

What role do metaphors play in racial prejudice? The function of antisemitic imagery in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*

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ABSTRACT Musolff's study applies methods of cognitive metaphor analysis to Hitler's antisemitic imagery in *Mein Kampf*, especially to the conceptualization of the German nation as a (human) body that had to be cured from a deadly disease caused by Jewish parasites. The relevant expressions from the conceptual domains of biological and medical categories form a partly narrative, partly inferential-argumentative source 'scenario', which centred on a notion of *blood poisoning* that was understood in three ways: a) as a supposedly real act of *blood defilement*, i.e. rape; b) as a part of the source scenario of *illness-cure*; and c) as an allegorical element of an apocalyptic narrative of a devilish conspiracy against the 'grand design of the creator'. The conceptual differences of source and target levels were thus short-circuited to form a belief-system that was no longer open to criticism. The results cast new light on central topics of Holocaust research, such as the debates between more 'intentionalist' and more 'functionalist' explanations of the origins of the Holocaust, and the question of how the Nazi metaphor system helped gradually to 'initiate' wider parts of the German populace into the implications of the *illness-cure* scenario as a blueprint for genocide. The Nazi antisemitic metaphor system thus provides a unique example of the cognitive forces that can be unleashed in the service of racist stigmatization and dehumanization.

KEYWORDS antisemitism, body politic, cognitive theory, Holocaust, *Mein Kampf*, metaphor, National Socialism, race

Metaphor, ideology and the Holocaust

In 2001 the Internet list of researchers who work on figurative language witnessed a row over an enquiry about metaphors in Holocaust historiography.¹ One response to the enquiry was short and dismissive: 'Jews are considered germs that have invaded the pure Arian [*sic*] race and culture. This view has been/is perpetuated by the catholic church. In my opinion any other meta-view is superfluous so don't write again.'² This message

1 See postings to the Figurative Language Network (FLN), 3 July 2001, available at www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/fln.html (viewed 2 November 2006).

2 Posting to FLN, 3 July 2001.

triggered a series of counter-responses that accused the writer of ‘disturbing’ or ‘bigoted’ views, and led in the end to their exclusion from that list.³ Evidently, the enquirer and the responder had touched a raw nerve in the network audience. While the anti-Catholic accusation is a matter of individual bias on the part of the responder, the ‘informative’ part of the contribution, namely, the contention that the view of Jews as ‘germs’ was supposed to be a justification for the genocidal policy of the Nazis, seems worth further investigation.

In particular, we might ask in what sense a ‘view’ of humans as *germs* can be deemed to be ‘metaphorical’, especially when considering that the Nazis matched their actions to Hitler’s words and implemented them in the most horrifically ‘literal’ sense. And, if we succeed in identifying the role that such a ‘metaphor’ played in the preparation of the Holocaust, how would such an analysis help to elucidate its role in patterns of prejudice and racism more generally? The aim of this study is to contribute to the clarification of such questions by using methods of the ‘cognitive’ approach to metaphor analysis, as developed over the past three decades,⁴ to investigate Hitler’s antisemitic imagery in *Mein Kampf*. The study is part of a larger project that analyses the politico-medical concepts of Nazi racism in the context of longstanding traditions of conceptualizing society and the state as a (*human*) *body*. Here, we shall concentrate on *Mein Kampf*, which provided a benchmark, so to speak, for further uses of the *body-state* metaphor in Nazi propaganda. The analysis seeks to counter the attitude, expressed by the above-quoted responder in the online debate, that the mere ideological identification of the ‘image’ part of a metaphor makes further analysis ‘superfluous’. Racist metaphors used by the Nazis are notorious, but do we understand fully how they ‘worked’, both for the speakers themselves and for the ‘receivers’ of their propaganda?

The imagery employed by the Nazis in their key ideological and propagandistic texts has been noted and commented on many times by political and cultural historians,⁵ as well as by researchers of public discourse,

3 Postings to FLN, 3–13 July 2001.

4 See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1980); Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002); Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think. Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books 2002).

5 See e.g. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3 vols (Chicago: Quadrangle 1961), i.2–19; Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler. Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt on Main, Berlin and Vienna: Propyläen 1974), 292–304; Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler’s World View. A Blueprint for Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1981), 57–9, 89–91; Philippe Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews. The Genesis of the Holocaust*, trans. from the French by Patsy Southgate (London: Edward Arnold 1994), 27–8, 31–6; Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. Vol. 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1998), 87–8; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London: Penguin 1999), 244; and Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London: Allen Lane 2003), 197–8.

and propaganda and language historians.⁶ Typical instances of Nazi imagery that have been investigated are the metaphors of Germany's *reawakening* under Nazi rule, of history and life in general as a constant *war* and the alleged *parasitic* status of the Jews and other ethnic and social groups and nations. The theoretical paradigm of these interpretations has almost exclusively been the classic rhetorical concept of metaphor as a stylistic device of 'meaning transfer' based on a tacit comparison.⁷ In the case of language use by political movements as discredited as the Nazis, this perspective has led to a view of their metaphors as a 'deviant', manipulative and deceptive form of meaning.⁸ While the general aim of such approaches, that is, the critique of demagogic uses of imagery, is of course morally impeccable, we may question whether it really helps us to identify the most important, and dangerous, aspects of political metaphor. It would be erroneous to assume that metaphors are a special characteristic of strongly rhetorical or demagogic language use; in fact, they are ubiquitous in every register of discourse. The metaphors that Hitler employed were by no means particularly extravagant or unconventional; on the contrary, they largely consist of well-worn phrases and idioms and, even where they focus on Jews as the target of his greatest hatred, they are not creative as regards their 'image' content.⁹

6 See e.g. Rudolf Olden, *Hitler* (Amsterdam: Querido 1936); Kenneth Burke, 'The rhetoric of Hitler's "battle"', *Southern Review*, vol. 5, Summer 1939, 1–21; Victor Klemperer, *LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen* (Leipzig: Reclam 1946); Dolf Sternberger, Gerhard Storz and Wilhelm E. Süskind, *Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschen* [1946–8] (Frankfurt on Main and Berlin: Ullstein Taschenbuch 1986); George Steiner, 'The hollow miracle', in George Steiner, *Language and Silence. Essays 1958–1966* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1979), 136–51; Eugen Seidel and Ingeborg Seidel-Slotky, *Sprachwandel im Dritten Reich* (Halle: Verlag Sprache und Literatur 1961); Konrad Ehlich (ed.), *Sprache im Faschismus* (Frankfurt on Main: Suhrkamp 1989); Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 1998); and Peter von Polenz, *Deutsche Sprachgeschichte vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Gegenwart. III: 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 1999), 541–54.

7 For critical views of the classic tradition of metaphor theory, see Max Black, 'Metaphor', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 55, 1954, 273–94, and James E. Mahon, 'Getting your sources right. What Aristotle *didn't say*', in Lynne Cameron and Graham Low (eds), *Researching and Applying Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), 69–80.

8 This politico-ethical criticism of metaphor itself has a long tradition in political philosophy, reaching back at least to Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. See Stephen K. Land, *The Philosophy of Language in England* (New York: AMS Press 1986); Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996); and Andreas Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2004), 159–72.

9 Recently, Felicity Rash has published a comprehensive inventory of figurative passages in *Mein Kampf*, which is ordered under the two general headings CULTURAL *v.* NATURE METAPHORS AND SIMILES into more than 170 subcategories. By providing references for all examples in German and English, the inventory provides an invaluable basis for

Furthermore, we are confronted with the stark fact that the Nazis did try to kill all individuals of the European Jewish population *as if* they were parasites, even using similar 'hygienic' devices, i.e. poison gas, when the opportunity arose. Eberhard Jäckel has concluded that Hitler, in the plans for the elimination of the Jews, as well as the incurably ill and those he held responsible for Germany's defeat in the First World War, that he laid out in *Mein Kampf*, 'indubitably meant what he said quite literally'.¹⁰ However, such 'literalness' can sensibly be understood only as 'seriousness of intent' rather than as a conceptual qualification, or else we would have to regard Hitler's antisemitism merely as a psychopathological phenomenon. This dilemma has been expressed by Neil Gregor: 'it is not possible to see in *Mein Kampf* . . . a set of plans or a blueprint for mass murder in any specific way. . . . But, equally, we should not regard Hitler's metaphors merely as metaphors: for him, they described reality.'¹¹ Thus we seem to be dealing with metaphors that are not 'merely metaphors' while at the same time not amounting to a fully 'literal' blueprint either.

This apparent paradox clearly hinges on the traditional definition of metaphor as a 'mere' rhetorical ornament. Without that definition, from the viewpoint of cognitive semantics, the 'serious' conceptual—and political—import of metaphor can be captured in a less puzzling way. Metaphors are more than stylistically required lexical substitutions but rather act as mappings from a conceptual 'source domain' to a 'target domain' with resulting conceptual 'blends' that help to shape popular world-views in terms of how experiences are categorized and understood. Several recent studies have applied this approach to Nazi antisemitic metaphor, focusing on the conceptualizing aspects of the 'iconographic reference' and 'blending' in the mapping between 'Jews' and 'parasites', and on the position of metaphor in the racist application of the Chain of Being concept.¹² However, metaphors do

further research. Felicity Rash, 'A Database of Metaphors in Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*', 2005, available at www.qmul.ac.uk/%7Emlw032/Metaphors_Mein_Kampf.pdf (viewed 2 November 2006).

10 Jäckel, *Hitler's World View*, 58. For a critique of this strong 'intentionalist' position because of its teleological, and thus ultimately circular, structure, see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Edward Arnold 2000), 104.

11 Neil Gregor, *How to Read Hitler* (London: Granta 2005), 67.

12 See Paul Chilton, 'Manipulation, memes and metaphors: the case of *Mein Kampf*', in Louis de Saussure and Peter Schulz (eds), *Manipulation and Ideologies in the Twentieth Century. Discourse, Language, Mind* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins 2005); Bruce Hawkins, 'Ideology, metaphor and iconographic reference', in René Dirven, Roslyn Frank and Cornelia Ilie (eds), *Language and Ideology. Vol. II: Descriptive Cognitive Approaches* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins 2001), 27–50; and Felicity Rash, 'Metaphor in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*', *metaphorik.de* (online journal), no. 9, 2005, 74–111, available at www.metaphorik.de/09/rash.pdf (viewed 13 November 2006).

not merely serve to 'label' and categorize parts of our social world, they also allow us to derive conclusions from the respective source concepts by treating them as seemingly unproblematic assumptions or presuppositions.¹³ It is this inferential structure of Nazi antisemitic imagery—the cognitive link between the presuppositions embodied in the source concepts of Nazi antisemitic imagery and the conclusions at the target level of genocidal ideology and practice—that is at the centre of the following discussion.

Body and disease as source concepts in political ideology

The source imagery of Hitler's political world-view consisted in the conceptualization of the German (but, in principle, every) nation as a *human body* that had to be *shielded from disease* (or, in case of an outbreak, *cured*). Jewish people, who were conceptually condensed into the super-category of 'the Jew' and viewed as an *illness-spreading parasite*, represented the danger of *disease*. Deliverance from this threat to the nation's *life* would come from Hitler and his party as the only *competent healers* who were willing to fight the *illness*.

The conceptual basis of this metaphor—that is, the general mapping, 'a political entity is a (human) body'—was by no means an idea original to Hitler or to the Nazis, or even to antisemites or racists in general. It is part of a vast system of conceptual metaphors known as the *Great Chain of Being*, whose central role in western philosophical traditions has been made evident in work produced within a 'history of ideas' framework.¹⁴ This metaphor complex appears to have had its heyday as the basis for political philosophy during the Renaissance, when it was used, for instance, by Machiavelli, Thomas More, Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes, as well as many others. However, recent studies that have gone beyond the methodological limits of a 'history of ideas' approach have demonstrated that the tradition of the mapping of *body, life* and *health* concepts on to the domain of state and society, like the more general one

13 For the specific 'logic' of analogical reasoning as the basis for the use of metaphor in argumentation, see Stella Vosniadou and Andrew Ortony (eds), *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989); Dedre Gentner, Keith Holyoak and Boicho N. Kokinov (eds), *The Analogical Mind: Perspectives from Cognitive Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2001); and Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse*, 30–9.

14 See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being. A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1936); F. W. Maitland, 'The body politic', in F. W. Maitland, *Selected Essays*, ed. H. D. Hazeltine, G. Lapsley and P. H. Winfield (Cambridge 1936), 240–56; E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* [1943] (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1982); Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* [1957] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1997); and David G. Hale, *The Body Politic. A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton 1971).

of the *Great Chain of Being*, continues up to the present day and is especially pervasive in political discourse.¹⁵

This finding, however, should not be interpreted as amounting to the claim that all metaphorical formulations drawn from this conceptual complex are cognitively the same, let alone in terms of political or historical significance. If Hitler had simply employed Renaissance imagery in his writings, he would have made a fool of himself rather than attracting a mass following that enabled him to get into power and put his imperialist and genocidal plans into practice. In order to find out what characterized and distinguished Hitler's *diagnosis* of Germany from other conceptualizations of the state as a *body*, we need to examine his politico-metaphoric statements in some detail. To this end, a systematic search of relevant passages of *Mein Kampf*, which are spread over the whole text of the book, was conducted. The results were documented in a database of about 380,000 words of the German text and Ralph Manheim's 1943 English translation,¹⁶ which was searched for 207 (93 German and 114 English) expressions from the following conceptual domains: 1) *general biological categories*, 2) *body parts and organs*, 3) *physiological functions*, 4) *illnesses and other pathological phenomena*, 5) *illness-inducing agents*, and 6) *cure and recovery*. In the following analyses, we shall concentrate on key statements that demonstrate the main line of concept-building with regard to the *body-state* analogy.

A first set of key quotations can be found in the context of Hitler's discussion of the factors that allegedly triggered the collapse of the German empire in 1918:

- 1) [This military collapse] was the first consequence, catastrophic and visible to all, of an ethical and moral poisoning (*einer sittlichen und moralischen Vergiftung*), of a diminution in the instinct of self-preservation and its preconditions, which for many years had begun to undermine the foundations of the people and the Reich.¹⁷

15 See, for example, Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Vintage Books 1978); George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason. A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1989), 166–72; and Andreas Musolf, 'Ideological functions of metaphor: the conceptual metaphors of *health* and *illness* in public discourse', in René Dirven, Roslyn Frank and Martin Pütz (eds), *Cognitive Models in Language and Thought: Ideologies, Metaphors and Meaning* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter 2003), 327–52.

16 The editions used were Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich: Franz Eher 1933) for the German text, and *Mein Kampf*, trans. from the German by Ralph Manheim [1943] (London: Pimlico 1992) for the English text. In the following discussion, all English translations are by the author, with key terms supplied in German, and page references both to the German text of 1933 and the reprint of the Manheim translation in the footnotes.

17 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 252 (1933); 210 (1992).

- 2) This *poison* [of the press, 'mainly of Jewish origin'] was able to penetrate the bloodstream of our people (*Blutlauf unseres Volkes*) unhindered and to do its work, and the state was not strong enough to master the disease (*Krankheit*).¹⁸
- 3) It may almost be considered a good fortune for the German people that its period of creeping sickness (*schleichende Erkrankung*) was suddenly cut short by so terrible a catastrophe, for otherwise the nation would have gone under more slowly perhaps, but all the more certainly. . . . It was no accident that man mastered the plague more easily than tuberculosis. . . . The same is true of diseases of the bodies of nations (*Erkrankungen von Volkskörpern*). If the disease does not take the form of catastrophe at the onset, man slowly begins to get accustomed to it and at length, though it may take some time, perishes all the more certainly of it.¹⁹
- 4) [The Jew] is and remains the typical parasite, a sponger who, like an infectious bacillus, keeps spreading (*der typische Parasit, ein Schmarotzer, der wie ein schädlicher Bazillus sich immer mehr ausbreitet*) as soon as a favourable medium invites him. And the effect of his existence is also similar to that of spongers: wherever he appears, the host nation (*Wirtsvolk*) dies out after a shorter or longer period.²⁰

From these quotations, we can distil a preliminary concept of Hitler's perspective on the *health* of the German *nation's body*, its *Volkskörper*. Since before the First World War, the *body* of the nation had been suffering from a *general disease*, which led to the military defeat and which had been caused by Jews' *poisoning* the *body's bloodstream*, particularly through their press. Hitler also claims that he is more competent to *diagnose* Germany's *illness* than pre-war politicians who had failed in *treating* the German nation's *illness* because they perceived only its *symptoms* and ignored the underlying cause.²¹ Having demonstrated his unique politico-'diagnostic' qualities, Hitler does not leave it to the reader's imagination to ponder who would be able to combat this *deadly* threat to the *life* of the German *nation's body*; in one of the most notorious statements from *Mein Kampf* he spells out that it is he who is going to achieve this end, and even on whose bidding he is undertaking it:

- 5) . . . today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: *by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord*

18 Ibid., 268 (1933); 224 (1992).

19 Ibid., 253–4 (1933); 211–12 (1992).

20 Ibid., 334 (1933); 277 (1992).

21 Ibid., 360 (1933); 298 (1992).

Table 1

<i>Source domain</i>	<i>Target domain</i>
Body	(German) nation
Illness	Diminution in the instinct of self-preservation
Sign of illness	Military collapse of 1918 and its consequences
Cause of illness: poisoning	(Jewish) press
Agent of illness: bacillus, virus, sponger	Jews
Cure of illness	'Defence' against (=complete removal of) Jews

(*Indem ich mich des Juden erwehre, kämpfe ich für das Werk des Herrn*) (emphasis in the original).²²

In a first attempt at summarizing the conceptual structure of these initial examples of the *body-nation* analogy in *Mein Kampf*, we can draw up a simple schema of the key mappings between the source and target domains (see Table 1). Such a table of inter-domain mappings gives an overview of the basic conceptual correspondences, but it hardly conveys their systematic implications. The source cluster of *body-illness-cure* concepts is not an arbitrary constellation of notional elements but a complex, narrative/scenic schema or 'scenario',²³ one that tells a mini-story, complete with apparent causal explanations and conclusions about its outcome (here, the story of a body suffering illness *because of* poisoning and *therefore* needing a radical cure). This narrative scenario is mapped as a whole on to the target domain, leading the hearer or reader towards the expectation that a *healer* will appear who will *cure* the national *illness*. This expectation is based on two premises: 1) the *diagnosis* of the nation's *illness*, and 2) the universal human interest in curing any illness. The latter aspect may seem to be self-evident and trivial; however, precisely because of this 'obviousness' it is of great importance for Hitler's argument. It provides his inferences with a 'warrant' of seemingly uncontroversial conclusiveness. If one accepts the premise of the *illness* scenario, then the necessity of finding a *cure* (and the *healer* to administer it) is assumed as a matter of course. Without this presupposed knowledge, the mapping would be incomprehensible or a futile exercise in fanciful re-categorization. Table 2 aims to visualize this narrative-predictive structure and the ensuing inferential dynamic. The schema in Table 2 illustrates how much Hitler's political target-level argument depends on the analogies suggested by the source scenario. The arrows in bold signify cause-effect

22 *Ibid.*, 70 (1933); 60 (1992).

23 For discussion of the cognitive structure of 'scenario', see Charles J. Fillmore, 'An alternative to checklist theories of meaning', *Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, vol. 1, 1975, 123–31, esp. 124–9, and George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1987), 285–6; Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse*, 17–29.

Table 2 Narrative scenario structure

<i>Domains</i>	<i>Underlying cause</i>	<i>Present situation</i>	<i>Action needed</i>
<i>Source</i>	Poisoning by an 'alien body' (<i>bacillus, virus, sponger</i>)	⇒ Body suffering from severe, deadly illness (<i>blood poisoning</i>)	⇒ The cure of the illness consists in the removal of the cause.
<i>Target</i>	↓ Destructive force of Jewish influence on German society in general (as well as on all other nations)	⇐ ↑1 Crisis of German nation, as shown by the military collapse of 1918 and the ensuing downfall	⇐ ↓ Germany must empower a man able to remove the Jews from German society: the only man able to do this is Hitler.

relations, which only hold at the source level; the white arrows represent argumentative/analogical inferences. The only 'fact' that Hitler is able to refer to is Germany's post-First World War national crisis. The metaphorical interpretation of this crisis as an *illness* (↑1) sets off two argumentative moves. One is the search for the *cause of the illness*, simultaneously at the source and the target level. Hitler of course chooses a source scenario aspect that fits his purpose of depicting the target ('the Jew') as negatively as possible: hence, the choice of the extremely dangerous, potentially fatal *blood-poisoning*. This ideologically motivated choice is clearly arbitrary but, thanks to the source scenario, it appears to be perfectly 'natural'. It activates general knowledge about illnesses: just as every illness must have an illness-causing agent or substance, so the national crisis must have its agent. It is this general warrant that, together with the target identification, yields the intended inference that the influence of 'the Jew' in German society is equivalent to that of a blood-poisoning agent in a body.

The other argumentative move for Hitler, after having established the *diagnosis*, is the 'practical' conclusion, that is, the necessity of a radical elimination of the supposed poisonous agent. Again, experience-based source-domain knowledge (namely, that an illness 'requires' a cure by a competent doctor) is used by Hitler to suggest himself as the *healer of the suffering patient*, the German nation. This conclusion carries with it a host of further presuppositions: that the illness is in principle curable, that it is worth the effort, that the healer has been rightly identified, that the cure is appropriate, successful etc. These assumptions can be deemed to be relatively 'straightforward' only at the source level (with regard to a generally benevolent medical science and practice), whereas they are extremely problematic at the target level and would require extensive backing in open deliberation and argumentation. However, as parts of a holistic scenario mapping, these presuppositions are covered up and hidden but still taken for granted. The nation thus *becomes* the patient that urgently

needs the cure. The healer is present, the diagnosis is clear: the treatment is without alternative.

We can connect this basic scenario that Hitler used in *Mein Kampf* to justify his antisemitism to its characterization as a distinctive, 'redemptive', 'exterminatory' or 'eliminatory' version of antisemitism, as proposed by Holocaust researchers such as Yehuda Bauer, Christopher Browning, Saul Friedländer, and Daniel J. Goldhagen.²⁴ These explanations all refer to the expected outcome of the *cure* that Hitler had planned for the German *national body*. While the categorization of antisemitism as 'exterminatory' or 'eliminatory' is mainly based on hindsight knowledge about the genocidal result of that *cure*, the term 'redemptive' seems more apt as a characterization of how Hitler presented his policies himself in *Mein Kampf*. It also points to a further conceptual dimension of his metaphor system: redemption presupposes not just a national crisis but a universal catastrophe, which needs to be 'redeemed' by the presumptive healer/saviour.

Nature's garden and the creator's design

Hitler's most elaborate attempt to give such a universalist underpinning to the *illness-cure* scenario can be found in chapter 11 of *Mein Kampf*, entitled 'Nation and Race' ('Volk und Rasse'). If a naive reader opened *Mein Kampf* at the beginning of that chapter, he or she might think they were glancing at a grotesquely oversimplified account of heredity in the 'animal kingdom', rather than at a political treatise. The chapter starts with a childish-sounding introduction to the fact that sexual reproduction among animals is often confined to members of the same species:

- 6) There are some truths that are so obvious that for this very reason they are not seen or at least not recognized by ordinary people. . . . Thus people without exception wander about in the garden of Nature; they imagine that they know practically everything and yet, with few exceptions, they pass blindly by one of the most patent principles of Nature's rule: the inner segregation of the species of all living beings on this earth. . . . Blue tit seeks blue tit, finch goes to finch, stork to stork, field mouse to field mouse, dormouse to dormouse, he-wolf to she-wolf etc.²⁵

24 See Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2001); Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men. Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins 1992); Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992); Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*; and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1996).

25 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 311 (1933); 258 (1992).

Even the most naive reader would probably be puzzled by Hitler's assumption that this 'truth' was not known to 'ordinary people' who 'wander about in the garden of Nature'; after all, his insights into the life of blue tits and finches are not *that* original. Within a couple of pages, however, after dealing perfunctorily with the most glaring exceptions to the supposedly universal principle, Hitler gets to his main point. 'Just like' animals, he alleges, humans of different 'races' are not supposed to mate:

- 7) Historical experience . . . shows with terrifying clarity that in every mingling of Aryan blood (*Blutsvermischung*) with that of lower peoples the result was the end of the cultured people. . . . Briefly, the result of all racial crossing is therefore always the following:
- (a) Lowering of the level of the higher race;
 - (b) Physical and intellectual regression and hence the beginning of a slowly but surely progressing sickness (*Siechtums*).

To bring about such a development is therefore nothing else but to sin against the will of the eternal creator (*Sünde treiben wider den Willen des ewigen Schöpfers*).²⁶

Apart from feeling revulsion at this combination of racism and blasphemy, even the most gullible reader would balk at the two *non-sequiturs* in this passage: 1) the equivalence between 'species' and 'race', and 2) the identification of cultural and biological evolution. Even a historian such as Eberhard Jäckel who tried to take Hitler's world-view as seriously as possible, considered this confusion of biology and culture in Hitler's notion of 'race' beneath contempt: 'There is no need to comment on the nonsensicality of this kind of argument.'²⁷ Others such as Alan Bullock, Ian Kershaw and Richard Evans speak of 'enter[ing] the world of the insane',²⁸ of an 'overriding and all-embracing obsession',²⁹ and of 'paranoid conviction'.³⁰ These psychopathological characterizations of Hitler's anti-semitic beliefs are, of course, psychologically appropriate, and their logical and scientific 'nonsensicality' is, indeed, abundantly evident. However, all this is irrelevant to the question of judging the *apparent* coherence and conclusiveness of the conceptual metaphor scenario that Hitler employed to frame his racist beliefs. By integrating his view of nations as *bodies* into an overarching concept of human *races*, Hitler managed to enhance the internal cohesion of his basic scenario and to 'universalize' it at the same time.

26 *Ibid.*, 313 (1933); 260 (1992).

27 Jäckel, *Hitler's World View*, 89.

28 Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1962), 40.

29 Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936*, 244.

30 Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 198.

But what, then, of the 'naturalist', scientific appeal of the 'race' concept that Hitler explicitly highlighted in chapter 11 of *Mein Kampf*? Hitler's claims to have based his antisemitic racism on 'natural' facts of animal reproduction and evolution, as well as the infamous involvement of German medical and biological scientists in the Nazis' eugenicist and genocidal programmes, have led to a number of prominent interpretations of Nazi racism as a special, vicious variant of Social Darwinism.³¹ If he had read Darwin's own works, the amateur observer of 'the garden of Nature' from Braunau might have claimed, spuriously, that even the great evolutionist himself had not drawn a sharp dividing line between 'species' and 'races'. In *The Origin of Species*, for instance, Darwin asserted that, if 'species are only strongly marked and permanent varieties, and . . . each species first existed as a variety', then 'no line of demarcation can be drawn between species, commonly supposed to have been produced by special acts of creation, and varieties which are acknowledged to have been produced by secondary laws'.³² In *The Descent of Man*, he applied this principle also to human races and concluded that it was 'almost a matter of indifference whether the so-called races of man are thus designated, or are ranked as species or sub-species', although 'the latter term' appeared to him to be 'the more appropriate'.³³

Hitler's interest in blurring the lines between *race* and *species*, by contrast, had nothing to do with any wish to emphasize evolutionary continuity. Indeed, it was focused on the very opposite objective, that of underlining contrasts between 'races' and making them appear to be as discontinuous as possible. The 'nonsensicality' of the analogy between animal species (blue tit *v.* wolf etc.) and human 'races' ('Aryans' *v.* 'Jews'), which Jäckel scoffed at, made good sense within Hitler's scenario. In his framework, 'races' were as distinct from each other as 'species', that is, irreversibly and essentially

31 See Hans-Günter Zmarzlik, 'Der Sozialdarwinismus in Deutschland als geschichtliches Problem', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 11, 1963, 246–73; Gerhard Baader and Ulrich Schultz (eds), *Medizin und Nationalsozialismus: Tabuisierte Vergangenheit—Ungebrochene Tradition?* (Berlin: Verlagsgesellschaft Gesundheit 1980); Alfred Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin. The Popularisation of Darwinism in Germany 1860–1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1981); Peter Weingart, Jürgen Kroll and Kurt Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene. Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* (Frankfurt on Main: Suhrkamp 1988); Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989); Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler. Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2004); and, critically, Richard J. Evans, 'In search of German Social Darwinism', in Richard J. Evans, *Rereading German History, 1800–1996. From Unification to Reunification* (London: Routledge 1997), 119–44.

32 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* [1859] (London: John Murray 1901), 644.

33 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* [1879] (London: Penguin 2004), 210.

incompatible with each other. Both terms denoted collective entities with immutable characteristics and specific historical purposes. Thus, any cross-over was a monstrosity and a 'sin against the will of the eternal creator'.

Hitler effectively had no concept of *continuous* evolution that could seriously be compared to Darwin's fundamental insight that 'species have changed, and are still slowly changing by the preservation and accumulation of successive slight favourable variations'.³⁴ The author of *Mein Kampf* left little doubt about what he thought of the notion that 'Man' might be related to animals:

- 8) *A people's state (völkischer Staat) must . . . begin by raising marriage from the level of a continuous defilement of the race (Rassenschande), and give it the consecration of an institution which is called upon to conceive men in the image of the Lord (Ebenbilder des Herrn) and not monstrosities halfway between man and ape (Mißgeburten zwischen Mensch und Affe)* (emphasis in the original).³⁵

The concept of any mediation, intercourse or crossing between members of different races/species was in Hitler's eyes an absolute abomination. He regarded the results of such crossing as violations of the grand design of 'the eternal creator'. They were not meant to be and if, by some devilish accident, they came into the world, it was the duty of anyone who tried to help *the work of the Lord* to eliminate them. However, as the creator had failed (somewhat perversely) to put sufficient natural safeguards in place against the mingling and mixing of human races/species, he needed a 'deputy' to 'enforce' the original design, a task that Hitler was, of course, only too eager to carry out himself.

By assuming that role Hitler implicitly claims to have understood the principles that underlie all creation, encompassing nature and the realm of human experience and development. Within this context, the German national *illness* is but an example, a test case, of a universal crisis of creation. In this cosmic super-scenario, *all* creatures try to maintain and improve their health for the benefit of their respective race/species in order to increase its strength and its value in the hierarchy of creation. Conversely, any 'blending of a higher with a lower race' was viewed by Hitler as leading to de-gradation and threatening to ruin the design of the 'creator' and '[Nature's] work of higher breeding, over perhaps hundreds of thousands of years'.³⁶ Hitler even contemplated the possibility of an ultimate, irreversible failure of humans to fulfil the creator's grand design:

34 Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 646.

35 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 444–5 (1933); 365–6 (1992). Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch has pointed out the allusion to Genesis 1: 26 in Hitler's reference to 'men in the image of the Lord': 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' (Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch, *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: W. Fink 2002), 312–17).

36 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 313 (1933); 260 (1992).

Table 3

Domains	Event structure		
	<i>Underlying cause</i>	<i>Present situation</i>	<i>Action needed</i>
<i>Source</i>	Poisoning by an 'alien body' (bacillus, virus, sponger)	⇒ Body suffering from severe, deadly illness ⇐	⇒ Cure of the illness through removal of its cause
<i>Target 1 (Germany)</i>	↓ Destructive influence of Jews on German society	↑1 Germany's national crisis following the defeat in 1918	↓ ⊃ Empowerment of a man able to remove 'the Jew' from the German nation
<i>Target 2 (Universe)</i>	↓ Devilish forces foster unnatural mixing of human species/races	↓ Threat to creator's plan of continuous improvement of species/races	↓ A redeemer is needed to enforce the creator's grand overall design.

- 9) If, with the help of his Marxist creed, the Jew is victorious over the other nations of the world, his crown will be the funeral wreath of humanity and this planet will, as it did thousands of years ago, move through the ether devoid of men.³⁷

In view of this apocalyptic vision, we need to add a third scenario tier to the basic source and target levels of Hitler's antisemitic conceptual metaphor framework in *Mein Kampf*. This addition is represented in Table 3 as a secondary 'target domain' level. By comparison with the already tenuous analogical inferences between the primary source and target levels, target level 2 is even more fantastic: it is based on sheer speculative extrapolation from the national crisis to a universal drama. Nevertheless, in the 'analogical logic' of the metaphoric scenario, even these speculations retain a vestige of internal consistency and plausibility. Target level 2 'inherits' from level 1 the grounding in the seemingly self-evident source scenario of *illness*, leading to *diagnosis*, leading to *cure*. As the source level is now once removed, this derived event structure may appear less plausible than at level 1, but it is still present as a conceptual echo. The second target dimension of Hitler's antisemitic metaphor system is also recognizable as a 'stripped-down' version of the Christian scenario of *Man's fall* and *redemption*. It is in this sense that Saul Friedländer speaks of the 'redemptive' aspect of Nazi antisemitism and that Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch 'credits' Hitler and

37 *Ibid.*, 70 (1933); 60 (1992).

other Nazi leaders with having established National Socialism as a 'political religion'.³⁸

Bärsch compares Hitler's references to biblical phrases in *Mein Kampf* with the mystical tendencies in the writings of other Nazis such as Dietrich Eckart, Joseph Goebbels and Alfred Rosenberg, and he concludes that the 'religious content' of National Socialist ideology was one of its central characteristics and a decisive factor in securing popular support.³⁹ It is, however, debatable to what degree Hitler's unspecific, sporadic use of religious terms (*devilish Jews, god-like or divine Aryans, the Lord's work, God's will, creator, omnipotent, providence, our creed, sin*) in *Mein Kampf* constitutes a coherent ideological framework that deserves to be called a 'political religion'.⁴⁰ The more extensive and systematically developed references to mystical Bible texts in Rosenberg's and Eckart's writings and the religious background of Goebbels's education make them more likely candidates for advancing 'religious' versions of Nazi ideology than Hitler, who is known to have openly ridiculed the mystical claims made by Rosenberg.⁴¹ On the other hand, Hitler clearly wanted his followers to emulate the intensity of religious devotion in their 'belief' in him as a *redeemer*.⁴² And, in terms of scenario coherence, the echoes of the biblical story of *Man's fall, repentance and redemption* in *Mein Kampf* provided an 'event structure' of its own that had the advantage of being well known to readers and that lent itself to parallelization with the other levels of his anti-semiotic scenario. The ordering of the primary scenario levels—*infection* ⇔ *illness* ⇔ *cure, Jewish influence on German society* ⇔ *national crisis* ⇔ *national liberation-through-elimination of Jewry*—could thus be copied on to the third, universal and metaphysical level. This parallelization evidently enhanced the apparent coherence and comprehensiveness of the scenario.

38 Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 87; Bärsch, *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus*, 380.

39 See Bärsch, *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus*, 277–318. For relevant passages in *Mein Kampf*, see, for example, 317, 340, 351, 752 (1933); 59, 63, 282, 294, 605 (1992).

40 For the debate concerning the (pseudo)-religious character of Hitler's ideology, see, in addition to Bärsch, Manfred Ach and Clemens Pentrop, *Hitlers 'Religion': Pseudoreligiöse Elemente im nationalsozialistischen Sprachgebrauch* (Munich: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Religions- und Weltanschauungsfragen 1991); Michael Ley and Julius H. Schoeps (eds), *Der Nationalsozialismus als politische Religion* (Bodenheim: Philo Verlagsgesellschaft 1997); Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich. A New History* (London: Macmillan 2000), 97–101; Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003); and Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power, 1933–1939* (London: Allen Lane 2005), 257–60.

41 Fest, *Hitler*, 202, 732.

42 See, for example, Hitler's admiration of the 'propagandistic' successes of the Catholic Church, as stated repeatedly in *Mein Kampf*, 481, 512–13 (1933); 393, 417–18 (1992).

Genocide as a *therapy* for racial *blood poisoning*

Overblown and hyperbolic as it was, Hitler's *diagnosis* of a national and global *health crisis* did not strictly warrant a complete annihilation of the supposed racial group identified as the *cause* or *agent of the illness*. One can treat even a life-threatening illness (in the literal sense) without necessarily eliminating all its causes, and the same holds for social *illnesses* that are perceived as urgent but manageable threats to the *body politic*.⁴³ Hitler, however, deliberately drew the most drastic conclusions from the worst possible *illness* scenario, and his apocalyptic vision of a threat to the whole human species, if not the whole of creation, raised the stakes even further. In Hitler's view, really existing Jewish people were nothing more than puppets of a worldwide conspiracy. As he stated unambiguously in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler firmly believed in the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, but even he conceded that in reality Jewish individuals might be quite unconscious of the role they were supposed to play in such a conspiracy.⁴⁴

To integrate the antisemitic conspiracy theory into his *illness-cure* scenario, he had to rely on a source concept that had an irredeemably negative value and that could be projected on to 'the Jew' as a collective entity. The *illness-cure* scenario already provided a slot for such a concept, namely, that of the *cause of the disease*, and one prototypical cause of disease is poisoning, especially in the form of a lethal *blood poisoning*, which we have already encountered as being attributed to the Jewish press in quotation 2 above. But the *blood poisoning* source concept was by no means restricted to these ephemeral characterizations. In fact, it stood at the centre of a series of scenario versions of increasing ferocity in *Mein Kampf*.

In the most basic version, Hitler likens 'the Jew' to a *viper* or an *adder* (*Viper*, *Kreuzotter*, *Schlange*) whose *bite* directly introduces *venom* (*Gift*, *Völkergift*, *Vergiftung*) into the *bloodstream* (*Blut*, *Blutzufuhr*, *Blutlauf*) of the victim.⁴⁵ At the second level, 'the Jew' is depicted as a *bloodsucker*, *leech* (*Blutegel*, *Blutsauger*) or generally as a *parasite* (*Parasit*, *Schmarotzer*).⁴⁶ With specific regard to Hitler's imagery as well as other racist discourses, Bruce Hawkins highlights the contrast between the high value placed on entities that 'seem to have the closest natural connection to life within the body', and parasites that 'maintain life within their own bodies by sucking life-sustaining nutrient out of some other body' and are accordingly rated extremely negatively,

43 According to Susan Sontag (*Illness as Metaphor*, 71–6), traditional *disease* metaphors in political theory at least up to the Enlightenment served mainly the purpose of 'encourag[ing] rulers to pursue a more rational policy' and were not normally used to suggest the complete destruction of social groups, nations or races.

44 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 337 (1933); 279 (1992).

45 See, for example, *ibid.*, 268, 316, 346, 751 (1933); 223–4, 262, 268–9, 288, 605 (1992).

46 See, for example, *ibid.*, 334, 335, 339, 340 (1933); 276, 281, 282, 296 (1992).

particularly in the specific iconography of *blood poisoning*.⁴⁷ Not only is the body in question deprived of some of its own blood, the remaining blood is at the same time infected: the damage is thus magnified.⁴⁸

At a third, more abstract level, 'the Jew' is labelled generally as the *germ* or *germ carrier* or *agent of disease* (*Bazillus*, *Bazillenträger*, *Erreger*).⁴⁹ This general qualification as an agent of infection links to the further scenario of *decomposition* (*Zersetzung*, *Fäulnis*), in which 'the Jew' has either the role of the *decomposing agent* (*Zersetzer*, *Ferment der Zersetzung*), as, for example, *fungus* (*Spaltpilz*) and *maggot* (*Made*), or that of the *multiplying agent*, namely, *vermin*, especially *rats* (*Ungeziefer*, *Ratten*), that spread the by-products of decomposition (*Leichengift*).⁵⁰ The *infection* concept is also compatible with the scenario of an *epidemic* (*Seuche*), which Hitler uses to describe Jewish influence in society, specifically *pestilence* (*Pest*, *Pestilenz*, *Verpestung*) and *syphilis* (*Syphilis*, *Versyphilitisierung*).⁵¹

While these differing scenario versions do not form a consistent source domain in terms of completely coherent system of biological or medical concepts, they still fit together sufficiently to create an ensemble of *causes/agents of illness* that suggests a deadly, universal *health crisis*. Even where these *disease* scenarios differ, the role for 'the Jew' remains the same: he only changes his specific (metaphoric) appearance. Whether he is depicted as a *viper*, a *bacillus*, a *leech*, a *fungus* or a *rat*, he is in every case the *parasitical* driving force of *poisoning*, *physical decay* and *decomposition*. This role was, according to Hitler, unchangeable: it had always been the same and it could not be affected by any change of circumstance, other than complete annihilation either through a politico-medical intervention, such as the one Hitler himself intended to bring about, or in an apocalyptic scenario-version, as the inevitable and inadvertent result of final victory of 'the Jew':

- 10) ... the blood-Jew (*Blutjude*) tries to exterminate the national intelligentsia and, by robbing the peoples of their natural intellectual leadership, makes them ripe for the slave's lot of permanent subjugation. ... The end, however, is not only the end of the liberty of the peoples oppressed by the Jew, but also the end of this parasite upon the nations (*Völkerparasit*) itself. After the death of his victim, the vampire sooner or later dies too.⁵²

47 Hawkins, 'Ideology, metaphor and iconographic reference', 46.

48 This doubly stigmatizing force of the *bloodsucker* metaphor probably accounts for its long tradition of use as a pejorative term. See *Brewer's Dictionary of Modern Phrase and Fable*, ed. Adrian Room (London: Cassell 2000), 142, and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2 [1860] (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 1984), 190.

49 See, for example, Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 62, 334, 360 (1933); 54, 277, 298 (1992).

50 See, for example, *ibid.*, 135, 186, 331, 361 (1933); 113, 155, 274, 298 (1992).

51 See, for example, *ibid.*, 63, 269, 272 (1933); 54, 224, 226 (1992). Tuberculosis, which figured in Hitler's antisemitic metaphors in earlier writings, is mentioned only in literally medical contexts in *Mein Kampf*, see 253, 269 (1933); 211, 224 (1992).

52 *Ibid.*, 358 (1933); 296 (1992).

Within this complex of pseudo-parasitological and -medical scenarios, the notion of *blood poisoning* plays a central role. As we have seen, the source of the *blood poisoning* metaphor appears in two forms: 1) as the bite of a poisonous snake, that is, a viper, and 2) as a by-product of parasitical activity, for example, a bloodsucker's bite that introduces toxic substances into the bloodstream. The metaphorization of 'the Jew' as a *leech*, a *bloodsucker* and a *vampire* (the last of which can be read in both a zoological and a mythological version) fits this scenario perfectly.

In addition, blood was for Hitler also the carrier of heredity. As quotation 7 (above) shows, he believed that procreation among members of different races always resulted in a *mingling of blood*, and that such *racial crossing* lead to 'physical and intellectual regression and hence the beginning of a slowly but surely progressing sickness'. This belief in what we would call a 'genetic' significance of blood was not an idiosyncratic superstition on the part of Hitler but was fully in line with traditional folk-theoretical assumptions that an offspring's blood was a mix of the parents' blood and with it their inheritance. This notion derived from pre-modern concepts of blood as one of the 'four humours' (besides phlegm, cholera and melancholy); its conceptual linkage with heredity had persisted into the nineteenth century and was only slowly replaced in the twentieth century by the acknowledgement of Mendelian genetics.⁵³ Hitler could rely on his audience to understand the 'blood = heredity' equation as a conventional way of speaking about heredity. As a corollary of this equation, the notion of 'poisoned blood' entailed that of 'poisoned heredity'.

Within this framework, 'the Jew' as the supposed *blood poisoning agent* of the German *body politic* as well as of the Aryan race and, ultimately, the world posed a danger not just for one generation but also for the future. This long-term threat made the elimination of *all* forms of the supposed Jewish *poisoning agent*, that is, of all the *bacilli*, *vipers*, *leeches*, *parasites* and *vermin*, even more urgent. However, in terms of Hitler's analogical argument, a crucial element in the *illness-cure* scenario that would make the 'cure-by-elimination' a moral imperative was still missing. In terms of the biological and medical source domain concepts, bacilli, vipers, leeches, parasites and vermin are habitually called *agents of disease* but, as organisms without consciousness or conscience, they are not held literally responsible for any result of their 'activities'. We can figuratively call their effects *evil* or *cruel* with a conscious, anthropocentric interest. But when Hitler used these categories he meant anthropomorphic qualities in earnest. The crucial argumentative link that allowed Hitler to treat the Jews *as if* they were *blood-poisoning agents* that caused death and decomposition *on purpose* was his particular explanation of how such a poisonous racial mix had come about.

53 See Steve Jones, *The Language of the Genes. Biology, History and the Evolutionary Future* (London: Flamingo 2000), 38–40.

Hitler achieved this argumentative aim by enriching his basic scenario with a series of accounts of actual 'inter-racial' Jewish-German/Aryan contacts. Of these, the pseudo-biographical references to experiences in pre-war Vienna and his rehash of antisemitic legends giving Jews a prominent role in criminal history⁵⁴ are of little concern for us, as they serve mainly to illustrate the scenario. They do not provide the crucial explanation of how the *blood-mix* between Aryans/Germans and 'the Jew' had come about in the first place. Such a *blood-mix* was, according to Hitler, supposed to be a violation of nature's laws and of the creator's design. Accordingly, it needed a particular motivation.

This leads us to the especially sinister, pornographic aspects of Hitler's antisemitism, which in *Mein Kampf* are only occasionally visible through its laboured conventional and semi-academic style (they are more evident in speeches and monologues in his inner circle).⁵⁵ In one of the most infamous passages of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler states how he envisaged the Aryan-Jewish *blood-mix* to have come about:

- 11) With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks for hours in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood (*das er mit seinem Blute schändet*), thus stealing her from her people. With every means he tries to destroy the racial foundations of the people he has set out to subjugate. Just as he himself systematically ruins women and girls, he does not shrink back from pulling down the blood barriers (*Blutschranken*) for others, even on a large scale.⁵⁶

The essential ingredient in this horror-version of the *blood poisoning* scenario is the contrast between the deliberate, evil aggression on the part of the 'black-haired Jewish youth' and the total innocence of the 'unsuspecting girl'. The *defilement of non-Jewish blood* by 'the Jew' is a totally one-sided act of criminal aggression, which morally justifies any kind of defence (either by the victim herself or any saviour who comes to her rescue). The phrase *defilement of blood*, as a conventional label for any undesirable sexual contact,⁵⁷ was not in itself an exceptionally strong metaphor, but in the context of Hitler's metaphoric scenario of *blood poisoning* as the cause for the nation's *illness* it assumed extraordinary importance. What Hitler construed here at the target level was an exact parallel to the biological source scenario, but with the desired further moral dimension included. It is presented as an

54 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, chapters 2, 7, 11 and *passim*.

55 See Henry Picker (ed.), *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942* (Stuttgart: Seewald 1965); and Werner Jochmann (ed.), *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims* (Munich: Heyne 1982).

56 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 357 (1933); 295 (1992).

57 Originally, the term *Blutschande* appears to have meant mainly incest but was then extended metonymically. See Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 190–1.

Table 4

		Event structure	
<i>Domains</i>	<i>Underlying cause</i>	<i>Present situation</i>	<i>Action needed</i>
<i>Source</i>	Poisoning by an 'alien body' (bacillus, virus, sponger)	⇒ Body suffering from severe, deadly illness, ⇐ i.e. blood poisoning	⇒ Cure by way of a complete removal of the cause of the illness
	↓	↑	↓
<i>Target level 1a</i>	Race defilement of innocent girl by Jewish rapist	Destruction of hereditary foundations of the girl's race/people	The girl must be saved by force from the rapist.
	↓	↑ ¹	↓
<i>Target level 1b</i>	Destructive influence of Jews on German society	Germany's downfall following the defeat in 1918	Elimination of Jews from German society
	↓	↓	↓
<i>Target level 2</i>	Devilish forces foster unnatural mix of species/races.	The natural course of improvement of species-races is impeded and put in jeopardy.	A universal redeemer has to enforce the creator's cosmic design.

act of blood poisoning, but not in the sense of a metaphorical *viper* or *bloodsucker's* bite, but as an actual sexual attack by a supposedly real Jewish person on a supposedly real (non-Jewish) victim.

The parallelization of the biological concept of *blood poisoning* and the ethical concept *blood defilement* also matched and complemented perfectly the notion of *race defilement* (see quotation 8 above) at the universal level (= target level 2). It allowed Hitler to pass between all levels of source and target domains without further justification. The boundaries between biological, ethical and socio-political concepts were effectively eliminated. Whenever Hitler called 'the Jew' a *poisonous parasite*, he provided what for him was a 'truthful' characterization that fitted all domain levels. This particular conceptual 'trick', as it were, necessitates one last amendment of our scenario schema, introducing a special, intermediate layer between the basic source and target domain levels, as shown in Table 4. In terms of this last scenario version, 'the Jew' was seen as an essentially anti-human *parasite* species, which, unlike an unconsciously acting bio-parasite, *deliberately* tried to invade as many host populations as possible. As the infection was lethal for all its hosts, its own 'victory' would also be its nemesis: it would die together with the last host it had conquered (see quotation 10 above). 'The Jew' thus became a kind of universal *super-parasite* that not only had the will to destroy other races but would do so, as it were, on principle, that is, even risking its own destruction in the process.

Scenarios for genocide

By following up the implications of the biological/medical metaphor scenario in *Mein Kampf*, we have reached what Hitler considered to be the 'granite foundations' of his ideology.⁵⁸ They centred on the notion of a race war between 'Aryans'/Germans and Jews, in which the latter launch a deadly attack in the form of *blood poisoning* against the German nation's *body*. This *blood poisoning* was conceived of in various ways: a) as a supposedly real act of *blood defilement*, that is, rape or seduction, b) as a part of the source scenario of *illness-cure*, and c) as an allegorical element of a pseudo-religious, apocalyptic narrative of a devilish conspiracy against the grand design of the creator. The analysis of this multilayered conceptual structure of the chief causal event in the *illness-cure* scenario helps to explicate the peculiar 'metaphorical' status of Nazi antisemitism (as far as it appears in *Mein Kampf*), while fully recognizing its function as a plausible model for what the Nazis would later call the 'final solution'.

The apparent 'conclusiveness' of this model for genocide derives not so much from the individual 'content' aspects of Hitler's metaphorization of Jews as *parasites* (which were long-established conventional clichés of antisemitic discourse) but from their integration in scenarios that have their own internal logic. The basic mapping (see Tables 1 and 2) allows inferences from the domain of popular medical/hygienic knowledge ('necessity of comprehensive extermination of an agent of disease') to be transferred to the target level of politics ('necessity of fight against the alleged Jewish influence'). Hitler did not, however, stop at drawing pseudo-logical conclusions from this relatively straightforward analogy. By including a further target level of cosmic 'redemption-through-annihilation' and also an intermediate level between source and target scenarios, he managed to insinuate that the alleged crime of *blood poisoning* was 'literally' true as well as being the appropriate overarching conceptual frame for the Jewish role in German society and even in humanity at large.

Within this antisemitic 'super-scenario', the conceptual boundaries between source and target domains were erased: for Hitler, any German-Jewish contact *was* blood mixing, hence blood defilement, hence blood poisoning. The conceptual and epistemological difference of source and target levels was short-circuited; the result was a belief-system that was no longer open to criticism, as the different levels could be used to corroborate each other. Problematic claims at the target level were 'proven' at the source level, and vice versa. Outside facts that did not fit the scenario could be dismissed as the product of cunning deception practised by 'the great master of lying', namely, 'the Jew'.⁵⁹ If one wanted, in a Machiavellian spirit, to assess the 'achievement' of devising an optimally efficient ideological

58 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 22, 361 (1933); 21, 299 (1992).

59 Ibid., 253, 335 (1933); 277, 289 (1992).

metaphor, Hitler's multilayered *illness-cure* scenario of national and universal redemption-by-genocide would certainly count as one of the most powerful—and most destructive—conceptual constructs of all time.

These results cast new light on several central topics of Holocaust research that have been discussed both among the community of Holocaust historians and in the wider public. First, in the context of the longstanding debates between 'intentionalist' and 'functionalist' explanations of the origins of the Holocaust,⁶⁰ an insight into the inner coherence of Hitler's ideology based on cognitive methodology would seem to reinforce the view that Hitler himself favoured a comprehensively eliminatory 'final solution' of what he saw as 'the Jewish question' at least as early as 1924–5. *Mein Kampf* explained this 'solution' in conceptual metaphors that were meant in earnest and not just as fanciful rhetoric. The implementation of his genocidal plans would thus have been for him more a matter of timing and opportunity, rather than merely one possible option among many. This view entails taking the metaphors of *Mein Kampf* seriously though not at all at their 'face value'. The well-known fact that many of Hitler's contemporaries in the 1920s and 1930s did not understand their true significance does not provide a valid counter-argument: many more of Hitler's predictions in that book that were formulated less figuratively, such as his military expansion to the East, were also fatefully misunderstood.

It is a matter for further research to establish how exactly the inferences of the antisemitic *illness-cure* scenario were interpreted, by which parts of the German public and at which stages on the 'path to genocide'. On the basis of existing studies of German public opinion in the 1930s,⁶¹ it seems likely that the genocidal implications of Hitler's metaphor system were fully understood right from the start by his inner circle of friends and followers. However, the wider public's understanding was more differentiated, ranging from diffuse agreement to dismissal as 'wild talk'. Even Nazi followers who went along with any sort of 'strong words' and brutal actions against Jewish people would not necessarily have realized immediately all the implications of the *illness-cure* scenario as a blueprint for genocide. Nevertheless, once the scenario was established as a common and even dominant 'frame of reference'

60 See Christopher Browning, 'Beyond "intentionalism" and "functionalism": the decision for the Final Solution reconsidered', in Browning, *The Path to Genocide*, 86–121; David Cesarani (ed.), *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation* (London: Routledge 1996), 1–29 (Introduction); Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, 93–133; Saul Friedländer, 'The extermination of the European Jews in historiography: fifty years later', in Omer Bartov, *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath* (London and New York: Routledge 2000), 79–91; and Peter Longerich, *Der ungeschriebene Befehl: Hitler und der Weg zur 'Endlösung'* (Munich: Piper 2001).

61 See David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford: Blackwell 1992); David Bankier, 'German public awareness of the Final Solution', in Cesarani (ed.), *The Final Solution*, 215–27; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jew, passim*; and Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 586–610.

in public discourse, it was available for reinterpretation, such as after each of the successive public displays of stigmatization and humiliation of Jews from the April boycott in 1933, through the various boycott campaigns, the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws, the pogrom of 10 November 1938 to the final stages of their separation from social and economic life and isolation in ghettos. For larger parts of the population, for example, officers and soldiers of the Wehrmacht who were 'initiated' into its true meaning prior to and during the invasion of the Soviet Union,⁶² the awareness of its genocidal dimension would then not have come as a completely new 'insight' but at least partly as a recognition of a conceptual pattern that was now being 'turned into reality' and thus confirmed. The ensuing reinterpretations of the metaphor may have ranged from the more or less self-conscious use of the *illness-cure* scenario as a way of glossing over unpalatable experiences or witness accounts to its deliberate use as a cover for referring to the atrocities. Once the latter point had been reached, any 'metaphoric' quality would have been lost: it would have been on a par with the specialized code of Holocaust perpetrators and administrators that included terms such as 'concentration', 'deportation', 'special treatment' etc.

The actual perception of Nazi metaphors by the German population still remains to be investigated, but the cognitive analysis of antisemitic key metaphors in *Mein Kampf* shows that the reconstruction of strong ideological metaphors cannot confine itself to identifying a few isolated racist expressions or source concepts. In order to explicate the conditions of their ideological import—how easy they made it for users to switch between literal and figurative levels of genocide-justification—it is necessary to study in detail their conceptual coherence as ideological scenarios. The antisemitic metaphor system of the Nazis provides a uniquely powerful example of the cognitive forces that can be unleashed in the service of racist stigmatization and dehumanization leading to genocide, a 'warning from history' about the horrific cost of misunderstanding metaphors as mere rhetoric.

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62 For the crucial role of propaganda in the preparation and actual planning of the Soviet campaign as a war of racial annihilation, see Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army. Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991); Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 115–31, 140–7; and Christopher Browning, 'Hitler and the euphoria of victory', in Cesarani (ed.), *The Final Solution*, 137–74.