocaust began to emerge on the surface of consciousness in the 1960s as a public memory and theme counterforces of denial became mobilized that sought to resubmerge the Holocaust, to push it back to the realm of hidden, frozen prememory. This attempted resubmergence is different from the marginalization of the Holocaust after the War since it involves denial of what has already emerged on the surface. The result was a form of acting out involving a number of reversals: much of the left that emerged out of the new social movements tended to identify with historical victims who were seen as Other. In the West German student movement, for example, positive attitudes toward Israel were very widespread in the early 1960s.[51] A very rapid reversal occurred after the 1967

1997), pp. 418, 421]. In 2001 an Egyptian film company produced and aired a film called *Horseman without a Horse*, partly based on Tlass's book.

[49] United Nations Arab Human Development Report 2002, *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab Studies, 2002).
Cf. Also Gilbert Achcar, *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013), esp. pp. 7–37 ("Fettered Development") and pp. 38–75 ("The Peculiar Modalities of Capitalism in the Arab Region").

[50] Postone, "The Holocaust and the Trajectory of the Twentieth Century."

[51] Kundnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz?* p. 48; Martin W. Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke: Zur Geschichte eines schwierigen Verhältnisses* [*Israel and the German Left: On the History of a Difficult Relationship*]. Schriftenreihe des Deutsch–Israelischen

war, however, whereby the Jews became cast in the role of perpetrators once again.[52] The displacements and reversals involved whereby an identity was posited between Israeli Jews and the Nazis, and the Palestinians became the "true Jews," victims of "genocide," helps explain why the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has been so cathected by the left. Within the framework of such acting out the Holocaust must be ignored or denied.[53]

The Holocaust not only is a stain on European history that cannot simply be washed away and hence must be denied. It also disrupts some left understandings of history and politics. In this situation reductionist left understandings and the mechanisms of European historical denial reinforce each other. This is particularly the case with the self-styled "anti-imperialist" left, which seeks to locate the possibility of anticapitalism in non-Western nationalist movements. The anticapitalist character of such a conception was always questionable even during the era of Communist-led anticolonial struggle. The collapse of Communism has revealed the danger that was always latently present in such concretistic understandings of capitalism and of anticapitalist movements. Shorn of any pretence to progressive transformation the defense of such nationalism (in the broadest sense of the term) reveals itself as lacking an adequate conception of capitalism; it is an expression of conceptual helplessness and despair. Emancipation no longer is imagined as the constitution of a new form of social life but in terms of the eradication of the sources of global evil – "Zionism" and the United States. Movements that operate

Arbeitskreises für Frieden im Nahen Osten, XX (Frankfurt am Main: Haag + Herchen, 1990), pp. 41–64.

[52] Kundnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz?* pp. 48–49. Kundnani argues that the student left's relationship toward Israel "turned on its head . . . from being a 'victim' to a 'perpetrator' in the post-war generation's black-and-white political worldview" (49); Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke,* pp. 71ff. See also Reinhard Renger, ed., *Die deutsche "Linke" und der Staat Israel* (Leipzig: Forum Verlag, 1994), esp. Inge Deutschkron, "Angriff auf die Versöhnung: Die deutsche Nachkriegsgeneration und Israel" [Assault on Reconciliation: the German Postwar Generation and Israel] pp. 15–28 and Martin Kloke, "Ressentiment und Heldenmythos: Das 'Palästinenserbild' in der deutschen Linkspresse" [Resentment and Hero-Myth: The Image of the Palestinian in the German Left Press], pp. 47–75.

[53] This sort of inversion has been termed "secondary antisemitism" – one that exists not in spite of the Holocaust but as a reaction to it. See Lars Rensmann, "Zwischen Kosmopolitanismus und Ressentiment: Zum Problem des sekundären Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken," in *Exclusive Solidarität: Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland*, ed. Matthias Brosch, Michael Elm, Norman Geißler, Brigitta Elisa Simbürger, and Oliver von Wrochem (Berlin: Metropol, 2007).

within the hollowed-out shells of Cold War thought have all too easily succumbed to forms of reification that have long characterized reactionary anticapitalism.

I am suggesting that this is one consequence of the absence of an adequate critical theory of capitalism today, one that could also point beyond the antinomy of abstract universalism and concrete particularism. The absence of such a critique is related to the absence of a future-oriented perspective, an absence that opens the door to fetishized concretistic forms of anticapitalism and populism, many of which are essentially antisemitic.

The problem complex of history, the Holocaust, and antisemitism then, is not simply particularistic. Rather it helps illuminate and in turn is illuminated by the structuring opposition in capitalism of abstract universalism and particularism in ways that also help to distinguish critiques of capitalism that could be emancipatory from those that are fundamentally reactionary, as broad as their populist appeal might be.