

# ANTISEMITISM AND THE JEWISH QUESTION

JONATHAN JUDAKEN

“Antisemitism” and “the Jewish Question” are Janus-faced sisters of modernity. The history of their entwinement reveals the inner workings of much of modern cultural life, Jewish and not. The opening two sections of this chapter historicize the constructs “the Jewish Question” and “antisemitism,” tracing the transformations in European and Jewish cultural life from the open-ended discussions of the eighteenth century to the racialization and politicization of anti-Jewish discourse toward the end of the nineteenth century, culminating in the Holocaust, challenging the core ideas, values, and institutions that have shaped modern Europe’s self-definition. The third section provides a compendium of different accounts of antisemitism in modernity.

The chapter does not dwell upon the ongoing assault on Judaism by Christians.<sup>1</sup> Anti-Judaism, treated in its various permutations in earlier volumes of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, persisted into modernity. This was evident in key episodes like the Damascus Affair (1840) and the Mortara Affair (1858).<sup>2</sup> My focus instead is on what was new in the

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<sup>1</sup> There are a number of writers who have examined the ongoing “teaching of contempt” by Christian thinkers and the Christian churches beginning with Jules Isaac and Léon Poliakov, but now including Rosemary Ruether, Roy Eckardt, Friedrich Heer, Franklin Littell, Malcom Hay, John Gager, James Carroll, Robert Michael, Dora Bergen, and Susannah Heschel.

<sup>2</sup> The Damascus Affair revolved around the charges of ritual murder and blood libel leveled against the Jewish community in Damascus, Syria, in 1840, ultimately becoming an international cause célèbre when Jews from various countries publicly mobilized to fight the anti-Jewish persecution. On the Damascus Affair, see Ronald Florence, *Blood Libel: The Damascus Affair of 1840* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) and Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: “Ritual Murder,” Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The Mortara Affair involved the abduction of Edgardo Mortara by papal gendarmes so that he could be raised as a Catholic as a result of his having been baptized by his teenage Catholic nursemaid in Bologna, Italy, then a Papal State. Despite worldwide protests, Pope Pius IX refused to release the

expression of anti-Jewish antipathy. I emphasize how the deep-set typologies of Jews and Judaism elaborated over the course of Western civilization were recast in modern terminology and deployed in new institutions from the Enlightenment onwards. I consequently concentrate on how the category of race came to reshape anti-Jewish discourse, transforming blood libels and blood purity into a scientifically justified claim about the fixed nature of Jewish difference. This transformation dovetailed with how the mass politics of the late nineteenth century resulted in programmatic calls to confront the perceived threat posed by the rise of the Jews.<sup>3</sup> By the 1880s, a decade after Jewish emancipation was finalized across much of Europe, newly granted (Jewish) freedom(s) became the ultimate symbol of how modernity was overturning the natural order of things. The anti-semitic clarion call promised restoration from the underside of the modern world in its myriad forms, just as Jews embraced and embodied these new possibilities.

#### “THE JEWISH QUESTION”: HISTORICIZING A NEW CATCH PHRASE

Historian Jacob Toury has traced the catch phrase “the Jewish Question” to 1838 in Germany, first as *die Jüdische Frage*, then *Judenfrage*, and soon translated into other languages. Toury argues that, “The emerging ‘Jewish Question,’ was not the question of individual rights and of equality between private citizens, but rather the question of the corporate status of Jewry as a whole.”<sup>4</sup> In this way it was similar to the “Irish Question,” the “Social

boy. His case helped to spur the creation of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in 1860, the first Jewish rights and aid organization. See David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Albert Lindemann in particular has stressed the “rise of the Jews” as the explanation of modern antisemitism. See *Esau’s Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The problem with Lindemann’s approach is that he consistently insists that Jews *really were* a demographic, economic, cultural, and political threat because they often refused to change what he characterizes as Jewish chauvinism and narrow separatism: “So long as most Jews retain an identity with a substantial connection to Jewish tradition, and so long as the rest of the world has some sense of that identity and its related history” then “the potential for new explosions of hatred will remain, sparked by ‘bad times’ – economic difficulties, wars, revolutions, natural disasters, or pandemic disease” (532). Lindemann conflates Jewish concentration in certain socio-economic sectors, principally in banking, medicine, law, and the press – Jewish *visibility* and *influence* – with real political and economic *power*.

<sup>4</sup> On “the Jewish Question” see, Jacob Toury, “‘The Jewish Question’: A Semantic Approach” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 11 no. 1 (1966): 85–106, here 95.

Question,” the “German Question” and the “Woman Question.”<sup>5</sup> The new construct corresponded to the new situation of mid-century Jews who were now integrating into every domain of modern life. The question for many non-Jews became how to distinguish the evermore-indistinguishable Jewish Other. Ultimately, the solution to that riddle took the form of so-called scientific racism or “antisemitism” per se, a term popularized by Wilhelm Marr in 1879. Thus, “the Jewish Question” as a slogan only took root between 1838 and 1879 when it established itself as “an anti-Jewish battle-cry.”<sup>6</sup>

But if Toury insists upon understanding the new catch phrase as about the corporate status of Jewry as a whole, then the arguments that underpin this nineteenth-century category go back to a series of questions first articulated by Enlightenment thinkers and their Jewish counterparts, the *maskilim*, related to issues of rights and citizenship and modern ideas of freedom and emancipation. The terms of these discussions were new, in that they took place within a *secular* idiom. Enlightenment writers asked whether Jews as a group could be granted civil and political rights equal to Christian subjects and citizens; whether civic education would make them more like gentiles; and whether Jews could serve as loyal soldiers. Beneath this set of issues lay two central questions: did Jews constitute a distinctive people, race, or nation; and did an inherent dichotomy exist between Judaism and modernity? These questions stemmed from a broader Enlightenment debate about human nature, natural religion, natural rights, common humanity, tolerance, and “regeneration.”<sup>7</sup>

English deists first articulated the terms of this discussion, most explicitly in John Toland’s *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland* in 1714. Influenced by Baruch Spinoza and John Locke, Toland made his plea for religious tolerance on the basis of the notion of “Liberty of Conscience.” He argued that Jews, like all people, were “a mixture of good and bad” and “that they are obedient, peaceable, useful, and advantageous as any; and even more so than many others.” He insisted that if they were naturalized, their faults would be abated since they were a product of the conditions of their abject status.<sup>8</sup> Toland’s claims were but the

<sup>5</sup> Albert Lindemann, “The Jewish Question,” in *Antisemitism: A History*, ed. Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17.

<sup>6</sup> Toury, “The Jewish Question,” 92.

<sup>7</sup> These connections are made by Jay Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-century France* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), chap. 1. See also Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 18.

<sup>8</sup> John Toland, *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland, On the same foot with all other Nations. Containing also, A Defence of the Jews against all Vulgar Prejudices in all Countries* (London, 1714), 6, 11.

first of a series of Enlightenment arguments for the civic equality of Jews.<sup>9</sup> This came to light in the disputes concerning the Bill of Naturalization in England in 1753, the so-called Jew Bill. In 1753, Parliament passed the Naturalization Act, enabling some foreign-born Jews to become citizens. Following passage of the law, however, there was an outburst of newspaper articles, songs, petitions, and visual materials, with a mob parading through the streets of London carrying signs that read, “No Jews, No Naturalization Bill, Old England and Christianity Forever!” Included amongst this flurry of pamphlets was one entitled *Reply to the famous Jew Question*.<sup>10</sup>

The debate on the “famous Jew Question” reached a high point in Berlin in 1781 with the publication of Prussian bureaucrat Christian Wilhelm von Dohm’s *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (*Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of Jews*). Dohm’s contentions encapsulated the ambivalence of the advocacy on behalf of Jews. On the one hand, Dohm claimed that “Asiatic” Jews “differ from others by beard, circumcision, and a special way ... of worshiping the Supreme Being”; on the other, that exposing them to Enlightenment ideas would alleviate their moral depravity.<sup>11</sup> Ameliorate the civil status of Jews and they would no longer be usurious, clannish, obstreperous, and malevolent. For his opponents, on the contrary, like biblical scholar and Orientalist, Johann David Michaelis, Jews had an innately “criminal” character and as such could never be reliable soldiers or loyal citizens.<sup>12</sup> Dohm’s treatise was translated into French as *De la réforme politique des Juifs* in 1782, the same year that Hapsburg Emperor Joseph II’s *Toleranzpatent* (Edict of Toleration) was issued, encouraging religious toleration, civic education, and opening up trades to Jews. In 1784 Louis XVI’s *Lettres Patentes* would follow Joseph II’s model.

Dohm’s contentions, further advanced in 1787 by Honoré Gabriel Mirabeau in *Sur Moses Mendelssohn sur la réforme politique des Juifs*, clarified in the Royal Society of Metz’s 1787 essay competition on the question, “Are there ways of making the Jews more useful and Happier in France?”

<sup>9</sup> The debate about Enlightened philosophes’ views about Jews and Judaism continues to rage. The classic reference is Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968). See more recently, Adam Sutcliff, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Toury, “The Jewish Question,” 85.

<sup>11</sup> Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, “Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews” in *The Jew in the Modern World*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), 28, 30, 31.

<sup>12</sup> Michaelis in “Arguments Against Dohm,” in *The Jew in the Modern World*, 42–43.

Bishop Henri Baptiste Abbé Grégoire's prize-winning response, *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale, et politique des Juifs*, demonstrated how transnational this conversation had become.<sup>13</sup> Grégoire disputed the facts on Jewish criminality presented by Michaelis, as well as his underlying contention that "man is born wicked." Jewish perversity stemmed instead from rabbinic Judaism, which could be overcome with a reformed education.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, Grégoire drew upon numerous eighteenth-century authorities, including the physiognomic studies of Johann Caspar Lavater, claiming that "the Jews in general had sallow complexions, hooked noses, hollow eyes, [and] prominent chins," which correlated with their deleterious moral character, and he adopted French naturalist Comte de Georges-Louis Buffon's assertions about how certain environments and "ill-chosen and ill-prepared food ... makes the human race soon degenerate," and applied this to Jews.<sup>15</sup> Summed up in the views of Grégoire, in different degrees Enlightenment thinkers agreed that it was Judaism that made Jews degenerate. But grant the Jews civic equality and transform social institutions and you will have solved the Jewish problem.

The debates in the National Assembly during the French Revolution made this discussion concrete. Jews in France were ultimately emancipated on the basis of the principles enunciated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen on August 26, 1789. A month later, moderates like Mirabeau, Stanislas Clermont-Tonnerre, and Abbé Grégoire raised the issue of Jewish rights in the Assembly. The Assembly decreed "that the Jews are under the safeguard of the law and require of the king the protection that they need," thus effectively giving Jews *civil* rights.<sup>16</sup> After two more years of vehement debate, a decree of September 27, 1791 granted French Jews equal legal and *political* rights.

<sup>13</sup> Grégoire is often treated as the "icon of Jewish emancipation." See Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, "Strategic Friendships: Jewish Intellectuals, the Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution" in *Renewing the Past, Reconfiguring Jewish Culture*, ed. Adam Sutcliffe and Ross Brann (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 2, and Sepinwall, *The Abbé Gregoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). See also Pierre Birnbaum, "A Jacobin Regenerator: Abbé Grégoire" in *Jewish Destinies: Citizenship, State, and Community in Modern France*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 11–30.

<sup>14</sup> Abbé Grégoire, *Essai sur la regeneration physique, morale et politique des Juifs* (Metz, 1789), trans. as *An Essay on the Physical, Moral and Political Reformation of the Jews* (London, 1791), 134, 135, 136.

<sup>15</sup> Grégoire, *Essay*, 56 and 60.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Gary Kates, "Jews into Frenchmen: Nationality and Representation in Revolutionary France," *Social Research* 56, no. 1 (1989): 213–232, 225.

The French Revolution consequently pushed the differing Jewish communities in France to the forefront as the first legally emancipated Jews in Europe, extending full citizenship to those who swore the civic oath that specifically renounced Jewish communal autonomy.<sup>17</sup> Jewish Emancipation had been passed despite vehement opposition and in two stages that reflected the duality of revolutionary attitudes caught between long-standing prejudices and Enlightenment principles.<sup>18</sup> The price of Jewish emancipation was cultural integration. Judaism and Jewishness were limited to the private sphere and national citizenship was deemed to conflict with communal affiliation. Clermont-Tonnerre's well-known statement in the Assembly encapsulated this state of affairs: Since "there cannot be one nation within another nation," "the Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals."<sup>19</sup>

As in so many other areas, Napoleon sought to reconcile Old Regime attitudes with Revolutionary ideals toward Jews. While he spread Jewish emancipation to Venice and Rome, the Kingdom of Westphalia, and as far east as the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, it was always within the defined limits of the new social contract, which linked citizenship with assimilation.<sup>20</sup> Final resolution on the matter eluded the Napoleonic regime. Responding to ongoing complaints about Jews in 1806, Napoleon convened an Assembly of 111 primarily non-rabbinical Jewish notables to distinguish between civil and Jewish law and to reinforce assimilation as the goal of emancipation. The Assembly codified the cleavage between ethnic and religious identity, with Jews subservient to the Napoleonic Code and French cultural norms, and rabbis serving thereafter as teachers and preachers, but not judges with an autonomous legal code that might conflict with Napoleon's. The Great Sanhedrin called for by Napoleon in 1807 was supposed to codify these decisions for the rest of European Jewry. In

<sup>17</sup> On the emancipation of the Jews of France, see Robert Badinter, *Libres et égaux...: L'émancipation des Juifs, 1789–1791* (Paris: Fayard, 1989). See also the essays by Shmuel Trigano, Stanley Hoffman, and David Landes under the title "Emancipation Reexamined" in Francis Malino and Bernard Wasserstein, eds, *The Jews in Modern France* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1985), 245–309.

<sup>18</sup> The Jews of southwestern and southeastern France were granted citizenship first, on January 28, 1790.

<sup>19</sup> "The French National Assembly: Debate on the Eligibility of Jews for Citizenship (December 23, 1789)" in *The Jew in the Modern World*, 114.

<sup>20</sup> Hyman acutely develops this argument in her chapter on "The Napoleonic Synthesis," in *The Jews of Modern France*. The classic study of Napoleonic attitudes to the Jews is Robert Anchel, *Napoléon et les Juifs* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1928). See also, Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews and the Sanhedrin* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

its short but active existence, the Grand Sanhedrin ratified the *quid pro quo* of emancipation: the state was secured in all civil and political matters including juridical, educational, taxation, and other administrative functions. Jewishness was limited to religious observance and private life.

As legally equal citizens, Jews were well positioned to ride the tide of modernization, impelled by industrialization and urbanization. French Jewry underwent rapid acculturation and geographical and social mobility with the last discriminatory legislation, the *more judaïco* court oath, abolished in 1846. They integrated into economic, political, and university institutions, leading to their progressive *embourgeoisement*. By the end of the nineteenth century, although a tiny minority of around 100,000, Jews were visible in every area of French life, especially after the advent of the Third Republic, to which they were zealously committed.<sup>21</sup>

Emancipation in Central Europe – specifically in Germany and Austria – unfolded more unevenly, caught between the reaction against Napoleonic era reforms and the struggles of liberals and socialists agitating for popular sovereignty and other Enlightenment values. After the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, the Congress of Vienna reinstated the subordinate status of Jews in June 1815. Hope for Jewish civic equality now lay in liberal and radical struggles for human equality, rights, and popular sovereignty.

Despite liberals' advocacy of emancipation, the conviction that Jews should *not* have political equality remained widely shared. In 1819, thousands of rioters expressed their opposition in a wave of pogroms known as the "Hep-Hep" riots. From Alsace to Bohemia, from Copenhagen and Hamburg to Riga and Kraków, the rallying cry for the rioters – *Hieroslyma est perditā*, or "Jerusalem is lost" – invoked the crusaders who had attacked Jews on their way to the Holy Land almost five hundred years earlier. The initial outbreaks of the "Hep-Hep" riots in Würzburg on August 2, 1819 occurred just as the debate over Jewish emancipation in the Bavarian parliament was concluded, but before the results were made public. Within a few weeks, "Hep Hep" riots spilled across Germany and beyond.

Despite this resistance, the liberal agenda appealed strongly to Jews, since emancipation had yielded clear results for their Jewish brethren in France. Gabriel Riesser's activism serves as a case in point.<sup>22</sup> At a time when

<sup>21</sup> On the acculturation of Jews in the nineteenth-century, in addition to Berkovitz, Hyman, and Birnbaum, see Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) and Phyllis Cohen Albert, *The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1977).

<sup>22</sup> For the example of Riesser as a Jewish activist, see Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 179.

few Jews were allowed to study at a university, Riesser earned a doctoral degree in law from the University of Heidelberg. Although he graduated with highest honors, Riesser soon learned that no German would hire a Jewish lawyer or a Jew as a professor of law. He achieved notoriety in 1831 when he published an article demanding equal rights. Heinrich Paulus, a professor at the University of Heidelberg, vehemently opposed his petition, insisting that Jews were “Ausländer”: foreigners, incapable of understanding the German soul.

The period 1820–1848, with those favoring emancipation pitted against those declaiming its impossibility, is nicely illustrated in the debate on the *Judenfrage* between the two young Hegelians, Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx. Their debate shows the transition in discussions of Jews and Judaism during the middle of the nineteenth century. In his 1843 *Die Judenfrage* (*The Jewish Question*), Bauer spoke as an opponent of Jewish emancipation. He lamented that while advocates of emancipation demanded that Christians give up their prejudices, they could not demand the same of Jews because the heart of Judaism was unchangeable and immutable. Following Hegel’s line on Jews and Judaism, Bauer claimed that Jews are an unhistorical people possessing an “oriental nature” that limits human liberty and progress.<sup>23</sup> For Bauer, as for Hegel, Judaism and Christianity remained absolutely irreconcilable. In a starkly modern phrase, Bauer insisted, “The opposition is no longer religious, it is scientific.” Jewish atavism, and their “perpetual segregation from others,” meant that Jews could never be equal citizens.<sup>24</sup>

In his famous reply, *Zur Judenfrage* (*On the Jewish Question*), Marx argued *against* his one-time teacher and *for* the political emancipation of the Jewish community. In so doing, he clearly sided with the Prussian Jews in the central struggle that they faced. But the thrust of his argument, like Bauer’s, stressed the distinction between political emancipation and human emancipation, and here it took a nasty turn. Flipping Bauer’s Hegelianism on its head, Marx insisted that civic and political emancipation depended upon economic emancipation, which meant emancipation from commerce and “huckstering,” which he identified with Jews. Judaism served as a synonym for financial and merchant capitalism, which Marx insisted objectified and alienated humans, transforming all human relationships into “exchange objects.” “What is the profane basis of Judaism?,” wrote Marx, “*Practical need, self-interest.* What is the worldly cult of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? *Money.*” Judaism as such had

<sup>23</sup> Leopold Davis, “The Hegelian Antisemitism of Bruno Bauer,” *History of European Ideas* 25 (1999): 179–206.

<sup>24</sup> Bauer, in *The Jew in the Modern World*, 322–323.



thoroughly contaminated Christian society with “the practical Jewish spirit.” Marx’s equating Judaism with capitalism did not bode well: “The *social* emancipation of the Jew is the *emancipation of society from Judaism*,” he wrote in his final line.<sup>25</sup>

While Marx’s argument for Jewish emancipation differentiated his position from the French utopian socialists, he did echo their use of images of Jews and Judaism to critique capitalism. The utopian socialists had argued that industrialization and capitalism created a new aristocracy of money.<sup>26</sup> Their target was the July Monarchy (1830–1848), where under Louis Philippe, an emergent Orléanist elite dominated, including a number of Jewish families, especially the Rothschilds, who became the new symbol of everything that nascent socialism opposed. Charles Fourier (1772–1837) and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) identified Jews with this new plutocracy of financial and merchant capitalism that like the aristocracy of the *ancien régime* were considered parasites on the body of the nation. One of Fourier’s disciples, Alphonse de Toussnel (1803–1885), as the author of *Les Juifs, rois de l’époque* (The Jews, Kings of the Age, 1845), became the most influential socialist anti-Semite as a result of his impact on Edouard Drumont. Targeting the Rothschilds, he argued that Jews dominated France by controlling its financial markets. Idealizing rural France and ultramontane Catholicism, he saw monarchical authority allied with the Catholic Church as a bulwark against the Protestant and Jewish enemies of France.

Toussnel brought together socialist and conservative Christian anti-Jewish antipathy to emancipation and modernity. Seeing Jews as bent on the destruction of a traditional, aristocratic, hierarchical order, both Conservative Catholic and Protestant Christians often linked Jews to the

<sup>25</sup> Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question” in *The Marx–Engels Reader*, second edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 26–52, 48–49, 52. On Marxism and the Jewish Question, more generally, see Robert Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews: The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1982); Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and “the Jewish Question” after Marx* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); and Enzo Traverso, *The Marxists and the Jewish Question: The History of a Debate, 1843–1943* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1994).

<sup>26</sup> The best overview on Socialism and “the Jewish Question” is still George Lichtheim, “Socialism and the Jews” *Dissent* (July–August 1968): 314–342. On the image of “the Jew” in the French utopian socialists see Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 119–128; Robert F. Byrnes, *Antisemitism in Modern France: The Prologue to the Dreyfus Affair* (New York: H. Fertig, 1950), 114–125; Edmund Silberner, “Charles Fourier on the Jewish Question,” *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 4 (1946): 245–266; J. Salwyn Schapiro, “Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism,” *American Historical Review* 50, no. 4 (1945): 714–737.

corrupting forces of modernity. Like socialists, they sought to purge society of the contagion they identified with Jewish banking, commerce, the stock market, industry, and the city.

After the revolutions of 1848, the forces of reaction were pitted against the struggles for expansion of suffrage and rights. As an icon of modernity, the Jews of Europe were caught in the crossfire. On the one hand, slowly across the continent and across the century, Jews were granted legal equality as part of a broader set of social reforms, first in France (1791), then in the Netherlands (1796), in Greece (1830), in the Ottoman Empire (1839), in the United Kingdom (1856), in Italy (1861), in the Habsburg Empire (1867), the North German Confederation (1869) and in the unified Reich (1871). On the other hand, in each debate “the Jewish Question” would repeatedly get addressed in the categories set by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and the rejoinders to them. Since that reaction arose primarily in Central Europe, the emancipation of Jews there resulted from struggle rather than from governmental legislation of principles. As Jews were legally emancipated, however, the terms that defined “the Jewish Question” began to narrow, giving birth to a new construct, “antisemitism.”

#### “ANTISEMITISM”: THE MASS POLITICS OF SCIENTIFIC RACISM

The new legal status giving Jews equal rights spurred racial antisemitism. The terms of the discussion about Jews and Judaism now changed. Whereas for Enlightenment thinkers, the cause of Jewish depravity was religion, and the solution to the Jewish problem was assimilation, new racial arguments aimed at upending emancipation by maintaining that assimilation was impossible. “Antisemitism” as a new construct developed as the battle cry for a new form of modern mass politics. In this new era, the discourse of race replaced the earlier theological and then social distinctions between Christians and Jews with new scientific-sounding criteria based on blood and descent that could be easily welded onto an exclusionary nationalist, ethno-racial vision of “the people.”

The language of race was secular, scientific, and positivist. The invention of “Semite” as a category suggested objectivity and science, making Jewish qualities fixed and unchanging, from which neither conversion nor assimilation was possible. The stock figure of ‘the Jew’ trotted out by the new mass press ostensibly made Jews identifiable in an era of social integration. Just as “the Jewish Question” emerged when Jews were beginning to integrate in vast numbers, the creation of the neologism “antisemitism” marked another step in the effort to exclude them: a more

systematic and immutable racialization and its politicization among the masses.

German journalist Wilhelm Marr popularized the term “anti-Semite” in 1879, explicitly to replace religious anti-Judaism with a secular, scientific construct based on racial theory. Marr first used the term as the name of a short-lived political party, the Anti-semiten-Liga (Anti-Semite League), based on the success of his best-selling 1879 pamphlet, *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum* (The Victory of Jewry over Germandom).

Marr’s own *démarche* is indicative of the changing direction of anti-Jewish discourse between 1848 and 1879. An itinerant journalist, political radical, and acolyte of the Young Hegelians in his early years, his first publishing successes came as a popularizer of Feuerbach’s and Bauer’s critiques of religion. Pinning all of his hopes on triumph in 1848, Marr emerged embittered from the collapse of the revolution. In 1859 he returned to his native Hamburg from America a white supremacist. In 1862 he published *Der Judenspiegel* (A Mirror to the Jews), which repeated ideas that could be found in Voltaire or the Young Hegelians. But Marr gave his indictment a pointedly racist rationale, alluding to “‘tribal peculiarities’ and ‘an alien essence.’”<sup>27</sup>

*The Victory of Jewry over Germandom* was a more novel work than *A Mirror to the Jews* and struck a far deeper chord. In a few pages, Marr strung together a “historical-cultural” narrative covering the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans to Marr’s present with a Jewish conspiracy at its core. This “Judaization” of European history, he told the reader, “corrupted society in all of its aspects.” “This alien racial element,” he insisted, “clashed too violently with the total character of Germandom.” Germany was on her deathbed.<sup>28</sup>

A political program intended to revive Germany followed in his next pamphlet of 1879, *Elect No Jews!* (*Wählet keinen Juden!*), subtitled, *Der Weg zum Siege des Germanenthums über das Judenthum* or *The Way to Victory of Germandom over Judaism*, in which Marr cast himself as a “fighter against Jewish emancipation.” Political equality for Jews allowed them to gain control of the state in order to guarantee the hegemony they had already established in the financial and cultural arena. In response, Marr made a bid for a

<sup>27</sup> Richard Levy, “Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria” in *Antisemitism: A History*, ed. Lindemann and Levy, 127.

<sup>28</sup> Wilhelm Marr, *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism, Viewed from a Nonreligious Point of View*, trans. Gerhard Rohringer (Bern: Rudolph Costenoble, 1879), 6, 22, 23, 12. See also the selections translated in Richard Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1991), 76–93.

new kind of political mobilization, institutionalized in parties, propaganda associations, and newspapers aimed at the purported Jewish power that came with emancipation. At the same time that Marr was publishing his *Antisemitische Hefte* (Antisemitic Pamphlets), he launched his newspaper *Deutsche Wacht* with the subtitle, *Monthly of the Anti-Jewish Association*.<sup>29</sup> A year later he was calling himself “the father of the anti-Jewish movement,” and a decade further on “the patriarch of antisemitism.”<sup>30</sup>

While Marr’s Anti-semiten-Liga was, in fact, wholly ephemeral, the title for the association stuck. As Richard Levy explains, “over the next fifteen years, variants of *anti-Semitism*, *anti-Semite*, and *anti-Semitic*, made their way out of the German-speaking world into nearly every European language.”<sup>31</sup> “Anti-Semite” now morphed into a *nom de guerre* that stood opposed to the dark side of modernity made possible by the French and Industrial Revolutions. Marr had given a name to a new vocabulary and a new set of strategies oriented toward mass mobilization. Against Jews as manipulators of money and controllers of levers of power, “antisemites” could now group in solidarity to defend the aristocrats, shopkeepers, artisans, low-level professionals, and minor bureaucrats left behind by the stock market crash of 1873 and the great depression of the late nineteenth century. A switch had thus taken place between the Enlightenment discourse that underpinned “the Jewish Question” and Marr’s formulation of “antisemitism.” Jews no longer represented atavism and backwardness; they were now also tagged as the vanguard of corrosive modernity.

A few months after Marr’s coinage, Heinrich von Treitschke, distinguished professor of history at the University of Berlin, gave the word “Semitic” currency in his pamphlet *Ein Wort über unser Judenthum* (“A Word about Our Jews”). While not a straightforward racist like Marr, von Treitschke abetted in making antisemitism acceptable by declaring that “a cleft has always existed between Occidental and Semitic essences” and warning that Jews “will someday command Germany’s stock exchanges and newspapers.” His famous claim in “A Word About Our Jews” that “the Jews are our misfortune” became the masthead for a number of antisemitic news organs.<sup>32</sup>

But it fell to the popular Lutheran preacher and court chaplain, Adolf Stoecker, and his *Christian Social Party* to organize the first antisemitic

<sup>29</sup> Moshe Zimmerman, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Antisemitism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 90.

<sup>30</sup> Zimmerman, *Wilhelm Marr*, 88–89.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Levy, “Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria,” 123.

<sup>32</sup> Heinrich von Treitschke, “A Word About Our Jews” in Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World*, 73, 71.

movement that had a significant impact. In his speeches and writings, most famously in his 1879 “Our Demands on Modern Jewry,” Stoecker put political antisemitism on the map. Like Marr and Treitschke, he warned about Jews that “finance, banking, and commerce are in their possession,” and “the press is in their hands.” As the chaplain to the imperial court, Stoecker gave antisemitism clout; as the founder of the Christian Social Party and the Berlin Movement, he was the first major leader of political antisemitism in Germany. Despite his Christian credentials, Stoecker also borrowed from the new racial discourse: “The Jews are and remain a people within a people, a state within a state, a tribe amid a foreign race,” he fulminated.<sup>33</sup>

The first major campaign he mounted was the “Anti-Semite’s Petition” (1880–1881), which garnered over 250,000 signatures and became the subject of debate in the Prussian Parliament. The petition called upon the Kaiser to implement four laws: (1) that “the immigration of alien Jews” be limited if not prevented; (2) “that the Jews be excluded from all positions of authority; that their employment in the judiciary – namely as autonomous judges – receive appropriate limitation”; (3) “that the Christian character of the primary school – even when attended by Jewish pupils – be strictly protected”; that only Christian teachers be allowed in these schools; and (4) “that a special census of the Jewish population be reinstated.”<sup>34</sup> These measures would have ended Jewish emancipation, which became the goal of the plethora of antisemitic parties that emerged in the 1880s after the creation of Stoecker’s Christian Social Party.

While none of these now-forgotten political parties proved very successful (the antisemitic parties had their best showing in the Reichstag elections of 1893, electing 16 deputies out of 397), by the dawn of World War I antisemitic discourse had nonetheless become widely institutionalized in German political and cultural life.<sup>35</sup> Antisemitic discourse had spread into the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (DNVP), the Agrarian League (*Bund der Landwirte*), the Pan-Germanic League (*Alldeutscher Verband*), the White Collar Trade Union (*Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband*), gymnastics clubs (like the *Akademischer Turnerbund*), student and youth groups, and lobbies and interest groups, and it was common in a variety of church groups.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Adolf Stoecker, “Our Demands on Modern Jewry,” in Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World*, 65, 64.

<sup>34</sup> “Antisemites’ Petition,” in Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Pulzer, “Third Thoughts on German and Austrian Antisemitism,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005): 137–178, 143.

<sup>36</sup> George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken, 1981); Fritz Stern, *Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of*

Antisemitism across Central and Western Europe was winning wide circulation in part because of its scientific associations, but also precisely because of its elasticity as a concept. The appeals of antisemites also stuck because Jews were significantly overrepresented in the modern industrial economy. While less than 1 percent of Germany's population, and less than 5 percent of Austria-Hungary's, Jews had a disproportionately large role in the industrialization and modernization of Central Europe. With a long legacy, first as "Court Jews" and later as modern bankers, Jews were also key developers of railroads, important financiers of coalmining, and pioneers of sugar refinement, textile manufacturing, electrical machinery, transatlantic shipping, and department stores. Jews were overrepresented in the liberal professions, especially journalism, law, and medicine. And Jews were also in key positions that influenced the liberal, educated classes: as cultural creators, critics, impresarios, and managers of high culture. "Jews, as allies of modernity," writes historian Steven Beller, "thus became the targets of many of those in Central and Eastern Europe who suffered from the dislocations of economic modernization and the loss of moral and spiritual certitude that came with [it]." To many left behind by modernization, Jews had gone from despised pariahs to parvenus too quickly. The apparent success of Jews who went from itinerant Talmudic scholars to journalists and critics and from peddlers and beggars to merchants and businessmen within a generation stung those who felt left behind or left out by the forces of modernity.<sup>37</sup>

The Dreyfus Affair in France (1894–1906) demonstrates the point. The Affair devolved into a *guerre franco-française* based on the false accusation of the Jewish Captain Alfred Dreyfus. Dreyfus was the grandson of a peddler and kosher butcher and the son of a prosperous textile manufacturer in the city of Mulhouse in Alsace. He moved to Paris after the Franco-Prussian War to continue his schooling, and eventually rose to a position as an adjutant to the French national staff. When a memorandum (the famous *bordereau*) was discovered in the wastebasket of the German embassy in Paris, it made clear that someone was selling military secrets to the Germans. The general staff quickly lit on Dreyfus, the only Jew in their midst at the time.

*German Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (New York: Wiley, 1966); Richard Levy, *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Germany* (New Haven: Yale, 1975); Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1975); Shulamit Volkov, *The Rise of Popular Antimodernism in Germany: The Urban Master Artisans, 1873–1896* (Princeton: Princeton, 1978).

<sup>37</sup> Steven Beller, *Antisemitism: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 52, 36.

A military tribunal convicted him on trumped up evidence and sentenced him to military degradation and life in solitary exile on Devil's Island. Shipped off to die, Dreyfus was forgotten by most, except for a small group rallied by his brother. Following Emile Zola's intervention under the most famous headline in all of journalism – his "J'accuse" on January 13, 1898 – the Affair exploded onto the streets of Algeria, Lyon, Marseilles, Toulouse, and Rouen, with riots across France, splitting France into Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards.<sup>38</sup> For the latter, Dreyfus was part of a syndicate of usurious "lords of finance and administration" (Drumont), a "hideous beast of treason" (Leon Daudet), a "Judas" reborn (Maurice Barrès).<sup>39</sup> By now, anti-semitism had plainly become a political weapon, uniting the opponents of the modern, Republican state. While Dreyfus, in fact, was never found "not guilty," the case would come to a close when a civilian appeals court overturned his conviction in 1906.

While the anti-Dreyfusards failed in their immediate aims, the first place where political antisemitism actually came to power was in Vienna, where Jews made up nearly 10 percent of the population. Just as political antisemitism waned in Germany, but was reaching its boiling point in France, Karl Lueger was elected mayor of Vienna three times on an explicitly antisemitic platform before the Habsburg Emperor, Franz Joseph, allowed him to accede to the position in 1897, which he held until 1910. Lueger, the charismatic leader of the Catholic Christian Social Party, rose to power as a master of the new politics based on mobilizing along ethnic lines, common across the industrialized world, but particularly powerful in the ethnically divided Habsburg Empire.

Like Marr, Lueger followed the cultural shifts of his era in developing his political ideas. After studying law at the University of Vienna, Lueger won election to the municipal council as a liberal in 1875. Following the crash of 1873 and the lengthy economic crisis that followed, he slowly

<sup>38</sup> Michael Burns, *France and the Dreyfus Affair: A Documentary History* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 107. The best histories of the Dreyfus Affair include Jean Denis Bredin, *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus*, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: George Braziller, 1986); Michael Burns, *Dreyfus: A Family Affair, 1789–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); Nancy Fitch, "Mass Culture, Mass Parliamentary Politics, and Modern Anti-Semitism: The Dreyfus Affair in Rural France," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 1(1992): 55–95; Norman Kleeblatt, ed. *The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth and Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: The French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); and Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982).

<sup>39</sup> Burns, *France and the Dreyfus Affair*, 7–8, 11, 52.

drifted rightward, rising to leadership of the Christian Social Party in 1890 after the death of its Austrian founder, Karl von Vogelsang. Under Lueger's leadership the Christian Socials became the first successful mass political party in Austria, with antisemitism a central plank of their ideology. Lueger mobilized the lower-middle classes in Austria by employing the same imagery Stoecker had in the "Anti-Semites' Petition." Denouncing Jewish influence in banking, industry, commerce, and the liberal professions, Lueger called for segregating the school system and banning the immigration of foreign Jews.<sup>40</sup>

It was, of course, in Lueger's Vienna that Hitler came of age, faulting his much-admired progenitor only for his lack of rigor when it came to racial antisemitism.<sup>41</sup> This was because Lueger famously once responded to the suggestion that he lacked conviction on the Jewish Question by retorting, "I decide who is a Jew." In having the power to decide who was a Jew, Lueger aggravated the fears of Austrians most directly affected by the influx of Jews from the eastern provinces of the Habsburg Empire: so-called *Ostjuden* made up 25 percent of Vienna's 175,000-strong Jewish community when Lueger took office.<sup>42</sup>

This vast immigration was in turn the result of Jews fleeing the Russian Empire. In 1897 when Lueger became mayor, there were 5.2 million Jews living in the Russian Empire, about 4.3 percent of the population, with nearly five million residing within the Pale of Settlement, making up fully 40 percent of world Jewry. For the first half-century after the creation of the Pale in 1772, no major legal changes affected Jewish existence. Under the general goal of modernizing the Russian Empire, however, Nicholas I transformed Jewish life in these areas. His first initiative was via the military. Jews were traditionally exempted from military service in exchange for a special head tax. In 1827, however, Nicholas

<sup>40</sup> Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews, 1867–1938: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); John Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: The Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848–1897* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981); John Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897–1918* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995); Bruce Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution: A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1992).

<sup>41</sup> Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> On the impact of the *Ostjuden* in German culture, see Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).



issued a decree creating a cantonist system, based on the demand that each Jewish community produce a quota of military recruits, who would serve for up to twenty-five years. In 1840, the government's approach conjoined creating loyal soldiers to educating Jews in special state schools – teaching secular subjects and the Russian language – all intended to foster Jewish integration. The effort to modernize the patently backward Russian Empire was given a boost when the “Tsar Liberator” Alexander II inherited the throne in 1855. The “Emancipating Tsar,” manumitted more than fifty million Russian serfs, reformed the legal and administrative systems, and abolished the cantonist system. But his assassination on March 1, 1881 by the revolutionaries of the Narodnaia Volia (People's Will), including the Jewish comrade Gesia Gelfman, set off a wave of pogroms initiating a new phase of anti-Jewish persecution.

During Holy Week of 1881, a season always prone to anti-Jewish excesses, a pogrom broke out in Elisavetgrad, followed by more violent outbreaks in Kiev and Odessa. Over the next three years, pogroms would rage in 160 other cities and villages across the Russian empire. Mobs roamed the streets, attacked Jews, smashed into homes, and looted stores, often with the authorities looking on idly until it was too late. The pogroms were compounded by the passage of the Temporary Regulations of May 3, 1882, which prohibited Jews from living outside towns and shtetls within the Pale. The state also retreated from its reliance on education as a method of integration, imposing instead a *numerus clausus* on Jews: henceforward only 10 percent of Jews within the Pale of Settlement, 5 percent outside, and 3 percent in Moscow and St. Petersburg could attend secondary and higher education.

The pogroms beginning in 1881 were only the first of three waves (1881–84, 1903–06, 1918–20) that like a tsunami changed Jewish life in the Russian empire forever, cascading as they did with massive emigration. A second set of pogroms started in the city of Kishinev in 1903 at the instigation of P. A. Krushevan, the editor of a local newspaper and former government official. This time pogroms broke out in over 300 cities. From the end of the 1905–06 pogroms, as Heinz-Dietrich Löwe notes, “anti-Semitism developed a mass basis in the Union of the Russian People (URP) and other so-called Black Hundred Organizations.”<sup>43</sup>

By far the most violent wave of pogroms, however, took place from 1918 to 1920, during the Civil War that followed the Bolshevik seizure of power. Every current opposed to the communist takeover engaged in pogroms: the White Armies under General Denikin, Wrangel, Kolchak, and others; the

<sup>43</sup> Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, “Antisemitism in Russia and the Soviet Union,” in Lindemann and Levy, *Antisemitism*, 175.

anarchists under Nestor Makhno; and the Ukrainian national army commanded by Semion Petliura. The White armies identified Jews with disloyalty to the tsar and with Bolshevism itself. Once more the labels stuck, since Jews were overrepresented within Bolshevik and revolutionary ranks.

In December 1918, the momentary success of the communists in Bavaria and Hungary encouraged a widespread fear that the social upheaval of “Judeo-Bolshevism” would rage across Europe. Only a few years later, Hitler’s message to a hobbled Germany offered national redemption by engaging in a crusade against this two-headed monster of modernity: Jewish Bolshevism. In *Mein Kampf*, which became the Bible of National Socialism after it was published in 1924, Hitler drew on a half century of antisemitic discourse in blaming Jews for the decadence that had infected modern social life. He decried “their unclean dress and their generally unheroic appearance ... in addition to their physical uncleanliness.” Their tools were “the press, art, literature, and the theater.” But their secret weapon was the Jewish theory of Marxism that proclaimed equality, which “contests the significance of nationality and race.” “*By defending myself against the Jew,*” he concluded, “*I am fighting for the work of the Lord.*”<sup>44</sup> Hitler’s harangues against Jews thus wound together motifs from Christian anti-Judaism with the medical discourse of degeneracy (Jews as abnormal, corrupt, and impure), wedded the integral nationalist arguments about Jews as foreigners (outsiders, strangers, aliens) with socialist accusations of Jewish materialism (bankers, financiers, parasites), and coupled the image of Jews as hyper-rational conspirators (unscrupulous, invisible, organized) with the danger of Revolution (subversion, disruption, chaos).

Combined with military models of organization (uniforms, torch-light parades, and hierarchy), National Socialism thus based its cohesion in the imaginary Jewish threat. As such, Saul Friedländer has termed the Nazi variety of Jew-hatred “redemptive anti-Semitism.”<sup>45</sup> In using this formulation, Friedländer sought to bridge the major interpretations of Nazi anti-Semitism. While some scholars emphasize the centrality of science, social engineering, and a crisis of modernity for the rise of Nazism, others insist upon anti-Judaism as a root cause.<sup>46</sup> Friedländer suggests that religious anti-Judaism, secular and political antisemitism, and *völkisch* ideology were opposed neither in Nazi discourse nor in its institutions. Nazism

<sup>44</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943), 57, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), chap. 3.

<sup>46</sup> Omer Bartov, ed., *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 79.

fused together the modern and the traditional into what Jeffrey Herf terms a “reactionary modernism” that was both rational and irrational, modern and anti-modern, bureaucratic and charismatic.<sup>47</sup> In short, the millenarian apocalypticism of the Nazis was key to their modern, managed, and bureaucratized genocidal antisemitism. The demonization of Jews – the notion that they were evil incarnate – made Nazi antisemitism different from Nazi racial views of Slavs or of the French masses: “If the Jew occupied Satan’s place in Nazi eschatology,” maintains Léon Poliakov, “then the non-German or ‘sub-human,’ lacking any sacred attribute was for the most part classified among the animals.”<sup>48</sup> The sacred dimension of the Nazi assault on European Jewry differentiated the war against the Jews from Nazi genocide more generally, which targeted as many non-Jews as Jews, including Gypsies and the handicapped, who were likewise slated for extermination.

With Hitler’s rise to the helm of the German state in 1933, the millenarianist and racialized antisemitism at the core of the Nazi creed became the basis of state policy. Nazism consequently transformed Germany into what historians Burleigh and Wippermann term, a “Racial State.”<sup>49</sup> As such, Nazi antisemitism marks the final moment in our account of the categories “antisemitism” and “the Jewish Question,” with the unfolding of what Hitler deemed “*die Endlösung der Judenfrage*” (the Final Solution of the Jewish Question).<sup>50</sup>

Nazi and SA documents used the phrase “*die Endlösung*” as early as 1931. A dispatch titled “The Jews in the Third Reich” outlined “a secret plan” for the stages of anti-Jewish restrictions: “removal of Jews from the courts, from the civil service, the professions; police surveillance, including residency and identity permits; confiscation of Jewish enterprises and property; detention and expulsion of ‘unwanted’ Jews; Nuremberg-type laws against intermarriage and sexual and social intercourse.” “For the final solution of the Jewish Question [*die Endlösung*]” they “proposed to use the Jews in Germany for slave labor or for cultivation of the German swamps administered by a special SS division.”<sup>51</sup> By January 1939, in his most

<sup>47</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>48</sup> Léon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate: The Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986), 263.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> François Furet, *Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 182.

<sup>51</sup> Ron Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil* (New York: Random House, 1998), 42–43.

infamous declaration on the subject, Hitler bellowed to the Reichstag that, “If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!”

Raul Hilberg points out, however, that until 1941 Nazis followed a policy of exclusion and expulsion, not annihilation.<sup>52</sup> The conquest of the areas most populated by Jews in 1941 stimulated a change in that policy. Throughout the former Pale of Settlement, German soldiers – primarily the *Einsatzgruppen* roving in killing units behind military lines – mowed down more than one million Jews. Within six months, the opening lines of the minutes of the Wannsee Conference made clear that a new policy was to be implemented. The minutes begin by listing all those who participated “in the conference on the final solution [*Endlösung*] of the Jewish Question,” which was being held because “the organizational, technical and material aspects of the final solution of the Jewish Question required prior joint consideration by all central agencies directly concerned with these problems in order to coordinate their subsequent course of action.”<sup>53</sup> The horror of what transpired on the twisted road to Auschwitz – built by “redemptive antisemitism” and paved with indifference – is well enough known that I can conclude my narration simply by invoking it.

#### WHY THE JEWS?: POST-HOLOCAUST THEORIES

A number of accounts appearing shortly after the end of World War II offer a set of explanatory frameworks for understanding the mechanisms that drove antisemitism and the Jewish Question in the modern period. These include Hannah Arendt’s interactionist approach, Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialist account, Talcott Parsons’s sociological analysis, and the Frankfurt School’s socio-psychoanalytic critical theory. Each provides a different vantage point for understanding antisemitism, modernity, and the Jewish Question.

Hannah Arendt’s groundbreaking section on the history of antisemitism included in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) disparaged narratives of “eternal antisemitism,” insisting that a wide chasm separated modern antisemitism from its earlier progenitors. “Antisemitism, a secular

<sup>52</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961).

<sup>53</sup> “Minutes of the Wannsee Conference, January 20, 1942.” Document NG-2586, Nuremberg Trial Record, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, edited by Leon Poliakov and Josef Wulf. Reprinted in Simone Gigliotti and Berel Lang, *The Holocaust: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 243–251.

nineteenth-century ideology – which in name, though not in argument, was unknown before the 1870s – and religious Jew-hatred, inspired by the mutually hostile antagonism of two conflicting creeds, are obviously not the same,” she argued.<sup>54</sup> Explanations based on narratives of eternal antisemitism answer the question “why the Jews?” with the question begging reply, “eternal hostility.”<sup>55</sup> What explained modern antisemitism, for Arendt, was the role of the Jews in the development of modernity. “Modern antisemitism,” she maintained, “must be seen in the more general framework of the development of the nation-state, and at the same time its source must be found in certain aspects of Jewish history and specifically Jewish functions during the last centuries.”<sup>56</sup> Jews, seen as a nation without a state, simply did not belong in the Europe re-ordered by modern nation-states and the colonial world order.

Arendt offered this interactionist account of modern antisemitism partly as a response to her unfavorable assessment of Sartre’s existentialism. “[E]ven a cursory knowledge of Jewish history,” she wrote, “should be enough to dispel this latest myth ... that has become somewhat fashionable in intellectual circles after Sartre’s ‘existentialist’ interpretation of the Jew as someone who is regarded and defined as a Jew by others.”<sup>57</sup> Despite Arendt’s dismissal, Sartre’s *Réflexions sur la question juive* (*Anti-Semite and Jew*, 1946), has remained an influential examination of Jewish victimization and subjugation, explored as a dialectic between Self and Other. The book became a major contribution to post-war debates about antisemitism, Jewish identity, and the possibility of “Jewish emancipation” after the Holocaust.

The *Réflexions* is a phenomenological analysis of the Jewish Question and contains two major premises that structure Sartre’s analysis. His first axiom is that the anti-Semite is a man of “*mauvaise foi*” (bad faith or self-deception), and that antisemitism is consequently a “fear of the human condition.”<sup>58</sup> He insists (contra Arendt) that, to understand antisemitism, one cannot reduce it to economic, historical, or political analyses that do not reveal it as an existential choice. Rather, antisemitism must be understood as an inauthentic response to man’s situation in the world and being-with-others. The antisemite fears the limits of the human condition

<sup>54</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973 [1951]), xi.

<sup>55</sup> Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, xv.

<sup>58</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Paris: Gallimard: Collection Folio/Essais, 1954), 64.

(change, death, and a world shared with others who call into question one's essence and values). Denying their own freedom, antisemites legitimate their choices through the typology of the degenerate Jewish Other. As such, they avoid responsibility. They flee from it by focusing their passions on 'the Jew,' the free-floating symbol of decadence, decay, and degeneration that must be eliminated to redeem the modern world.

Sartre extends his analysis to the modern Jewish condition, calling upon Jews to assume the responsibility for their situations, which are defined in part by Sartre's second axiom: "The Jew is a man that other men consider a Jew."<sup>59</sup> Sartre here renders in existential terms the inescapability of Jewishness that constituted Nazi racial definitions. Every Jew must confront the possibility that the racial state, the individual antisemite, or even the banal or ordinary non-Jew may apprehend him as "the Jew." This possibility becomes a constitutive factor for Jewish self-consciousness.

Social scientists, for their part, took a different tack to explain anti-Semitism. Key figures included the psychologists Marie Jahoda, Bruno Bettelheim, Rudolph Loewenstein, Daniel Levinson, and Ernest Simmel, as well as the historians Eva Reichmann, Aurel Kolnai, Paul Massing, and Joshua Trachtenberg. Among these pioneers was the famed American sociologist of modernity Talcott Parsons. Parsons effort "The Sociology of Modern Anti-Semitism," was included in the large 1942 collection *Jews in a Gentile World: The Problem of Anti-Semitism*. Edited by Isacque Graeber and Steuart Henderson Britt, the volume was a groundbreaking interdisciplinary effort that brought together eighteen sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists, economists, and historians to "examine the problems of anti-Semitism in a dispassionate, objective manner."<sup>60</sup>

Parsons's thesis is that "the most important source of virulent anti-Semitism is probably the projection on the Jew, as a symbol, of free-floating aggression, springing from insecurities and social disorganization,"<sup>61</sup> attendant upon the transformations of modernity. These include urbanization, industrialization, the developing complexity and instability of the economy, increasing heterogeneity and mobility of the population, shifts in consumption patterns, the "debunking" of traditional values and ideas," the expansion of popular education and mass means of communication, which all result in the "large-scale incidence of anomie in Western society."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Sartre, *Reflexions*, 83–84.

<sup>60</sup> Isacque Graeber and Steuart Henderson Britt, *Jews in a Gentile World: The Problem of Anti-Semitism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), v.

<sup>61</sup> Parsons, "The Sociology of Modern Anti-Semitism," in *Jews in Gentile World*, 120.

<sup>62</sup> The itemization of the sociological processes of modernization listed here actually come from "Some Sociological Aspects of the Fascist Movement," where Parsons develops some of the points he makes in "The Sociology of Modern Anti-Semitism" at greater

Borrowing the notion of anomie from Durkheim's study on *Suicide*, it is a state of rootlessness, disconnection, and social alienation. Parsons claims that anomie results in social and psychological insecurity, frustration, and resentment often expressed as aggression. The more heightened the anxiety, the more "free floating" the aggression. In these circumstances, people act out their frustration and insecurity on a symbolic object. In the case of modern Europe, this symbolic object was the Jew.

Members of the Frankfurt School offered a fourth set of theories of antisemitism. Their most ambitious effort was the *Studies in Prejudice* series, combining Weberian sociology, Marxism, and psychoanalysis, and involved multi-institutional efforts. The boldest undertaking of the *Studies in Prejudice* series was *The Authoritarian Personality*, a collaborative work led by Theodor Adorno.<sup>63</sup> The title linked it to the work of Erich Fromm in the Frankfurt School's first collective publication, *Studies on Authority and the Family* where the concept of the "authoritarian personality" was put forward as a link between psychological dispositions and political leanings. In his methodological chapter on "Types and Syndromes" Adorno warns that the assertion of an "authoritarian personality," risked essentializing the origins of antisemitism in a characterological type. Any doctrine of types, Adorno writes, could "tend towards pigeonholing and transform[ing] highly flexible traits into static, quasi-biological characteristics," just as fascist typologies tended to do.<sup>64</sup>

But Adorno justifies the drive to locate the etiology of the "authoritarian personality" and its correlate types – the anti-Semite, the fascist, the xenophobe – since the social conditions of modernity were themselves typed. All social processes of modernity tended toward standardization and mass production, including the personality types of individuals. "Only by identifying stereotypical traits in modern humans, and not by denying their existence," Adorno therefore averred, "can the pernicious tendency towards all-pervasive classification and subsumption be challenged."<sup>65</sup> Social types were the products of social rubber stamps.

How these rubber stamps became constituted as socially produced phenomena forms the basis of Adorno's specific anthropology of antisemitism. His first principle for understanding antisemitism is to appreciate that the

length, focused less on antisemitism and more on fascism. See Talcott Parsons, *Talcott Parsons on National Socialism*, ed. Uta Gerhardt (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993), 203–218.

<sup>63</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, R. Nevitt Sandford, et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950).

<sup>64</sup> Adorno in *The Authoritarian Personality*, 744.

<sup>65</sup> Adorno in *The Authoritarian Personality*, 747.

object of prejudice – that is, “the Jews” – does *not* provoke the syndrome. Instead, he insists upon “the ‘functional’ character of anti-Semitism.” The social functionality of the stereotype depends upon what Adorno terms, “stereotypy” and “ticket thinking”: the social production of the stereotype, which is itself linked to psychological needs that are created by the “cold, alienated, and largely ununderstandable world” of modernity.<sup>66</sup>

The psychological motor of stereotypy is projection, whose key mechanism is the defamation of other groups as a way to code one’s own status. Antisemitism consequently compensates for social alienation. But Adorno transcends Parsons’s sociological analysis in arguing that antisemitism *personalizes* an explanation of the complicated contradictions that engender the social and psychological discomfort resulting from alienation. The ineloquence or confusion of social life can be unraveled in an instant through a set of stock images.

On a psychological level, too, Adorno suggests that antisemitism functions as a site for screening the internal contradictions of individuals – their inner conflicts between id and superego. Stereotypes are the externalization of these inner conflicts, which are themselves the internalization of the contradictions of global capitalism. As a result, many positive stereotypes are closely linked to their darker side. For example, the contention that Jews are solidly entrenched in family values has its double in the assertion of Jewish clannishness. This double set of values ascribed to the stereotyping of Jews fits Adorno’s basic hypothesis: “the largely projective character of anti-Semitism.”

Through the *Studies in Prejudice* series, Adorno and the Frankfurt School expanded the understanding of antisemitism to include not only a critique of capitalism and fascism, but of modernity more generally. The fullest fruit of these efforts was Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, published in 1947 with the concluding segment on the “The Elements of Anti-Semitism” added in 1949.<sup>67</sup> Here, they consider antisemitism within the development of Western civilization, rationality, and the administered society of modernity. As in *The Authoritarian Personality*, their foundational thesis is that antisemitism is a paranoid projection of fascism’s own worldview.

Read together, the work of the Frankfurt School, Sartre, Arendt, and Parsons, offers a multi-causal explanation of “antisemitism” and “the Jewish Question” in modernity. Sartre helps us to understand the Self/Other dialectic of recognition. His point of view is intersubjective and

<sup>66</sup> Adorno in *The Authoritarian Personality*, 608.

<sup>67</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 2000), 168–208.



intrasubjective, exploring how the antisemite covers over the hole of emptiness in the Self by opposition to his image of the Jew as the degraded Other. Arendt refuses Sartre's existentialist analysis since it does not take account of the collective dimension of antisemitism. She analyzes the problem in terms of the interactions between the Jewish community and the shifting forms of states over the development of modernity. Talcott Parsons widens the lens one step further by offering a sociological account of the disenchantments that occasion modernity and how these result in a sense of anomie, which can be displaced onto the Jews as a symbolic target. The Frankfurt School's optic is one step wider still. In a fragmentary set of observations, they indicate how the same social processes that unpin the modern culture industry produce the stereotypes of Jews and Judaism. When internalized, these stereotypes help to personalize the social forces that the masses otherwise would lack the vocabulary to name. These modern discontents are certainly not past us, and coupled to the politics of the Arab–Israeli conflict, they help us to explain the spike in Judeophobia in our new millennium.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> For an overview of the discussions about the new Judeophobia, see Jonathan Judaken, "So What's New? Rethinking the 'New Antisemitism' in a Global Age," *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 4–5 (2008): 531–560.

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