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Antisemitism: Sociological Perspectives

The story of European Jewry is more than two thousand years old. It has known periods of prosperity but also times of persecutions.¹ Above all, it is impossible to describe this history without assessing the vicissitudes of their condition as a minority repetitively harassed in most various circumstances. Hatred of Jews has even received a special label—antisemitism. Early examples of massacre of Jews took place in Alexandria, before and after the beginning of the Common Era, when the city was home to the largest Jewish diaspora community.² Manetho, an Egyptian historian, wrote scathingly of the Jews and so did Agatharchides of Cnidus who ridiculed Jews' laws as "absurd." Many scholars have studied this persistent attitude and come up with a variety of accounts.

Shaul Bassi cites the historical testimony of Ludwig Börne, a German Jew who converted to Christianity, written in 1832: "Certain people object to my being a Jew; others forgive me; still others praise me for this; but everybody remembers it."³

It is this special look on Jews or past-Jews that qualifies for the term antisemitism. The term itself was formulated by Wilhelm Marr who in 1879 founded the "League for Antisemitism" and elaborated on his intentions in *Der Weg zum Siege des Germanenthums über das Judenthum* [*The Way to Victory of Germanism over Judaism*], published the same year.⁴ This term became common usage in many languages. According to Marr, Jews constituted physically and morally a distinct inferior race predisposed to be a "slave race." He followed notorious figures who shared his hatred of Jews among whom Richard Wagner stood out with his *Das Judenthum in der Musik* [*Jewishness in Music*], published in 1850. Wagner

1 Cf. S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 18 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952–1983).

2 Cf. E. H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-three Centuries of Antisemitism* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 21 ff.; W. Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate* (Lanham: Jason Aronson, 1993), 198; P. W. Van der Horst, *Philo's Flaccus: The First Pogrom: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

3 S. Bassi, "Resisting Jews: Allo-Semitism and the Dialectic of Assimilation," in *Resisting Alterities: Wilson Harris and Other Avatars of Otherness*, ed. Marco Fazzini (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 210.

4 Cf. W. Marr, *Wählet keinen Juden! Der Weg zum Siege des Germanenthums über das Judenthum. Ein Mahnwort an die Wähler nichtjüdischen Stammes aller Confessionen. Mit einem Schlußwort: "An die Juden in Preussen."* (Berlin: Hentze, 1879).

contended that Jews are alien to German culture and an enemy of its foundations.⁵

This kind of hatred of Jews was new because it was a constitutive element of nationalistic convictions and spoke of race rather than religion and religious practices. Jews' "rootlessness," it implied, was genetic. To this persuasion, scientists and philosophers added that Jews share mystical beliefs and an unambiguous tendency to pursue their lives separately from non-Jews. The "empirical" support of antisemitism was to be provided with the publication of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or *The Protocols of the Meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion*.⁶ These "protocols" narrate secret sessions of "the rulers of Zion" which revealed, assumedly, to the public at large, a Jewish plot to control the world. It is a fabricated text, first published in Russia in 1903 and translated into numerous languages in the early twentieth century. The *Protocols* detail how Jewish leaders intended to gain hegemony over the Gentiles by undermining their moral power and controlling the world's economy. In the 1920s, Henry Ford funded 500,000 copies to be distributed in the United States. The Nazis found in the *Protocols* a useful means of propaganda—even though, in 1921, *The Times* of London and other newspapers denounced their falsehood. Even today, the *Protocols* are available, in print and on the internet, and are still designated by some figures as genuine.

Such pseudo-scientific theories about race had become widespread in Europe by the second half of the nineteenth century. Today, such theories meet incredulity, but other approaches are formulated which express the same exclusionism vis-à-vis Jews. The *European Forum on Antisemitism* (2013) quotes the updated working definitions of antisemitism as adopted, in 2004, by the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). This definition enounces as follows:

Antisemitism is a perception of Jews expressed as hatred toward them. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities [...] such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for "why things go wrong." It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative traits of character.

5 Cf. R. Wagner, "Das Judentum in der Musik," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, September 3/9, 1850.

6 Cf. "Программа завоевания мира евреями (Programa zavoevaniya mira evreyami)" [The Jewish Program to Conquer the World], *Знамя (Znamya) [Banner]*, August–September, 1903.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding to, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of an ideology or a religious faith.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as individuals or as collective—such as the myth about a world conspiracy of Jews to control the media, economy, government or other institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, the scope, the mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people undertaken by Nazi Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of the nations where they live.
The ways in which antisemitism manifests itself with regard to the State of Israel may include:
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of Israel a behavior not expected or demanded from any other nation.
- Using symbols and images associated with historical hatred of Jews (e.g., claims of deicide by Jews of Jesus or blood libel of children) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel.

Criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism is evident however when they respond to the following:

- Antisemitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).
- Criminal acts are antisemitic when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property—such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries—are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.
- Antisemitic discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.⁷

7 “Working Definition of Antisemitism by the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism

As a historian, Dietz Bering evinces that antisemites share the belief that Jews are bad by nature. They bring disaster on their “host societies” and the whole world. Hence, it is the duty of antisemites to unmask them.⁸ Helen Fein suggests that this notion consists of persisting hostile views of Jews illustrated in attitudes, culture, myth, ideology, folklore and imagery that are designed to exclude the Jew.⁹ Bernard Lewis sees antisemitism as marked by two distinct features: (1) An antisemite judges Jews by standards different from those which apply to non-Jews;¹⁰ (2) He or she would be convinced that Jews are to be accused of “cosmic evil.”¹¹

More detailed definitions differentiate kinds of antisemitism: social, economic antisemitism, religious, or political. Bernard Lazare and William Brustein discuss some of these aspects and Gerald Krefetz summarizes by contending that the notion of antisemitism is a myth and stereotype according to which Jews are in control of the banks and the economy, and thus, of the community, the country and the world.¹²

These specifications, however, bring antisemitism close to nineteenth-century racism. Hence, William Nicholls shows that even baptism into another faith does not delete an individual's Jewish origin and thus, Jewishness.¹³ In turn, this outlook is not alien to Nazis' auto-justification that a Jew is anyone, adult or child, who has even “one drop” of Jewishness ancestry in his or her blood. According to Bryan Cheyette's research, antisemitism is not a one-dimensional story. It is a history starting from ground-rules accounting for a basic ambivalence. The figure of the Jew, he contends, has always been and still is multi-faceted.¹⁴

and Xenophobia (EUMC),” European Forum on Antisemitism, accessed December 5, 2013, <http://www.european-forum-on-antisemitism.org/working-definition-of-antisemitism/English/>.

⁸ Cf. D. Bering, *The Stigma of Names: Antisemitism in German Daily Life, 1812–1933* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

⁹ Cf. H. Fein, *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1993).

¹⁰ Cf. B. Lewis, “The New Anti-Semitism,” *The American Scholar* 75, no. 1 (2006): 26.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹² Cf. B. Lazare, *Anti-Semitism: Its History and Causes* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2006); W. Brustein, *Roots of Hate: Antisemitism in Europe before the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); G. Krefetz, *Jews and Money: The Myths and the Reality* (Minneapolis: Book Sales, 1984).

¹³ Cf. Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism*.

¹⁴ Cf. B. Cheyette, *Constructions of ‘the Jew’ in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12, 269; and *idem*, *Between ‘Race’ and Culture: Representations of ‘the Jew’ in English and American Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 9.

Regarding present-day hatred of Jews, however, other scholars—from Lewis to Taguieff—sustain the concept of *new antisemitism* or *neo-judeophobia* to designate this hatred focalized on Jews sustained by the most hybrid kind of alliance of the left, the right, and radical Islam.¹⁵ This alliance tends, as a rule, to converge on opposing the existence of Israel as a Jewish State. Jack Fischel writes that this new antisemitism generates a coalition of irreconcilable enemies but all sharing endorsement of the Palestinian cause.¹⁶ The left, for its anti-Americanism for whom Israel is the United States' ally; the right-wing for its xenophobic nationalism for whom Jews are the eternal foreigner; fundamentalist Muslims for whom Israel is the number one enemy of the Arab nation. This alignment makes the new antisemitism unique; a new concept that displays criticism of Israel and Zionism completely disproportionate in degree and kind to any attitude in the world toward other actors of the international scene.¹⁷

Moreover, as shown by Arnold Forster and Benjamin Epstein some years ago, this new antisemitism takes the form of indifference to the fears of the Jewish people displaying thereby its inability to understand the importance of Israel to Jewish survival.¹⁸ Cotler, more recently, argues that while classical anti-Jewish hatred equates discrimination against Jews as such, the new antisemitism is primarily embedded in discrimination and opposition to the embodiment of Jewishness in the State of Israel. It remains that the essence itself of antisemitism has remained the same: it consists of an assault upon the core of Jewish self-definition. Irwin Cotler thus maintains that while classical anti-Jewishness consists of denying the right of Jews to live as equal members of society, the new antisemitism denies the right of the Jews to live as an equal member of the family of nations.¹⁹

These approaches confront opposed views that minimize the significance of the new antisemitism, or antisemitism at all, in present-day debates. Brian Klug complains that people of goodwill who support the Palestinians resent being falsely accused of antisemitism and that supporters of the Jewish State exploit the stigma of antisemitism in order to silence legitimate criticism of Israel's policy. The source of hostility to Jews today, Klug contends, is the Arab-Israeli con-

15 Cf. Lewis, "The New Anti-Semitism," 25–36; P. A. Taguieff, *La Judéophobie des Modernes: des Lumières au jihad mondial* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2008).

16 Cf. J. Fischel, *The A to Z of the Holocaust* (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2005).

17 Cf. L. N. Powell, *Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, the Holocaust, and David Duke's Louisiana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

18 Cf. A. Forster and B. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974).

19 Cf. I. Cotler, "Human Rights and the New Anti-Jewishness," *FrontPage Magazine*, February 16, 2004, <http://frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=12191>.

flict. Israel proclaims itself as the state of the Jewish people, and many Jews align themselves with this statement. It is out of this configuration that hostility to Jews as Jews arises.²⁰ Earl Raab pursues that systematic accusations of anti-semitism against anti-Israel opinions may lack credibility.²¹ Steven Zipperstein also believes that many people following the events of the Middle-East reach the conclusion that Israel shares the largest large part of responsibility for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²² Norman Finkelstein goes further and claims that there has been no significant rise at all in antisemitism and that organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League have brought forward charges of new anti-semitism to exploit the historical suffering of Jews in order to immunize Israel against any sort of criticism. What is called the new antisemitism, he says, consists of exaggeration and mislabeling of legitimate criticism of Israeli policy.²³ Tariq Ali, a British-Pakistani historian and political activist, goes as far as to contend that the concept of new antisemitism amounts to an attempt to subvert the language in the interests of the State of Israel.²⁴

The French philosopher Pierre-André Taguieff answers all these claims by noting that today antisemitism is no longer based on racism and nationalism but, paradoxically enough, on antiracism and anti-nationalism. It equals Zionism and racism, uses Holocaust denial manufactured material, borrows third-worldist discursive tokens, and the slogans of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, anti-Americanism, and anti-globalization, and disseminates the myth of the intrinsically “good Palestinian”—today’s innocent victim par excellence.²⁵

As a result, while the Jews do not, with few exceptions, suffer discrimination in a country like France, they are often victims of stigma, threats, and physical violence on the part of regular people, passers-by or traders. They are, above all, victims of the media which disseminate fake news and radical anti-Zionism. This atmosphere exposes Jews to suspicion, and in some cases, to the accusation of criminal complicity with the Israelis. Judeophobia or neo-judeophobia be-

20 Cf. B. Klug, “In Search of Clarity,” *Catalyst*, March 27, 2006, <http://www.catalystmagazine.org.uk/Default.aspx?LocID=0hgnew0bvRefLocID=0hg01b00100600f009.LanEN.htm>.

21 Cf. E. Raab, “Antisemitism, Anti-Israelism, Anti-Americanism,” *Judaism* 51, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 387–96.

22 Cf. S. Zipperstein, “Historical Reflections of Contemporary Antisemitism,” in *Contemporary Antisemitism: Canada and the World*, ed. Derek J. Penslar et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 52–63.

23 Cf. N. Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Antisemitism and the Abuse of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

24 Cf. T. Ali, “Notes on Anti-Semitism, Zionism and Palestine,” *Counterpunch*, March 4, 2004, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2004/03/04/notes-on-anti-semitism-zionism-and-palestine/>.

25 Cf. Taguieff, *La Judéophobie des Modernes*.

come thereby a cultural given on a public scene that, in many places, has turned mechanically and nearly unanimously supportive of the Palestinian cause.

One example among much too many expressions of neo-judeophobia is as follows: a respectable Danish newspaper (*The Copenhagen Post*) published on 13 December 2012 a warning to Jews to avoid displaying Jewish symbols on the street, echoing a Jewish group, *Mosaik Troessamfund*, that advises Jews to avoid wearing the Star of David or the kippah in public. The article informs its readers that 37 antisemitic aggressions occurred in Copenhagen in 2012, including the case of a man whose chain with a Star of David was ripped off from his neck. This incident occurred in a district of Copenhagen with a large Middle-Eastern and Arab population, which brought Imran Shah, a spokesperson for a Muslim group, to deny that there were widespread anti-Jewish feelings among the country's Muslim population. Yet both the police and the City Council urged Jews to be particularly cautious. The City Council even advised Jewish participants of an international food fair where Israel was present not to carry Israeli flags.

Hatred aimed at Jews is ideologized and expressed in the form of harsh statements against Israel and Zionism. It mixes systematic hostility towards Israel and exclusive compassion for Palestinians. It reduces the State of Israel to a criminal entity and favors the Islamization of the Palestinian cause that, for some, symbolizes, in a positive sense, no less than a global jihad. To this public opinion, enouncing the text of the 28th Article of the Hamas Charter (August 1988) remains without any influence. This text, to recall, states clearly that Israel, because it is Jewish and has a Jewish population, challenges Islam and the Muslims. Hence, the objective of this anti-Zionist program is definitely to “purify” or “cleanse” Palestine from the “Zionist Jewish presence” considered a priori as an invasion of sacred Palestinian land.²⁶

Judeophobia accuses the Jews at the same time of being “too community,” too religious, and nationalist. In the same breath, it also describes them as cosmopolitan. The defense of Palestinians as victims of Zionism is the ideological core mode of legitimation for contemporary anti-Jewish violence. Every act of violence against Jews is justified as revenge for Palestinian children killed by the Zionists, a theme that awakens the old accusation of ritual murder. Pro-palestinianism leads to view the Palestinians as a messianic people. Taguieff quotes Jean Genet saying that the Palestinian revolution is not a fight for stolen land but a “metaphysical” struggle. From here, the jump to anti-Jewishness is easy:

26 Cf. L. F. Bove and L. Duhan Kaplan, *From the Eye of the Storm: Regional Conflicts and the Philosophy of Peace* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995).

today, Genet contends, one cannot be pro-Palestinian without being anti-Jewish.²⁷

Concerning this point, David Hirsh discusses whether criticism of Israel is necessarily antisemitic. And indeed, criticism of Israel often sounds like antisemitism: requiring the Jewish state to conform to higher standards than expected from other states; articulating conspiracy theories; using demonizing analogies. Such criticism hurts many Jews in the world and are seen as revealing antisemitism.²⁸ David Matas and Taguieff, for example, are convinced that anti-Zionism is indeed a form of antisemitism because it denies the right of Jewish self-determination while standing for the self-determination of other nations.²⁹

Clearly enough, anyway, a boycott of Israel aiming at the punishment of Israel while any other oppressor—they are numerous today—attracts much less hostility, can be defined as antisemitism. The demonization of Israel today is, indeed, quite unique in its pervasiveness in numerous countries. It invades the mainstream discourse and is no longer restricted to extremists on the left or on the right. The inseparably pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli mass demonstrations recurrent in many capitals have no counterpart with respect to Israeli victims of terrorist attacks, nor in defense of Arab victims of Arab dictatorships. The ideological novelty of this phenomenon consists of the justification of this anti-Jewish hatred in terms of “fight against racism,” “in favor of human rights,” nay even standing against anti-Islamophobia.

In brief, the demographic changes in the European population have created a new monster: present-day judeophobia. It is firstly carried by young jihadists recruited from among a fighting *lumpenproletariat* who confound the hatred of the West—especially the US—and of Jews. Jacques Déom insists that this point on the antisemitic orientation can already be found in Islamic theology and may have an impact on the hatred of Jews today in the twofold context of the Middle-Eastern conflict and the encounter of Muslim immigrants with Jews on European soil. Citing the original theology of falsification that stigmatizes Judaism as a perversion of the message of God to humans, the Coran, Déom evinces how this perspective is often bound these days to anti-Western Third-Worldism

²⁷ Taguieff, *La Judéophobie des Modernes*.

²⁸ Cf. D. Hirsh, *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Cosmopolitan Reflections* (New Haven: Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism (YIISA), 2007).

²⁹ Cf. D. Matas, *Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2005); Taguieff, *La Judéophobie des Modernes*.

and an uncompromising de-legitimization of Israel. At the limit, it supports anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli terrorism.³⁰

It should also be underscored that Judeophobia is diffused in recent years by virulently anti-Israel works of intellectuals. Alain Badiou, for instance, attacks Israel under the form of a general anti-Jewish homily. This literature is often carefully articulated as “revisions” of the role and status of Jews in contemporary history.³¹ Enzo Traverso, who dedicates a large part of his scholarly work to the Jewish experience—including the Shoa—attacks Israel uncompromisingly as colonialist and oppressor of the Palestinian people. He pursues this hostility as an attack on Jews in general. He enounces a view according to which present-day diaspora Jewry has broken up its links with its past contribution to progress and modernity. Ever since the Shoa, he contends, Jews have exploited their “victimhood” to get material advantages and become a well-to-do group that has sunk into conservatism. Thereby, Jews contributed not only to the disappearance of antisemitism but to the growth of Islamophobia. In this, Traverso joins Badiou for whom the “genuine” Jews today are the Palestinians. Anyone can easily conclude from such “analyses” that Jews belong to the enemy for everyone who fights against the evils of present-day society in general.³²

All these sentiments create an uneasy climate for actors moved by good will who aspire to combat antisemitism. Hence, for instance, the 2004 working definition of the EUMC of antisemitism which figured on the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights website was dropped in November 2013 under the pretext that by its legal mandate, this agency is not a standard-setting body; it can neither set nor repudiate any definition. This position, to be sure, took aback many observers: how can the Agency do away with the definition of the plague, antisemitism, against which it is supposed to fight?

These developments contribute to the antisemitic atmosphere of many milieus. Rensmann and Schoeps speak of “modernized antisemitism.”³³ They emphasize with this concept the link between old and new elements in today’s anti-

30 Cf. J. Déom, *Qu'est-ce que l'antisémitisme? Quelques éléments de réponse: données et analyses, dossier pédagogique* (Brussels: Fondation de la Mémoire contemporaine, 2012).

31 U. Aloni, A. Badiou, S. Žižek, and J. Butler, *What Does a Jew Want? On Binationalism and Other Specters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

32 Cf. E. Traverso, *La Fin de la Modernité Juive: Histoire d'un Tourment Conservateur* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013).

33 L. Rensmann and J. H. Schoeps, “Politics and Resentment: Examining Antisemitism and Counter-Cosmopolitanism in the European Union and Beyond,” in *Politics and Resentment: Antisemitism and Counter-Cosmopolitanism in the European Union*, ed. L. Rensmann and J. H. Schoeps (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 31–33.

semitism and, above all, that antisemitism should be understood in the context of the dissent widespread among some strata with what they perceive as cosmopolitanism and exploitative liberalism. Stereotyped by many as cosmopolitans par excellence, Jews are assumedly the very representative of everything that arises dissent among people.³⁴

Francis Kaplan, however, does not accept explaining antisemitism by such specific causes; for him, antisemitism is an a priori posture receiving in each particular conjuncture another rationalization:

nearly one third of the Poles think that the influence of the Jews is too big in their country [...] an Algerian newspaper alleged the far-reaching penetration of Jews in the Algerian State and society while there are nearly no Jews in these two countries [...] the ideologists of antisemitism actually contradict each other: for some, they have no ethics [...], for others, they have too much [...]; for the ones they are counter-revolutionaries [...], for others, they are too revolutionaries [...]; for the ones they are the masters of the universe [...], for others, they are miserable [...]. An antisemite ideology is not an intellectual error due to ignorance, confusion or stupidity, it is a passion that can be dressed, intellectually, [as one wishes].³⁵

Whatever the terminology used to qualify the hatred of Jews, what is of no less crucial importance is how Jews confront the phenomenon: how do they combat it?

Self-Hatred and Other Responses

Over the centuries, Jews have reacted in very varied manners to the hatred turned against them. These reactions might be disguise, suicide, a shift to mysticism and kabbala, conversion to Christianity or Islam, emigration to more tolerant places, or searching for a collective exit from vulnerability.

A well-known and documented consequence to not a few Jews of the hatred toward them in the modern era is *self-hatred*. Self-hatred designates, in general terms, one's dislike of the group to which one belongs. This attitude accepts the norm often prevailing in the environment according to which "Jews are bad by nature." This acceptance brings not a few Jewish individuals to hate themselves as Jews—illustrating what may be called "Jewish antisemitism." Theodor Lessing's *Der Jüdische Selbsthaß* [*Jewish Self-hatred*] shows the diffusion of this occurrence among intellectuals who adopted a hateful view of Judaism and, thereby,

³⁴ Ibid., 34.

³⁵ F. Kaplan, *La Passion antisémite habillée par ses idéologues* (Paris: Le Félin – Kiron, 2011), 47. Translation by the author of this article.

of themselves.³⁶ Jewish antisemitism and Jewish self-hatred are not, however, necessarily the same: Jews who agree with antisemitic judgements do not always hate themselves even if they hate other Jews. John P. Jackson Jr. recalls, in this respect, that the concept developed in late nineteenth-century Germany was first directed at Eastern European Jews who had immigrated to the country.³⁷

A major academic discussion of Jewish self-hatred was conducted in the 1940s by Kurt Lewin, who was Lessing's colleague at the University of Berlin in 1930.³⁸ Following Lewin, the concept gained widespread currency. It was used in a derogatory way during the 1940s by "militant" Zionists against the disparaging looks of many well-established Jews toward Jews who moved to Palestine/Israel. The publication of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*³⁹ in 1968 attracted heavy criticism for her condemnation of the trial as a "show trial." In the heated discussions this book provoked, more than a few accused the author of self-hatred.

Today, Jewish self-hatred, as Sander Gilman understands it, often refers to Jewish intellectuals who do not deny their Jewish identity but adopt radical anti-Israeli positions. He sees one of the most recent forms of Jewish self-hatred in the virulent opposition to the existence of the State of Israel. Jewish antisemitism, he contends, can be disguised as anti-Zionism in the same measure that general antisemitism is often hidden behind anti-Israelism.⁴⁰

Alvin H. Rosenfeld also attacks Jewish authors who take positions that go well beyond what he understands as legitimate criticism of Israel, and he considers rhetoric that calls into question Israel's right to continued existence to be antisemitic.⁴¹ Self-hatred in Jewish debates about Israel has grown more frequent and more intense in the US, the UK, and France over the past few years. Hence, in 2007 it was reported that an association called "British Independent Jewish Voices" had been jointly created by Nobel Prize winner Harold Pinter, the illustrious historian Eric Hobsbawm, film director Mike Leigh, and prominent actors. This association stresses that British Jews do not unanimously support

36 Cf. T. Lessing, *Der jüdische Selbsthaß* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1930).

37 J. P. Jackson, Jr., *Social Scientists for Social Justice: Making the Case Against Segregation* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 121–22.

38 Cf. P. Reitter, "Zionism and the Rhetoric of Jewish Self-Hatred," *The Germanic Review* 83, no. 4 (2008): 343–63.

39 H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1968).

40 Cf. S. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Antisemitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

41 A. H. Rosenfeld, "Rhetorical Violence and the Jews," *The New Republic*, February 27, 2007, <http://www.spme.net/cgi-bin/articles.cgi?ID=1884>.

the Israeli government and asserts that a distinction should be made between Jews in the Diaspora and Jews in Israel.⁴² In France, a long series of intellectuals and academics of Jewish origin—from sociologist Edgar Morin to writer Marc Levy—see it as an obligation to state their criticism of Israel, which, in some instances, assumedly goes as far as associating Israel with Nazis in their handling of the Palestinian population.⁴³ Kenneth Levin, a Harvard psychiatrist, comments that Jewish self-hatred can be referred to as Stockholm syndrome. Accordingly, individuals under protracted siege tend to embrace the indictments of their besiegers, however bigoted and outrageous; another example is the psychodynamics experienced by abused children who blame themselves for their predicament and ascribe it to their being “bad.”⁴⁴

Jews’ self-hating is not necessarily focused on, or limited to, resentment against Israel. Irving Louis Horowitz also sees Jewish self-hatred in many cases of Jews wishing to distance themselves from their community.⁴⁵ The historian Bernard Wasserstein contends that many Jews have internalized elements of antisemitic discourse and have psychologically “surrendered” to their detractors.⁴⁶

Self-hatred is but one possible response of Jews to antisemitism among the ones observed today or in the past. Another pattern consists in dimming the visibility of Jewishness in public. Ben Halpern speaks of *duplicating norms* prevalent with non-Jews and in this way avoiding the blame that Jews always tend to distinct themselves from non-Jews.⁴⁷ Deborah Cohen contends that this strategy only worsens the individual’s sense of being threatened. She quotes Alain Finkielkraut when he contends that racial hatred is essentially the punishment for Jews who do not display their Jewishness in the open. Genocide, he also con-

⁴² M. Beckford, “Jewish Group Rejects Uncritical Support of Israel,” *Daily Telegraph*, February 5, 2007, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1541606/Jewish-group-rejects-uncritical-support-of-Israel.html>.

⁴³ Cf. *JSS News*, December 18, 2013.

⁴⁴ Cf. K. Levin, “The Psychology of Populations under Chronic Siege,” *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, July 2, 2006, <http://jcpa.org/article/the-psychology-of-populations-under-chronic-siege/>.

⁴⁵ Cf. I. L. Horowitz, “New Trends and Old Hatreds,” *Springer New York Society Journal* 43, no. 1 (2005): 48–55.

⁴⁶ Cf. B. Wasserstein, *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 211.

⁴⁷ Cf. B. Halpern, *The American Jew* (New York: The Theodor Herzl Foundation, 1956).

tends, “was not imposed on the Jews in spite of their effort to assimilate, but in response to this very attempt.”⁴⁸

Yet, it is often the case that a pursuit of “liberty from Judaism,” so to speak, is available in the form of conversion to Christianity or Islam. It is the opinion of Todd M. Endelman that when facing what seem to Jews as a no-solution situation for them as Jews, individuals may find it reasonable to embrace another faith and get rid of their Jewishness.⁴⁹

A ramification of this model may consist in the attachment to non-Jewish cause aspiring to create a new society where to be Jewish would not matter anymore. In this Eden, it might be hoped, being Jewish would be freed from the predicaments of Jewishness for the benefit of an “all-humanity” ideal dooming antisemitism to total irrelevance. This scenario is well known in Jewish history, and one remembers how strongly Jews involved themselves in socialism and communism—and how grim were the results, especially in the USSR and its satellites. In more than one case, the adherence of Jews to secular movements by no means deleted antisemitism among their fellow-members and their leaderships.

Other forms of response endorse the contrary principle: changing reality in the sense of creating circumstances where asserting Jewishness is fully legitimate, nay even prevailing. The two major historical responses here were Bundism and Zionism. *The Bund*, a Jewish socialist movement created in the late nineteenth century in Russia, aspired to draft Jewish workers in the struggle for socialism while setting as its ultimate goal the establishment in the future socialist society of a principle of cultural autonomy for a secular Jewish nationality. Bolshevism in Russia and Nazism in the rest of Europe decimated the Bund. Hence, the only collective attempt to extract Jewry from antisemitic realities remained Zionism.

The return to Zion has always been an aspiration of Judaism. All along the Middle Ages, a trickle of Jews settled in the Holy Land; Judah Halevi, author of *Zionides*, died on his way from Spain to the Holy Land; Yehiel of Paris and Nahmanides took to a similar route, with the same destination; Obadiah ben Abraham of Bertinoro created an administration for Jerusalem’s Jewish community in the fifteenth century; Yosef Karo wrote the *Shulkhan Arukh*—a compendium of all the commands for observant Jews—in sixteenth-century Safed. In the late nineteenth-century, when modernity was conquering Europe, Leon Pinsker pub-

48 A. Finkelkraut, *The Imaginary Jew* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 83, cited in D. Cohen, “Who Was Who? Race and Jews in Turn-of-the-Century Britain,” *Journal of British Studies* 41, no. 4 (October 2002): 482.

49 Cf. T. M. Endelman, “In Defense of Jewish Social History,” *Jewish Social Studies* 7 (2001): 52–67.

lished *Auto-Emancipation*,⁵⁰ the first Zionist manifesto, and founded the *Lovers of Zion* movement. The movement called for the colonization of Palestine in view of creating a national home for the Jew. The first group was organized in 1881 in St. Petersburg, even before the book was published. The movement expanded rapidly with the goal of creating new facts on a land still in the hands of Ottomans. This “*first Aliyah*” (immigration to Palestine) consisted of close to 10,000 people. Simultaneously, from 1882, Baron Edmond de Rothschild, one of the most active supporters of the nascent Zionist entity, began buying land in Palestine to settle newcomers.

Less ambitiously, most Jews—non-Zionist as well as Zionist—actually do find significance in their Jewishness, even if they do not immigrate to what is now a Jewish State. As such, they sustain the creation of Jewish bodies to respond on their behalf to antisemitism at the level of local, national, and transnational institutions. Jewish leaders, especially in present-day democratic and liberal societies, respond to antisemitic acts by expressing dismay and anger, and requests for reactions by Authorities. Concomitantly, large funds are invested in constructing Holocaust museums in cities throughout the Diaspora, with the intention of maintaining the memory of the Jews’ terrible suffering. It is expected that these museums will also help in reducing the antisemitic drive among non-Jews and teaching Jews the painful path of their history.

These efforts also pertain to the intentions to set down a general strategy of strengthening community life by developing community institutions, Jewish schools, adult clubs, youth movements, media, and local Jewish cultures. The density of these activities that one may observe throughout the Jewish world undoubtedly bolster intercommunity and transnational bodies and allegiances, and above all, transfer to the young essentials of what Jewishness stands for. The self-confidence that these forms of activity and institutions are likely to instill in the mind of Jewish individuals may be seen as a pattern of confronting antisemitism and, eventually where there is no other way, just living with it and getting “no harm.”

This Jewish endeavor, it should be noted, is encouraged by parallel developments among other groups in this era of globalization and multiculturalization. Advanced countries are nowadays indeed powerful poles of attraction for immigrants from all over the world who aspire to insert themselves in wealthy societies and benefit from democratic regimes that are—more or less willingly—toler-

50 L. Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation: An Appeal to his People by a Russian Jew* (Berlin, 1882).

ant of ethno-cultural diversity.⁵¹ Many of these newcomers show desires and wills to create sets of organizations that bind their dispersed communities to each other as well as to their—real or chosen—original homeland.

Allosemitism

Still, this Jewish history remains enigmatic after all: how is it that Jews have always—and up to these times—been a target of special attention and feelings in so many different circumstances? Zygmunt Bauman, who has been very concerned with this question, uses the notion of *allosemitism*; a notion that was coined by Artur Sandauer (translated from the Polish and quoted by Bauman) and implies the assessment that Jews' plights in society are radically different from any other social entity's and require special concepts to be described and analyzed.⁵² Jewishness may attract hate or love, but these feelings are always extreme and intense. The entity signaled by allosemitism is not just "unfamiliar" or "strange": in its essence, it does not comply with the general order of things and does not fit either into any other category of phenomena. And still more, the allosemitic attitude toward its object is extra-temporal and extra-spatial: it consists of a permanent interrogation resulting, each time, from the interplay of historical developments, on the one hand, and actual circumstances, on the other.

Modern antisemitism or hate of Jews, Bauman contends, targets "Jewishness" rather than Judaism. When all over Western Europe the walls of ghettos were crumbling and Jews were shaving their beards to match the prevalent norms in the non-Jewish environment, by no means did they, through these actions, bring antisemitism to end. For the antisemite, whatever they do, Jews possess their own inimitable *Volkseigentümlichkeit* [people peculiarity]. It is in this that, in the eyes of the non-Jew, one may effectively speak of Jews as a "special species." Bauman recalls Gombrowicz for whom the Jews' unnerving uniqueness goes back many centuries, and he also cites E. M. Cioran who observed that if to be a man is a drama, to be a Jew is another, and as such, the Jew represents the

51 Cf. E. Ben-Rafael and Y. Sternberg, eds., *Transnationalism: Diasporas and the Advent of a New (Dis)Order* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

52 Cf. A. Sandauer, "O sytuacji pisarza polskiego pochodzenia żydowskiego w XX wieku: rzecz, którą nie ja powinienem był napisać." in *Pisma Zebrane*, vol. 7, ed. S. Żeromski (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1985); Z. Bauman, "Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern," in *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*, ed. B. Cheyette and L. Marcus (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 143–56.

alienated existence par excellence. He is the man who will never be from here.⁵³ David Biale suggests that what explains this unique historical path is widely determined by Jews' relative lack of power, combined with a myth that they share centrality in the world.⁵⁴

It is Bauman's own thesis that Christianity marked the Jews as oddities who rebelled against the divine order of the universe. Though they were the ancestors of Christianity, they refused to disappear once Christianity took over and continued to haunt the world as living fossils; Jews gave birth to Christ only to disown him. In other words, allo-Semitism is endemic to Western civilization as a part of the legacy of Christendom. For the Church, Jews have been the embodiment of ambivalence, that is, of disorder.

With modernity, Bauman continues, in the footsteps of Jacob Katz, the outcome of Jewish emancipation was the pariah's successful assault on highly prestigious professions. The Jews were a low and marginal entity that moved up and instilled in the higher social spheres the fear of downgrading.⁵⁵ This is what Édouard Dumont, the bible-writer of modern antisemitism, complained about: Jews' names, he contends, are inexistent in old parish registers; still a century ago they did not even have the right to dwell on the land from which they now [assumedly] chase the non-Jew away.⁵⁶

In actual fact, again according to Bauman, in this Europe made of nations, states, and nation-states, there were only Jews and Gypsies who did not fit. Jews were not a legitimate part of the population in any nation-state, and their dispersion among many nations was a predicament. They were the epitome of incongruity: a non-national nation. Bauman quotes Hannah Arendt's reporting about Jewish exiles from Germany in France who said that while Jews have been exemplary Germans, they may as well be exemplary French citizens.

In 1882, Leo Pinsker noted that the Jew is considered by the non-Jew as a someone that do not belong to the living, an alien. The poor see the Jew as a millionaire, and the patriots, as a countryless vagrant. For all, the Jew is a hated being. The resulting image of the Jew made light on all social, political, and cultural obstacles to the idea that the world is essentially an orderly place.⁵⁷

53 Cf. W. Gombrowicz, *Dzienniki 1953–1955* (Paris: Instytut Kultury, 1957); E. M. Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist* (London: Quartet Books, 1987).

54 Cf. D. Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).

55 Cf. J. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Antisemitism, 1700–1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

56 Cf. É. Dumont, *La France juive: Essai d'Histoire Contemporaine* (Paris: C. Marpon & E. Flammarion, 1886).

57 Cf. Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation*.

Representations of Jews in European literature and art validate this conclusion. They monotonously repeat this non-belongingness, Bauman says, for two thousand years. The production process of those stereotypes and their generation is explained by Litvak as the outcome of both changing and stable factors.⁵⁸ The European cultural model—essentially negative—of the Jew has always primarily stemmed from the myths of the Church which, ever since the fourth century, has persisted to justify the horrors of its persecution of the Jew throughout the Middle Ages. These myths, adds Litvak, led to Hitler's obsession with the destruction of the world Jewry. For the Church itself, anti-Jewish persecution has been an endemic theological-identity need for its self-affirmation, independently from the presence or absence of Jews all around. Litvak insists that the continuous negative view of the Jew in European culture has been completely unrelated to what Jews have done or have not done.

This motivation still stands behind antisemitism. Today, like in the past, it makes do with far-reaching non-truths. It sets and defines Jews as people radically apart, irremediably “different” from any other collection of people. An image of the Jew prevailing in all writings—including and especially, Russian literature—inspired by or just influenced by Christianity.

The continuity of this image of the Jew is also shown in Weinstein's comparative study of two German films, the one produced under Weimar, *Das alte Gesetz*, which is philosemitic and the other, *Jud Süß*, that was produced as a tool for anti-Jewish propaganda by the Nazis.⁵⁹ In fact, one finds many similarities between two portraits of Jewish men who both fight for social acceptance. In both films, the Jew not only aspires to assimilate into the society, but he also aspires to cause disorder and confusion. Jews in both cases appear as “different,” thwarting the social order, failing to fit into structuring categories, and sharing a tendency to straddle all the usual divides. In response to their respective efforts, in both films the Jew attempts to contain his own Jewish character and to re-establish order in the situation he himself created by the will to assimilate. In both cases, the chief problem consists of the sexual alliance between a Jewish male and a non-Jewish female. Breaking barriers between the Jewish and the non-Jewish worlds is the issue which creates *tohu-bohu*. The boundaries of the world of the non-Jew are threatened by the Jew's attempts to transgress them. The threat represented by Süss legitimizes then unavoidable racist legislation—ultimately

58 Cf. L. Litvak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

59 Cf. V. Weinstein, “Dissolving Boundaries: Assimilation and Allo-Semitism in E. A. Dupont's *Das alte Gesetz* (1923) and Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* (1940),” *The German Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 496–515.

genocidal—while in *Das alter Gesetz*, order is re-established by partial assimilation. Viewing these films in comparison reveals the affinity between them. The Jew with the best intentions and the one with the worst ones share an essentially similar way of thinking; that is, the will to insert themselves among the non-Jews. This convergence is by no means unexpected, as these films draw their stereotypes from the same culture and vocabulary.

In the postmodern era, however—an epoch distant from the Second World War and its sequels—Bauman's hypothesis is that the impacts of allosemitism are growing less and less acute. Society is becoming multicultural, and identity issues are multiplying. Politics today are increasingly wrapped in identity conflicts rather than national or class contradictions. Singularities diversify the texture of societies, and allosemitism is likely to lose the unique significance it carried in pre-modern and modern history. Differences are no more seen as secondary nuisances; the human essence seems to consist in the universally shared ability to establish and protect identities' distinctiveness from each other.

Though, at the same time, and in dissonance with Bauman's contention, we learn from Taguieff and others about neo-judeophobia, and their teachings temper Bauman's optimistic perspective: it is indeed rather difficult to state today that allosemitism has lost pertinence. We see that Jews continue to be challenged as Jews, and in actual fact increasingly so, by acute resentment around them stemming, among others, from the newcomers from the Muslim world who settle in the West. Optimism regarding the close ending of antisemitism seems hardly sustainable.

Moreover, the notion of allosemitism that Sandauer and Bauman formulated and elaborated conveys another aspect that they themselves did not consider but draws the concept beyond the textual phrasing that they proposed. This aspect derives from the fact that both Sandauer and Bauman belong to contemporary Jewish scholarship dealing with the Jewish condition. By proposing the notion of allosemitism for analyzing non-Jews' attitude toward Jews, they actually do not only propose an analytical scheme of general value but also express a possibility for Jews to interpret the attitude of non-Jews toward them. In other words, allosemitism may also be understood as a model of perception by Jews of how non-Jews perceive them. In this vein, allosemitism belongs to the store of hypotheses Jews are able to suggest in order to understand, and respond to, antisemitism. A hypothesis that asks whether Jews do effectively view antisemitism confronting them throughout their history among non-Jews as an endemic condition, or rather an episodic phenomenon that may be an outcomes of specific conjunctures. From their answers to these questions, we may comprehend, at least in part, the behaviors they adopt in face of antisemites and vis-à-vis themselves.

Allosemitism is most often bounded to the demonization of the Jew as the one who is an outsider by essence. It is the mechanism that disseminate the belief that Jews are aiming at the conquest of the world, and are the last cause of all evils. As the joke goes, “The Titanic is the Jews’ fault: Iceberg is a Jewish name, isn’t it?” With modernity, Jews stopped being the “other” of the Church to become the “other of the nation-state,” and eventually, the “other” of Communism and later, the other of “Germaness,” “Aryaness” or other X-ness. Its reality is simply shown in the plethora of anti-Jewish stereotypes: a Christian who steals is a thief, a Jew who steals is a Jewish thief. With the creation of Israel, the Jew was, for a while, on the side of anti-colonialism—Israelis were often praised then as “different Jews”—but after 1967, Jews again stood on the “wrong side,” that of the colonialist and oppressor. Pro-Palestinian attitudes includes, as taken for granted, Holocaust denial which is openly proclaimed at conferences held in Muslim capitals.

Allosemitism is strongly influential, even when Jews fight others’ causes. Yet despite this vigorous formulation of what antisemitism stands for, Bassi sees no other way out from this condition than what he calls “dialectic assimilation,” by which he means assimilating non-Jewish elements in Jewish culture and adopting new patterns of behavior and speech that might disarm antisemitism.⁶⁰ In other words, creating a “non-different other.” The limit of validity of this proposal is the fact that the behavior then expected from Jews is widely endorsed practically by the huge majority of Jews throughout the world who have abandoned since long the constraints—regarding food, clothes, and displacement—of orthodox Judaism.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is obvious that the special attitude toward Jews is a kind of code or ground-rule that takes root on any ground with ease and may be found in the most diverse cultures and at different societal phases. This reality brings Jews everywhere to adopt patterns of confrontation and modes of behavior that reflect both, and interactively, their perceptions of their environment and their own understandings and practices of Jewishness.

All in all and to conclude by repeating clearly the strategies proposed by scholars of the social sciences regarding the fight against, or the accommodation with, antisemitism may be summarized as follows:

⁶⁰ Bassi, “Resisting Jews,” 209–23.

- The theory of Jewish self-hatred assumes that Jews actually agree with antisemites in their description of Jews as “bad guys”—whether or not this includes themselves, members of their community, or a given category from among their fellow Jews—today, with an emphasis on Israel.
- The “dimming-Jewishness-in-public” approach assumes that the acuteness of animosity toward Jews flourishing around them, triggers off Jews’ tendency to become more or less “invisible” as Jews, at least in the public sphere—which, actually many of them, the non-religious non-traditional Jews—already practice.
- The instrumental-conversion line would assume that the ultimate stage of becoming “invisible” as Jews consists of transgressing the collective’s border and joining other faiths. The issue is what do they gain in their new milieus where they might appear as “former Jews.”
- Still another hypothesis in a similar vein, consists of accepting commitments to pan-humanity ideals that strive to create a social reality where particularistic identities become irrelevant to the classification of individuals. This seducing hypothesis may appear, over time, as an overestimation of the capacity of comrades to disregard the Jewish origin of their fellow militants.
- In a quite opposite direction, the hypothesis of allosemitism views the animosity toward Jews as endemically attached to Jewish history; though, today’s multiculturalization of advanced societies seems to encourage expectations that the impact of allosemitism will grow steadily less significant. The difficulty of this proposition is that, in the context of the Middle-East conflict, it is rather the contrary that often occurs: the newcomers are a priori motivated to see Jews as a factor of nuisance and hostility.
- Multiculturalization, however, may present one positive aspect for Jews’ confrontation with allosemitism: it encourages them to find self-confidence in strengthening their own communities through institutionalization, education, the work of memory, and transnational solidarity.

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