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CRITICAL THEORIES OF ANTISEMITISM

PhD Thesis

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This work is dedicated to my grandmother Ester Rosenblit and my parents Joe and Mildred Seymour.

Abstract

Critical Theories of Antisemitism

Distinguishing between different ways of thinking about antisemitism, this study concentrates on those theories that understand antisemitism as a uniquely modern phenomenon. Covering the period from the mid-19th century to the present day, it first examines the work of Marx and Nietzsche and then moves on to those theorists who wrote in the immediate aftermath of the holocaust and concludes with the postmodern writings of Bauman and Lyotard. It argues that these critical theories of antisemitism all relate the emergence of antisemitism to modern forms of political emancipation and questions the impact of the holocaust upon this body of thought. The study argues that the fluidity and open-endedness by which the early writers characterise modernity - most notably the ambivalence within modernity itself between the possibility of full emancipation and barbarity - comes to be replaced by an increasing pessimism that sees antisemitism as modernity's only possible outcome. It argues that this change is accompanied first by increasing the centrality of antisemitism to modernity, and also by defining more rigidly the concepts by which antisemitism is explained, most noticeably, the concept of "the Jews". This study argues that as a result of these interrelated developments, critical theories replicate many of the assumptions of the antisemitic worldview identified in the early works. By calling for a cautious and critical return to these earlier ways of explaining antisemitism, the study concludes by pointing to an approach that remains within the tradition of critical theory, but which re-establishes the critical distance between ways of accounting for antisemitism and the phenomenon itself - one in which the "Jewish question" is de-centred, the explanatory concepts reopened to question and the promise of emancipation reinvigorated.

Preface: Letter From Shylock¹

Venice, 1597

My dear friend,

The little news that reaches me here is resplendent with tales of love. Love, how that little word sticks in my throat! I am told that at Belmont, the palace of that fair and gentle Portia, love reigns supreme; such perfect and ideal love. The love of husband and wife, Portia and Bassanio, Lorenzo, and, oh, how that pains me, my daughter Jessica, and the love of friends, Antonio and Bassanio. How they must spend their days in idyllic bliss, without a care in the world. And yet, my dear friend, only I know what all these lovers and friends know themselves but do not dare acknowledge - that love has a price, that love has a cost. And who has paid for their love? Me, Shylock, the one who was once known as Shylock the Jew. And how have I paid? With my money, my religion, and my future. Without exaggeration, I could even say that I have paid for their love, their happiness, with my own life.

And how did this bitter-sweet tale come to pass? This I shall tell you, and in so telling leave out nothing - nothing - including the part I myself played in my own downfall and in their victory.

A few months ago, the noble Bassanio came to visit me. He requested three thousand ducets. Why he wanted them at the time I did not know. It later came to my knowledge that he needed them so as to have the means to court the woman of his heart, Portia. He needed my money for his love! for his happiness! Yet, do you hear a word about this part of the story, about how I furnished him with the money so that he was free to love? About how Jewish money paved the way for that most perfect of loves? Oh, how much more I shall tell you of this association of Jewish money and Christian love.

¹ This preface has been published in [1997] 2 Law and Critique 215-222

Needless to say Bassanio, who knows how to spend money, but not how to produce it, was not in a position to make any kind of deal with me. I have since heard it told that, Antonio the merchant, of whom I shall tell you a great deal more, had already given him - given, do you note, not lent, but given, and given out of friendship, out of love! - had given Bassanio a great deal of money so that he could invest in ventures. Apparently, he had asked Antonio to give him more, but Antonio was unable to.

But, and here lies the first of many infamies, do you know what justification Bassanio, this paragon of virtue, gave to Antonio in requesting yet more of his friend's money? I shall tell you. He pleaded his request by arguing that since Portia had been bequeathed a great fortune, and since whoever won her would gain control of that wealth, both the later gift and the earlier one would be repaid a hundred fold. So much for the purity of love. These Christians, these merchants, they treat the affairs of the heart as if it were a business deal. Yet, it is the Jew that bears the weight of that assumption!

Be that as it may, Antonio was not in a position to give his friend the funds he needed so as to satisfy his heart's desire. His money was idle, tied up in goods sitting on ships in the middle of the ocean. The two were left, despite themselves, to come to me. To ask *me* for the money, to ask *me* to furnish the cost of Bassanio's love.

When they came to see me, Bassanio did not mention even a word in my presence about his love, nor about the potential return that such love was to furnish. I suppose that they thought that love was an alien notion to me. What little they know! I know only too well about love, but I keep it in its place. Unlike those noble compatriots, Bassanio and Antonio, who speak of love in the same breath as profit, I keep the two firmly separated. Love is for the heart, money for the pocket.

Bassanio, perhaps because of the intensity of his feelings, his need to stand a chance to win his hearts's prize, was pleasant enough toward me in asking me to lend him the sum. True, I heard in his voice his hatred with which he treats a Jew, but, what's the news in that! As I have said, I do not lend out of love, but out of calculation. But my calculating mind knew that his coffers were empty. On his own, I would have refused him without a

second thought. But, and such a small word for such a great consequence, he then assured me that Antonio would stand surety.

Antonio, Antonio. Oh, how long I had waited to catch him on the hip. He was not like the other Christians that I have dealt with, either as friend or client. He hated me, but he hated me in a novel and original way. He is unlike those Christians who hated me for their usual reasons, killing their Lord, and for refusing the truth of the "one true religion", etc., etc.. That is their only reason for despising me, even while they knew that I was necessary for them.

I was necessary to give them money to live, since in the way they lived, they could make none of their own; they used money to consume - no more, no less. Apparently, it goes against their Church for them to make money make money. Even in their hatred of me and my people, we remained a part of their lives and their world. But, not so to Antonio and his new breed of merchants.

Antonio and his kind believe that they have found a way around their Church's prohibitions. Instead of money making money through interest, money makes money for them through profit. A fine distinction! Tell me my dear friend, what is the difference between buying cheap and selling dear and charging interest on money lent? Is it not true that in both ways the recipient gives back more to the provider than the provider has laid out? Ah, you might say, but the man who provides the goods still needs us Jews to give those that buy the money to purchase what is supplied them in this way. That is not the case. And why is that not the case? I shall tell you.

The merchant faces those that come into contact with him in two ways - as a buyer and as a seller. First, he buys what they have made with his own money; then he takes those goods and exchanges them with others that a another merchant has acquired in the same way, and - this part is so clever that I do not know why a Jew did not think of it - he sells those goods back to the same people who made them originally, but this time for a far greater price. In this way, money constantly reproduces itself through the work of people who make things themselves, but who then buy those things back as if they did not

make them or had ever seen them before. The trick of the merchant is to keep the people blind in this way, so that they can take the difference between the price at which they buy and that for which they sell.

You can see, my dear friend, why, for them, there is no place for the Jew. Our money, even when lent out for interest, merely remains as money and comes back to us as money. Unlike these Christian merchants, money does not suddenly turn into something else that pretends it is not money. Antonio calls our money, our Jewish money, "barren". How can it be barren if it breeds in the way of more money?

For all his talk of refusing to be "neither a lender or borrower", he came to me for a loan. A loan, not for business you understand, but for love! How fragile is *his* new practice! He talks of money "breeding", but how successful is the intercourse when his money, or as he calls it, "his goods" sit nowhere other than in the bright blue sea, at the mercy of the heavens and of the pirates? No, he still needs us Jews and our money. Or so I thought....

Yes, he needs our money, but all of it....and now. His new way of making wealth depends on all the people buying and selling. Because all people do not do this, he is limited. He also runs the risk that all his money could disappear in one rough night on one rough ocean. If only I would have understood his merchant's situation. I would have acted so differently.

In the end Antonio robbed me. He and his like robbed me of all my money. If they had come like thieves in the night and taken it, at least that would have been open and, dare I say, honest. But such an action they would see as unchristian. Instead, they stole it with deceit; they stole it in the name of love - they stole it in the name of their Lord; and I was a party to it.

When I saw Antonio come into my house ready to make an agreement, my heart leapt. "Now I have him", I thought, and I did. But, oh, how I missed my chance; how stupid I

was. If only I had acted as a Jew! Instead I acted as a Christian; can I now complain that I was judged like a Christian?

As you know, I lend money free of favour. What do I care about the person who stands in front of me; what do I care if he is Jew, Christian or Moor, whether he be left-handed or right-handed. All I care is that the person is good; and by "good", all I mean is that he is good for the debt. I sit as with an equal and discuss the agreement, and sign, seal and deliver it within the bond. If the debt cannot or will not be met when it is due, then I go to court, appeal to the law and expect, nay, demand, that the law treat me as I have treated it, with respect and with justice. That, as you more than other know, my dear friend, is the Jew's greatest and most magnificent achievement - the creation of the law, and the subservience of all in the face of it. Where, I ask you, would the world be, without this greatest of miracles?

If I had acted under the law in my dealings with Antonio, what a different story could now be told. Knowing that his ventures were at the mercy of the gravest of risks, and knowing the desperation of his love for Bassanio, I could have charged whatever interest I wanted with such a forfeit that, had his ships been a day late, he would have been ruined, and it would have been my satisfaction to see that day.

But, oh, what a fool I was. In front of me I saw, not a man like all others, not a man of more or of less means, but Antonio - a Christian and a merchant who had made enemies of me and my and my people. My passion obstructed my vision and my thought.

I could not see that in baiting him, it was he who set the trap and that I walked into it as I said, blindly but with my eyes wide open. These Christians, what do they know of setting prices and charging interest justly, according to the law, free of personal involvement. No, they sneer at interest (as if it were different from profit!) and, so he tells me, they give money in the spirit of friendship and love. Indeed, in their new merchant's corporations they set their prices in agreement one with the other and measure it not by justice in the face of the law, but by love in the face of their Lord. Oh, how this elite and the rabble act in the same way.

That was the next step in my own undoing. I, Shylock the Jew, blasphemed against our own law, and acted as a Christian. In place of the justice inherent in our law, I was willing to use the cover of the law to wreak vengeance, but under the thin veneer of kindness, friendship and love. It was only later that I realised just how strong was the relation of Christian love to Christian vengeance.

I told Antonio that I would deal in kindness with him, contrary to my legal and just habits. And, in this so unjewish way of dealing, I thought I would be better at being a Christian than Antonio! What a mistake I made.

I told him that in the spirit of friendship I would forsake all interest and, should the debt not be met, merely ask for a pound of his flesh. Of course, I knew that this would mean his death; what I did not realise was that I was staking my life as well.

The day of the forfeit finally arrived. In the meantime, my daughter Jessica eloped with a Christian and took on his religion. This event compounded my desire for vengeance to that which I felt toward that Christian-merchant Antonio.

I went into court that day with vengeance in my heart, but, of course, to me and to the court I pleaded that vengeance in the name of justice. After all, I argued, the date for repayment had arrived, the money could not be returned to me, so, as the law demands, I must be allowed to take my pound of flesh from him as was written in the bond to which Antonio agreed and signed as a freeman.

The judges, those trained in the law, and only the law, despite some whining for clemency, had no alternative but to agree that I was in the right. All victory was to be mine. It is then that Portia arrived on the scene; asked by the court to arbitrate. Why could not they themselves decide? Surely, the law is the law?

Oh, how Christian love appears! Did she come into court dressed as that which she was - love and virtue? No, she came in (as did I) as a charade; she came disguised as a

lawyer. What chance did law and justice, those noblest of Jewish values, stand in the face of her Christian values of love and revenge?

Oh, what pretence of justice she made! I should have seen what was about to be visited on me. In the guise of Justice she asked, not Justice's question, who was defendant and who was plaintiff? Instead, she asked who was merchant and who was Jew? As if she did not know the answer! She continued her masquerade as the blindness of law when she pretended not to see the difference between me in my gabardine and the merchant in his finery.

Still masked, in this court of law, she then, with eloquent words, pleaded with me in the name of mercy and charity. Oh, those vile Christian virtues through which their love of man is met. What have I, a man of the law, to do with love or mercy? What does a Jew know of love. I do not love my fellow man, I have too much respect for humanity to love a man. I treat a man with respect, as my equal, no matter who he is. Because of my lack of love, a lack I am proud of, can I, a Jew, show mercy? Nay, to show that noble, Christian virtue, you need to be above another, to patronise him with your pity. If I am above a Christian, it is in the name of justice. I demand justice, I expect to be judged according to it, not according to love.

But, if the truth be known, what justice could I demand? Had I not given up my right to justice when I bargained with Antonio in the name of friendship, but with a heart of vengeance? Had I not made a mockery of law when I attempted to force into it what does not belong there? Can I complain that I was treated in the same way?

How quickly, Christian mercy turns to vengeance, yet all in the name of love! At my refusal to show "love for my fellow man", how speedily, love turned to hate. How fast I was to suffer the violence of love spurned.

Using legal arguments full of spite and malice, Portia, that gentle lady, spat out her decision. I may take my flesh, but not a drop of his blood must be spilled. The flesh was mine, the blood was his - as if the two could be separated. One of us had to yield, and, in

the face of this court of love and vengeance, it was to be me. And so the precedent was set.

Not content with permitting her to make judgement, they then left it to Portia to speak of punishment. And what punishment. Not the punishment of law and of justice, such notions had flown out of the room, chased by the spirit of love! It was the punishment of love: all I had was to be its own. One half was to the state, to Venice, the other half to Antonio. I had been robbed in Portia's court of all I possessed.

Once dispossessed in this manner, what use did they have for a Jew? To show the measure of my new worth, they told me who I really was and who they really were. I was told that I was an alien who had threatened the life of a citizen, and must pay accordingly. An alien! All my life I had lived in Venice, entering into contacts, paying taxes, yet, I was called an alien. But was I an alien of the state, or was I an alien of a community of love? Or had one become the other? Love and vengeance had overcome law and justice, and, dressed in its mantle, continued to act. but with such a different heart.

In this name of love, so unlike that of justice which stands between the wrongdoer and the wronged to temper the feelings of vengeance, in love's own name, the one wronged, Antonio, was to extend further humiliation. In his blend of Christian love and merchant avarice he made me the trustee of my own money. For whom was I to hold this money so it earned all the more, but without its true owner becoming visible? I was to hold it for my Christian daughter and her Christian husband until my death. If for no other reason, how I desire to live forever!

Finally, Antonio confronted me as the victor faces the vanquished. I lay before him and waited. He could take my life if he so desired. After all, what is a Jew to him after his money and his law has been stolen. And took my life he did; but in a oh, so gentle, Christian way! Speaking out of mercy he killed me by bading me become Christian. By this simple act of death and resurrection, was I no longer to be a Jewish alien in a Christian world?

I could stand no more and left that room of deceit, trickery and hypocrisy.

How, I wonder, my dear friend will this tale be told to those not present?

Will Portia and Bassanio lying in their bed of sublime love, readily admit the tricks they played? Will they acknowledge the role of the Jew of whom they so kindly disposed, in allowing them their peace and happiness? And will Bassanio ever tell the fair Portia that he sought to woo her, not only for her love, but so as to use her wealth to repay Antonio for his first "gift"?

When Antonio is thanked by Lorenzo and Jessica for the money he has procured for them, will he tell them, will he tell himself, of the cost to himself that lay behind that gift of love? Or will he see the Jew in himself even as he congratulates himself for killing Shylock, the old Jew?

And will all of the nations of Christianity ever realise that for them to live in ideal love and communion among themselves, as one perfect community, so as to create their Christian heaven on earth and call it the "world of justice"; that for such a prize somebody else will need to be seen to pay for their earthly sins, including, of course, the sins of human necessity? And pay we do! Will it now always be us, my dear friend, will it from this day, be the Jews, who pay this cost of Christian love, and who will be the water in which they cleanse their vengeance when they find, time and time again, that they themselves must wash their dirty Jewish hands so as to keep their Christian hearts clean.

As for me, I left the court and found that I had done as they willed. I had already become a Christian. But tell me, am I, now with a simple act of baptism, with the rule of a Christian court, more of a Christian or less of a Jew than I was before. As I walk with a cross around my neck, speaking to my noble fellow Christians in words of love and mercy, I shall never forget what else has been taught me - that vengeance is love by

another name. Yes, my friend, I was killed as a Jew, but no more than Antonio a Christian. Who now can separate the flesh from the blood?

Introduction: Critical Theories of Antisemitism

Ever since the term “antisemitism” first appeared in print in Germany in 1860,² there have been questions as to how its emergence should be explained. For some thinkers, it was explained as “old wine in new bottles”. From this perspective, antisemitism represented a new form of the old, even ancient, phenomenon of Jew-hatred. For others, its emergence in Germany meant that antisemitism was a specific and uniquely “German problem”. Both of these perspectives are not only current today, but also appear to be gaining increasingly wide popular support.³ Norman Cohn⁴ for example, relies upon religious animosity and anti-Judaism to explain antisemitism, and Daniel Goldhagen’s recent work⁵, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the holocaust* explicitly indicts Germany in the birth of modern antisemitism.

I believe that part of the reason for the currency of these theories is the lack of challenge with which they present their audience. In the former case, once antisemitism is seen as “eternal” it takes on the aura of a “law of nature” and, as such, any *praxis* to counter and, finally, to eradicate it is seen as futile. From the perspective

² “The term was first used in 1860 by a Jewish writer, M. Steinschneider in a polemic against Ernest Renan. It next appeared in 1879 with Wilhelm Marr's "Anti-Semites' League". The abstract term "anti-semitism came into use soon after". Paul Lawrence Rose, [1990; 288]

³ These perspectives are discussed in Chapter 1 below.

⁴ Cohn, N. (1967) *Warrant for Genocide* London: Eyre and Spottiswoode

⁵ Goldhagen, D. (1996) *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* London: Little, Brown and Co.

of the antisemite, it leads to the conclusion that “the Jews” can never truly be part of wider society as long as they remain Jews. Even if they were to renounce their Judaism, their “true nature” would always make a mockery of such membership. From the perspective of some Jewish groups, it gives legitimacy to their perception of the “outside” world as hostile and to the belief that the only safe place for a Jew is Israel or within one of the various “self-defence groups”. For the religious Jewish right, the only refuge that can be provided is a return to an orthodoxy that treats any form of social progress as suspect.

Paradoxically, this theory reproduces the worldview of antisemitism itself. First, it replicates the antisemitic idea that the categories of antisemitism, of an alleged impenetrable barrier between Jews and non-Jews, reflect an empirical reality. Secondly, it leads to a discussion of the false and pernicious question of “Who is a Jew”; a question that has only ever been the concern of antisemites and the Jewish religious right. Finally, this view culminates in the “essentialising” or “racializing” of both Jews and non-Jews, a practice that can result in the most terrifying consequences, such as apartheid, “ethnic cleansing” and the murder of millions of individuals alleged to be of the now despised “race”.

Whereas the “eternal antisemitism” theory leads to the idea of a hostile world, the idea that antisemitism is a specifically “German” problem leads to the opposite conclusion. Hermetically sealing antisemitism within the “tradition” of one specific nation-state, all those outside it can feel safe and secure with their own “national traditions”, free from any responsibility. This (false) security is the basis for insisting that Germany be asked to carry forever the “guilt” of their past and be treated as a criminal eternally on probation. The consequences of such a general abdication of responsibility can never be guaranteed before hand.

There is also another body of theory to explain the emergence of “modern” antisemitism. These theorists avoid explaining antisemitism’s origins as either German or religious. To those writers whose work forms the main body of this

study⁶, antisemitism represents the appearance of an entirely *novel* and *modern* phenomenon that departs substantially from previous types of hostility aimed at Jews. Interestingly, their work, although different in so many respects, converges in the recognition that the concept of “antisemitism” appeared at the same moment that Jews were finally granted full and unqualified emancipation within the newly constituted nation-states of Western Europe.⁷ They then seek to understand the apparent *relationship* between antisemitism and the *praxis* of modern emancipation in general and its medium of legal rights in particular. They end up approaching the question of antisemitism through a critique of “modernity” itself.

I characterise this work as “critical theories of antisemitism”. They are critical because unlike Jacob Katz and Paul Lawrence Rose who combine eternal antisemitism and the German problem, they approach the issue of antisemitism from a perspective which implicates political and social conditions, individual relations and human agency. Further, because of their refusal to see antisemitism as isolated from more general conditions in the modern era, these writers spent only a part of their working lives specifically addressing the question of antisemitism. In many cases, once they reached conclusions that dealt specifically with the question of antisemitism, they returned to those more general issues, which remain the subject of ongoing and thorough critical attention, whilst their reflections on the question of antisemitism are marginalised or avoided. Alternatively, the works were viewed on an individual basis as isolated examples of a particular thinker’s observations and were not read as part of a body of work collectively shedding light upon questions of modernity and antisemitism.

Part of the reason for the marginalisation of the critical theories of antisemitism may have been that antisemitism became removed from mainstream social theoretical pursuits as a result of the “eternal antisemitism” and “German problem” theories. It became the speciality of Jewish Studies or holocaust Studies [Bauman; 1989]. As a

⁶ I exclude here the works of Jacob Katz and Paul Lawrence Rose, for reasons that will be discussed below.

⁷ Even though Germany was sometimes referred to a “Central European” it appears to me that it was precisely their commitment to liberalism that (re)defined all and any nation-states as “Western”

consequence, the work of critical social theorists that did address antisemitism was buried. Alternatively, if the work did appear in these specialised fields of study, discussion about it focused less upon what the particular thinker had to say about antisemitism than on the question of whether they themselves were or were not antisemitic. This has been the case especially regarding the thinking of Marx, Nietzsche and Arendt. This study brings to light these “hidden” works not only by bridging the gap between the “centre” and the “margin”, but, more ambitiously perhaps, by overcoming the dichotomy in the first place, despite, or, rather, because of the political, as well as the academic stakes involved.

Yet, this study is not simply, or rather, not only, a systematic account of the various theories of antisemitism. It is also a critical evaluation of those theories, both as individual pieces and as a body of work. The perspective that I have adopted is in many ways in keeping with the tradition of thought that I am discussing. Thus, in critically evaluating the accounts of antisemitism each theorist offers, I seek to determine the way in which they account for the tension that I believe is inherent in modern society between meaningful equality and substantive inequality, of which antisemitism is but one manifestation.

Secondly, and following from this point, I pay equal attention to where each thinker locates the causes of antisemitism and its connection with modern emancipation. If equality and inequality (i.e. antisemitism) are equally parts of the social world, I question those theories that argue that antisemitism, although in some manner related to modern society and modern social relations, exists in a sphere “outside” or “beyond” it in the realm, for example, of the imagination or the unconscious.

Thirdly, I believe that an integral element of the *praxis* of antisemitism is to isolate one specific facet of an individual’s multifarious social existence and claim it to be their determining or essential quality; and, in the light of this “discovery” claim that equality for “the Jews” is impossible. It is through this abstraction that a person, or group of otherwise diverse people, come to be recognised as “the Jews”. As a consequence, I pay particular attention to the manner and the extent to which critical

theories of antisemitism challenge this conceptualisation of “the Jews”. However, as will become apparent, it is on this point that the present limitations of critical theory are most far-reaching. On the one hand, there are those who treat “the Jews” simply as the product of the antisemitic worldview. On the other hand, there are those thinkers who believe that the Jews represent “something” that leads to the failure of modern emancipation. It seems to me that the result of either view is a replication (even if for entirely different purposes) of the antisemitic idea that the Jews *really do* contain “something” that makes them distinct and incapable of emancipation. I consider the extent to which these aspects of critical theories of antisemitism dilute their authority.

One last point must be made about the very approach that the critical theorists adopt. As was noted above, their work on antisemitism forms a part of their wider critique of modernity. Not surprisingly, they bring to their discussions of antisemitism the insights and conclusions of their wider work and antisemitism is often understood as representing a specific phenomenon within these wider aspects. Of itself, this fact is neither unwarranted nor unwelcome, and is, in fact what characterises them as critical theorists. However, what does present a problem is that in some theories,⁸ antisemitism and the Jews come to embody not just one, but *the* site of these wider (and more fundamental) limitations of modernity. As such, antisemitism comes to be explained in terms that place it as *the* problem of modernity. It is as if antisemitism carries with it the weight of all the ambivalence of modernity. The consequence is that these critical accounts of antisemitism reproduce the antisemitic view that the question of “the Jews” really is the question of modernity; once the “Jewish question” has been resolved, humanity can move on to its full potential.

This tendency has become more pronounced in some of those critical accounts that have appeared after the holocaust. In these later accounts the *praxis* of emancipation, antisemitism and the holocaust are read in such a way that any distinction between them is increasingly collapsed. Consequently, the understanding of antisemitism as

⁸ See, for example, the works by Zygmunt Bauman and Jean-Francois Lyotard. I also argue, however, that this tendency is also implicit in the accounts of antisemitism offered by Theodre Adorno and Max Horkheimer and Hannah Arendt.

the focal point of the general ailments of modernity is reinforced by the idea that the holocaust, its terror and horror is the mark and index of modernity itself. Thus, in these accounts, the holocaust (and antisemitism) come to take on almost eschatological proportions. The effect of the holocaust on social theories of antisemitism has in this way, been both profound and unfortunate. It is as if the phenomena of antisemitism, the Jews and the holocaust have been collapsed into one concept that has become *the* defining aspect of modernity and critical theory has internalised the trauma and traumatising consequences of the catastrophe.

This study is an attempt to re-evaluate this thinking and to bring together the work of the critical theorists in order to examine their individual ideas as well as the body of work as a whole. It aims to be critical, but also to discover insights; insights that, I argue, overcome the loss of critical distance between theory and the object of its study. I point to the manner in which critical theory can overcome its own trauma and, in so doing, account for antisemitism in a manner that re-establishes its own commitment to a *praxis* of emancipation, freedom and equality.

Chapter 1

"Eternal Anti-Semitism"

Paul Rose⁹ and Jacob Katz¹⁰ are examples of writers who subscribe to the idea that the holocaust was the product of an "eternal antisemitism" that reaches back to the earliest periods of history. In their accounts, the relationship of antisemitism to the Enlightenment is one of form and not content. For them, modernity "merely" involved a change in the manner in which a pre-existing antisemitism (sic) changed into one that made genocide thinkable. They are not the only writers who fail to examine antisemitism's relationship to modernity¹¹, but are examples of a theoretical trend which presumes a constant and eternal hostility between "Jews" and "others".

I include Katz and Rose at this stage of my project because I wish to contrast their method, approach and assumptions to those thinkers who attempt to ground their analysis of antisemitism within the framework of social theory, to link antisemitism specifically to the modern age, and to adopt less reductive explanations for antisemitism.

In contrast to the philosophical and social depth offered by the balance of the texts in this study, Paul Rose utilises the explanatory tools of myth, national character/race and revolution to sustain his argument that modern German antisemitism emerged out of a general European Christian antisemitic context, and Katz relies upon a European anti-Jewishness that has *always* been "in the air".

Let me begin with Rose's position that German antisemitism crystallised in the period 1780-1850, but began much earlier. His work presents a virtual "Whiggish" view of history. Whilst in the title the holocaust is not referred to specifically, it silently informs

⁹ Rose, P.L. (1990) *German Question/Jewish Question: Revolutionary Anti-Semitism from Kant to Wagner*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press

¹⁰ Katz, J. (1980) *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism 1700-1933* Cambridge: Harvard

¹¹ See, for example, Cohn, N. (1967) *Warrant for Genocide* London: Eyre and Spottiswoode; Dimont, M.I. (1971) *The Indestructible Jews* Toronto: Signet

the whole book. Unlike, for example, Hannah Arendt's account of the development of antisemitism¹², where the course of history gradually and contingently unfolds to lead to the holocaust, here it is the holocaust that is constantly present in the "history" of antisemitism. The history of antisemitism is read backwards *as if* the holocaust were inevitable from the onset of anti-Jewish thought itself. In this way Rose offers another rendition of the "Luther to Hitler" school of thought.

Rose says that following the crucifixion of Christ, Christian feelings of guilt were transferred onto the Jews and were mediated through the creation of myths which constructed the Jews as containing an evil national character, one antithetical to Christianity and by which the Jews became perceived as the obstacle to Christian redemption [1990; 3-23]. In the mid-16th century, this religiously-mediated mythology was adapted into a German context through Germany's search for a specifically German national identity. It was Martin Luther who first made the transference from the Jews as the obstacle to Christian redemption to the Jews as the obstacle to Germany's redemption [1990; 61-70]. Luther's concept of the "jewification" of Germany meant that the definition of "German" became anti-Jewish.

Rose's history moves too smoothly from this period to the new era in which he says that the theological and religious mythology of the pre-modern period was secularised by Enlightenment thought. Whereas in the Christian era, the Jews were seen as the obstacle to the redemption of Christians, and Germans, in the modern German view, Jewish national character was seen as being the obstacle to the redemption of man through reason into humanity.

A specifically German antisemitic mythology now became grounded in German society. For Rose, it is this process which led to the centrality of the Jewish Question as *the* concern of German thought and politics in the modern era. In this way, not only did the Jewish Question become dialectically related to the German Question (the search for an authentic non-Jewish, German national identity) but it also became negatively related to

¹² Arendt, H. (1979) *Origins of Totalitarianism* London: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

a specifically German and so antisemitic definition of "humanity". From 1780 to the 1830s, the Question was whether the Jews could be reformed morally so that they could enter the new moral humanity, while from the 1830's onward it became a political question in which the Jews were seen as the usurious dominators of the human spirit of mankind and the German political project of revolution became to redeem the world from them.

Of itself, such an approach is not automatically invalid. The holocaust did emerge from Germany, and so it is legitimate to enquire whether there was "something about" Germany which brought about this catastrophe for Europe and the Jews within Europe. However, the legitimacy of the enquiry ought to centre around an examination of concrete material conditions and actually existing social relations between Jews and other Germans.

Katz attempts to take seriously historical developments which brought about the change from the pre-modern to the modern era in Europe. However, he then says that modern antisemitism cannot, in its originality, be attributed to anything in that period. For example, the rise of capitalism with its change in political and social relations, the change in property relations, the rise of individualism, the dispersion of power brought about by these changes, the rise of the nation-state, rationality, imperialism and immigration, are deemed by Katz's view as irrelevant.

Instead he seeks the cause of anti-Semitism *outside* of contemporary developments. He argues that despite the demise of institutional and doctrinal Christianity, vestiges of it that contained negative images of the Jews remained so that a continuing, and general atmosphere of anti-Jewishness was always and already in the air. For Katz, Jewish/gentile relations are intelligible only in the light of an eternally, hermeneutically-sealed, dialectical relationship between two pre-formed groups mediated solely by hostility. According to both authors, then, all that remains is an idealistic reading of German history.

Apart from their dubious historiographies, I have a number of questions regarding these authors' uncritical adoption of various analytical tools. The first is Rose's use of "myth".

Rose argues that relations between Jews and non-Jews have always been mediated by antisemitic myths. Although the historical context determines the particular *form* of those myths, their *content* - the construction of both Germany and the Jews having an antithetical "national characters" - remains constant. However, on closer examination, this mythical antithesis focuses not on a relationship between Jews and Germans as much as it does on "Germanness" exclusively. Rose first places the Jews in the role of the "sacred executioner". He then *presumes* the emergence of a specific German psychology which, because it was premised upon Christian guilt revolving around Christ's execution, was inherently antisemitic. This antisemitic psychology remained constant throughout the vagaries of European history, and changed only its form from the theological to the national and to the rational.

Katz commits a similar error. In his assumption that anti-Jewishness was always "in the air" in Europe, Europeans in general, and Germans in particular, from Kant, to Hegel, to Bauer, to Marx, to Wagner and to Hitler, are all susceptible to anti-Jewish influences. Instead of characterising this construction as myth, however, Katz brands all modern philosophy and other discourses as "ideological justifications" for social reality in general, and for the situation of the Jews in particular. In this way, all the critical and progressive power of modern European thought is reduced to its alleged antisemitic content, which is then used to justify Jewish social separation. European thought is left bereft of further meaning.

The most obvious problem with this argument is that because these myths or ideological justifications contain a false view of the Jewish "national character", Christian Europeans' *appearance* of relations with Jews is really an internal and self-contained relationship between their own guilt and that guilt in a mythical but reified, form. Katz and Rose offer explanations of antisemitism that are hermeneutically sealed within Christian Europe regardless of Jewish actions. Indeed, real Jews are entirely invisible, and actually existing concrete social relations between Jews and non-Jews are entirely

absent. For Rose, the question of materialism does not arise in the history of antisemitism as myth.

For Katz, the question of human agency is also ignored. In Katz's account, for example, non-Jewish authors are, by definition of being born into Europe, anti-Jewish. It would appear that, for him, even assuming that Europe was inherently antisemitic, a person's attitude is completely determined by his or her environment, so that all "Gentile" thinkers amongst all "Gentiles", are anti-Jewish. It is difficult to sustain this view if historical human agency is examined. How, for example, would Katz account for the continued pressing forward of emancipation in 19th century western Europe? Moreover, this position cannot explain the development of either "philo-semitic" trends or developments leading to a neutral, let alone, positive attitude to Jews in Europe, nor can he explain those who aided Jews during the nazi period or at other times in German history.

Further difficulties centre around Rose's unquestioned use of the concept of "national character". In his reification of the mythology of national character, Rose echoes the work of Sartre (1946) although he reaches opposite conclusions. For Sartre, the antisemite who seeks solace in the mythical notion of a "pure" France is considered to be the epitome of the "inauthentic" man, whereas for Rose, the antisemite becomes the truly "authentic" German. Indeed, Richard Wagner is considered to be the pinnacle of German "authenticity" because of his embodiment of the myth of the inherently antisemitic German national character [1990; 11-15].

Moreover, in the use of the term "national character", that which needs to be analysed and explained becomes the unquestioned key to Rose's thesis. At times, he speaks of German antisemitism as arising out of the German's own *mythologizing* of a Jewish "national character" and refers to German "national character" as if it were real. At other times, he presents both as real:

But to deny that the phenomenon of German national character is a real category of explanation, to deny the specificity of the various national political and cultural traditions of the European peoples, is to react in a spirit of liberal prejudice which, while it may be morally inspired, is

scarcely objective or respectful of historical reality. There is clearly such a thing as German national character, just as there is Jewish national character. These historical concepts begin to be morally dangerous only when they are inadequately analysed and presented, when, for instance, only the unfavourable aspects of national character are insisted upon in a spirit of bad faith and intellectual dishonesty [1990; 67-68].

Having argued that "Germanness" is only meaningful in terms of its anti-Jewishness and that a successfully negotiated German "national identity" means the "destruction of Judaism", Rose maintains that *any* German thinker views the "Jewish Question" (in either its religious or secular terms¹³) as *the* central question of German thought, including German philosophy.

In this way, he sees the moral "project" associated with Kant as antisemitic and the political emancipation with Marx turned into the antisemitic political "project" of Wagner and Hitler. Whilst these original revolutionaries were not "racist" in the exact meaning of the term, Rose argues that their conception of a separate, isolated and antithetical Jewish national character served the same purpose as "race" and indeed paved its way for its adaptation onto the Jewish Question. Indeed, he argues that, when "racial" thought developed, it was only natural that German thinkers should utilise it when discussing the Jews. This process, it is claimed, is clearly evidenced by the biographies of Bauer and Marr, who moved from socialism to racism. Again, he shares this view with Katz, whose "tainting" of all German thinkers was discussed above. Finally, "national character" implies one homogenous group, first in relation to the "Germans" who are unified by myths concerning the Jews.

Rose argues that in the period 1780-1850 an antisemitic German interpretation of the Enlightenment invaded its universality because this was the age in which German philosophy and thought influenced all later Western thought. The invaded discourses constructed a web of antisemitism throughout Europe that eventually enmeshed the Jews. The central meaning of the "Jewish Question" in his Germany between 1780-1850, then, is *not* whether Jews should or should not be granted civil emancipation, but

¹³ For a discussion of the similar meaning Rose bestows on these terms, see below.

whether their "national character" allows them to enter German society (characterised by its "Jew-hatred" and not by its social, political or economic divisions) in particular and "humanity" in general. Rose claims in this way to have solved the paradox that he assumes existed at this time in Germany - support for Jewish civil rights existing simultaneously to hostility to Judaism.

Likewise, by ascribing to the Jews a "national character", Rose is unable to distinguish differences amongst Jews. Indeed, those Jews in Germany who accepted the idea of "abandoning" their "Jewishness" in order to assimilate may be accused by Rose of having betrayed their "national character". This view is supported by Rose's treatment of "race" and "race-states".

Whereas other authors have linked modern antisemitism to "race"¹⁴, Rose maintains that "race" is to be seen only as a modern, insubstantial gloss, on "national character", and that of themselves,

notions of race and national character did not necessarily have to be anti-Jewish (and that) racist theory itself...was not the crucial factor in the development of German antisemitism but merely represented a particular ideology of Jew-hatred that lent antisemitism a pseudoscientific basis. Biological theories of race and genetics were welcomed by antisemites because they conferred a systematic "modern" logic on an original intuition that Jewish national character could not be changed. By the time of Kant and Fichte, the concept of Jewish national character had sufficed to demonstrate that for all practical purposes the "Jewish Nation" was the Jewish biological race [1990;13-14].

For Rose, first, modern conceptions of "race" and the idea that Jews were a distinct racial group, had no impact on the genesis of modern antisemitism. Instead, it operated as a justification of a pre-formed alleged German anti-Jewishness. Secondly, Rose is arguing that "national character" *of itself* need not be anti-Jewish, but developed only in that way in the case of Germany. This position has implications for the issue of the Jews' place in Europe and the possibility of their existence within it.

¹⁴ See, for example, (1991) Zygmunt Bauman *Modernity and the Holocaust* Oxford: Polity Press.

For the Germans, "race stood for "racial domination"; for the Jews, "racial harmony" [1990; 306]. In his support for this "Jewish" viewpoint and "race's" conflation with "national character" along with the nostalgic call for "autonomous social space", Rose implies that each "race" needs its own autonomous state so as to live in "harmony" with other "race-states".

Finally, for Rose, the road to antisemitism and genocide began with the work of German revolutionaries and now amounts to the same thing: revolutionary antisemitism. By maintaining that national character has the same power as "race" and then arguing that national character underpins the basis of German revolutionism, he is able anachronistically to equate "revolution" and "race" so that German Revolutionism and revolutionary antisemitism are invested with the same modern meaning. For Rose, then, all German revolutionists, left or right, nationalist or international, are antisemitic.

On the one hand, German nationalist thinking was imbued with revolutionary idealism. The quest of the nationalists for the elusive essence of national identity was an expression of their urge for redemption; through the nation redeemed would come the individual's redemption. On the other hand, German revolutionists of all stripes accepted the implicit racial prejudice that there existed a virtually unchanging Jewish - as well as a German - national character. German revolutionism was therefore embedded in a pattern of thought that was essentially racial and potentially anti-Jewish [1990; 130].

Rose's essentialism and separation of German national character and Jewish national character again bear similarities to Katz's approach of assuming the existence of two distinct and separate groups - Jews and gentiles. Katz implies that the relations between these two groups are not only mediated *solely* by an anti-Jewishness and/or antisemitism that arises because of the powerless and inferior position of the Jewish minority within a Christian majority¹⁵, but that these relations exist outside of the context of all other forms of general social relations. For example, in discussing the Hep riots of 1819, Katz states that they cannot be understood as a manifestation of the general social crisis afflicting Germany at that time.

¹⁵ Or, in earlier times, a pagan majority. Katz, J. [1980; 17]

The result is an ahistorical and unsociological analysis of modern antisemitism with the Jews cast in the familiar role of "scapegoat". Even though Katz argues that he has provided reasons for this eternal scapegoating of the Jews - Christian antisemitism - the result is a tautology; Jews are scapegoats because of Christian anti-Jewish images of Jewish separation because the Jews are separate and so cast in the role of scapegoats. In other words, Katz's analysis concentrates on the *forms* of modern antisemitism, *without* analysing the possibility of changes in the *content* of antisemitism. For both Katz and Rose, Jews and gentiles and their relations are formed *outside* of the specificity of historical periods. Antisemitism is the continuation of Christianity by another name.

Katz's belief in Jewish "separateness" giving rise to a negative image of the Jews in turn further increasing their separation, raises another problem. It means that it is the *image* of the Jew, created by non-Jews, which engaged the European mind. The relation of Jew and non-Jew exists solely in the sphere of non-Jewish discourse itself, and the Jews are absent from Katz's view of the development of antisemitism. Indeed, this problem is reinforced by the unacknowledged assumption that Jewish separateness implies a Jewish absence from developments in general European history. Katz's picture is of a Jewish community going about its life without either caring or worrying about European matters or participating in them as either cause or effect. In fact, the only effect that "non-Jewish Europe's" ideological view of the Jews has on the Jews themselves is to increase their pre-existing separateness. Thus, Jewish separation results in Jewish separation.

The penultimate problem in Rose's and Katz's work is their reliance upon an always-existing antisemitism which even in the modern era is merely another form of pre-modern Christian anti-Jewishness. According to Katz, new forms of anti-Jewish images merely replicated the content of the Christian image of the Jew. Christianity saw the Jews as religiously inferior, as operating a double-morality between themselves and Gentiles, and as willing to exploit the Christian majority by any means at their disposal. In the modern period, these same accusations (and some others which emerged out of the original ones) were reproduced, but in secular terms. The religiously-inspired perception of Jewish inferiority was translated into and reproduced by a new ideological

perception of Jewish irrationality and Jewish immorality, and was compared to Christian-inspired notions of rationality and morality. Therefore, although Christian institutions and doctrines ceased to be dominant, Katz claims that the early rational philosophers interpreted Christianity as a spiritual guide for their writings on morality and rationality.

The result of this early development was the reproduction of pre-modern anti-Jewish animosity into the modern, secular world, and the background against which the Jewish Question of the modern era becomes intelligible. The Jewish Question became one of whether the Jews were fit for admission into full citizenship, "tainted" as they were with immorality and irrationality.

Finally, for Katz, even the transmutation of Jewish separateness to nationality and then to race was linked with Christian-inspired anti-Jewish images.

For Rose as well:

In this new age the Jews were deemed to be holding hostage all rational and moral humanity, not just superstitious Christendom; they did so, not by refusing to disappear as a nation and religion through the gentle means of assimilation into European society and submission to reason.... There existed underneath these secular transformations deep continuities between the themes of the old Christian and the new secular Jew-hatreds [1990; 10].

Whilst I am not convinced of the modern demise of religion, to the degree of that espoused by Weber¹⁶ or Bauman¹⁷, neither can I accept that the full meaning of religion has continued from the pre-modern era, albeit by another name. Both Christianity and Judaism still exist spiritually and institutionally, and in recent years, politically. I do not believe either that religion "ended" or, conversely, that it merely changed its form. In the light of contemporary events, neither extreme appears plausible.

¹⁶ Weber, M. (1930) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* tr. Parsons, T., London: Harper Collins

¹⁷ *opp.cit.*,

Moreover, although Rose's European Christian antisemitic myths became more specifically German-nationalistic, and Katz's more scientific and rational, they were still originally anchored within the "sphere" of religion and theology, and so remained other-worldly. This meant that, although life could be uncomfortable for Jews in the pre-modern period their actual lives were not threatened in the same way as in the "post-religious" age.. For both, the real danger for the Jews came when this "gap" between the religious, mythological realm and the social world was closed by Enlightenment thought. For Rose,

The real danger began when Christianity was superseded by a new secular mythology of reason and revolution that claimed dominion over the whole territory of society, a territory that had never been the primary concern of Christianity, no matter how successful it had been in acquiring temporal power... Secular revolutionary mythology not only negated Judaism on a mythological level as had Christianity, but also negated the future existence of Judaism on the social level that had always been theoretically independent of Christian religious mythology. The Jews must sooner or later disappear, either through assimilation or less pleasant means. This was the revolutionary demand, a demand that was at once mythological and social. Paradoxically, the rise of secularism in Germany meant that the Jews lost their secular space in which they so long found refuge [1990; 57].

For Katz, even in 1930's Germany the content of the image of the Jew was still the Christian-inspired view of the Jew as the universal "other", but it was combined with the modern racist view of the Jews as the irredeemable, hostile alien to Germans/Aryans. The two versions became linked by a man who devised a "solution" to the "Jewish Problem" that until this time, had been lacking. However, this modern, radical, racist antisemitism had now become separated from its Christian context. The uncoupling meant not only that the move from segregation to isolation was complete, but any Christian justification for the Jews' separate existence ceased. Thus, from the seeds of the possibility of genocide in the 1870's arose its logical culmination, the actual murder of the Jews. Social reality and ideology came together at Auschwitz and the other killing centres of the holocaust.

Both theorists argue that the religious *content* of antisemitism remained but in a secular *form*. They have theologised the Enlightenment and the Revolutionary tradition by

emphasising the notion of redemption of non-Jews whether through conversion, assimilation or destruction of the Jews.

My final critique of Rose's work, and to a lesser extent Katz's, is their view of the moment that the Jewish Question became transformed from a moral-philosophical question to a social one. Rose argues that this transformation may have ended German antisemitic rhetoric. Yet, he claims that it was through the thought of the socialist Young Hegelians - such as Bauer, Marr, Hess and Marx - that modern German antisemitism was transformed from a philosophical to a social phenomenon. After that transformation, not only were the Jews seen symbolically as the antithesis of Germany and humanity, but they became perceived as the actual, material, carriers of that opposition. Moreover, such a transition was still connected with the "blood libel"; this time however, it was a metaphorical interpretation through the connection made between money and blood.

For the authors of this period, both "left" and "right"¹⁸, the new capitalistic order was now associated not only with Judaism and a Jewish national character, but also with real Jews as its actual agents. Rose argues that to these thinkers capitalism appeared as yet a further example of the "jewification" of Germany¹⁹, in which the "authentic" German spirit was being crushed by the miseries of alleged Jewish-capitalist oppression. This allegation gained acceptance through the metaphor of the Jews drawing the life-blood from Germany (and humanity) in the form of money.

For Rose, it was Marx who first conflated the symbolic Jew with the real Jew as the agent of capitalism. According to Rose, Marx's goal was not civil, but human emancipation. However, since Marx's understanding of emancipation meant the liberation of man from civil society, and since, to Rose, Marx equated capitalism with

¹⁸ Although as we have seen, such terms are for Rose, meaningless, since all German authors were invested with a German national character.

¹⁹ Rose considers Martin Luther to be "the moulder of so much of German culture" (1990; 4) and through whom, "a hysterical and demonizing mentality entered the mainstream of German thought and discourse" so that "Luther in fact legitimated hysteria and paranoia in a major European culture" (1990; 8).

Jews, then Marx's concept of human emancipation *must* have meant emancipation from the Jews. Consequently, for Rose, it was Marx who made synonymous the oppositions German/Jew, exploited/exploiter, human/non-human.

Rose claims that this discourse of economic antisemitism fuelled the political arguments of both "left and right"; the left (Marx) because political action meant the overthrow of Jewish capitalism so that man could become truly free; for the right (Wagner) "Jewish-capitalism" had to be overcome so as to free the "true" German spirit.

Rose's tracing of the journey of antisemitism from the religious other-worldly antisemitism to the secular, this-worldly antisemitism and finally, to the heart of economic, social and political life of Germany appears to make social and material relations relevant to explanations for antisemitism. On closer examination, however, he relies upon an uninterrupted voyage through history of Jewish national character and German national character, and allows for no modification, disruption or challenge to those pre-existing constants.

Katz also falls appears to locate antisemitism in social conditions and social relations, but he too assumes those social relations are mediated only between already pre-determined Jews and non-Jews. He argues, for example, that, because of Jewish insistence on separateness (which Katz regards as a, if not the, defining characteristic of the Jewish tradition) assimilation was doomed to failure. Yet, he says, it was at least partly the failure of assimilation that accounted for the failure of emancipation and aided the rise and cohesion of German society's antisemitism. For Katz, assimilation was always doomed to failure because of both Jewish and non-Jewish attitudes.

He seems to argue further that if Jews did not exist in Europe, there would be no antisemitism: "I regard the very presence of the unique Jewish community among the other nations as the stimulus to the animosity directed against them" [1980; 322].

Merely existing, in addition to failing to assimilate in a period when non-Jewish society was willing to grant them a place in Europe, is seen as leading to anti-Jewish animosity. Antisemitism is thus read as a *backlash against* Jewish obstinacy.

Yet, Katz does not ask how, or into what the Jews were supposed to assimilate. It could be argued, for example, that the Jews did assimilate into the political structure of the state. Jews voted, joined and were active in political parties. Jews did become full-blown citizens, equal before the law, with the same rights and responsibilities as all other citizens. It could also be argued that they assimilated into society. Jews did own property and lived within society, affected by capitalistic relations. However, by positing Jewish separateness, distinct from the rest of society, characterised simply as "Gentiles", Katz cannot delve deeper into Jews' membership in different classes or different occupations - they remain simply "the Jews".

As Jews, even after social mobility was permitted, their very presence as a former pariah group entering into mainstream society resulted in antisemitic reactions. Thus, for Katz, assimilation was doomed to failure, not only by continued Jewish separation, but also because, no matter how far they moved into "non-Jewish" society, the Jews would always be considered a former pariah group overstepping their boundary. The Jews were in a "Catch-22" - become emancipated through assimilation and so be destroyed, or not assimilate and so be destroyed. Katz's underlying Zionist agenda now becomes transparent.

In Katz's account, as in Rose's, Jews and non-Jews face each other as pre-formed groups; only the form of social relations in that confrontation alters. Changing social relations has no effect on Jews or the non-Jews. Katz and Rose thus exclude any possibility of discussing the meaning of Jews or "Jewishness" or of discussing and antisemitism as the product of changing social relations. They are not able to examine the changing meaning of "Jewish" in a fully-socialised context. Indeed, one cannot speak of a group pre-existing *outside* of contemporary social relations. Social relations and the subjects/objects created by those relations are indivisible. Each implies and makes meaningful the other.

Further, Rose's and Katz' ahistorical explanations of pre-modern and modern European and German antisemitism evade the whole problem of responsibility. If antisemitism is the product of an European and specifically German "psyche", or separateness, and if that "psyche" determines all thoughts and actions, then no individual can be held responsible for antisemitism in general or the holocaust in particular. Rather, all German people are responsible because of their common social-psychological character. In fact, "responsibility" and "guilt" become meaningless terms in this communalist analysis. Either way, collective whitewash or collective guilt, Rose's and Katz's analyses lead to the same end - the mere fact of "Germanness" determines one's position to the Jews.

Correspondingly, in Rose's account, the Jews themselves become completely passive and take no serious role in the advent and development of antisemitism. In Katz's account, the Jews' very "socially cohesive" existence comes uncomfortably close to being held responsible for antisemitism.

In both accounts, antisemitism emerges within the sphere of the German people themselves. "Real" Jews and "real" Germans are completely absent and only imagined ones imbued with a mythically-inspired "national character" remain. Both Katz and Rose, therefore, have written a history and sociology of antisemitism without Jews.

Their history is flawed because both attribute to antisemitism its own power of continuity and an ability to survive over time in multifarious forms, only changing in terms of increasing intensity. Thus, history acts as merely a form of repetition of the original process of Jewish separation. In this repetitive role, history and historical events are denied any creative role in the development of antisemitism. Moreover, because all relations between non-holocaust and putative Jews are deemed to have originated underneath or outside of society, actually-existing social relations are bypassed and a social theory of antisemitism is ruled out from the start.

Chapter 2

Karl Marx: Dissolving the Jewish Question

In this chapter, I shall discuss Karl Marx's (1818 - 1883) contribution to a critical theory of antisemitism through an investigation of the two essays that together comprise his article *On the Jewish Question*. I will argue that in defending the cause of Jewish emancipation, Marx seeks to dissolve the Jewish question into one aspect of a critique of the nature of political emancipation in general. Marx criticises the leading Berlin left Hegelian, Bruno Bauer for seeking to exclude Jews from entry into the modern nation-state. He illustrates that the reasons Bauer relies upon to exclude the Jews are equally applicable to whom Bauer deems deserve entry. I also argue that despite his critique of political emancipation Marx does not abandon it. Finally, I will argue that the nature of Marx's defence of Jewish emancipation points to the potentiality for a modern and virulent form of anti-Jewish hostility - antisemitism.

Even though Marx had intended to contribute to the debate on the Jewish question for at least a year prior to the publication of *On the Jewish Question*, his immediate motivation was provided by the publication of two anti-emancipationist and antisemitic tracts by Bruno Bauer.²⁰ Consequently, Marx's article can be read as an attack on Bauer's leftist antisemitism and Bauer's work provides the reason why Marx's *On the Jewish Question* presents itself as a critique of Hegelian idealism.

In *The Jewish Question*, Bauer argued against the Jews being granted either political rights (the Rights of the Citizen) or civil rights (the Rights of Man) on three grounds. First, he said the granting of rights depends upon the Jews renouncing their religious beliefs and adopting atheism. Secondly, he said that were the Jews to be emancipated *as Jews* their "particularism" (their "restricted nature") would always dominate over the universalism that he saw as the essence of political and civil rights. Thirdly, he claimed that the Jews had remained outside the historical development that led from

²⁰ *The Jewish Question*; Brunswick (1843) and "The Capacity of Present-day Jews and Christians to Become Free", *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz*, pp.56-71.

Christianity to “Christianity in dissolution” to human emancipation. In this way, Bauer produced a critique of the Jewish question that rests ultimately on a critical theology and the idealism that such a method implies.

In criticising the first of Bauer’s arguments, Marx challenges that which Bauer identifies as a specifically Jewish situation. Bauer wrote:

[T]he *Jew* will recede behind the *citizen* and be a *citizen*, in spite of the fact that he is a Jew and is to remain as Jew; i.e. he is and remains a *Jew* in spite of the fact that he is a *citizen* and lives in universal human conditions, his Jewish and restricted nature always triumphs in the long run over his human and political obligations. The *prejudice* remains, even though it is overtaken by *universal* principles. But if it remains, it is more likely to overtake everything else....The Jew could only remain a Jew in political life in a sophistical sense, in appearance; if he wanted to remain a Jew, the mere appearance would therefore be the essential and would triumph, i.e. his *life in the state* would be nothing more than an appearance, or a momentary exception to the essential nature of things and to the rule [Quoted in Marx, 1992; 214, emphasis in the original].

Marx argues that this is in fact a *universal* condition and arises, not for any *theological* reason, but is a consequence of the (*secular*) nature of political emancipation itself. Consequently, Bauer’s anti-Jewish stance applies as much to those to whom he grants the right to have rights as it does to the Jews themselves. In this way Marx begins his task of dissolving the Jewish question by denying a specific “nature” of the Jews.

We humanise the contradiction between the state and a *particular religion*, for example Judaism, by resolving it into the state and *particular secular* elements, and we humanise the contradiction between the state and *religion in general* by resolving it into the contradictions between the state and its own general *presuppositions* [1992; 218, 219, emphasis in the original]

In achieving the dissolution of the Jewish question, Marx re-formulates the question of the relationship of the Jews to political emancipation:

Bauer asks the Jews: Do you from your standpoint have the right to demand political emancipation? We pose the question the other way round: Does the standpoint of political emancipation have the right to demand from the Jews the abolition of Judaism *and from man the abolition of religion*. [Marx; 1992; 216, emphasis added]

To his own question, Marx answers in the negative.

Drawing on the example of certain North American states, Marx illustrates that the political emancipation of religion does not entail the emancipation of *man* from religion, but rather the *emancipation of the state* from religion. This apparent contradiction, Marx explains, arises because *political emancipation* is not synonymous with *human* (i.e. social) emancipation (through which humanity would have thrown off the conditions that makes religion a possibility in the first place). Thus, political emancipation represents an individual's freedom from religion only in an indirect, mediated and abstract manner:

The attitude of the state, especially the *free state* to religion is still only the attitude to religion of the *men* who make up the state. It therefore follows that man liberates himself from a restriction through the *medium of the state*, in a *political* way, by transcending this restriction in an *abstract* and *restricted* manner, in a partial manner, in contradiction with himself [1992; 216].

Marx explains the nature of this contradiction with reference to the institution of private property. On the one hand, private property is abolished *politically* when it ceases to be relevant as a qualification for the right to vote. However, this does not mean that private property itself is abolished; it continues to exist and exert its influence but remains in the realm of civil society where it is perceived as a private (i.e. apolitical) matter. Marx implies the same is the case for religious belief, be it Judaism or Christianity.

In this way, the contradiction that Marx notes in Bauer's work, "the state can have emancipated itself from religion even if "the overwhelming majority is still religious" has been explained through a discussion of the secular nature of political emancipation.. Consequently, Marx has countered Bauer's antisemitic idea that the Jews cannot be emancipated *as Jews* and that they must first renounce their own religious affiliation. He illustrates, first, that one's religious belief *in general* is no bar to membership in the state, to a person's being granted the Rights of the Citizen: and, secondly, that of itself, religion does not represent a unique problem, but is expressive of a *general* contradiction between the state and civil society.

Bauer's further claim, that the Jew's alleged "particularism" will always dominate over "his human [i.e. universal] and political obligations" so that his "*life in the state*

would be nothing more than an appearance, or a momentary exception to the essential nature of things and to the rule” [Quoted in Marx; 1992; 214, emphasis in the original] is also dissolved by Marx through the discussion of a further general condition of political emancipation. Here, he points to the nature of the *relationship* between the realm of the state (the public realm) and the realm of civil society (the private realm).

Marx observes that the state’s characteristic as the realm of universality or human freedom (what Marx terms as “species-life”) only arises through its opposition to the sphere of private and particular interests. Comparing this relationship as that between heaven and earth Marx alludes to the idea that from the perspective of civil society, in which the individual is burdened with a life of toil and struggle, their existence in the realm of the state appears as an ideal of freedom that is, as yet, unattainable. However, even though this state of freedom now appears in the secular world,

[t]he relationship of the political state to civil society is just as spiritual as the relationship of heaven is to earth. The state stands in the same opposition to civil society and overcomes it in the same way as religion overcomes the restrictions of the profane world, i.e. it has to acknowledge it again, reinstate it and allow itself to be dominated by it. [1992; 220]

Thus, the member of civil society is also, at one and the same time, a member of the state. In this way, Marx argues, this divided individual, “leads a double life....not only in his mind, in his consciousness, but in *reality*” [1992; 220].

He lives in the *political community*, where he regards himself as a *communal being*, and in civil society, where he is active as a *private individual*, regards other men as means, debases himself to a means and becomes a plaything of alien powers [1992; 220].

However, since political emancipation leaves civil society “uncriticised”, the bourgeois²¹ perceive their *material* life (i.e. their life in civil society as a private individual) as their *real* and *natural* existence. In this way, their life in the state, their life as citizens will always appear to them as an ideal, as something that could only occur once they have left the conditions of their individuality behind. In other words,

²¹ In this context Marx uses this term to mean the individual as a member of civil society.

the bourgeois see their own citizenship in *ideal* and *abstract* terms. Thus, on the one hand, where the individual

regards himself and is regarded by others as a real individual he is an illusory phenomenon. In the state, on the other hand, where he is considered to be a species-being, he is the imaginary member of a fictitious sovereignty, he is divested of his real individual life and filled with an unreal universality [1992, 220].

Through this analysis of the relationship of the state to civil society, Marx has illustrated that the situation that Bauer attributes solely to the Jews as a consequence of their particularist “restricted nature” is, in fact, attributable to all members of civil society, *as* members of civil society. Furthermore, he has shown that this contradiction applies not only to religious beliefs, now made a “private affair”, but to the plethora of other phenomena (such as private property) displaced by political emancipation into the realm of civil society. Thus,

[t]he conflict in which the individual believer in a *particular* religion finds himself with his own citizenship and with other men as members of the community is reduced to the *secular* division between the *political* state and civil society. For man as *bourgeois* “life in the state is nothing more than an appearance or a momentary exception to the essential nature of things and to the rule”. Of course the *bourgeois*, like the Jew, only takes part in the life of the state in a sophisticated way, just as the *citoyen* only remains a Jew or a *bourgeois* in a sophisticated way; but this sophistry is not personal. It is the *sophistry of the political state* itself. [1992; 220]

Moreover, Marx has achieved his aim of dissolving the Jewish question into the “general question of the age” by adopting a secular methodology in which the nature of political emancipation itself is called into question, rather than adopting the theological and idealist methodology advanced by Bauer.

It is on the same basis that Marx challenges Bauer’s argument against granting the Jews the “Rights of Man”, i. e. civil rights. Bauer’s reasons for maintaining the exclusion of Jews from membership within civil society is again grounded in the idea of an alleged Jewish nature. Here, he argues that the Jews’ “true nature” will result in their separation from gentiles and so they would not be able to participate within the human community,

The question is whether the Jew as such, i.e. the Jew who admits that he is compelled by his true nature to live in eternal separation from others, is

capable of acquiring and granting to others the *universal rights of man*?... As long as he is a Jew the restricted nature that makes him a Jew will inevitably gain ascendancy over the human nature which should join him as a man to other men; the effect will be to separate him from non-Jews. He declares through this separation that the particular nature which makes him a Jew is his true and highest nature in the face of which human nature is forced to yield [Quoted in Marx 1992; 227' emphasis in the original]

Drawing on the French and American declarations of the Rights of Man, Marx observes that far from demanding that one's religion be renounced, the Rights of Man guarantees religious freedoms

[t]he incompatibility with the rights of man is so alien to the concepts of the rights of man that the *right to be religious* - to be religious in whatever way one chooses and to practice one's chosen religion - is expressly enumerated among the rights of man. The *privilege of faith* is a *universal right of man*. [1992; 228]

Having resolved the specific relationship of religious belief to the rights of man in favour of the Jews, Marx challenges Bauer's assumption that the Jews, and only the Jews, on account of the "restricted nature that *makes* [!] him a Jew", will remain a distinct and separate group. Here, again, Marx's purpose is to illustrate that this allegedly unique situation is, in fact, a universal condition.

To achieve this aim, Marx analyses the same declarations. He notes that the fundamental right which gives meaning to all others, *including the rights of the citizen*, is nothing other than the rights to the freedom of private property. Marx defines this right as, "the right to enjoy and dispose of one's resources as one wills, without regard for other men and independently of society: the right of self interest" [1992; 229].

Marx argues that this basic right reflects the condition of the individual as he is constituted within the realm of civil society. Recognised solely through his ownership of private property, each person is perceived as "an individual withdrawn into himself, his private interest and his private desires [which, as we have seen, now includes one's religious beliefs] and separated from the community" [1992; 230]. Indeed, any notion of a communal existence appears from this social perspective as an interference

or obstacle to the freedom of the individual in his pursuit of his own particularism. Thus, far from social relations expressing ties of “species-being”, “[t]he only bond which holds [social persons] together is natural necessity, need and private interest, the conservation of their property and their egoistic persons” [1992; 230].

Through this critical examination of the meaning and substance of the rights of man and the attributes of the individual who is their embodiment, Marx has shown that the alleged “nature” of the Jews, which Bauer saw as the reason for refusing Jews the rights of man, is in fact, a replication of the “nature” of rights-bearing individuals themselves. It is a “nature”, moreover, that, far from being inherent in “man himself” is, in fact, socially and politically constituted.

Finally, by tracing the secular and materialist bases of rights, Marx has also overcome the third element of Bauer’s anti-emancipationist argument. Bauer had argued that the Jews should be excluded from the rights to have rights because they stood outside the history that “discovered” them. He states,

[t]he idea of the rights of man was not discovered in the Christian world until the last century. It is not innate in man. On the contrary, it can only be won in a struggle against the historical traditions in which man has up to now been educated. Therefore, the rights of man are not a gift of nature or a legacy of previous history, but the prize of the struggle against the accident of birth and the privileges which history has handed down from generation to generation. They are the *product of culture*, and only he can possess them who has earned them and deserved them. [Quoted in Marx; 1992; 227, emphasis added]

Here, Bauer implicitly refers to the teleological and idealist thinking of Feuerbach²² through which the history of emancipation was read as a “progression” from Judaism to Christianity to what Bauer terms “Christianity in dissolution”²³ to human freedom. In consequence of this anti-Jewish interpretation, the Jews were seen as an anachronism. Their “stubbornness” in clinging to an allegedly superseded religion was interpreted as their refusal to join in with the march of human progress. It is this sense that Bauer refers to the “discovery” of rights as a “product of culture” Consequently,

²² Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity* trans, George Eliot, 1957, New York and London; in Carlbach 1978.

²³ Quoted in Marx; 1992, 235

Bauer not only argues that Jews should not be granted rights *as Jews* since their alleged particularity and separateness arises, ultimately, from their “stubbornness”, but also calls on them to renounce their religion.

Marx’s answer to the Jewish question is to emancipate the Jews, to grant them the rights of the citizen and the rights of man. With this approach he has shifted the focus of attention away from any allegedly subjective attribute of the Jews onto a critique of political emancipation itself. He has illustrated that the nature of the rights in question and the basis upon which they rest transcend any alleged dichotomy between the Judaism and Christianity or between Judaism and a Christianity “in dissolution” which Bauer believed was the progenitor of rights themselves. Marx has also shown that the Jewish question, by its very nature, transcends any *praxis* premised upon theological or idealistic considerations, and, instead, rests upon an analysis that stresses the importance of making the idealist consequences of political emancipation a social reality.

Having confronted Bauer’s argument that the Jews cannot partake in the earthly appearance of freedom on earth, i.e. be granted political and civil rights, Marx challenges Bauer’s idea that the Jews are nonetheless responsible for subverting that freedom through their alleged social dominance which occurs through a connection with money and finance. Bauer states, for example,

The Jew, who is merely tolerated in Vienna, for example, determines the fate of the whole empire through the financial power he possess. The Jew, who can be without rights in the smallest of the German states, decides the fate of Europe. [Quoted in Marx, 1992; 237]

And, in a similar vein:

[It is] a dishonest state of affairs when in theory the Jew is deprived of political rights while in practice he possesses enormous power and exercises a political influence in the larger sphere that is denied him as an individual. [Quoted in Marx, 1992; 238]

Here, again, Marx dissolves what others claim is an inherent attribute of the Jews into a general condition of civil society brought about in the wake of political emancipation. Marx’s response to this line of argument is quite simple. As was

discussed above, Marx had argued that in the relationship between the state and civil society, the latter always dominates the former. Consequently,

[t]he contradiction between the practical political power of the Jew and his political rights is the contradiction between politics and financial power in general. Ideally speaking the former is superior to the latter, but in actual fact it is in thrall to it [1992; 238]

Marx argues that the social dominance of money is itself only possible within a social context premised upon the dominance of private property. Here, Marx challenges the idea prevalent in Bauer's thought, and in other "leftist thought at the time"²⁴, that the Jews are responsible for the development of money, and, in consequence, for the alienation of humanity from nature. His argument on this point is that the social significance of money cannot be detached from the institution of private property; that is from the same institution from which political and civil rights arise.

As we have seen, Marx argues that through the medium of civil rights individuals are abstracted from their concrete existence and are recognised solely as owners of private property. Similarly, money is the medium through which nature is abstracted into "exchange-value" and so becomes robbed of its specific qualities. Thus, just as rights recognise the individual as an abstract owner of private property and so detach this element from his specific qualities so that exchange between two "equals" can be facilitated, so does money as the medium of exchange abstract the specificity of nature permitting *its* exchange. This character of money is made possible through its function as a universalising medium of exchange. Marx states "[m]oney debases all the gods of mankind and turns them into commodities. Money is the universal and self-constituted *value* of all things" [1992; 239].

Moreover, money, as the medium of value through which the world is commodified and transmuted into private property, represents the manner in which man is alienated from nature. Marx says "money has therefore deprived the entire world - both the world of man and of nature - of its specific value" [1992; 239].

²⁴ An example of this form of anti-capitalist antisemitism can be seen in the work of Proudhon (see, for example, Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy*; 1978)

As a medium that exists between the natural world and the social world through making the latter amenable to ownership and exchange as private property, the value of nature is reduced to its value in terms of money. The consequence of this process is that

[t]he view of nature which has grown up under the regime of private property and money is an actual contempt for and degradation of nature...contempt for theory, for art, for history, for man as an end in himself - is the *actual* and *conscious* standpoint, the virtue, of the man of money. The species-relation itself, the relation between man and woman, etc. becomes a commercial object! Woman is put on the market [1992; 239]

In this account of the significance and meaning of money, Marx has illustrated how it is intimately related to private property and so to the significance and meaning of rights. He has countered Bauer's thesis that whilst rights represent the culmination of a journey which has bypassed and excluded the Jews, money is an allegedly Jewish attribute. He illustrates, in other words, the intimate connection between rights and private property. Thus, for Marx, it is the secular and material emergence of private property that gives rise to both rights and money, each of which in turn is a reflection of the conditions in modern civil society in which individuals are themselves treated in abstraction. In this way, again, Marx has removed from the analysis of money any connection with Jewish attributes, and, instead, focused upon the "objective" situation of the nature of political emancipation.

As others have noted²⁵, Marx frames his analysis of money in the guise of a critique of the "materialist" basis of Judaism. Whilst this study is concerned with the manner in which antisemitism has been theorised in its relationship to modernity, and not with whether particular thinkers were or were not antisemitic, a few comments on this part of Marx's presentation are apposite,

It seems to me that Marx's (perhaps unfortunate) use of Judaism to illustrate his thesis rests upon his desire, not only to challenge Bauer's anti-emancipationist and antisemitic thought, but also to ridicule his methodology. As we have seen, Marx takes issue with Bauer's idealistically-driven explanation of rights as the "product of

²⁵ See, for example Carlbach, J. (1978) *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

(Christian) culture". He also challenges Bauer's view that since Judaism had been "superseded", the Jews *as Jews* should not and could not be granted political and civil rights. Overtly referring to an allegedly Judaic tradition of seeing nature as something external to human existence, as something that is of use, but not of value - a view prevalent in much German idealistic thought from Kant through to Feuerbach - and comparing it to *bourgeois* values, Marx has indicated that Judaism is, and has always been part of history. Indeed, he argues that Judaism and Christianity have, in fact, always existed in relation one to the other. As such, even on Bauer's own terms, it was contradictory to claim the Christian "parentage" of rights, whilst denying Christianity's role in the development of money.

The Christian was from the very beginning the theorising Jew. The Jew is therefore the practical Christian and the practical Christian has once again become a Jew....Christianity overcame real Judaism only in appearance. It was too *refined*, too spiritual, to do away with the crudeness of practical need except by raising it into celestial space....Christianity is the sublime thought of Judaism and Judaism the vulgar application of Christianity. But this application could not become universal until Christianity as perfected religion had *theoretically* completed the self-estrangement of man from himself and from nature....Only then could Judaism attain universal domination and turn alienated man and alienated nature into alienable, saleable objects subject to the slavery of egoistic need and to the market [1992; 240, 241].

Throughout, Marx highlights, first, the weakness of Bauer's critical and idealist philosophy, second, the fact that modern social phenomena have overcome or transcended any idealistic dichotomies between "Judaism" and "Christianity", and, third, and this point is crucial considering the critical comments directed at Marx, that which Nietzsche would later theorise as the concept of *ressentiment* at the very heart of Bauer's thought.

It would, however, be a mistake to read Marx's critique of political emancipation and rights as completely negative. Although he argues that work still needs to be done in order to achieve full human emancipation, he appreciates the significance of first steps. He states"

Political emancipation is certainly a big step forward. It may not be the last form of general human emancipation, but it is the last form of human emancipation *within* the prevailing scheme of things. Needless to say, we are here speaking of real, practical emancipation [1992; 221].

For Marx, the recognition of the individual as a rights-bearing person is a recognition of his equality and freedom that should be welcomed. Yet, because these rights are formal; rather than substantive they leave the space for the future development of antisemitism. In his account of political emancipation, Marx concludes that

the perfection of the idealism of the state was at the same time the perfection of the materialism of civil society. The shaking-off of the political yoke was at the same time the shaking-off of the bonds which had held in check the egoistic spirit of civil society from politics. Political emancipation was at the same time the emancipation of civil society from politics, from even the *appearance* of a universal content. [1992; 233]

He points to the fact that political emancipation has robbed civil society of any universal or communal aspect that, no matter how debased in feudal society, was nonetheless present there. As a consequence of political emancipation in which the individual sees their conditions in civil society as their real or true life, any *meaningful* notion of community has disappeared. Instead, socially located individuals are now perceived in their isolation as “self-sufficient monads” - autonomous and standing alone.

This situation of autonomy is replicated in the nature of modern civil rights whereby the rights-bearing person is abstracted from the various concrete aspects of his life in a manner similar to his abstraction from the “materialism of civil society” into the “idealism of the state”. Consequently, personal factors disappear “behind” the image of the individual as an owner of private property and the socially recognised person comes to be alienated or abstracted from his full and concrete attributes.

The only means of social relationship available to this individual is that of opposition and struggle in which each person is involved in a war of each against all. Those social relations which take place through the medium of money serve to alienate humanity from the nature of which they are a part. The alienation of “man” from himself, from others and from nature, are all related “irrational” aspects of the rule of private property which has emerged as a “rational” outcome of civil society.

Finally, Marx notes that political emancipation brought with it the dissolution of prior forms of social and political existence in which the individual experienced some form of community.. However, with the coming of political emancipation and the separations between state and civil society, universalism and particularism, the alienated individual was thrown into the uncertainties of an unreconstituted civil society. It is at this point that the potential for antisemitism is identified.

Whilst Marx indicates the rational, that is emancipatory aspects of formal and individualist rights and their potential for freedom, he also indicates (nothing more) their irrational element suggesting the way in which they can simultaneously give rise to antisemitism. The theorising of this relationship informs Nietzsche's thinking and forms the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Nietzsche: The Moral Economy of Antisemitism

The characteristics of modern antisemitism are far more wide-ranging than the animosity towards Jews that Marx confronted when he wrote his pro-emancipationist polemic in the mid-1840's. At that time, as we have just discussed, anti-Jewish hostility centred on the exclusion of Jews from the modern nation-state. Inherent within the state and civil society, was the concept of equality. This concept was central to the state and civil society whether they are interpreted on their own terms, i.e. through a conception of rights and the rule of law, or as a consequence of a critical view through the category of political economy which implied the abstraction of the individual and his recognition as an "abstract owner of property". Thus, as Marx argued so persuasively, excluding a group or individuals on the basis of their religious status represented an illogical discrepancy.²⁶

It is no coincidence that it was at virtually the same moment as the Jews were emancipated into the modern body politic that antisemitism appeared on the scene. The relationship between the two occurrences is, of course, far from coincidental. Antisemitism arose precisely to re-inscribe relations of inequality that antisemites believed had been glossed over or "masked" by the principle of political and social equality. Thus, from the start, antisemites - as an attempt to distinguish themselves from "the Jews" and to introduce relations of hierarchical inequality - had also to contest the equality which was inherent within the modern notion of "society" itself. It was for this reason, that, from the antisemitic point of view, the twin notions of "the Jews" and "society" were conflated. It in this way that antisemitism involved not only an attack on "the Jews", but an attack on the very concept and reality of "society" and its premise of equality. It is this that separates the pre-modern anti-Jewish hostility from antisemitism.

²⁶ K. Marx *On the Jewish Question*. See above: Chapter 1 for a discussion of that work

In his study, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche offers an explanation of the manner in which antisemitism, as distinct from anti-Jewish feeling, arose. As will become apparent, Nietzsche was one of the first thinkers to offer a coherent critical theory of antisemitism. He recognised the relationship antisemites saw between equality, society and "the Jews". Whilst Nietzsche himself sought ways to critique the contemporary nature of society, he was also cognisant of the negative and nihilistic aspects of the modern phenomenon of antisemitism. Nietzsche recognised that the antisemites' assault on society would not only fail to bring about the freedom that he advocated, but would result in its complete antithesis. Moreover, he was particularly vexed at the fact that the nihilism of antisemitism appeared under the guise of "progress". It is this observation that explains his negative references to the "left" antisemitism of Eugen Dühring.²⁷ Indeed, it is not unreasonable to argue that the development of his concept of *ressentiment* as the cause for the moral optical illusion in which evil comes in the guise of "the good" arose out of this observation.

In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche was also cognisant of the fact that this new hostility to "the Jews" was not the product of an "eternal antisemitism" - an ahistorical and constant conflict between Jews and Christians. In recognising antisemitism in its uniqueness and novelty, he was drawn to the conclusion that there was something about society itself that gave rise to, or produced, it. The question that we will investigate here, therefore, is the nature of the relationship between modern society and antisemitism. In other words, how, and in what way, did society produce its own potential negation, one that centred on a new and virulent version of the "Jewish Question"?

An important aspect of Nietzsche's analysis is the relationship between his investigation and the "text" of the *Genealogy* itself. At the time of its writing, antisemitism was just appearing as a praxis within the social realm. One can see this relationship as analogous to the place of antisemitism within Nietzsche's book itself. Nietzsche's comments on antisemitism in general and on Dühring in particular

²⁷ Ernst Dühring *Kritische Geschichte der Nationalökonomie und des Sozialismus*, Berlin, 1875, (in Julius Carlbach, *Radical Critique of Judaism*, 1978, RKP London

suddenly "burst through" the text at particular junctures. A good illustration of this point is Nietzsche's diatribe against Dühring and antisemites in III 14²⁸ at the juncture between his discussion of the meanings of the Ascetic Ideal and the Ascetic Priest. By placing his comments here he can be seen as implying that antisemitism is the break down of the asceticism itself. It is as if antisemitism appears as the negation of the "repression" that Nietzsche identifies as a main characteristic of modern life. Thus, in bringing to the surface Nietzsche's reflections on the question of antisemitism, it is important to understand what is latent in his overt discussion of modernity.

The place of Nietzsche's work within the body of scholarship comprising critical theories of antisemitism is itself important. On the one hand, his work can be seen as a critical engagement with Marx's *On the Jewish Question*, whilst, on the other, many of his insights form a basis for later theorists. For example, it is through the work of Nietzsche that the modern phenomenon of antisemitism comes to be understood through a thoroughly modern dialectic of freedom and unfreedom with the notion of *ressentiment* as the mediating term. It is also in the *Genealogy* that we find this division represented in terms of equality and inequality and the "ethicisation" of the latter that then attempts to turn on the former. This division in Nietzsche as well as in others is also represented in terms of the manner in which rationality similarly gives rise to irrationality.²⁹ However, it is equally the case, that unlike the work of many of the later theorists, there are still traces within Nietzsche's work of his belief pre-modern hostility towards the Jews as reflected or grounded in religious prejudices.³⁰ *On the Genealogy of Morals* is such a fascinating study, at least in part because it was written at a time of transition in which Nietzsche drew upon both this "pre-modern" phenomenon, as well as the "modernity" of antisemitism as voiced by Dühring.

²⁸ In discussing specific passages of *On The Genealogy of Morals*, it is more appropriate to refer to section and subsection.

²⁹ See especially, for example, the discussions above on Marx and below in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer and Bauman.

³⁰ See especially, for example, below the discussions of Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* and *Modernity and Ambivalence* and Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Nietzsche engaged directly with Marx's *On the Jewish Question*, in particular with his discussion of religion. In the last chapter, we saw that Marx recognised that political emancipation did not bring about the abolition of religion. In arguing that it became an aspect of civil society, he implied that religion took on the form most appropriate to that sphere; a species of private property that reflected the individualistic interests of those social actors. As he states,

[Religion] has become the spirit of civil society, the sphere of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. It is no longer the essence of community but the essence of difference. It has become the expression of the separation of man from his community, from himself and from other men, which is what it was originally. It is now only the confession of an individual oddity, of a private whim, a caprice. The continual splitting of religion in North America, for example, already gives it the external form of a purely individual affair. It has been relegated to the level of a private interest and exiled from the real community.... The splitting of man into his public and private self and the displacement of religion from the state to civil society is not one step in the process of political emancipation but its completion. Hence political emancipation neither abolishes nor tries to abolish man's real religiosity. [1992; 221]

Marx goes further than this in discussing the social effect of religion. Indeed, in many instances, Marx implies that the rationality of political emancipation means that the social phenomenon of law and money represents the rational kernel of their appearance in the irrational shell of religion. Consequently, in his discussion of the "materialism of civil society", religion and religion ideals have little formal explanatory force.

It is in this context that the *Genealogy* is to be read in this study. On the one hand, Nietzsche accepts Marx's description of civil society as the realm of legal exchange relations. However, rather than representing a decline in religious belief, he argues that that mode of social existence itself gives rise to new and powerful religious forms. Moreover, and this is a vital point to make, these new religious forms operate as a means of compensation for the individuality which Marx characterises as forming the basis of civil society. Thus, religion, in Nietzsche's view is re-vitalised by the existence of the "materialism of civil society" and, as such, offers the existence of "community" precisely in the location where Marx believes it is absent. These are

points to which I will return. However, it is important at this juncture to note that this co-existence of materialist individualism and religious (idealist) community is not for Nietzsche responsible in itself for antisemitism. Nietzsche infers that it is only when this uneasy balance breaks down that antisemitism emerges and that the relationship between individualism and community may have a causal relationship to antisemitism's existence originally.

Nietzsche also differs from Marx in the perspective he adopts in opening up modern society to critical analysis. Marx, adopting the methodology of political economy, views its development in "objective" terms. He is concerned to examine how the individual is "reduced" to an element of exchange relations. Conversely, Nietzsche, and for now we may call his approach, "social psychological" (although it often appears to defy rigorous disciplinary division), investigates the "subjective" aspects of that social existence. Thus, Nietzsche's interest can be understood as a comprehension of the modern subjectivity that comes about through the person's existence within society itself. Perhaps, for present purposes, his most important finding is the existence of a split or divided subjectivity; one aspect pointing to the "rationality" of individualistic legal exchange relations, and the other the "irrationality" of communal relations.

I suggest, therefore, that Nietzsche represents modern subjectivity as dirempted. It may be more accurate to state, however, that, for Nietzsche, the emergence of the modern (rational) subjectivity is only comprehensible in terms that take into account the co-existence of its own negation. Modern man, therefore, is perceived as simultaneously a being with subjectivity and one in whom it is lacking. It is within the nexus of this dualism that we can locate the causes of antisemitism as discussed by Nietzsche.

It is within the second essay of the *Genealogy*, "'Guilt', 'Bad Conscience' and the Like", that Nietzsche discusses the emergence and development of this dialectic of freedom and unfreedom through an examination of the causes for the apparent contradiction between the emergence of subjectivity and its absence. The essay

comprises twenty-five "sections". The early sections are concerned with the manner in which subjectivity comes into existence and the closing sections concern the emergence of its negation. It is in section 11, at the close of his analysis of modern subjectivity and its relationship to the administration of law, that Nietzsche presents a scathing attack on antisemites on the grounds of their *ressentiment* in which revenge appears behind the mask of "justice".

The structure of the essay is as important to Nietzsche's argument as the content. First, he implies antisemitism is the complete antithesis of law and justice. Although, as we shall see, Nietzsche holds law and legal rights indirectly responsible for the nihilism of the absence of subjectivity, his formulation of the relationship is far more complex. Secondly, the location of his rhetoric against antisemitism is important. It falls between law and morality (forms of subjectivity and its absence, respectively), just as in essay three, where at the same point he introduced the notion of *ressentiment* as the mode of re-evaluating morality from the perspective of the slave (those without subjectivity). Nietzsche, therefore, makes links between law, morality and the mediation of *ressentiment* where the latter "turns upon" the former in a relationship of negation and denial and its adopting the hues of antisemitism. I will return to these points below.

In the structure of the essay as a whole we can identify an underlying explanatory mode premised upon the notion of exchange. The heuristic use of exchange is present, first, in Nietzsche's discussion of the emergence and development of freedom, subjectivity and objectivity; and second in the emergence of their antithesis through a discussion of man's relationship to God. Thirdly, the concept of exchange is present in the relationship between the first two discussions. Thus, Nietzsche implies that the more man achieves "freedom" through gaining a subjectivity, the more he exchanges it for unfreedom and his feeling of "being nothing". We can conclude that Nietzsche intends his *Genealogy* to be a critique of modern social life and the manner in which the rational and the irrational come into existence, as well as the way that each and the relationship between them reflect the nature of modern society as the realm of exchange relations. More specifically, the relations of exchange are themselves

modelled on the legal notion of contract. Indeed, antisemitism itself is explained through the concept of *ressentiment* as an attempt by the antithesis of subjectivity to deny and annihilate its progenitor - as an attempt to exchange the "bad conscience" for the "good conscience".

Nietzsche's view of exchange modelled upon contract is in keeping with the initial premise of the *Genealogy* that the exchange nature of modern society brings contains both rational and irrational aspects. In many ways he identifies a relationship between these two apparent oppositions by indicating their imbrication.

The "rational" side of exchange relations - that is, its legal manifestation - gives rise to man's subjectivity as his consciousness of himself as one "with the right to make promises" [II 1]. Inherent in this right to make and keep promises is the ability to feel obligated to honour these promises. The acceptance of obligation then reaches such a level that the responsibility eventually transmutes itself into the meaning of man's "conscience" itself. Because exchange by necessity involves more than one party, others to whom one gives one's word also have the same awareness of their responsibilities, and modern subjectivity thereby implies an equality between parties. Thus, the sphere of legal relations - that is, the sphere of society itself - is premised upon the recognition of its inhabitants in terms of their autonomy and equality. Indeed, for Nietzsche, such men are the very definition of the "emancipated individual".

Nietzsche also makes the observation that legally-mediated exchange relations are coterminous with the notion of equivalencies; that like be exchanged for like. This notion of equivalencies, he argues, forms the basis of the administration of law itself. Thus, in the case of one who has broken his promise, as in the case of a debtor who has not kept his word to the creditor, punishment is always mediated through this concept of equivalencies. Indeed, this idea, of which "an eye for an eye" is the obvious illustration, is for Nietzsche the very definition of "justice". As he states,

Throughout the greater part of human history punishment was not imposed because one held the wrongdoer responsible for his deed, thus not on the presupposition that only the guilty one should be punished: rather, as parents

still punish their children, from anger at some harm or injury, vented on the one who caused it - but this anger is held in check and modified by the idea that every injury has its equivalent and can actually be paid back, even if only through the pain of the culprit. And whence did this primeval, deeply rooted, perhaps by now incredible draw its power - the idea of an equivalence between injury and pain?...in the contractual relationship between creditor and debtor, which is as old as the idea of "legal subjects" and in turn points back to the fundamental forms of buying, selling, barter, trade and traffic [II 4]

Moreover, it is in the nature of this "just" legal punishment that the individual who breaks his promise bears no resentment against those who punish him, nor at the fact of his being punished. Conscious of his responsibilities, he is also conscious of the consequences and takes them with a "good conscience".

Such is Nietzsche's focus upon this contractual development from subjectivity to law to justice, that he extends it to describe within the community premised upon the idea of the "social contract". On this view the "creditor" is the state which exchanges with the "debtor" for protection and peace and social disturbance is to be understood in as a breach of contract. Upon such breach the law will exclude or "thrust out" the one who has broken his word to the collective community. Finally, law and legal relations and the subjectivity on which they rest feels so confident of its own power that, in Nietzsche's words, it "overcomes itself" through the granting of mercy. Law is now so secure that it can afford to forget the injuries made against it.

In this way, Nietzsche has accounted for the nature of rational civil society by tracing its legal basis back to the rights-bearing subjectivity of the individual, through the notion of justice and finally through the contractual notion of citizenship. Yet, it is precisely this subjectification that gives rise to its antithesis: man defined through an absence of subjectivity. Here, Nietzsche indicates the irrational dimension to the emergence of such a rational mode of social organisation and social relations.

At this point in his argument, Nietzsche relies upon his notion of the "will to power" which is defined in terms of a life lived by instinct. He argues that for man to accede to the demand of legal autonomy and the subjectivity of responsibility and autonomy,

he must first "master himself". In other words, such "freedom" is only bought at a cost. The implication here is that man must overcome his own instincts, especially as they relate to living life in the present without the notion of temporality required by exchange relations. Furthermore, the notion of equality that contract relations implies is defined in terms of instrumental rationality.

Man himself must first of all have become calculable, regular, necessary, even in his own image of himself, if he is to be able to stand security for his own future, which is what one who promises does! (II 1)

It is in these terms that Nietzsche begins his discussion of the rise of the "bad conscience" [II 16]. Tied in with man's feelings of guilt, the bad conscience leads to the idea of unfreedom, to man as the eternal debtor. Whereas the legal relation results in man looking outward to others, the consequence of this process leads to his introversion, and finally results in the development of the "soul".

This is due to the effort of constraint that is inherent within the mastery of oneself necessary for the development of the appropriate "subjectivity". Nietzsche's thesis is that the will to power, man's instinctual drive, can never be abrogated or ended. If it is blocked in one direction, then it will seek other outlets. In the present context that "other outlet" is man himself. Thus, the "natural" cruelty that Nietzsche argues is an inherent aspect of the will to power is turned back onto the individual incarcerated within society.

It must be noted here that Nietzsche argues that this turning back of the will to power is not necessarily merely negative. His ambivalence is evidenced by the fact that in some instances the tension it creates within man leads to great creativity. He cites Goethe as an example [III 2]. It is in the case of "weaker" individuals that it results in the denial of themselves, as a negation of their own subjectivity.

Nietzsche uses the findings of anthropology to trace the manner in which this "delight in self-torture" has hitherto developed. This process follows that of exchange or contractual relations, although with the opposite effects to those that have just been noted. In beginning to speak of the rise of the "bad conscience", Nietzsche states that

[t]he civil-law relationship between the debtor and his creditor, discussed above, has been interpreted in an, historically speaking, exceedingly remarkable and dubious manner into a relationship in which to us modern men it seems perhaps least to belong: namely into the relationship between the present generation and its ancestors [II 19].

He then likens this relationship of the present to the past to a recognition of a present "juridical duty towards earlier generations" [II 19]. It is worth quoting Nietzsche on this point.

The conviction reigns that it is only through the sacrifices and accomplishments of the ancestors that the tribe exists - and that one has to pay them back with sacrifices and accomplishments: one thus recognises a debt that constantly grows greater, since the forebears never cease, in their continued existence as powerful spirits, to accord the tribe new advantages and new strength.... What can they give them in return? Sacrifices....above all, obedience - for all customs, as works of the ancestors, are also their statutes and commands: can one ever give them enough? The suspicion remains and increases; from time to time it leads to a wholesale sacrifice, something tremendous in the way of repayment to the "creditor" [II 19].

Nietzsche argues that this process culminates with the advent of the Christian God - the idea that the "creditor" has sacrificed himself for the "debtor". It is at this point that the "bad conscience" comes into existence. Its effects are the ultimate cruelty that man can inflict upon himself: the notion that he is in a position of irredeemable debt, of "eternal guilt", of a party to a contract that can never be honoured.

In this psychical cruelty there resides a madness of the will which is absolutely unexampled: the will of man to find himself guilty and reprehensible to a degree that can never be atoned for; his will to think himself punished without any possibility of the punishment being equal to the guilt; his will to infect and poison the fundamental ground of things with the problem of punishment and guilt so as to cut off once and for all his own exit from the labyrinth of "fixed ideas"; his will to erect an ideal - that of the "holy God" - and in the face of it to feel the palpable certainty of his own absolute unworthiness. Oh this insane pathetic beast - man! What ideas he has, what unnaturalness, what paroxysms of nonsense, what bestiality of thought erupts as soon as he is prevented just a little from being a beast in deed! [II 22].

The essay ends with Nietzsche declaring that such a condition of man is a sickness. The sickness is manifested through the idea that the man of "bad conscience" denies his own existence, his own self and his own subjectivity. He denies any part of him that indicates or "reminds" him of his own existence, his own autonomy. The manner

in which this denial manifests itself is by projecting onto "something" or "someone" else the very aspects of himself that stand for his autonomy, human will and subjectivity. As Nietzsche states,

[h]e apprehends in "God" the ultimate antithesis of his own ineluctable animal instincts; he reinterprets these animal instincts as a form of guilt before God...; he stretches himself upon the contradiction "God" and "Devil"; he ejects from himself all his denial of himself, of his nature, naturalness, and actuality....Here is sickness beyond any doubt, the most terrible sickness that has ever raged in man....[II 22].

In this way, the "sick" man confronts his subjectivity as something alien or external to him, as something that oppresses him. It is oppression because it reminds him of his own "worth", in contradistinction to the feeling of worthlessness the bad conscience has erected within him. It is as if his very self becomes the cause of his predicament. As we shall see, it is this conflict that, from the position of the "bad conscience", gives rise to *ressentiment*.

Nietzsche has thus shown that with the incarceration of man within society, of the constraint necessary for legal exchange, i.e. social relations, man has simultaneously developed for himself a system of guilt in which any notion of "free will" which is a consequence of those relations is correspondingly denied. This, for Nietzsche, is the contradiction inherent within the modern individual - to be and to feel guilty for being at one and the same time. Before discussing the manner in which man lives in such a condition, it is worth noting again the role of exchange in Nietzsche's thesis.

Thus far, I have shown how Nietzsche's concept of exchange and contract forms the basis of the legal relations of civil society, and how his approach differs from Marx's. Secondly, we saw how the "irrational" aspect of civil society that remained hidden in Marx's account was also premised on contract through the notion of repayment to the ancestors. Finally, the interrelations between rationality and irrationality appear when in exchange for present prosperity, man increases his duty to his gods. In this way, Nietzsche has attempted to illustrate, not only that the irrational arises in a relation to the rational, but also that they are both structured on the same notion of exchange and contract. It is this way that the dialectic of freedom and unfreedom both emerge and

confront each other. As we shall see, it is in the conflict between the two, in the attempt of unfreedom to deny and negate freedom, that antisemitism can be located.

The point at this juncture is Nietzsche's insistence that this diremption resides in the modern individual himself. The diremption, or the confrontation between man's freedom and bondage, or between the "good conscience" of the legal subject and the "bad conscience" of the "religious" (which Nietzsche defines as "the psychological-moral" domain) also creates the potential for antisemitism [II 11] and it is in this context that Nietzsche develops the substance of his concept of *ressentiment*.

On the average, a small dose of aggression, malice, or insinuation certainly suffices to drive the blood into the eyes - and fairness out of the eyes - of even the most upright people....For that reason the aggressive man, as the stronger, nobler, more courageous, has in fact had at all times a freer eye, a better conscience on his side: conversely, one can see who has the invention of the "bad conscience" on his conscience - the man of *ressentiment*....[*ressentiment*] blooms best today among anarchists and antisemites [II 11].

It is interesting to note that in this essay, the concept of *ressentiment*, so significant for Nietzsche's thought, is virtually absent. It is only mentioned twice, and once only in passing. Where it is discussed in detail is in section 11. This placement is interesting in itself. The discussion comes immediately following the discussion of the climax of legal relations where law ends in mercy as a form of "forgetting" harms committed because it is so secure in its feeling of security. Moreover, in placing his criticism of Duhring here as well, Nietzsche offers a strong defence of law, before examining its negative effects through an account of the development of the "bad conscience".

Although it is not directly argues, one can see in this essay the potential for antisemitism when the "bad conscience" confronts the good conscience or when the morality of *ressentiment* breaks free of its constraints and enters into conflict with that which it seeks to deny. The context of this discussion is the claim made by "anarchists and antisemites" that justice is synonymous with revenge, that law and revenge can be conflated. Not only, as we have noted, does Nietzsche connect justice to law (in the notion of equivalencies), but he also indicates how justice mediates and neutralises *ressentiment* when it appears as revenge, through what we can now see as the "rule of

law", in which the harm caused to one party is viewed as an act against the law itself. Unlike "subjective" revenge, law treats requital in a measured and "objective" manner. Moreover, where Duhring had argued that "justice" arises immediately following the harm, Nietzsche argues that it can only follow the introduction of the administration of law. And, it is in the context of this part of his argument, that Nietzsche indicates the manner in which law includes the notion of freedom,

A legal order thought of as sovereign and universal, not as a means in the struggle between power-complexes but as a means of preventing all struggle in general - perhaps after the communistic cliché of Duhring, that every will must consider every will must consider the other will its equal - would be a principle hostile to life, an agent of the dissolution and destruction of man, an attempt to assassinate the future of man, a sign of weariness, a secret path to nothingness [II 11].

The point is that the *ressentiment* of the bad conscience turns upon the "nobility" of law so as to destroy the individualism and the measured nature of its "good conscience". Thus, we can begin to see the way in which antisemitism incorporates within it the notion of social and legal relations premised upon exchange which, to a certain extent, give rise to an individualism and a subjectivity that are part of Nietzsche's notion of freedom as action. However, why it should take the form of hostility to "the Jews" is, at this stage left undiscussed. For this equation to be made, two other aspects of Nietzsche's argument must be discussed. The first is the means that Nietzsche argues are adopted precisely so as to avoid the conflict between man as free and unfree. In the light of that discussion the second is the nature of the concept of *ressentiment* that will help determine why antisemitism can arise out of this potential conflict.

Nietzsche argues that it is through the emergence of asceticism that this conflict between the two aspects of the diremptive individual Nietzsche's description of these "men of *ressentiment*" captures its spirit.

For every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more exactly, an agent; still more specifically, a guilty agent who is susceptible for suffering - in short, some living thing upon which he can, on some pretext or other, vent his affects, actually or in effigy; for the venting of his affects represents the

greatest attempt on the part of the suffering to win relief, anaesthesia - the narcotic he cannot help desiring to deaden pain of any kind. [[III 15].

As a *praxis* asceticism is not only about theory, i.e. moral evaluation, but also entails a practice that reinforces its message of denial in positive terms. The relevant aspects of this practice all aim to present the meaning of life as punishment and of denial of vitality. First, there is the idea of communal life over individual life, mediated through the doctrine of "love thy neighbour". Through this "community of love" the notion of denial is affirmed through the idea that one must deny oneself in the name of the other, one must sacrifice oneself when called upon to help one's neighbour. This, of course, is the antithesis of the legal relations, where it is precisely one's autonomy that separates one from the other; Nietzsche's pathos of distance. Secondly, there is the idea of "mechanical activity", the idea of "mechanical activity" or "the blessing of work",

The alleviation consists in this, that the interest of the sufferer is directly entirely away from his suffering - that activity, and nothing but activity, enters consciousness, and there is consequently little room left for suffering. [III 18]

Finally, there is the idea that asceticism permits occasional "outlets" of "orgies of feeling" - of the will to power. However, these are re-interpreted as sin, so that every outburst leads to even greater feelings of guilt.

Nietzsche describes this *praxis* of asceticism primarily in religious terms, with clear references to Calvinism and Lutheranism (German Protestantism). He is also critical of that which he terms modern science. He argues against the self-legitimation of science as conquering the ascetic ideal. Science (and it appears that in many instances he is speaking of modern philosophy³¹) represents a continuation of the ascetic ideal in its reliance upon the timeless or ahistorical subject of reason; the transcendent subject that represents the "truth" of man. This scientific "will to truth" assumes, Nietzsche argues, that there is a reality about man that is hidden. The consequences of this scientific view, therefore, is that our own reality, our own present life is but a shadow of a deeper reality. Some writers interpret this view of science as the cause of

³¹ See section III 23-25]

antisemitism.³² For Nietzsche it is merely an "extension" or "secularisation" of asceticism which so as to block or obstruct the outburst of *ressentiment* that is in some way related to antisemitism.

Asceticism neutralises this lashing out through re-directing the outburst against the individual himself. Asceticism plays on and exploits man's sense of guilt and reinforces the idea that earthly existence is understandable in terms of punishment for that guilt. In this way, the denial of self that is inherent within the "bad conscience" is given meaning. It becomes perceived in "positive" terms; it comes to be the greatest moral good. Critically, however, this ascetic valuation does not "cure" the sufferer, but makes his condition worse.. In re-evaluating denial as "the Good", life itself - including, of course, his own subjectivity, becomes ever more threatening and ever more oppressive. Thus, one can argue that asceticism keeps a lid on the boiling pot whilst simultaneously turning up the heat.

Again, it is interesting to note that mid way through the essay where this aspect is discussed - essay three - Nietzsche "interrupts" his analysis with an attack on Duhring and antisemitism. The relevance of the location, which comes between a discussion of the various forms and styles in which asceticism had occurred throughout history, and its specifically "modern", religious forms, should not be underestimated. This, I believe, is indicative again of the latency and potentiality of antisemitism as a consequence of the breakdown of the ascetic ideal. This interpretation is evidenced by the many times in the *Genealogy* that asceticism is given a highly ambivalent treatment. One can see the ambivalence clearly when Nietzsche argues that, negative though it may appear, asceticism at least keeps the will to power alive precisely at the moment that the "bad conscience" tells man he is worthless and life not worth living. Asceticism, in other words, brings meaning, just when man says, "I am sick of myself". [111 14].

Nietzsche's attack on Duhring and antisemites in general appears in this essay to turn upon the idea that these people do not even have the "strength" to live up to the

³² See for example, *Modernity and Holocaust* Bauman, Z. 1991, Oxford: Polity Press.

constraining demands of a life of denial and discipline demanded by the ascetic ideal. As we have seen, the "bad conscience" is the idea of the worthlessness of man in contrast, and in relation to, the "good conscience" of the legal subject. Yet, it is also in relation to the "bad conscience" that the concept of *ressentiment* comes to be an influence. For present purposes, Nietzsche's idea of *ressentiment* indicates the way in which those too weak to live according to the demands placed upon them by the legal and social relations of exchange *re-evaluate* their moral condition. Through *ressentiment* values are inverted, and bad becomes good and good, evil. Through such inversions, the herd perceives its own existence in positive terms. This, in turn, aids them in the ascetic life in that the more they suffer the more "good" they believe themselves to be. They can contrast their goodness against "those" (themselves) who live according to the harshness of exchange, or legal morality.

Nietzsche states that it is the "*ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate with an imaginary revenge" [I; 10] As we have seen, the "bad conscience" arises precisely out of the inability to act, the inability to live according to the constraints of the will to power (as self-mastery) demanded by legal relations. Nietzsche infers that the "imaginary revenge" consists of a *future* revenge in a *world to come* - in the "kingdom of God". As such, the promise of *future* dominion, particularly domination over those not as "good" is deferred. Yet, *ressentiment* operates differently with antisemites. For them, this element of *postponement* *evaporates* and *ressentiment* seeks *immediate* gratification. Antisemitism, therefore occurs precisely when asceticism is negated or "overcome". This "overcoming" of asceticism occurs within the *weakest* elements of the herd, and, contrary to the claims of Duhring, does *not* arise from the legal conscience or from the dictates of justice.

As I have emphasised above, the division or diremption of the two aspects of morality, the "legal" and the "ascetic" occurs in the same individual, and that the ascetic arises, precisely because of the constraints upon the instinctual will to power of the legal. In the first essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche suggests that the asceticism which he terms slave morality, is the only one present in the modern era. This reading

misses a subtle point, however. In section 16 of the first essay, Nietzsche "concludes" his discussion of derailed morality in the following way:

The two *opposing* values "good and bad," "good and evil" have been engaged in a fearful struggle on earth for thousands of years; and though the latter value has certainly been on top for a long time, there are still places where the struggle is as yet undecided. One might even say that it has risen ever higher and thus become more and more profound and spiritual: so that today there is perhaps no more decisive mark of a "*higher nature*", a more spiritual nature, than that of being divided in this sense and a genuine battleground of these opposed values [I 16]

In section 200 of *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche states

[t]he man of an era of dissolution which mixes the races together and who therefore contains within him the inheritance of a diversified descent, that is to say contrary and often not merely contrary drives and values which struggle with one another and rarely leave one another in peace - such a man of late cultures and broken lights will, on average, be a rather weak man: his fundamental desire is that the war which *he* is should come to an end [BGE; 200].

He then continues by observing that the manner in which this "war" manifests itself leads either to the creativity of the artist, *or* to the passivity offered by the ascetic ideal.

In section 260, Nietzsche argues that,

There is *master morality* and *slave morality* - I add at once that in all higher and mixed cultures attempts at mediation between the two are apparent and more frequently confusion and mutual misunderstanding between them, indeed sometimes their harsh juxtaposition - even within the same man, within *one* soul [BGE; 260, emphasis in the original]

In the same section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche offers a brief summary of noble morality,

[t]he noble human being honours in himself the man of power, also the man who has power over himself, who understands how to speak and how to keep silent, who enjoys practising severity and harshness upon himself and feels reverence for all that is severe and harsh [BGE; 260].

We can compare this view of noble morality to his view of the legal conscience.

This emancipated individual, with the actual *right* to make promises, this master of a *free* will this sovereign man...of how this mastery over himself

also necessarily gives him mastery over circumstances, over nature, and over all the more short-willed and unreliable creatures....The "free" man, the possessor of a protracted and unbreakable will, also possess his *measure of value*: looking out upon others from himself, he honours or despises; and just as he is bound to honour his peers, the strong and reliable (thus with the *right* to make promises) - that is, all those who promise like sovereigns, reluctantly, rarely, slowly, who are charring of trusting, whose trust is a mark of *distinction*, who give their word as something that can be relied on because they know themselves strong enough to maintain it, even in the face of accidents, even "in the face of fate"..... [II; 2]

It is also interesting to note Nietzsche's idea of the "measure of value". He argues that noble morality gives rise to the idea of *evaluation* in which one values (or, recognises) another according to one's view of oneself. In other words, one first sees oneself as autonomous and then measures others against this harsh standard. It is in this sense that Nietzsche understands the nature of *legal* equality. Slave morality, with its essential ingredient of *ressentiment*, is the direct opposite.

While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is "outside," what is "different," what is "not itself"; and *this* No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-posting eye - this *need* to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself - is of the essence of *ressentiment*. In order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all - its action is fundamentally reaction [I; 10]

Slave morality first looks at "others" to define itself, and, through *ressentiment*, is then evaluated in negative terms.

That antisemitism is this *ressentiment* "freed" of asceticism can be inferred by Nietzsche's comments recorded above.

For every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more exactly, an agent; still more specifically, a guilty agent who is susceptible for suffering - in short, some living thing upon which he can, on some pretext or other, vent his affects, actually or in effigy; for the venting of his affects represents the greatest attempt on the part of the suffering to win relief, anaesthesia - the narcotic he cannot help desiring to deaden pain of any kind [III 15].

Nietzsche continues toward the end of the same section.

"I suffer: someone must be to blame for it" - thus thinks every sickly sheep. But his shepherd, the ascetic priest, tells him: "Quite so, my sheep! someone must be to blame for it: but you yourself are this someone, you are alone to

blame for it - *you alone are to blame for yourself!*" - This is brazen and false enough: but at least one thing is achieved by it, the direction of *ressentiment* is altered [III 15].

Nietzsche also explains what occurs *without* this change of direction.

The suffering are one and all dreadfully eager and inventive in discovering occasions for painful affects; they enjoy being mistrustful and dwelling on nasty deeds and imaginary slights; they scour the entrails of their past and present for obscure and questionable occurrences that offer them the opportunity to revel in tormenting suspicions and to intoxicate themselves with the poison of their own malice; they tear open their oldest wounds, they bleed from long-healed scars, they make evildoers out of their friends, wives, children, and whoever stands closest to them [III 15].³³

Nietzsche argues that it is precisely with the "weakest".... "those who are failures from the start", "the born failure" (and here Duhring is mentioned by name) that *ressentiment* becomes a nihilistic, destructive and antisemitic force.

They are all men of *ressentiment*, physiologically unfortunate and worm-eaten, a whole tremulous realm of subterranean revenge, inexhaustible and insatiable outbursts against the fortunate and happy and in masquerades of revenge and pretexts for revenge....Here the worms of vengefulness and rancour swarm; here the air stinks of secrets and concealment; here the web of the most malicious of all conspiracies is being sown constantly - the conspiracy of the suffering against the well-constituted and victorious, here the aspect of the victorious is *hated* [III 14].

In the many accounts of antisemitism that I have read none captures as clearly as this its nature or attitude of mind. Not only is it a dark and dank world of lies and conspiracies, but *ressentiment* inverts this "evil" into the "good". It is also at this point that we can see the notion of mimesis at play, the idea that under the guise of *ressentiment*, the "unmediated slave" desires nothing other than to occupy the position of power that he ascribes to his enemy,

And what mendaciousness is employed to disguise that this hatred is hatred! What a display of grand words and postures, what an art of "honest calumny! These failures: what noble eloquence flows from their lips. How much sugary, slimy, humble submissiveness swims in their eyes! What do they really want? At least to *represent* justice, love, wisdom, superiority - that is the ambition of the "lowest", the sick. Admire above all the forger's skill with which the stamp of virtue, even the ring, the golden-sounding ring, is here counterfeited. They monopolise virtue, these weak, hopelessly sick people, there is no doubt of it:

³³ This description, that harkens to the idea of non-forgetfulness, is, of course, in strict opposition to the idea of law and its ability to "forget", or at least "to let things go, once punishment has taken place.

"we alone are the good and just," they say, "we alone are the *homines bonae voluntaris* [men of good will] [III; 14]

Here, Nietzsche has indicated the power of *ressentiment*. The language in which it manifests itself is the language of its "other", law and legal subjectivity, or "justice".

But, as Nietzsche states,

....as for Duhring's specific proposition that the home of justice is to be sought in the sphere of the reactive feelings, one is obliged for truth's sake to counter it with a blunt antithesis: the *last* sphere to be conquered by the spirit of justice is the sphere of the reactive feelings! [II; 11]

Antisemitism can, therefore, be said to be the outcome of the attempt by the slave - too weak to live by *any* discipline - to confront the noble in a spirit of animosity and hostility, and to invert the valuation so that the "good", and the just, become the "evil". One could say that antisemitism represents the destruction of any patience or discipline - *the exchange of the nothingness of the man of ressentiment for everything he can never possess*. He tries to obtain what takes others - the others he despises (himself) - harsh and unremitting discipline or self-mastery. The language of exchange is not inappropriate.

They walk among us as embodied reproaches, as warnings to us - as if health, well-constitutedness, strength, pride, and the sense of power were in themselves necessarily vicious things for which one must pay some day and pay bitterly: how ready they themselves are at bottom to *make* one pay; how they crave to be *hangmen*. There is an abundance of the vengeful disguised as judges, who constantly bear the word "justice" in their mouths like poisonous spittle, always with pursed lips, always ready to spit upon all who are not discontented but go their ways in good spirits [III; 14].

Nietzsche concludes with the following comment,

The will of the weak to represent *some* form of superiority, their instinct for devious paths to tyranny over the healthy - where can it not be discovered, this will to power of the weakest [III; 14].

In this account of antisemitism and its causes, Nietzsche has indicated the way in which the "weak", those who can stand neither the harshness of the demands made upon modern man in the world of legal relations of exchange, nor the discipline of asceticism, seek to destroy first the former and then the latter in order to gain the immediate "Kingdom of God". He has also indicated the way that this attempt at exchange by the weak appears in the language of that which it seeks to destroy -

justice. Perhaps most important, however, is Nietzsche's recognition that it is *law itself* that brings into existence its opposition. Whilst in the normal course of affairs this opposition and its confrontation is deferred or mediated, antisemitism arises when its "defence mechanisms" no longer bind the weakest of the weak.

Nietzsche thus offers an account of the modernity of antisemitism in terms of its relationship to society as the realm of legally mediated exchange relations. One question remains unanswered though? Why should the self-hatred of the antisemites find its point of reference in the Jews.?

The first point to note is that in his discussion of *ressentiment*, Max Scheler³⁴ makes the point that one of the characteristics of *ressentiment* is its ability to grow stronger the more its basic ingredients, such as revenge or envy, lose their specific object. As we have seen, Nietzsche's "specific object" is the nature of society itself as it constrains the (instinctual) will to power. But this is a *radical* idea (in a way more critical than many Marxist ideologies), and one that modern man, least of all the "bad conscience", cannot recognise. Whilst helpful, Scheler's observations avoids the question why should the *ressentiment* that arises with (and because of) modern society, find its outlet *against the Jews*?

Nietzsche does not directly provide an answer. One can, however, be inferred from his writings. Yet, as we shall see, even this implied answer leads to certain problems, many of which are repeated within the body of critical theories of antisemitism as a whole.

The first essay of the *Genealogy* "Good and Bad", "Good and Evil", can be read as an analogy of the development first of Judaism and then of Christianity from their emergence from the Classical World of Greece and Rome. In this essay "Judaism" is the Priestly religion of *ressentiment* par excellence through which the classical world was lost, and Christianity develops out of Judaism, but strengthens and deepens the notion of *ressentiment*.

³⁴ *Ressentiment*; Max Scheler, 1961, Free Press, New York

It is also interesting to note that the morality that Nietzsche discusses in terms of legal subjectivity, especially the idea of "equivalencies" has many characteristics in common with Old testament rules. Think, for example of regarding an eye for an eye.³⁵ Similarly, the asceticism of the third essay bears a striking resemblance to the German Reformation movement. In both of these examples, Nietzsche implies that the successor turns upon its progenitors. Indeed, in some comments, one can see the idea of a Pauline Christianity that acts to deny the *law* and the legal morality of the Old Testament. The *secular* version of this account is repeated in the second and third essay.

The point to note is that despite Nietzsche's whole-hearted anti-antisemitism, it could be argued that, Nietzsche ultimately conflates "the Jews" of the first essay with the law of the second and third essays. Such a move is open to various interpretations. First, one could maintain that Nietzsche's linkage of "the Jews" and society is itself an *inversion*. It is not, however, the inversion of *ressentiment*, but rather is one that shows the law to be "noble" and not the "evil" of the "bad conscience" of *ressentiment*. Alternatively, one could argue that Nietzsche believed that it was "the Jews" who in fact, actually introduced exchange-relations into the static world of feudalism. If, as he argues, this coincides with notions of freedom and rights, this is to be taken as a "compliment" to Jews.

Recently, there has been a debate about Nietzsche's "attitude" to "the Jews".³⁶ All that can be said in the present context is that there is little doubt that Nietzsche brings out (and probably adopts) an ambivalent attitude to modernity and to its notion of freedom. Thus, Nietzsche's ambivalence to the Jews mirrors precisely his ambivalence to modernity itself. The consequence of this view is that it is "the Jews" who become the *embodiment* of modernity. On one level, this is precisely the position adopted by antisemitism. Whilst, this of course, could be the very point Nietzsche is making, it

³⁵ A parody of Feuerbach, perhaps? See: *Essence of Christianity*, trans, George Eliot, 1957, New York and London; in Carlbach 1978.

³⁶ See, for example, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*; ed. Richard Schacht, 1994, University of California, London. and *Judaism and Modernity*; Gillian Rose, 1993, Blackwell, Oxford

appears, on a more generous interpretation, that the separation of his *critique* of antisemitism from the phenomenon itself, especially the position he himself is taking as to "the Jews" role in history, is rather problematic. The conflation of Jews, law and modernity can be evidence of this uncertainty, and is replicated in many of the accounts that follow. In other words, Nietzsche's ambivalence of modernity is synonymous with his ambivalence of "the Jews".

Many of Nietzsche's themes are developed in later critical theories of antisemitism. Many, for example, have recourse to the idea that modernity represents to a certain degree, the *repression* of certain aspects of nature - that man's domination over nature results in the opposite relationship. This is a theme developed by Adorno and Horkheimer [1973]. There is also the idea in the *Genealogy* of the gradual distinction between individualism and community. Whilst in Nietzsche's thought, these two aspects remain closely knitted together, we can see in later writings the distinction its distance increasing, such as in Sartre [1995]

In more general terms, Nietzsche as was Marx [1992] was concerned to understand the manner in which claims to universalism give rise simultaneously to its antithesis of particularism and the way that the universalism comes to be perceived as the characteristic of a particular group, in this case "the Jews". Moreover, as in Marx, and critical theory up to the intervention of post-modernity, this dichotomy between universalism and particularism, and its location around the "Jewish Question", appears through the description of society as the economic realm of exchange. In this way, Nietzsche work can be read as a *supplement* to Marx and the Marxist tradition, and *not* as its antithesis.

One final point remains. Although it may be a truism, Nietzsche was a theorist very much of his time. Despite the fact that he recognised the phenomenon of antisemitism and attempted to comprehend it in the context of modernity, he still relied upon pre-modern ideas of both the Jews and antisemitism. Thus, despite the richness and originality of his account, he still perceived antisemitism to be related in some fundamental way to *religious* animosity; in this case to the harshness of Jewish

"legalistic morality". As will be discussed, he shares this idea with many other critical theorists of antisemitism.

Chapter 4

Jean-Paul Sartre and Antisemitism: Between Rights and *Ressentiment*

In this chapter, I shall examine Jean-Paul Sartre's (1905 - 1980) reflections on the causes of modern antisemitism. These reflections were set down in writing in the latter half of 1944 and published in France in 1946 under the title *Reflexions sue la Question Juive*. In 1948 it appeared in English under the title *Anti-Semite and Jew*.

Two observations as to these bibliographical details are especially relevant. First, is the fact that the work was written before the full extent of the mass murders committed by the Nazis became known to the majority of the population. This point is reflected in the fact that Sartre's account on the question of antisemitism is not read through the prism of the holocaust and, in some ways, therefore, belongs to the earlier tradition of critical thinking of antisemitism. This location of Sartre's thinking is also evident (and this is the second point) in the French title of the work (literally translated as *Reflections on the Jewish Question*) which echoes a 19th century perspective of the issue. Indeed, in many respects, the "answer" Sartre provides to this "question" is equally reminiscent of earlier times: ultimately, assimilation into a society in which all differences and distinctions have been overcome in the name of universal humanity.

The combination of the French and English titles of the work reflects the methodological approach with which Sartre addresses the subject of his enquiry. This method foreshadows the methodological concerns that he was to make explicit some sixteen years later in *The Problem of Method*.³⁷

Following the publication of *Being and Nothingness* in 1943, Sartre's philosophy was criticised by many for concentrating too exclusively on subjective experience at the expense of objective conditions. As Hazel E. Barnes notes in her 1968 introduction to

³⁷ *The Problem of Method* (which appeared in the United States as *Search for a Method*) is the title of the first section of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. (1968)

Search for a Method, these critical comments highlighted the fact that “his philosophy allowed no room for any positive social theory. The individual consciousness was splendidly independent - and alone”[1968; vii].³⁸ *Anti-Semite and Jew* reflects Sartre’s answer to these concerns. Here, Sartre avoids explaining antisemitism by relying upon either entirely subjective factors or impersonal “objective” factors.

Anticipating many of the methodological concerns he expressed in *Method*, Sartre’s thesis of antisemitism in *Anti-Semite and Jew* is premised upon the idea that the antisemite “chooses” himself from within his situation in modern society, and that that subjective choice then rebounds upon those objective conditions. Sartre implies that as a consequence the very categories in his account of antisemitism - anti-Semite and Jew - cannot be identified *a priori*. Rather, they must be discovered through analysis of their conditions of emergence - objective *and* subjective - and the dialectical relationship that exists between them.

Sartre relies heavily on Marx’s *On the Jewish Question* [1844] in his description of the objective nature of modern society and modern social relations. He depicts modern society as comprising formally equal and abstract legal subjects, each pursuing individual and particular interests in a competitive struggle of all against all, and whose relations are mediated through the abstract categories of universal law. One of the consequences of this situation is that any sense of collectively or union with others dissipates. Instead, Sartre argues that this social individual experiences a profound feeling of isolation that is almost unbearable. It appears to Sartre that modern social individuals are constantly weighed down by a sense of personal and unavoidable responsibility that arises from their existence in modern society; their actions, their successes and/or failures appear to themselves to be entirely their own responsibility. It is in this situation that they choose themselves as antisemites. Indeed, it is their opposition to the Jews that “fixes” them, or gives them a feeling of “stability”.

Sartre sees this choice as a strategy to cope with feelings of isolation, alienation and responsibility. He suggests it is a psychological response which gives rise to a “feeling”

³⁸ Hazel E. Barnes “Introduction” to *Search for a Method* (1968), Vantage Books, New York.

of community or group existence. It involves the rejection and devaluation of the principles on which that society is premised and their "projection" onto the Jews. In this way, therefore, the alienated individual creates for himself an alternative means of perceiving the world resplendent with its own set of principles and which give rise to an alternative way of being-in-the-world in which "community" is prioritised over individuality and is made cohesive by its antisemitic "confrontation" with the Jews.

However, one's subjective choice is always mediated by one's individual situation in society. The choice to become an antisemite, therefore, is narrowed through one's class position. It is for this reason that Sartre believes that it is only open to the middle-class to make that choice. Sartre argues that because of their relation to the means of production, the working-class perceive the social world in terms of the historical confrontation between classes premised upon laws that reflect this class's objectification and that govern the "things" or commodities upon which they work. Conversely, the middle-class, whose economic function Sartre describes as "non-productive" and who, therefore, relate to the world through their objective economic condition and subjective experience, perceive social relations and social developments as the outcome of the confrontation between groups of humans and their alleged attributes.

Because of their perspective that sees the world in terms of *human* synthesis, the world is for the middle-class divided into different categories of human groups, each with its own alleged particularistic "essence". Thus, for the antisemite, driven as he is by *ressentiment* and through which his own view of himself emerges as the personification of "good", the Jews become the essence of evil. As such, the Jews are "free" only to choose how to utilise that evil in their thought and actions. Through the prism of their perception, antisemite's of the middle-class have re-ordered the world in a Manichean struggle between good and evil with the community the embodiment of "good" and the Jew the embodiment of "evil". Sartre thus has defined for this class an alternative mode of "being together" which appears for them to have overcome the existential isolation and class insecurity produced by the objective conditions of bourgeois capitalist social relations. The central axis of this alternative community is its opposition to the Jews.

Sartre's explanation for why it was the Jews who were excluded from the community postulates a mythical relationship to the soil which neutralises bourgeois concepts of private property. As against abstract notions of property, the alienated and constantly economically threatened member of the middle-class imagines an alleged historical connection with that land that he believes constitutes what Sartre terms a "primitive" possession [1995; 23]. The value of such an imagining is that unlike bourgeois private property which is, in theory accessible to all through personal effort, primitive ownership is limited only to those of the alleged "historical (i.e. national) community"[1995; 79ff]. This imagined "nation", with its inherently limited membership premised upon inherited and ascriptive "rights", is posed against the openness (and struggle) of the universality and equality of modern society and the state.

Because this notion of possession resides on its purported connection with the past, it is by definition antisemitic since it points to a time before the Jews "entered history". Since the Jews were only granted admission to the modern body politic through their being granted the Rights of Citizen and Rights of Man in the late-18th and early 19th centuries, they are barred beforehand from this mythical connection between history and land. They therefore can never be a part of the alternative community, and become the scapegoat for the uncertainties of modern existence.

Furthermore, all notions of possession imply that one can be *dispossessed* or robbed. In the eyes of the antisemitic community the thief can only be the one who has no claim to "legitimate" possession - the Jews. And, as noted above, since the antisemite sees the Jews as the embodiment of evil it is evident that the primitive community must be on constant guard.

The perception of primitive ownership as an alternative to legal ownership is extended beyond the possession of land. Sartre argues that *all* objects come to be endowed with an alternative, intangible mythical value emanating from the alleged connection to the past that is deemed to capture its real significance beyond the spiritlessness of "objective" use and exchange value. Thus, the Jew can own objects *legally* and understand them *rationally*, but can never truly *possess* them or appreciate

them for what they “*really*” are. Indeed, Sartre argues that as soon as the Jew touches these things, the other, mystical value comes to the fore and automatically dispossesses the Jew. Thus, the potential (social) achievements and successes open to the Jew count for nothing in the face of the “true” possessors. Moreover, as noted above, this imaginative form of possession allows the “true countrymen” to possess and to participate in objects without responsibility and without the struggle necessary within the objective conditions of modern society. In this way, the alienated members of the middle-class, in their own imagination, become members of a “ruling-class”; a fact that could never occur objectively.

Not only modern forms of property ownership are discredited in this way. Other predicates of modernity such as reason, intelligence, labour and merit can be denigrated as “Jewish”, not only because they are the other to “primitive” values and so represent the only way Jews can own “things”, but also because they achieved their dominance in the social world at the same time (and were the means by which) Jews were emancipated. Consequently, from the perspective of the collectivity of antisemites, these “Jewish” values can never be accorded importance and the antisemites can turn their back on the dictates of modern society. The antisemite, now safely ensconced in a community and having successfully escaped the fact of responsibility, comes to associate modern society - its equality, its law, its rights, its property, its values and its difficulties - with the Jews.

Sartre’s account illustrates a theme common to many of the critical theoretical accounts of antisemitism: namely the way in which antisemitism replaces the alleged artificiality of the social world with naturalisation of the categories of antisemite and Jew. Thus, Sartre argues that

[the Jew] can never have the security of the “Aryan”, firmly established on his land and so certain of his property that he can even forget that he is a proprietor and see the bond that united him to his country as *natural* [1995; 133, emphasis in the original].

Additionally, from the antisemite’s perspective, whilst the Jew is the personification of the artifice of modernity, he is, simultaneously naturalised as the embodiment of an

evil that is beyond the control of subjective choice. The implication of this apparent contradiction is the antisemitic idea that “underneath” the modern *social Jew* there “lurks” the “true” (entirely “evil”) “true” and “unchanging” Jew.

At first sight, it is the democrat as representative of the universalism of the modern body politic, who should act as friend and defender of the Jews. However, not only do the principles of universal legal rights afford the Jews little protection, they are actually inimical to their safety. Sartre explains this paradox with reference to the contradictions that surround the Jews’ position in modern society. He notes that on the one hand, the Jew enters modern society as a “man” like all others; formally, he is treated as all others. On the other hand, the Jewish person is still perceived as a “Jew”. For Sartre, the Jews’ equivocal position arises because of the historical imagery that attaches to them as a group.³⁹

Prior to their emancipation, the Jews were seen as the loathed killers of Christ and, because of the medieval Church’s economic prohibitions, were identified with usury and money. Despite the rise of secularism and the end of such restrictions Sartre maintains that this anti-Jewish image remains. Thus, the Jews are over-determined in the modern social context, existing both as an abstract “man” and as a “Jew”.

The democrat will not take any action against the antisemite since antisemitism is perceived as an exercise of free speech and individual opinion and, as such, represents a fundamental “human” right (as evidenced in the various charters and declarations). Yet, Sartre illustrates that liberalism’s failure is far more pernicious than such a position of “neutrality” implies, and, in fact, threatens the Jews’ very existence. His argument rests on the ambivalent nature of the Jews’ position within a legally-based society premised upon formal (abstract) equality.

The threat is intensified in times of crisis which, Sartre argues, are concurrent with the predominance of antisemitism. At these periods, usually of social and political

³⁹ It is to be noted that this idea of historical imagery is to be distinguished from the antisemite’s imagined past.

disintegration, the rise of the nation is at its strongest. Fearful of its own demise, the state adopts an attitude of tolerance toward the antisemitic community in the name of “national unity”. Consequently, at the very moment that the Jews seek and need protection they are denied it. Instead, the Jews become the sacrificial lamb on the alter of unity. In this way, the nation usurps the state, particularity negates universality.

The democrat poses a threat to the Jews because that he can only recognise people through the concept of universal “man”. Consequently, it is beyond the perception of this believer in universality to even recognise a “Jewish Question”. Indeed, the notion of a collective (of the Jews) fills the democrat with fear lest it awake a *particularist* consciousness within the midst of a universalist society. Thus, liberalism attempts to separate the individual from his concrete relations of which religion and “ethnicity” are specific aspects “in order to plunge him into the democratic crucible whence he will emerge naked and alone, an individual and solitary particle like all other particles.” [1995; 57].

It is for this reason that, as the title of this chapter makes clear, the Jews of modernity are for Sartre, caught between rights and *ressentiment*,

The anti-Semite reproaches the Jew with *being Jewish*; the democrat reproaches him wilfully with *considering himself* a Jew. Between his enemy and his defender, the Jew is in a difficult situation: apparently he can do no more than choose the sauce with which he will be devoured...For a Jew, conscious and proud of being Jewish, asserting his claim to be a member of the Jewish community without ignoring on that account the bonds which unite him to the national community, there may not be so much difference between the anti-Semite and the democrat. The former wishes to destroy him as a man and leave nothing in him but the Jew, the pariah, the untouchable; the latter wishes to destroy him as a Jew and leave nothing in him but the man, the abstract and universal subject of the rights of man and the rights of citizen [1995; 58, 57, emphasis in the original].

It is for these reasons that the Jews are caught between rights and *ressentiment*, state and nation. Thus, whilst Jews are theoretically free to attain all or any social and political position and honour as universal rights-bearing individuals, they nonetheless, at one and the same time, remain Jews. This gives rise to the contradiction of a *Jewish* businessman, a *Jewish* politician, etc.. Therefore, just at the moment of social or

political success, the nation, “amorphous, diffused, omnipresent - appears before him as if in brief flashes of lightning and refuses to take him in” [1995; 80]. The Jew, therefore, can never escape his situation of being a Jew.

Sartre argues that this situation of being a Jew arises as a product of the antisemitic imagination. As a consequence, it appears to the antisemite and their national community as the embodiment of all those values of modern society that give rise to their avenues of flight. The creation of a distinct group of “the Jews “, placed in the position of the pariah or “other”, for Sartre does not imply complete passivity. In keeping with his methodological premises, he argues that Jewish agency is limited to that of *responding* to their (“objectively” created⁴⁰) situation of being cast as the Jews. As I shall explain, this response can take one of two forms, “inauthenticity” or “authenticity”.

Sartre’s thesis begins from the assumption that there is nothing inherent in a Jew to make them a Jew. A Jew is not different from a non-Jew in any substantive way. Rather, the Jew arises through their being *labelled* as a Jew by others (the antisemites) and it is precisely this marking of the Jew as a Jew that places them in a *situation* of being a Jew. However, whereas the antisemite can choose from within their own situation to be an antisemite or not, the Jew has no such freedom. To be a Jew, in other words, is not within the realm of their choice. Rather, the only choice available to the Jew is, as noted above, how to respond?

Sartre characterises one of the two possible responses as “authentic”. Authenticity is defined as

[h]aving a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate [1995; 90].

Choosing “authenticity”, therefore, means the Jew overtly accepting their situation of being a Jew and living in a manner that refuses to deny that fact.⁴¹

⁴⁰ “objective” in the sense that it not of their choosing.

⁴¹ It is to be noted, however, that Sartre does not fully develop what it means to live “authentically”.

Conversely, acting "inauthentically" is an attempt to deny the condition of being "the Jew". The inauthentic Jew attempts to flee from his situation as Jew and the responsibility that flows from it. Sartre argues that the goal of this flight is to deny one's "situation of a Jew" [1995; 93]. The paradoxical result of this attempt at escape, however, is to affirm the situation of his "Jewishness". The inauthentic Jew internalises what is placed upon him externally - he looks in to himself to "identify" his Jewishness so as to deny it. Thus, the inauthentic Jew accepts as his starting point the antisemite's claim that there is something distinctive about him as a Jew, even though those distinctive Jewish traits are only imagined by the antisemites. The consequence of the attempt to deny these imaginary traits is to reproduce them by *imagining* that he sees them in himself and in all other Jews.

Sartre notes that a further consequence of the inauthenticity of denial is for the Jew to adhere unremittingly to the idea of modern Enlightenment values and to deny the existence of any remnant of particularism or superstition. For example, the Jew will value wealth measured according to the universal value of money since

[a]ppropriation by purchase does not depend on the race of the buyer; it does not vary with his idiosyncracies. The *price* of the object is set in reference to *any* buyer, who is set apart only by the fact that he has the amount written on the ticket. And when the sum is paid, the buyer is legally proprietor of the object. Thus property by purchase is an abstract and universal form of proprietorship, in contrast to the singular and irrational ownership by participation. [1995; 126-127, emphasis in the original].

However, the more the Jew values universality, the more the antisemite will affirm the mystical values he perceives as giving rise to "true", or historical possession. In this way, therefore, the clash of values between law and nation, rights and *ressentiment*, will not only remain, but will actually increase. Again, therefore, the Jews' denial of their being in the situation of the Jew feeds into and increases antisemitism.

Thus, for Sartre, the attempt at negation and denial is ultimately futile. Being in the situation of a Jew, like one's Jewishness itself, is not self-determined, but is determined by others, and these others will not allow the Jew to escape his situation. The outcome of this attempt, however, is that one creates a means of identifying oneself and others as

Jews, and so, unwittingly, re-affirms a Jewish collectivity of "Others", perpetuating the dialectic of Antisemite and Jew and therefore antisemitism. In internally misrecognizing oneself as "Jewish", one legitimises the external marking by the antisemite.

In the concluding passages of *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre proposes a programme of action to combat antisemitism. Ultimately, his goal is one of assimilation: the membership in a nation premised upon an inclusive and "authentic" nationalism. Yet, achieving this aim is, he believes, only possible with a structural change in objective social and political conditions which result in ending the conditions of alienation in which the individual can choose to be an antisemite. Such a change would be brought about by working-class revolutionary *praxis*. Seeing this transformation as a possibility only for the future, Sartre advocates certain temporary measures that will not only hasten its arrival, but also would allow Jews to live authentically.

What we propose here is a concrete liberalism. By that we mean that all persons who through their work collaborate toward the greatness of a country have the full rights of that country. What gives them this right is not the possession of a problematical and abstract "human nature", but their active participation in the life of the society. This means, then, that the Jews - and likewise the Arabs and the Negroes - from the moment that they are participants in the national enterprise, have a right in that enterprise; they are citizens. But they have these rights *as* Jews, Negroes, or Arabs - that is, as concrete persons [1995; 146].

Finally, Sartre identifies the central theme and objective of his thesis; the reversal of the "Jewish Question" into one of the antisemite:

Richard Wright, the Negro writer said recently: There is no Negro problem in the United States, there is only a White problem. In the same way, we must say that anti-Semitism is *our* problem. Since we are not guilty and run the risk of being its victims - yes, we too - we must be very blind indeed not to see that it our concern in the highest degree. It is not up to the Jews first of all to form a militant league against anti-Semitism; it is up to us [1995; 152].

Sartre insists throughout that the emergence of antisemitism must be understood through a critique of the nature of modernity itself. For Sartre, antisemitism enters the world through its negative relationship with the *praxis* of modern social and political relations. Sartre thus understand antisemitism as a product of *ressentiment* brought

about by the limits and deficiencies of the Enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality mediated through the legal notion of rights.

This methodological approach that brings to light certain problems with his explanation of antisemitism. As I have discussed, Sartre understands antisemitism as arising through a *subjective* response to *objective* conditions. The implication of this thesis is that the objective conditions themselves, i.e. social and legal relations, do not of *themselves* contain any ambivalence between equality and inequality or the universality of emancipation and the particularity of antisemitism. Rights and *ressentiment* in other words, are located in two related, but ultimately distinct spheres. This division is itself reflected in Sartre's idea that antisemitism arises from within the *imagination* of the antisemite.

A question can also be raised as to whether Sartre has not over-compensated in *Anti-Semite and Jew* for the criticisms that were levelled against his thought as it appeared in *Being and Nothingness*. In *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre appears to come close to arguing that it is one's class position that *determines* whether one can be an antisemite or not. As such, it appears that one's objective position within the relations of production is the determining factor in creating the antisemite and that one's subjective choice is correspondingly determined by the laws which govern that objective structure. Again, such a perspective is further evidenced by his rather bold statement that the working class cannot be antisemitic because of *their* relationship to the means of production and the laws that govern that productive system. In other words, Sartre never quite breaks free, despite his intentions, of a "base/superstructure" thesis of antisemitism, in which the economic base determines the superstructure.

These comments relate to another potential weakness in Sartre's account. His explanation of the emergence of the antisemite and their retreat into a collective, contains an echo of Nietzsche's analysis of the emergence of *ressentiment* in the face of the harshness of autonomy. Sartre states:

Antisemitism, in short is fear of the human condition. The anti-Semite is a man who wishes to be a pitiless stone, a furious torrent, a devastating thunderbolt - anything except a man [1995; 54].

The most distinct difference, however, between the two approaches is that Sartre *fixes* the categories that he argues have emerged. This difference is reflected in Sartre's idea that once the choice has been made, it becomes the very being of the individual, so that one's whole essence then is, in this case, antisemitic *or* Jewish *or* democratic. In Sartre's account, therefore, one *is* either or one *is not* an antisemite. Conversely, in Nietzsche, there is very much evident the idea that the dialectic between rights and *ressentiment* and its outburst as antisemitism is always in question. One never knows, or can know, beforehand who will or who will not turn antisemitic, who will or will not be cast in the roles of oppressor and oppressed.⁴² (This is a point Sartre disqualifies with his avowal that the working-class could not become antisemites). Sartre's theoretical understanding appears to contradict many empirical accounts of those in Germany who could not believe that so many of their "friends" and acquaintances should suddenly walk passed them on the street.⁴³

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Sartre's explanation of antisemitism is his idea that the Jews only exist in modernity as "the Jews" through the imaginings of the antisemite. Hannah Arendt, for example, criticises Sartre for this view [Arendt, 1979; xv].

Richard Bernstein, however, argues that Sartre is merely referring to the way in which the antisemite creates the Jew as *a pariah*, as the Other of modernity.⁴⁴ [Bernstein, 1996; 195-197]. Michael Waltzer's view on the controversy [Sartre, 1995; xixff] is that Sartre's political goal is the assimilation of *all* in the name of an "authentic" inclusive and humanist nation, in which the Jews will lose their particular characteristics and, the logic of this view supports Arendt's criticism. Consequently, the relationship between the concept of "the Jews" and flesh and blood Jews is absent from Sartre's thinking.

⁴² For a discussion of Nietzsche account of the relationship of *ressentiment* and antisemitism, see above: Chapter 2.

⁴³ This point is referred to in one of Adorno's reflections of his life in pre-war Germany.

⁴⁴ Bernstein also points to the similarity between Sartre's category of "authentic" and "inauthentic" Jew and Arendt's "pariah" and "parvenu". See Bernstein; 1996; 195-196]

Despite this criticism, Sartre has refused to rely upon an ahistorical and asocial notion of either the Jew or the antisemite. As such, his understanding remains clearly in line with his method that insists that such concepts cannot be found before and outside the phenomenon under discussion and then “simply” *applied*. He is clear that they are part of the phenomenon.

Finally, one can challenge Sartre’s insistence that the answer to the problem of antisemitism is assimilation. It could be argued that, at least at this point in his writing, Sartre was “situated” within a specifically French tradition which emerged from the experience of the French Revolution. This revolutionary tradition includes the notion of an inclusive citizenship premised upon legal rights regardless of one’s alleged “ethnicity”. It is, perhaps, this fact that accounts for Sartre’s call for all to be included in the French state provided that they work toward “the greatness of the country”.

Sartre does not accept this tradition uncritically, however, and highlights the contradictions that have emerged since the Revolution within and between the once all embracing concept of “nation-state”. Sartre’s enquiry is to a certain extent fuelled by this observation and he questions how this once unified concept came to separate and the separated elements come to confront each other in a spirit of animosity.. It is also within this confrontation, of course, that he addresses the question of antisemitism.

As we shall see in the following chapter, Hannah Arendt’s thesis on antisemitism takes Sartre to task, (both explicitly and implicitly) on the last two points - the idea that “the Jews” only continue to exist in modernity through the *praxis* of the antisemite; and, that antisemitism can be explained within the theoretical confines of the nation-state.

Chapter 5

Hannah Arendt: The Genealogy of Antisemitism

It was in the immediate shadow of the holocaust that Hannah Arendt addressed the question of antisemitism and developed an understanding of it that stood apart from conventional liberal assumptions.

First, she was critical of what she termed theories of "eternal antisemitism" which maintain that from time immemorial (or at least since the birth of Christianity) Jews have always been hated and persecuted by Gentiles and that there was accordingly nothing radically new about this latest outburst. This way of addressing the question, she argued, ignores the determinate character of modern, political antisemitism and its difference from all previous forms of antisemitism.

Second, she was critical of 'scapegoat' theories which ignore the question of "why the Jews?" in favour of a general theory of the need for or functions of scapegoating. This way of understanding antisemitism, she argued, was incapable of addressing the specificity of Jews as victims of extermination. She looked to an approach in which Jews cease to be the "innocent victim whom the world blames for all its sins" and become instead "one group of people among other groups, all of whom are involved in the business of this world" [1979; 6]. She emphasises human responsibility, including Jewish responsibility for antisemitism. Thus, the Jews do not cease to be co-responsible simply because they become victims of the world's injustice.

Third, she was critical of 'victimisation' theories which focus exclusively on the antisemite without taking into account the agency and actions of Jews themselves. These theories, she argued, can only treat Jews as objects of history, never as its purposeful and responsible subjects, and imply the 'complete innocence' of the victims in a way that denies Jews their own role in human history.

Fourth, Arendt was critical of theories of antisemitism, sometimes put forward by antisemites themselves, which explain it as the product of the undue political influence or monetary wealth of Jews. Drawing on an observation made by de Tocqueville, Arendt argued that at no time is a group more vulnerable than when they suffer a "rapid loss of real power not accompanied by any considerable decline in their fortunes" [1979; 4]. It is at this point, when wealth is dissociated from power, de Tocqueville argued in relation to the French aristocracy, that a previously tolerated group is viewed with particular resentment,

neither oppression nor exploitation as such is ever the main cause for resentment; wealth without visible function is much more intolerable because nobody can understand why it should be tolerated [1979; 4]

Arendt argued that antisemitism followed similar lines: the Jews were attacked most when they had lost their special political functions vis-à-vis the old nation states.

The remarkable similarity of arguments and images which time and again were spontaneously reproduced have an intimate relationship with the truth they distort. We find the Jews always represented as an international trade organisation, a world-wide family concern with identical interests everywhere, a secret force behind the throne that degrades all visible governments into mere facade, or into marionettes whose strings are manipulated from behind the scenes. Because of their close relationship to state sources of power, the Jews were invariably identified with power, and because of their aloofness from society and concentration upon the closed circle of the family, they were invariably suspected of working for the destruction of all social structures [1979; 28]

The thesis that at one time some Jews exercised a useful function which offered them wealth and power, and that at some later point they lost power but retained their wealth, was clearly meant to apply unequally to Jews. The great Jewish financiers, for example, had been a tiny minority.

This leads directly onto the sixth point: Arendt's criticism of theories of antisemitism which treat it as an extreme form of ethnic nationalism. She argued that the rise of modern, political antisemitism was in an inverse relationship to the decline of nationalism and the nation-state. "The fact is", she wrote, that "modern antisemitism grew in proportion as traditional nationalism declined and reached its climax at the exact moment when the European system of nation-states and its precarious balance

of power crashed" [1979; 3]. The Jews were resented as representatives of the nation-state by those who came to be excluded from it.

Seventh, Arendt was critical of theories of antisemitism, like those to be found within a Marxist canon, whose focus on class relations and capitalist dynamics leaves no space for an understanding of the centrality of antisemitism in the development of modern politics:

Twentieth-century political developments have driven the Jewish people into the storm centre of events; the Jewish Question and antisemitism, relatively unimportant phenomena in terms of world politics, became the catalytic agent first for the rise of the Nazi movement and the establishment of the organisational structure of the Third Reich, in which every citizen had to prove that he was not a Jew, then for a world war of unparalleled ferocity, and finally the emergence of the unprecedented crime of genocide in the midst of Occidental civilisation [1979, 3]

However, and this is the eighth point, Arendt was also critical of theories of antisemitism which divorce the phenomenon from 'wider' issues of the development of imperialism and totalitarianism. In its modern political form, antisemitism becomes increasingly separated from any internal history of Jewish - Gentile relations and its ideological function increasingly loses contact with any reality:

The emergence of the first antisemitic parties in the 1870's and 1880's marks the moment when the limited, factual basis of interest conflict and demonstrable experience was transcended, and that road opened which ended in the "final solution". From then on, in the era of imperialism, followed by the period of totalitarian movements and governments, it is no longer possible to isolate the Jewish question or the antisemitic ideology from issues that are actually almost completely unrelated to the realities of modern Jewish history. And this is not merely and not primarily because these matters played such a prominent role in world affairs, but because antisemitism was now being used for ulterior purposes that, though their implementation finally claimed Jews as their chief victims, left all particular issues of both Jewish and anti-Jewish interest far behind [1979; xvi]

Ninth, Arendt was critical of theories which reify the idea of 'the Jews' as if this corresponded unproblematically to an empirically verifiable and distinguishable group of people. Whether conceived religiously, culturally or ethnically, she argued that the same historical processes which gave birth to modern antisemitism also disaggregated the unity of Jews. The category of the Jews was certainly not simply the product of

modern antisemitism (as it sometimes seemed to be presented in the writing of Jean-Paul Sartre) but modern antisemitism reconstituted 'the Jews' as a unitary category precisely at the point when the process of dissolution of Jews into citizens was gathering pace. If the concept of 'the Jews' was not created by the antisemitic imagination, it was certainly fostered by it.

Tenth, and lastly, Arendt argued that

nearly all elements [of antisemitism] that later crystallised in the novel totalitarian phenomenon... had hardly been noticed by either learned or public opinion because they belonged to a subterranean stream of European history where, hidden from the light of the public and the attention of enlightened men, they had been able to gather an entirely unexpected virulence [1979; xv]

In other words, it was because antisemitism was largely hidden from history, except for a few "non-Jewish crackpots and Jewish apologetics" [1979; xv], that its virulence was so unexpected.

This reference to "a subterranean stream...hidden from the light...." indicates why the choice has been made to explicate Arendt's thinking on antisemitism as a *genealogy*. It is a genealogy, first, because it investigates one incident or event and identifies several distinct strands or elements of that incident that can be pulled apart. When combined they produce the outcome which is the subject of investigation. In the present case, that event is the "Dreyfus Affair" and the following eruption of antisemitism that occurred in France at the turn of the twentieth century. Arendt's approach can be described as a genealogy because it uncovers those distinct strands that were previously hidden from history.

The elements that Arendt identifies in the Dreyfus Affair are in fact the political and social principles that were believed to bring into the world freedom and security. Consequently, concepts such as "emancipation", "equality" and "rights" are interrogated so as to bring to light their meaning within the modern phenomenon of antisemitism. Arendt understands antisemitism as arising from within the framework of modernity itself, as the consequence of the "normal functioning" of these Enlightenment and liberal principles. However, unlike those before her, such as

Nietzsche, who offers a radical critique of morality, finally calling for its overcoming, Arendt adopts a far more measured and ambivalent stance to these principles. In this way, Arendt differs from many of those who came after her, such as Bauman who understands antisemitism as *inherent* in those principles. Rather, Arendt identifies *tendencies* in these principles whose negativity could only emerge when put into play through the *praxis* of historically located actors. The potentiality that is implicit within Arendt's genealogical method is reflected in her insistence that the outcome as to whether freedom or barbarity would prevail could be stated *a priori*.

The event that formed a centre-point for Arendt's investigation into antisemitism was the Dreyfus Affair that took place in France at the turn of the 19th century. She saw it as a "kind of dress rehearsal for the performance of our own time" [1979; 10] which demonstrated the 'hidden potentialities of antisemitism as a major political weapon within the framework of nineteenth-century politics'[1979; 10]. It was around the common denominator of antisemitism, expressed in the street-cry of 'Death to the Jews', that an otherwise disparate collection of groups - the Catholic clergy, the army, the aristocracy, the haute-bourgeoisie, the mob and the déclassé - could cohere. The unholy alliance contained those ruined by financial scandals of the late 19th century: the déclassé middle classes whose investments in government schemes had collapsed in a welter of incompetence, lies and bribery. The fact that Jews only played an insignificant role did not rob them of the illusion that they were to blame and that the Jews were the real power 'behind the throne'. It also contained those who never accepted the legitimacy of the new nation-state and the principles of political equality on which it rested. Included under this category were the clergy, army officers and aristocracy whose animosity to Jews was fuelled not only by their gaining of political equality but also by their presence in the world of 'society'. It was this aspect of 'the Affair' that was expressed in the idea of 'Jewishness' as a racial characteristic that could be overcome neither by political equality nor by social assimilation. Finally, there were the bourgeoisie themselves who, although not driven by any direct conflict with Jews, were happy to see the blame for financial scandals placed upon the Jews and unwilling to act in their defence.

Arendt therefore sees the Dreyfus Affair as representing a coming together of political and social factors. She sees the Jews' political emancipation as complicated. The Jews' developing relationship with the nation-state at the end of the 19th century appeared to be one marked by equality, but a combination of political factors ensured that that appearance was all it was. Additionally, although the political element determined the emergence of antisemitism, Arendt maintains that it is the social elements, and its relationship to the political, that creates antisemitism's genocidal tendencies.

Beneath the superficial appearance that Jews were now equal rights-bearing persons, Arendt argues that civil and political rights were granted to Jews only inasmuch as they were Jews and performed specific services – mainly in the form of providing much needed financial resources – to the states which granted them these rights. At one level this continued an old tradition in which every Royal House would have its own 'Court Jew', but with the development of modern state machinery the size of financial support was vastly increased and the 'state-Jews', as Arendt called them, could only find the quantities needed through organising the Jewish masses under their leadership. Consequently, both the states in question and their Jewish financiers were wary of complete Jewish emancipation for fear that as a body they would simply dissolve into the classes of civil society. The Jewish financiers demanded and the states offered equality as a reward for services rendered; on the other hand, both states and financiers sought to retain a distinct set of Jewish 'privileges'. Arendt argued that it was from this early history of bourgeois society that antisemitic images of the Jews were drawn: the identification of Jews with the state, the Jews as the secret power behind the throne, the Jews as a unitary and self-regarding entity outside of the nation, the Jews as a group that was privileged over the rest of the population, and the state as acting on behalf of Jewish interests. Since the large Jewish financial houses, like the House of Rothschild, had offices in many different countries, it also gave rise to the idea that the Jews were an international force, manipulating nation-states to their own purposes. The notion of a 'Jewish World Conspiracy', most famously expressed in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, emerged out of the role of Jews serving as channels of communication and peace-brokers in times of international conflict. These images, which represented a negative and selective reading of the real history of the Jews in

early bourgeois society, took on a force of their own when toward the end of the 19th century the rise of imperialism made the function of Jews redundant and Jews became perceived as traitors and enemy agents.

Thus with the defeat of Prussia by the French in 1807 and the ensuing period of reform, the Prussian aristocracy, resenting its loss of political power and prestige, began to argue that the state was now in Jewish hands. When the period of reaction began after 1815, liberals and radicals often turned anti-Jewish, claiming that under the new regime privileges were being granted to the Jews. In the 1870s and 1880s, when many of the middle classes lost their savings in a series of financial scandals, they pointed to the culpability of Jews as international bankers and financiers without commitment to any nation other than their own. The irony of this last period was that, at a time when the Jews were losing their position as state-financiers and as international mediators, they were finally being granted full political rights. De Tocqueville's general rule, that a privileged man is best kicked when he is down, seemed to be validated.

Arendt first introduced the relationship between political and social factors through the 'garret' of Rahel Varnhagen at the turn of the 18th century. At a time when Jews suffered stringent legal and political disabilities, the world of 'society' was described by Arendt in terms of "almost unbounded communication and intimacy" between individuals regardless of religion or rank [1979; 60]. However, when German Jews began (albeit unevenly) to be granted political emancipation under the post-Napoleonic reforming bureaucracy, 'society' began to ditch its Jewish contacts and relocate itself in the homes of the now disenfranchised aristocracy and higher echelons of the army. From this time on, Arendt argued, social relations between Jews and Gentiles never recovered their innocence.

With the early idyll of a mixed society something disappeared which was never, in any country and at any other time, to return. Never again did any social group accept Jews with a free mind and heart. It would be friendly with Jews either because it was excited at its own daring and "wickedness" or as a protest against making pariahs of

fellow-citizens. But social pariahs the Jews did become wherever they had ceased to be political and civil outcasts.

Arendt argued that the early idyll of a mixed society was from the start illusory and in fact premised upon the concept of the 'exceptional Jews', especially those who had distinguished themselves from their co-religionists in the field of education, who were Jewish but at the same time different from the others. The 'exceptional Jew' expressed for Arendt an unhealthy mixture of attraction and repulsion that 'society' felt toward Jews, as well as the cost to Jews themselves (like Rahel Varnhagen) who were allowed to play the role of the parvenu only at the expense of breaking with the people of their birth. Arendt's story of Rahel Varnhagen concerned the unhappiness of a parvenu life in which she was never allowed to forget her Jewish birth and was tortured by the memory of it. She lived in a kind of 'no-man's land' where she was both separated from 'her own people' and never secure within her adopted setting.

It was only when Jews were granted political emancipation, Arendt argued, that all strata of society began no longer to see exceptional Jews but the Jews as a group of whom the state was ready to make an exception. It was still easy for educated Jews to be distinguished and to distinguish themselves from the Jewish masses, but it became more difficult once Jews who wished to be admitted into non-Jewish society, had to stand out against the phantom of "the Jew".

No longer would it suffice to distinguish oneself from a more or less unknown mass of "backward brethren"; one had to stand out - as an individual who could be congratulated on being an exception - from "the Jew", and thus from the people as a whole [1979; 61]

Arendt saw in this social process the beginnings of the 'Jewish type' as an assemblage of "psychological traits" said to constitute 'Jewishness':

The behaviour patterns of assimilated Jews, determined by this continuous concentrated effort to distinguish themselves, created a Jewish type that is recognisable everywhere. Instead of being defined by nationality or religion, Jews were being transformed into a social group whose members shared certain psychological attributes and reactions, the sum total of which constituted 'Jewishness'. In other words, Judaism became a psychological quality and the Jewish Question an involved personal problem for every individual Jew [1979; 66].

The idea that 'being Jewish' is an innate essence first came to light when the educated Jew was forced to live in the space 'between pariah and parvenu' and come to terms with his 'homelessness' from both Gentile and Jewish society:

The majority of assimilated Jews thus lived in twilight of favour and misfortune and knew with certainty only that both success and failure were inextricably linked with the fact that they were Jews [1979; 66].

It was a difficult balance and the Jew had to present himself both as Jew and non-Jew. It was a balance that was important to maintain, however, because "it was precisely this ambiguity of situation and character that made the relationship with the Jews attractive" [1979; 66]. The Jews themselves fostered the myth of being 'strange and exciting', as if their Jewishness really did exist and was worthy of universal interest.

The concept of "Jewishness" as a racial characteristic, however, only became an integral part of antisemitic ideology at a time when Jewish emancipation into a disintegrating political world was occurring. At this time, the dialectic of attraction and repulsion toward Jews continued, for the doors of society could not resist accepting Jews on the basis of their 'secret vice', and the more Jews were threatened politically, the more society became interested in them. It seems that society's ambiguous attitude to the Jews could be satisfied only when they were held responsible for some large-scale crime, such as the alleged betrayal committed by Dreyfus, who appeared interesting until he was found not to be guilty. Then he could be quickly dropped. The section of gentile society that was most interested in these newcomers was the bourgeoisie, whose lack of concern with political issues and feelings of boredom and ennui could be remedied by the presence of Jews.

When one Jew's guilt (as in the case of Dreyfus) could be attributed to all others, the concept of 'Jewishness' had arrived. The idea of 'guilt' was itself transformed into 'vice' - that is, "from an act of will into an inherent, psychological quality which man cannot choose or reject but which is imposed upon him from without and which rules him as compulsively as the drug rules the addict" [1979; 68]. If in the past "Jews had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion, from Jewishness there was no

escape. A crime is met with punishment [but] a vice can only be exterminated [1979; 81].

Jews themselves played a part in this process:

If it is true that "Jewishness" could not have been perverted into an interesting vice without a prejudice which considered it a crime, it is also true that such perversion was made possible by those Jews who considered it an innate virtue [1979; 83]

On the one hand, the parvenu plays up his "Jewishness" so as to gain social acceptance; on the other, beneath the apparent tolerance of Jews society did not lose its instinct for hierarchy. The more equality was realised as a principle of political life, the more secretly was society rendered hierarchical [1979; 86]. The more threatened the Jews were politically, the more ambiguous was the philosemitism which "ends always by adding to political antisemitism that mysterious fanaticism without which antisemitism could hardly have become the best slogan for organising the masses [1979; 86]. Moreover, a genocidal instinct born of social resentment is multiplied by what Arendt calls a "psychological truth in the scapegoat theory" [1979; 86]. If and when antisemitic episodes actually lead to antisemitic legislation (as in Germany), the society that had "accepted" Jews will seek to purge themselves "of a secret viciousness, to cleanse themselves of a stigma which they had mysteriously and wickedly loved" [1979; 86].

Arendt brought to the surface the origins of antisemitism in the political and social history of Jewish emancipation. Her genealogy of antisemitism (Seymour 1999) referred to that which was 'unaccounted for in political history, hidden under the surface of events' [1979; xv]. A purely political history of the causes of antisemitism might have explained anti-Jewish legislation or even mass expulsion, but hardly wholesale extermination. Modern antisemitic ideology came to the fore when the nation-state, the bulwark of the old political order, was in the throes of disintegration and an ever-increasing number of people were excluded from the structures of the state and civil society. That these elements should crystallise around antisemitism was explained not only as the consequence of the fact that the Jews appeared to represent

that political body, but also by the fact that, when emancipation and assimilation were finally granted, they were based on entry into an increasingly antisemitic and hostile world. Stripped of any useful function as possessors of wealth without power, the Jews were more exposed to danger than before. It was at this moment that antisemitism lost almost any connection with the reality of the world.

Devoid of any contact with the empirical world, antisemitism crystallised into an ideology and became one element amongst others in the new totalitarian world, of which the mass killings of the Third Reich was a part. Whilst this later development is beyond the scope of the current study, one aspect of the "final catastrophe" is of relevance in the present context. Why, Arendt asks, did the institution of rights fail to protect the Jews and others once antisemitism had become an "origin of totalitarianism"?; why, when those outcast from their body-politic had nothing else to rely upon, did they appear to crumble as so many pieces of paper?

In the section of the *Origins* entitled "The Perplexities of the Rights of Man", Arendt discusses this problem in detail. Her thesis is that from their inception, human rights, as encapsulated within the "Rights of Man" had always been inescapably bound up with the "right of the people to sovereign self-government",

man had hardly appeared as a completely emancipated isolated being who carried his dignity within himself without reference to some larger encompassing order, when he disappeared again into a member of a people. From the beginning the paradox involved in the declaration of inalienable human rights was that it was reckoned with an "abstract" human being who seemed to exist nowhere, for even savages lived in some kind of a social order [1979; 291].

However, this paradox only fully came to light at precisely the moment that people appeared in the world whose only claim to protection rested precisely on these "abstract" human rights. Thus, as Arendt observes, even before one could claim their human rights, one first needed to possess a "right to have rights" - a "right to belong to some kind of organised community" [1979; 296, 297]. Yet, it was exactly this fundamental, prior and hitherto invisible "*grundnorm*" that those cast out from their place of residence were lacking. Without membership of a sovereign state, therefore,

human rights, hitherto believed to be "inalienable", were unenforceable and to all intents and purposes, meaningless.

Arendt argues that it was not so much the dispossessed's exclusion from one body politic that was to prove fatal to so many, but rather that no space remained in the world that was not incorporated within the system of nations,

[n]obody had been aware that mankind, for so long a time considered under the image of a family of nations, had reached the stage where whoever was thrown out of these tightly organised closed communities found himself thrown out of the family of nations altogether [1979; 294]

That the loss of membership from one's own national community led to such complete exclusion arose also from the fact that within this tightly knit family, each body politic was connected with others through various international treaties, the consequence of which was that a person's legal status, provided by their initial citizenship, travelled with the person themselves. As such, "whoever is no longer caught [in the web spun by this organisation of nations] finds himself out of legality altogether" [1979; 294]. From that moment on, in a world where "the loss of polity itself expels [a person] from humanity" [1979; 297], one's continued existence, one's life, is no longer guaranteed, but depends either on the kindness and charity of others, or is ended by those who had ensured that the verdict of "superfluosity" they had passed on these people was shared with others. In this way,

because the incredible plight of an ever-growing group of innocent people was like a practical demonstration of the totalitarian movements' cynical claims that no such thing as inalienable rights existed and that the affirmations of the democracies to the contrary were mere prejudice, hypocrisy, and cowardice in the face of the cruel majesty of a new world. The very phrase "human rights" became for all concerned - victims, persecutors, and onlookers alike - the evidence of hopeless idealism or fumbling feeble-minded hypocrisy [1979; 269]

Despite her critique of the limitations of human rights, Arendt maintains that they are still of significance for the development of a civilised world. Following Aristotle, Arendt characterises a truly *human* life as one spent within a political community, a sphere in which rights and equality are both desirable and necessary. Indeed, she notes that the first step the Nazis took on their way to extermination was to deprive Jews of

their political and civil rights. Thus, Arendt notes the correspondence between the denial of rights and the loss of civilisation.

Arendt's critique of rights must be read in the context of the development that arose as a consequence of imperialism whereby the nation subsumed the function of the state, and in which the universality of rights was replaced with the particularity of ethnicity as the mark of membership. Correspondingly, Arendt makes a distinction between the realm of public life and the realm of private life. Whilst in public, i.e. political life, relations between citizens should be governed by the principles of equality, justice and rights, within the realm of private life, in which individuals' innate uniqueness cannot and should not be suppressed, these political principles are inapplicable. Instead, relations in private life,

can adequately be dealt with only by the unpredictable hazards of friendship and sympathy, or by the great and incalculable grace of love, which says with Augustine, "*Volo ut sis* (I want you to be)", without being able to give any particular reason for such supreme and unsurpassable affirmation. [1979; 301]⁴⁵

Arendt argues, however, that the equality of the political realm, in contradistinction to the naturalness that should prevail in the private realm, is itself a product of the human artifice, of the act of human labour in and through the "build[ing] of a common world" [1979; 301] which can only be accomplished by those recognised as equals.

However, such a construction of equality at the level of the private is not only misplaced but threatens to eradicate the natural uniqueness which inheres in each and every individual and which can only thrive outside such principles of equality and universal rights. Nonetheless, Arendt argues that it is precisely this naturalness that comes to represent the greatest fear to the hubris of a humanity who increasingly comes to believe that nothing is itself beyond their own powers,

[t]he more highly developed a civilisation, the more accomplished the world it has produced, the more at home men feel within the human artifice - the more they will resent everything they have not produced, everything that is merely and mysteriously given them [1979; 300, 301]

⁴⁵ For an intricate and interesting discussion of Arendt's relationship to the thought of Augustine, see: *Love and Saint Augustine* Hannah Arendt, (1996) London: University of Chicago Press.

Thus, to reduce the fear that innate difference produces in the realm of the "human artifice", the modern body politic will insist on the "ethnic homogeneity" of their population. Within this context, those who are, or, rather, are said to be different will come to represent the limits of human activity and act as a provocation to the alleged omnipotence of "civilised man", who will treat that incitement with a "distinct tendency to destroy"[1979; 301].⁴⁶

This fear and resentment of the "alien", of the different and the unique (i.e. natural) which, in an increasingly nationally (i.e. ethnically), divided world can only produce increasing violence is further fuelled by the appearance of large numbers of rightless individuals. Those deprived of the right to have rights, unable to claim any affiliation to a body politic, will be left with nothing other than their basic "humanness". In this situation, such an expression refers to nothing more than a claim to the "minimum fact of their human origin" and, as such, have only the "right of the naked savage" [1979; 300].⁴⁷ Deprived of a truly human (i.e. political) existence, these "savages" are thrown back into a "peculiar state of nature", where their only attributes are the unique and natural attributes granted them through the accident of their births. Thus, from the perspective of those in whose midst of those in whose midst they find themselves, they come to embody the difference of nature thought to have been finally defeated. As such, they will call down upon themselves the resentful violence of those threatened by such an appearance.

And it is at this point that Arendt notes the emergence of a modern vicious circle. The more civilisation produces savages, the more it produces barbarians who, in turn, produce more savages and so on. As she states,

[t]he danger is that a global, universally interrelated civilisation may produce barbarians from its own midst by forcing millions of people into conditions which, despite all appearance, are the conditions of savages [1979; 302]

As a historical explanation, Arendt's was of course incomplete. Thus the Jews of whom Arendt wrote were confined to a small section of the Jewish 'community' as a

⁴⁶ This theme of civilisation and naturalness is developed and radicalised in the thought of Adorno and Horkheimer and Zygmunt Bauman; see below: chapters 5 and 7 respectively

⁴⁷ Thomas Payne's introduction to Edward Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Quoted in Arendt.

whole: its financial and intellectual elite. They were the ones living between "pariah and parvenu", the space which gave rise to a specific "Jewish type" that was to have such devastating consequences. The inference could be made that here this "type" was in fact a product of embryonic antisemitism. To a great degree this is correct. However, it is also the case that in keeping with her determination to allocate to Jews their role of responsibility in the events that drove them into the "storm centre of events", she stresses that at all times, a choice remained open as to whether to "play the role" or not. As she states,

If it is true that "Jewishness" could not have been perverted into an interesting vice without a prejudice which considered it a crime, it is also true that such perversion was made possible by those Jews who considered it an innate virtue.[1979; 83]

The vast majority of Jews, whom Arendt termed the 'Jewish masses', were subsumed under the hegemony of their leaders. She recognised that the modern Jewish communities were as stratified as everyone else, but the actions and agency of the Jewish masses are given no independent role in the analysis. For an analysis of these class relations, we have to look elsewhere.

As an understanding of the roots of antisemitism, the question Arendt addresses is how antisemitism, which was a relatively unimportant phenomenon in terms of world politics, came to play such a central role in the history of Europe. She distinguishes between pre-modern forms of anti-Jewish animosity and modern antisemitism without ignoring the modern uses of explanations of pre-modern prejudices against the Jews. The configuration of elements to create the Jews, antisemites and antisemitism are all explained through a focus that never reaches beyond modernity. Consequently, unlike, for example, Nietzsche, Sartre and Bauman, Arendt has no need to explain modern antisemitism through recourse to a pre-existing prejudice against the Jews. Rather, she highlights⁴⁸ the distinction between pre-modern forms of anti-Jewish animosity and modern antisemitism and its conditions of existence.

⁴⁸ It is of course true that her starting point refers back to the pre-nation-state "Court Jews", but even here they are clearly distinguishable from the later "State Jews".

Arendt neither falls back into the idea that antisemitism represents a harking back to the past or a reaction against modernity; nor conversely does she propose that antisemitism is the logical product of modernity itself. In her analysis, antisemitism does not represent the futility of political emancipation or the rights of man, still less their alleged collaboration with genocide. Her account of the inability of human rights to protect those sent to their slaughter serves not as a call for their negation, but as a critical summons to strengthen them and their enforcement, along with a truly human, i.e. political, equality, in which one's uniqueness is also permitted its expression.

Chapter 6

Adorno and Horkheimer: Antisemitism and the Dialectic of Enlightenment

Adorno and Horkheimer first announced and outlined in 1941 their chapter on 'Elements of antisemitism: limits of enlightenment'. It was written between 1941 and 1945 and published in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* in 1947. Writing during and in the immediate aftermath of the holocaust, they addressed the complexity of the relationship of antisemitism to modernity in the shape of a new research outline for the social sciences. Within this work, the analysis of the elements of antisemitism was seen to require new social scientific tools, not least the bringing together of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud in order to construct an adequate theoretical frame, but the assumption was still present that the phenomenon of modern, political antisemitism was susceptible to explanation with the tools of a recognisable social science. We shall see that this assumption was to be questioned in later explorations into the holocaust and modern antisemitism — not least by Adorno himself in *Negative Dialectics*.⁴⁹

In my discussions of critical theories of antisemitism, one of the themes that I have highlighted is that something more is at stake than "merely" antisemitism: that the modern animosity to Jews is in some way representative of other, deeper problems and frictions within modernity itself. This is certainly true of the account given by Adorno and Horkheimer. One of their crucial contributions to our understanding of this relationship between modernity and antisemitism is a more focused critique of the concept of "enlightenment" itself in which they call into question what has come to be termed the "Western tradition" in general and the praxis of emancipation in particular.

The parallels with the thought of Hannah Arendt are illuminating. Like Arendt, Adorno and Horkheimer wrestle with the difficulty of avoiding a collapse into nihilism. Just as Arendt argues that the rise of antisemitism 'does not mean that what came crashing down in the crisis (perhaps the most profound crisis in Western history

⁴⁹ See below Chapter 8

since the downfall of the Roman Empire) was mere façade' [Arendt; 1979, 9], so Adorno and Horkheimer also argued that "Enlightenment which is in possession of itself and coming to power can break the bounds of enlightenment" [1989; 208]. We shall see that in *Negative Dialectic*, written some twenty years later in 1966, this 'melancholic' optimism was replaced by a more consistently pessimistic attitude to antisemitism which Adorno then signified under the name of "Auschwitz", and by a loss of confidence that 'Auschwitz' could be explained within the terms even of a renewed social scientific form of knowledge and research. It will be argued, however, that the seeds of this turn to "nihilism" were already present within the account of antisemitism that he and Horkheimer presented in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Critical theories of antisemitism can be roughly divided between those schools that understand antisemitism as a reaction to modern social and political conditions⁵⁰, and those that perceive it as a result or product of modern social and political conditions or as a potentiality inherent within them.⁵¹ Within *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer's thought on antisemitism falls into the latter camp: antisemitism is associated with the concept and practices of fascism which in turn is associated with a specific moment within capitalist development. Fascism is understood in this work as an emergent property of bourgeois society in its imperialist phase and of the social and political praxis which is generated within this phase. In this respect Adorno and Horkheimer replicate Arendt's "chronology" of antisemitism.

As we have seen, Arendt argued a subtle 'in-between' position: that whilst the roots of antisemitism could be traced back to elements present within the prior period, its dominance 'over all competing "isms"' [Arendt, 1979, 9] represented the birth of an entire new political structure. Adorno and Horkheimer emphasise the first part of Arendt's argument — the roots of antisemitism within modern bourgeois society — at the expense of the second part, that is, the newness or originality of modern antisemitism. Instead, they emphasise the compatibility of antisemitism with the development of capitalism. This difference is reflected in the following contrast: for

⁵⁰ The thought of Nietzsche and Marx fall especially into this camp.

⁵¹ Bauman and Lyotard are examples of this way of thinking.

Arendt the totalitarian form of antisemitism represents the demise of the nation-state and nationalism; whilst for Adorno and Horkheimer the fascist form of antisemitism is perceived as the "pinnacle" of nationalism itself. This aspect of the thinking of Adorno and Horkheimer reaches its apotheosis in the argument that the Fascist form of antisemitism is merely an aspect of "mass society" in which no specific qualities attach to antisemitism itself. A further significant difference between Arendt and the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* concerns their respective understanding of the relationship of antisemitism to modernity. Adorno and Horkheimer understand antisemitism as a modern phenomenon, yet paradoxically trace its "elements" far back in time — much further than does Arendt — and see it as an admixture of both modern and archaic modes of domination. It may be more accurate to say that for Adorno and Horkheimer antisemitism arises as the coming to the surface of forms of domination that had been expelled or repressed by the onward march of enlightenment itself. This is not to say that by resorting to "pre-modern" factors in their account of antisemitism, Adorno and Horkheimer return to what Arendt termed "eternal antisemitism" [Arendt; 1979, 7]; it is more the case that they see repressed archaic forms of domination as attaching themselves to antisemitism, and to the modern scapegoating of Jews, as the result of thoroughly modern conditions.

Finally, it is appropriate to note here another theme that runs through this study: that of the relationship of real Jews to the concept of "the Jews". Adorno and Horkheimer are interested in explaining the link between antisemitism and "the Jews" and seek to explain why Fascism should turn Jews (in their flesh and blood) into the concept of "the Jews". However, they do not invert this question in order to examine the Jews themselves and their relationship to the concept of 'the Jews'. This lacuna is reflected in the organisation of the "Elements of Antisemitism". It comprises seven sections. As the chapter progresses, Adorno and Horkheimer move from a discussion of Jews to the emergence of the antisemitic category of "the Jews" exclusively through a discussion of antisemites and antisemitism. In this process, actual relations between Jews and other people(s) disappear so that antisemitism is explained solely in terms of the antisemites. Inherent in this way of thinking is the idea that antisemitism represents a form of "projection" which has little or nothing to do with Jews

themselves and is attached to Jews regardless of their own actions and agency. In this regard, Adorno and Horkheimer remain well within the terms of the "scapegoat" thesis

In the "Introduction" to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer state that antisemitism's "irrationalism" is deduced "from the nature of the dominant ratio itself, and the world which corresponds with its image" [1989; xvii]. In their account of antisemitism, the latter is to be understood as an "irrationalism" that emerges from its relationship to modern rationalism, each produced in relation to one another through the dialectic of enlightenment. They characterise antisemitism as a "by-product" or more accurately a "waste product" of the "dominant ratio". This notion of "waste" not only brings into focus the relationship antisemitism has to the "dominate ratio" but also the relationships to the body that such a metaphor implies.

In the opening lines of "The Concept of Enlightenment" Adorno and Horkheimer state that "[i]n the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates with disaster triumphant" [1989; 3]. They seek an answer to the question of why enlightenment and disaster have run together through the relationship of two theses: 'myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology' [1989; xvi]. Their argument, in brief, is that within myth there is contained an element of enlightenment in the sense that the former seeks to emancipate men from the domination of nature; whilst within enlightenment there is the mythical idea that nature is an unchanging and unchangeable force to which one must submit. In explaining how such inversions come to pass, Adorno and Horkheimer emphasise the mediation of social relations between people through their relationship to nature. This points to the inversion that occurs in their dialectic of enlightenment: that human efforts to dominate nature and thus to emancipate ourselves from nature end up by our being dominated by it to such an extent that domination itself appears as natural, rational and eternal.

The central element of this thesis is contained in the idea of the instrumentalisation of reason: that is, the idea that reason - the ability to think and reflect upon the world - has entered into the service of domination. To explicate this thesis, Adorno and Horkheimer draw upon Marx's analysis of "commodity fetishism" [1995]. They argue that inherent within the instrumentalisation of reason, especially in its modern positivistic form, is the perception of the world and all things within it in terms of its quantitative rather than qualitative (and unique) aspects. In this way the nature of things, i.e. their specific quality, is replaced by their merely abstract and universal form as a measure of quantity and the triumph of form over content is completed through the 'sublimation' of the commodity and the substitution of its exchange-value for its use-value. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that in the triumph of formalism not only are "qualities dissolved in thought, but men are brought to actual conformity" [1989; 12]. In a process of generalised exchange, in which each can be exchanged for the other, all individual qualities, all aspects of uniqueness, all forms of 'particularity' must be erased as a threat to the 'generality' that is the foundation of positivistic thought:

Men were given their individuality as unique in each case, different to all others, so that it might all the more surely be made the same as any other. But because the unique self never wholly disappeared, even after the liberalistic epoch, the Enlightenment has always sympathised with the social impulse. The unity of the manipulated collective consists in the negation of each individual: for individuality makes a mockery of the kind of society which would turn all individuals into the one collectivity. The horde which so assuredly appears in the organisation of the Hitler Youth is not a return to barbarism but the triumph of repressive equality...[1989; 13]

Any metaphysics which goes beyond the empirically given, is ruled out of court, given the status of 'superstition' and 'myth'. The most 'progressive' stage disavows and criticises its immediate predecessor as "metaphysical" and all that is deemed "superstition" thereby becomes the "other" or "enemy" of enlightenment in its latest, most rationalistic stage.

Adorno and Horkheimer highlight the paradoxical situation of individual existence that arises within the modern rationalistic age - to survive men must at one and the same time annihilate themselves. This relationship between "self-preservation" and

"self-destruction"⁵² is explained through reference to the nature of modern science, its application to the natural world through technology and the capitalist economic imperative. The argument rests on the inversion of man's domination over nature into its inverse. Modern means of production reflect this inversion through the repetitive cycle of technological production. Through technology, human beings work incessantly upon what "is", i.e. that which through positivist science is perceived as unchanging and formal nature. In their relations to the machine (as a virtual appendage) they reflect this never-ending sameness of nature through their own repetitive and unchanging work. They must become like the 'nature' upon which they work and give up any notion of their own specific individuality or uniqueness. It is in this sense that reference is made to self-preservation as self-destruction: for individuals to live, they must deny themselves.

To summarise the argument so far, Adorno and Horkheimer point to the manner in which the dialectic of enlightenment negates the sovereignty of man and promotes the "re-introduction" of fear. It is modern instrumental reason, according to this account, which gives rise to the "mass", the "collective", the "horde". Human beings still live in fear, fear of the forces of nature, and should their incessant activity cease for a moment or should they reflect for a moment upon their condition, they will be confronted by that which a positivistically-driven rationality declared out of court: the uniqueness, diversity and specificity of nature both in its organic and human forms. One of the psychological consequences of this inversion, one that is important for the analysis of antisemitism, is the "obsessive" character of modern existence and the repression, projection and paranoia which goes along with it.

In this account of the dialectic of enlightenment, it is "the Jews" who stand for that which is prohibited within the modern age: metaphysics and transcendence, nature and diversity. "The Jews" come to represent the particularism that has no place within the rational order of things and the metaphysics which is reduced to 'superstitious mumbo-jumbo' by its fascist successor. They become the 'other' of antisemites who are themselves reduced to conformity like "blinded men robbed of their subjectivity

⁵² For a detailed discussion of these aspects, see. *DE* pp.27-31

[and] set loose as subjects" [1989; 171]). For Adorno and Horkheimer, antisemitism is not of itself integral to the world of late capitalism and it is implied that fascism could survive and prevail as a system of domination without the murder of millions of individuals who fell or were forced into the concept of "the Jews". From a purely rationalistic standpoint, they argue, antisemitism is "irrational" in that it does not serve the dominant order in any utilitarian way: neither economically nor politically nor militarily. However, because of its very lack of necessity, it serves, as Adorno and Horkheimer phrase it, as a "luxury for the masses" [1989; 170]. Antisemitism serves as a "luxury" because it permits that which in the normal course of events is denied: it is waste in the sense of being useless or superfluous. One of the permissions granted by antisemitism is involvement in actions that are irrational, that serve no purpose, that break free from the incessant necessity of the scientific-technological world in which they are implicated.

Throughout *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno and Horkheimer stress the manner in which enlightenment incorporates what at first sight appears either as unnecessary or as opposed to itself. This is the case for the "luxury" of antisemitism. As they state,

[t]he fact that the demonstration of its economic uselessness tends to increase rather than to lessen the attraction to the national panacea, points to its true nature: it does not help men but panders to their urge to destroy. The true benefit for the Volksgenosse lies in collective approval of his anger. The smaller the actual advantages are, the more stubbornly he supports the movement against his better judgement. Anti-Semitism has proved immune to the argument of inadequate "profitability". It is a luxury for the masses [1989; 170]

Here Adorno and Horkheimer point to the function of antisemitism within the context of the enlightened world as an outlet for instincts and impulses that are forbidden in the course of "progress". By providing an outlet for these "taboos", antisemitism permits the even smoother running of the rationalised structure itself: it provides a discharge for the 'superfluous' energy denied by the structures of instrumental rationality, whilst simultaneously giving rise to an unparalleled barbarity - a barbarity

that is all the more viscous because of its otherwise forbidden nature.⁵³ The metaphor of waste relates to bodily evacuation and to the taboos that attach to it within modern civilisation. Antisemitism is presented as a kind of revel within the sphere of the prohibited - a partaking of the forbidden fruit that is endowed with the aura of taboo.

Adorno and Horkheimer liken antisemitism to an "idiosyncrasy" in which its constituents, "the Jews" and the antisemites, represent the twin aspects of what remains "taboo" within the overarching scheme of things. As they state,

[t]he old answer of all the anti-Semites is an appeal to idiosyncrasy....But idiosyncrasy inheres in the particular. The general, that which fits into the functional context of society, is considered to be natural. But nature which has not been transformed through the channels of conceptual order into something purposeful, the grating sound of a stylus moving over a slate, the haut gout which recalls filth and decomposition, the sweat which appears on the brow of the busy man - everything which has failed to keep up, or which infringes the commandments which are the sedimented progress of the centuries - has a penetrating effect: it arouses disgust [1989; 180]

Antisemitism represents an 'idiosyncrasy' which, though disallowed by the progressive stages of enlightenment, serves enlightenment's entanglement with domination: "Fascism is also totalitarian in that it seeks to make the rebellion of suppressed nature against domination directly useful to domination" [1989; 183]. The tabooed idiosyncrasy is termed "uncontrolled mimesis" [1989; 181] of that which civilisation outlaws. In the "organic adaptation to others" characteristic of fascism, such mimesis has not been dispensed with but it has come under increasing control and Adorno and Horkheimer point to the two stages through which the control of human relationships to nature through mimesis has passed, "by organised control of mimesis in the magical phase: and..... by rational practice, by work, in the historical phase" [1989; 180]. The irony is that modern positivistic thought, and the technological practice with which it is identified, is itself mimetic behaviour and sublimates the overt "primitive" or "mythical" fear of nature identified with earlier phases,

⁵³ In his excellent and informative *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, Simon Jarvis points to the anti-capitalist nature of antisemitism. Although quite correct, it appears to me that Adorno and Horkheimer's argument leads to a far deeper critique of "enlightenment" *per se*.

Society continues threatening nature as the lasting organised compulsion which is reproduced in individuals as rational self-preservation and rebounds on nature as social domination over it. Science is repetition, refined into observed regularity, and preserved in stereotypes. The mathematical formula is regression handled consciously, just as the magical ritual used to be; it is the most sublimated manifestation of mimicry....All that remains of the adaptation to nature is the obduracy against nature [1989; 181]

In this positivistic-technological world, in which all spontaneous (organic) relations to nature are prohibited, people are unable to confront their own repressed nature. Perceiving such tendencies as an "isolated remnant"[1989; 180]; and ashamed of them, these individuals (in the name of self-preservation) refuse to acknowledge them as their own and project them (with hostility) onto others.

Enter the Jews. The Jews fulfil this role because of their social position within the sphere of circulation, a sphere which vanishes from sight with the emergence of "mass society" and appears outmoded and superfluous. The Jews' methods of "doing business" now take on the characteristics of a natural disposition,

They seem to translate long verified human relations back into individual power relations: in trying to influence the purchaser by flattery, the debtor by threats and the creditor by entreaty [1989; 182]

Since this "relationship" of idiosyncrasy's (of particularity) concerns apparent aspects of nature now declared out of bounds, the whole transaction takes place in the sphere of the tabooed. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the attraction of antisemitism as a political phenomenon is precisely due to the fact that it permits dominated individuals to partake in the praxis that was hitherto denied. It is, therefore, a "rationalised idiosyncrasy" in the sense that Fascism permits it in the interests of a more efficient domination,

The mental energy harnessed by political anti-Semitism is this rationalised idiosyncrasy. All the pretexts over which the Führer and his followers reach agreement, imply surrender to the mimetic attraction without any open infringement of the reality principle - honourably, so to speak [1989; 185]

It is in this sense, that Adorno and Horkheimer maintain that "the persecutor and persecuted belong to the same sphere of evil" [1989; 171]. Moreover, Adorno and Horkheimer are also implying that within this permission to lose themselves in nature,

the anti-Semites are in fact mimicking their own projected nature. In other words, they see in "the Jews" a reflection of their own simultaneously repressed and desired nature. It is for this reason that they conclude that, antisemites "cannot stand the Jews, yet imitate them" [1989; 183].

In developing this argument, Adorno and Horkheimer point to an element of antisemitism which has caught the attention of other critical thinkers: the idea that antisemitism can only be understood as a mass phenomenon and depends upon the simultaneous coming together of "individuals" who have been "robbed of their subjectivity". It is in developing this point that the metaphor of waste as bodily evacuation comes to the fore. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the anti-Semite loses himself, first, in his "relationship" to the projected object of his own natural and tabooed self - "the Jews". This point is explained by reference to "smell" as the most "natural" of mimetic behaviour, since in smell one becomes a part of the object itself. Smell is the most prohibited means of mimesis since the division between self and nature that is so essential an aspect of the dialectic of enlightenment, is completely overcome:

The multifarious nuances of the sense of smell embody the archetypal longing for the lower forms of existence, for direct unification with circumambient nature, with the earth and mud. Of all the senses, that of smell - which is attracted without objectifying - bears closest witness to the urge to lose oneself in and become the "other". When we see, we remain what we are; but when we smell, we are taken over by otherness. Hence the sense of smell is considered a disgrace in civilisation, the sign of lower social strata, lesser races and base animals [1989; 184].

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that for 'civilised individuals' involvement in such forbidden behaviour is only permissible if it serves a given end, which in this case is, chillingly, its "elimination", "[a]nyone who seeks out "bad" smells, in order to destroy them may imitate sniffing to his heart's content, taking unrationalized pleasure in the experience" [1989; 184]

In these tabooed but permitted acts, the antisemite dissolves himself in the authority that permits it and into the herd of other antisemites. It is this which Adorno and Horkheimer understand as the 'schema of anti-Semitic reaction'.

Anti-Semites gather together to celebrate the moment when authority permits what is usually forbidden, and become a collective only in that common purpose [1989; 184]

It is in this authorised acting out of the taboo that Adorno and Horkheimer find the meaning within the apparent meaninglessness and irrationality of the rituals, uniforms and symbols of the "Fascist formula". They are an "imitation of magic practices, the mimesis of mimesis" [1989; 183] - a plastic copy of those modes of archaic domination, repressed but now placed into the service of domination. This is the way that fascism makes 'the rebellion of suppressed nature against domination directly useful to domination' [1989; 183].

The question remains: why is it the Jews who come to represent barred and tabooed nature? Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that the Jews became the focus of this infernal process - and came to represent 'nature' — because they were not only distinct from the "national society" but also a threat to it. This was the case, Adorno and Horkheimer argue, whether or not "the Jews as individuals really do still have those mimetic features which awaken the dread malady, or whether such features are suppressed" [1989; 185]. As a mirror of the projection of natural impulses which are those of their persecutors, 'the Jews' become the subconscious desires of the antisemites themselves. Not only are the allegations against the Jews - that they seek world domination, that they are purveyors of black magic, that they seek to poison and destroy the world, etc., the subconscious desires of the antisemite, but since their persecution rests upon primitive modes of domination, mimesis and magic, now given rational purpose, they become the victim of other, related primitive practices, including that of sacrifice:

Disguised as accusation, the subconscious desire of the aboriginal inhabitants to return to the mimetic practice of sacrifice finds conscious fulfilment. When all the horror of prehistory which has been overlaid with civilisation is rehabilitated as rational interest by projection onto the Jews, there is no restriction. The horror can be carried out in practice, and in practical implementation goes beyond the evil content of the projection [1989; 186]

Whilst it may appear from this account that Adorno and Horkheimer treated the concept of "the Jews" as one created solely by antisemites — and in so doing implied a version of the "scapegoat" thesis - such a view should be moderated by an account of the specific reasons of why the Jews became the "chosen people", i.e. those "branded as evil by those who are absolutely evil" [1989; 168]. Adorno and Horkheimer acknowledge that Jews have themselves been active within the dialectic of enlightenment, and so have partaken of the movement in which "civilisation is the victory of society over nature which changes everything into pure nature" [1989; 186]. They indicate, however, that in their contribution to this progress, Jews succeeded in avoiding the reversion into mythology:

They did not eliminate adaptation to nature, but converted it into a series of duties in the form of ritual. They have retained the aspect of expiation, but have avoided the reversion to mythology which symbolism implies....They are declared guilty of something which they, as the first burghers, were the first to overcome: the lure of base instincts, reversion to animality and to the ground, the service of images [1989; 186].

It is also to be noted that just as the persecution visited upon them was the admixture of archaic and modern forms of domination, so too were Jews associated with both stages. The paradox, however, is that the justification for the attack upon them is precisely because of their ability to escape that which their murderers have themselves fallen victim to and projected onto the Jews - the myth of the mimesis of nature and its associations of barbaric animalism and sacrifice.

Because [the Jews] invented the concept of kosher meat, they are persecuted as swine. The anti-Semites make themselves the executors of the Old Testament: they want the Jews who have eaten of the tree of knowledge to return unto dust [1989; 186].

The implication is that antisemitism represented a reversion not only to nature but to the "basest" aspect of nature. For Adorno and Horkheimer, antisemitism was the vehicle for a crisis of the "Western tradition" that far exceeds Jewish / gentile relations themselves. It became the negative resolution of the dialectic of enlightenment - a resolution that destroys the Jews and the antisemite, and the very notion of subjectivity itself.

I shall now turn to the second element of antisemitism that Adorno and Horkheimer propose: "the Jews" as representatives of "metaphysics". This point in turn draws upon another of the central themes included within *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a whole. Adorno and Horkheimer understand the dialectic of enlightenment as the gradual increase of a positivism that refuses any meaning to the world other than the appearance of the empirically given. They argue that this refusal is inherent within the instrumentalisation of reason and its implication with domination over nature,

For the scientific mind, the separation of thought from business for the purpose of adjusting actuality, departure from the privileged area of real existence, is as insane and self-destructive as the primitive magician would consider stepping out of the magic circle he has prepared for his invocation; in both cases the offence against the taboo will actually result in the malefactor's ruin. The mastery of nature draws the circle into which the criticism of pure reason banished thought. [1989; 26]

In other words, reason is robbed of its ability to reflect critically upon its own categories of thought and the idea that anything may be thought beyond the empirically given, metaphysics in general, is disavowed and endowed with the label of myth. Metaphysics shares the same fate as that of the nature that remains "outside" or "beyond" rational mastery: "nothing at all may remain outside, because the mere idea of outsideness is the very source of fear" [1989; 16]

Yet, as in their discussion of nature, Adorno and Horkheimer point out the way in which this extreme positivism, this extreme rationality, also "reverts back into mythology". Metaphysics becomes as taboo as nature:

Factuality wins the day; cognition is restricted to its repetition; and thought becomes mere tautology. The more the machinery of thought subjects existence to itself, the more blind in resignation in reproducing existence. Hence, enlightenment returns to mythology, which it never really knew how to elude [1989; 27]

It is within this dialectic that the Jews, as representatives of metaphysics, as something beyond the given, come to be 'tabooed'. As was noted above, Adorno and Horkheimer emphasise the manner in which each successive phase of the dialectic of enlightenment delegitimises its predecessor with the accusation of 'myth': "One after the other, mimetic, mythic and metaphysical modes of behaviour were taken as

superseded eras" [1989; 37]. This dialectic of "overcoming" is concretised by Adorno and Horkheimer through the manner in which oppositions born in one phase comes to be incorporated in the dominant thought of the later phase. Speaking of the stages of critical thought, i.e. oppositional thought, they state that,

[Opposition] suffer[s] what triumphant thought has always suffered. If it willingly emerges from its critical element to become a mere means at the disposal of an existing order, then despite itself it tends to convert the positive it elected to defend into something negative and destructive. The philosophy which put the fear of death into infamy in the eighteenth century, despite all the book-burnings, and piles of corpses, chose to serve that very infamy under Napoleon....The metamorphosis of criticism into affirmation does not leave the theoretical content untouched, for its truth evaporates. Now, of course, a mechanised history outstrips such intellectual developments, and the official apologists - who have other concerns - liquidate the history that helped them to their place in the sun, before it can prostitute itself [1989; xii]

Contained within this last sentence, which refers to the latest 'progress' in the dialectic of enlightenment, the reference to "liquidation" is far from coincidental. Rather, it points to the claim that is being made here, that it is "the Jews" who came to represent the metaphysics of transcendence — that of rights, freedom and emancipation — which on the one hand justified the emergence of bourgeois society, and on the other hand became the taboo of the fascist society which emerged from it.

In explaining this point, Adorno and Horkheimer appear to have had in mind Marx's *On the Jewish Question* [1992]. They argue that it was the Jews historical economic role - their "fate" [1989; 175] - that was partly responsible for their becoming representative of the metaphysics of freedom:

The Jews were the colonisers for progress. From the time when, in their capacity as merchants, they helped to spread Roman civilisation throughout Gentile Europe, they were the representatives - in harmony with their patriarchal religion - of municipal, bourgeois and, finally, industrial conditions [1989; 175]

However, with the "progression" of bourgeois society, both the Jews' role and the values they came to personify were increasingly declared superfluous. The first reason relates to Marx's idea that rights are indelibly linked to the sphere of exchange or circulation,⁵⁴ a sphere which identified as the province of Jews. However, with the

⁵⁴ See above: chapter 2

emergence of mass society this "space" was itself colonised by increasing large-scale productive monopolies who faced the consumer directly.⁵⁵ With the destruction of the middle-class, as the class of the sphere of circulation, the Jews' specific economic function came to an end. Furthermore, this change into "mass society" also brought with it the demise of the individual subject.⁵⁶ Without the self and the social basis on which the self can emerge, notions of rights are not just superfluous but a threat to the emerging order.

As Adorno and Horkheimer acknowledge, this need not of course have resulted in the physical extermination of the Jews. One of the "elements of antisemitism" was the Jews' economic position, so that they came to be the "scapegoat" for the injustices of the system as a whole:

the fear and hatred aroused by the non-transparency of social relations is revenged on mediators, on those (the Jews) who are taken to epitomise the sphere of circulation itself, as though their mediation were itself the reason for society's lack of transparency [Jarvis 1998; 63]⁵⁷

However, the murderous impulses arise within their persecutors because of their projection onto the Jews of their own frustrated desires,

Liberalism had allowed the Jews property, but no power to command. The rights of man were designed to promise happiness even to those without power. Because the cheated masses feel that this promise in general remains a lie as long as there are still classes, their anger is aroused. They feel mocked. They must suppress the very possibility and idea of that happiness, the more relevant it becomes. Wherever it seems to have been achieved despite its fundamental denial, they have to repeat the suppression of their own longing. Everything which gives repetition for such repetition, however unhappy it must be in itself....draws upon itself that destructive lust of civilised men who could never fulfil the process of civilisation [1989; 172]

⁵⁵ For a discussion of this process see: "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* pp.120-167

⁵⁶ See for a detailed discussion of this point, "The End of Reason", Max Horkheimer, in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, Ed. A. Arato and E. Gebhardt, Continuum, New York; 1982

⁵⁷ Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, 1998, Polity, Cambridge. See also *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp.172-176

The very idea of freedom embodied within the notion of rights came to be regarded as a metaphysics that could not be accounted for in the positivistic rationalising of the world, in which "what you see, is what you get - and nothing more" It came to be rejected as containing the remnant of a superstition that current knowledge had declared a myth. And, because of their association with such a metaphysics, the Jews came to be as taboo as the values that they were said to embody. Adorno and Horkheimer conclude these points in the following manner,

[t]hose who always wanted to be first have been left far behind....The kaftan was a relic of ancient middle-class costume. Today it indicates that its wearer has been cast onto the periphery of a society which, though completely enlightened, still wishes to lay the ghost of its distant past. Those who proclaimed individualism, abstract justice, and the notion of the person are now degraded to the condition of a species. Those who are never allowed to enjoy freely the civil rights which should allow them human dignity are referred to, without distinction, as "the Jew" [1989; 175]

Adorno and Horkheimer seek to explain how this *ressentiment* serves the "dominant ratio" itself. They argue that the antisemites' image of the Jews cannot bear the thought of their "true happiness" - the thought of "happiness without power" [1989; 172] - and the masses' own longing for this happiness, now embodied in "the Jews", is reflected back to them as something offensive and loathsome,

The illusory conspiracy of corrupt Jewish bankers financing Bolshevism is a sign of innate impotence, just as the good life is a sign of happiness. The image of the intellectual is in the same category: he appears to think - a luxury which the others cannot afford - and he does not manifest the sweat toil and physical effort. Bankers and intellectuals, money and mind, the exponents of circulation, form the impossible ideal of those who have been maimed by domination, an image used by domination to perpetuate itself [1989; 172]

Did Adorno and Horkheimer avoid those "pitfalls" that Hannah Arendt claims have beset accounts of modern antisemitism: eternal antisemitism, the "scapegoat" thesis, the concept of "the Jew" as the creation of the antisemitic imagination? The charge of eternal antisemitism cannot be upheld. It is of course true that recourse is made to archaic forms of domination which are identifiable for them in the phenomenon of antisemitism itself. However, their thesis is designed to highlight how these archaic modes are themselves sublimated into the dialectic of enlightenment, they do not claim that their history can be understood in terms of an equally archaic "Jewish

Question". At first sight, the criticism implied in the "scapegoat" thesis appears more valid. The persecution of the Jews is ultimately traced back to the nature of their persecutors. The Jews become, therefore, the screen upon which the antisemites project their own resentment. It is a resentment that has little to do with the Jews per se. Thus the question that must be asked in the light of these comments is again "why the Jews?". To a certain extent Adorno and Horkheimer have addressed this question: they present the Jews as representatives of 'forbidden nature' and of 'metaphysics'; they associate the Jews with the idea of freedom, emancipation and rights; they refer to the class position of Jews in the sphere of circulation. Yet such answers do not appear satisfactory: if "the Jews" were not the sole owners of the circulation sphere, why initially did they become its representatives? In seeking the answer to this question, Adorno and Horkheimer offer an explanation that in many respects is similar to Arendt's thesis as to why the Jews failed to become politically (and socially) "assimilated".

On a social level, they argue that because of their economic role as "intermediaries", the Jews could not be permitted to "put down roots and so they were dismissed as rootless" [1989; 175]. Because they appeared as the "colonisers of progress" [1989; 175], those harmed by this "progress" focused their attention and resentment against the Jews. As regards the Jews' relationship to the state in the period preceding Fascism (and it is here that the echoes of Arendt's thesis is most audible),

Even in the nineteenth century the Jews remained independent on an alliance with the central power. General justice protected by the state was the pledge of their security, and the law of exception a spectre held out before them. The Jews remained objects, at the mercy of others, even when they insisted on their rights [1989; 175].

Adorno and Horkheimer were no doubt wary of providing any information that may have added grist to the antisemitic mill. It is, perhaps, for this reason that, in terms of the Jews economic function they state that, "Commerce was not their vocation but their fate" [1989; 175]. When we turn to the "deeper" psychoanalytical reasons as to why the Jews should be the screen of antisemitic projections, the case is not so conclusive. Adorno and Horkheimer state that,

[t]he existence and way of life of the Jews throw into question the generality with which they do not conform. The inflexible adherence to their own order of life has brought the Jews into an uncertain relationship with the dominant order [1989; 169]

Here, the idea of the Jews' 'particularity' or non-universality is more posited than developed. It points to the idea that there was something about Jewish existence as Jewish existence that may have been partially responsible for the catastrophe that was visited upon those caught within the Nazis definition. Yet, the very notion of the particularity of the Jews echoes the antisemitic argument that the Jews, either for genetic or religious reasons or for reasons of sheer "stubbornness", provided their own ground for not being emancipated. In seeking to understand how it was that Jews were transformed into the concept of "the Jews" by the antisemitic imagination, the actuality of Jews was lost sight of.

Present within Adorno and Horkheimer's account, antisemitism itself comes to embody all the problems they find within the dialectic of enlightenment itself. The Jews increasingly come to personify those aspects of enlightenment *praxis* that are excluded and tabooed. The implication is that the "actual reversion of enlightenment civilisation to barbarism" [1989; *xvi-xvii*] comes to be represented within antisemitism and antisemitism becomes the very mark of 'the limits of enlightenment'. It is as if the dialectic of enlightenment negatively resolves itself around the question of antisemitism and as if the Jews serve as the index of enlightenment *praxis* itself. Rather than understand the meaninglessness of antisemitism, the danger is that it is endowed with a disproportionately powerful significance. The "Jewish Question" comes to be elevated into the question of the failure of "western" thought itself and antisemitism comes to signify something more than the specifics of anti-Jewish hostility. It begins to echo the antisemitic claim that only through the "solving" of the Jewish Question, can all other outstanding issues be resolved. In this account, Adorno and Horkheimer remain within the sphere of socio-historical research, yet they do not avoid presenting antisemitism in terms akin to an eschatology of satanic greatness.

Chapter 7

Zygmunt Bauman: Modernity and Antisemitism

Zygmunt Bauman's contribution to critical theories of antisemitism is contained in two important and influential studies; *Modernity and the holocaust*, published in 1989, and *Modernity and Ambivalence*, published in 1991. Bauman's objective in both these works is to question the hitherto prevailing orthodoxy which perceived antisemitism and the holocaust as a *pathology* of modernity and the "civilising process"; that

[T]he holocaust was an interruption in the normal flow of history, a cancerous growth on the body of civilised society, a momentary madness among sanity [that could be left to] the professional pathologists. [1989, viii]

In many ways, this approach represents simultaneously both the strengths and weaknesses of Bauman's account. Bauman is correct to identify the fact that antisemitism and the holocaust can only be understood as a *modern* phenomenon that differs quite radically from pre-modern forms "Judeophobia", and as such must bring into question the rhetoric of an apologist modernity, whereby these events are perceived as the (untimely) antithesis of modernity.

Conversely, however, the weakness of his account arises through his insistence on the *strength* of the relationship between modernity and antisemitism and the holocaust. Indeed, in *holocaust and Modernity*, in which Bauman addresses the structural relationship between modernity and antisemitism, the very notion of *relationship* is conflated so that modernity becomes equated with antisemitism. As we shall see, the consequences of this undialectical approach are, first, a complete negation of any possibility of the development of freedom or opposition within modernity. Consequently, in his account of antisemitism there is no aspect or remnant of modernity that can point to a way forward, a way *out of* and a challenge to modern antisemitism. Secondly, and related to this point, is an evasion of questions of human agency and responsibility.

Yet, in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, in which Bauman concentrates upon the relationship between modernity and antisemitism at the *cultural* level, the strength of his earlier claims is somewhat weakened. This limited retreat is most evident in his use of a dialectical methodology; one that sees the possibility of opposition emerging from within modernity itself; and, correspondingly, one that takes into account human agency, choice and responsibility. However, in the account of his work that follows, I argue that these revisions, do not go far enough to reform his initial thesis as to the undialectical nature of the connections between antisemitism and modernity

As do those of many of the other theorists examined in this study, Bauman's account of antisemitism connects it with a far deeper and more profound complex of problems within modernity itself.⁵⁸ In this way, the "Jewish Question" turns into one of *the question of modernity*. Antisemitism comes to be perceived as the *manifestation* of these deeper complexities and bears only a *contingent* relationship to the Jews actuality. Quoting Hannah Arendt, Bauman states that "only the choice of the victims, not the nature of the crime, can be derived (if at all) from the history of antisemitism." [1991;19]

As does Arendt and other critical theorists, Bauman discusses the relationship of modernity to antisemitism through a critique of the *praxis* of Enlightenment. However, Bauman's account is unusual in that he argues that rather than antisemitism arising as a *limitation* or a *failure* of this *praxis*, it enters the modern world as its logical consequence. Indeed, at some points Bauman seems to argue that it was the very *success* of Enlightenment thought and practice that gave rise not only to antisemitism, but also the holocaust itself. This observation, therefore, permits Bauman to be placed amongst those critical theorists who understand antisemitism as inherent within the "logic" or "rationality" of modernity itself. It is for this reason that Bauman is able to characterise the Nazi "state" as similar to any other nation-state of the same period regardless of its specific political dimension.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ For a discussion of this point see below: "Conclusion".

⁵⁹ On this point, cf. Hannah Arendt: *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Part III, "Totalitarianism".

This argument re-formulates and radicalises aspects of Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis of antisemitism. Most significantly, Bauman draws on the idea that one of the causes of antisemitism is the *naturalisation* of the Jews which itself emerges from the inversion of enlightenment into domination. Whilst, Adorno and Horkheimer stress the element of *inversion* within the internal logic of enlightenment's move into domination however, Bauman, sees the element of *inversion* subtracted, so that domination is seen as an inherent characteristic of enlightenment.

Bauman is able to revise Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis as he does not perceive the "modern project" of the domination of nature to be connected to any (autonomous) development within society. For Bauman, the modern quest for order does not arise through its relationship to the needs of developing capitalism. Thus, whereas the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* seeks to explain the manner in which the state comes under the domination of society, Bauman argues that the state's needs and goals, had from its birth, dominated any autonomous social sphere. Thus, what other theorists perceive as *socially* constituted phenomena, Bauman treats as weapons in the state's arsenal to be used against any and all opposition.

We can see evidence of this view in Bauman's treatment of those aspects of modernity which entered the social world on the coat-tails of enlightenment *praxis* and which were said to offer at least the potential for freedom. The concept of emancipation, for example, is understood by Bauman as a "tool" of coercion and domination.⁶⁰ Thus, far from providing Jews with protection *against* antisemitism, emancipation, and with it, legal rights and claims to equality, are explained as part of the very problem itself.

Bauman's understanding of "modernity" is important to his thesis. Bauman characterises modernity as that period ushered in by Enlightenment *praxis*, a concept of which he is highly critical. Enlightenment *praxis* is for Bauman the union of knowledge and power, of what he terms "legislating reason" and the "absolutist or

⁶⁰ See, particularly, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, chapter 3 and *Modernity and Ambivalence*, chapter 1.

“panoptical”⁶¹ state. Through this union the social world was to be moulded (by the state) according to the plan offered by universal reason (provided by the philosophers). This alliance between modern critical philosophy and the modern state expresses itself through each partner’s claim to the realm of universality. From the side of critical philosophy came the assertion of a “foundational philosophy” [1991; 25],

the philosopher’s unchallenged prerogative to decide between true and false, good and evil, right and wrong; and thus his licence to judge and authority to enforce obedience to the judgement. [1991;22]

From the side of the state, were what Bauman calls its “foundational politics” [1991; 26], that is, the idea that the state was to exert its power, without challenge, in all matters now considered to be under its provenance

In the two Bauman observes,

a striking symmetry of declared ambitions and practised strategies, as well as similar obsession with the question of sovereignty of legislative power expressed as the principle of universality of legal or philosophical principles. [1991; 26]

Thus, for Bauman, modernity is the period when this universalistic *praxis* came together and began to act upon the world. For Bauman, the sheer novelty of this union must not be underestimated since it represents a profound and fundamental breach with the pre-modern period that immediately preceded it. From its dawn, social reproduction became perceived by these new powers as a specific self-conscious *task*; a task that involved constant monitoring and vigilance of the space under the jurisdiction of the new territorially defined national-state lest the order (dictated by reason) be subverted. As a consequence of the universal blueprint and its criteria for the perfect ordered and rational society, the population had to be divided into

useful plants to be encouraged and tenderly propagated, and weeds - to be removed or rooted out. [According to these criteria] a premium [was put] on the needs of the useful plants (as determined by the gardener’s design) and disendowed the needs of those declared to be weeds. They cast both categories as *objects* of action and denied to both the rights of self-determining agents [1991; 20, emphasis in the original].

⁶¹ The reference to the Panopticon obviously points to an affinity within Bauman’s thesis and the work of Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*.

No longer, therefore, could social reproduction be left to the (apparently) natural and spontaneous ways in which it had occurred in the pre-modern world. Indeed, these spontaneous and local forms of social existence and social reproduction, when viewed from the new vantage point of reason and the state, were perceived as nothing other than a threat to the new grand design of the universal and thus perfected social order.

Bauman argues that inherent in this notion of social order is the construction and strict maintenance of boundaries so that “everything in its place and a place for everything” becomes the order of the day. Any slippage or transgression would lead to a subversion of the very order that was sought. Consequently, the (modern) social *space* had to be constantly monitored and its subjects kept under constant surveillance. What made the task so unending was not so much the possibility of a transcending of these new boundaries, but the potentiality that those previously deemed worthy of “cultivating” would degenerate as a result of contamination by “others”. It is for this reason that Bauman argues that *all* subjects came to be “objects” of state surveillance and action. It is in this way, therefore, that Bauman argues that from its very inception, enlightenment and modernity, in the guise of universal reason and the enlightened state, *is* domination.

It is into this world of (attempted) bounded order that the Jews enter as the embodiment of a threatening disorder; they became the Other of the “modern project”. Bauman contends that in the pre-modern world, the Jews were perceived and treated as any other caste, and, as with all other castes, their existence was to all intents and purposes self-contained, replete with their own autonomous communal mechanisms and mode of authority. The Jews lived in a place separate and distinct from gentiles, wore different and distinguishing clothes and any contact they may have had with others (and Bauman maintains that in the pre-modern world, such times were few) were both strictly regulated and formalised through various networks of ritual. Since all groups knew and understood these “rules”, ambivalence, i.e. complexities and confusions as to their own and others’ identities rarely, if ever, arose. All of these forms of social reproduction appeared to those concerned as “natural”, as something

that did not need reflection or critical thought. It was this “self-regulation” and certainty that was undermined with the advent of modernity and the development of a social *praxis* premised upon the universalism of the modern state through which social order came to be the sole concern of the state.

In Bauman’s account of the connection between antisemitism and modernity the most important change in the transition between the pre-modern and the modern eras is the fact that the formal and legal recognition of the Jews’ (and other castes) differences and distinction was ended. In the modern era, inclusion within the new universal body politic of the nation-state was now premised upon the concepts of citizenship which, in turn, rested upon legal equality as expressed through the medium of rights. Now robbed of political and legal measures through which the modern state could differentiate between classes of its members *formally* (at least without falling into contradiction), novel and discrete ways had to be devised in construing and constructing the Jews’ distinctiveness as the personification of the threatened and feared boundary and order-transgressors. These new measures relied upon fields of knowledge that operated “underneath” the sphere of overt social and political relations.

Bauman, therefore, argues that there is a paradox at the very heart of modernity. On the one hand, and in keeping with its belief in universal Reason, modernity overtly proclaimed the virtues of *bildung* as a means for all humans, along with the “correct” amount of personal effort, to achieve their full human potential regardless of the (particularistic) prejudices and practices that were held to afflict them. These historical handicaps included one’s Judaism. Yet, on the other hand, the discourses of modern science (natural, human and social), also under the name of universal Reason proclaimed *their* belief in the objective truth presumed upon the objective and unchanging laws of nature. Consequently, the realms to which these sciences applied (i.e. both the natural and the social worlds) could be tampered with only at one’s (and the ordered society’s) peril. In this scientific view, certain aspects of the world were eternally constant. One such element was the social and moral attributes of “blood”.

According to the “objective methodology” of modern science, certain allegedly ultimate truths could be discovered about the immutable essence of particular groups of individuals (themselves constructed by science and its demands of boundaries and order). Such essences, which continued to operate despite appearances to the contrary, spoke to the moral and other values of a person. These group attributes were discovered and fixed according to unchangeable laws of nature operating deep within the human body and psyche itself. It was, Bauman argues, within this context that antisemitism adopted its specifically *modern* racist and potentially murderous form. It was this development that created the notion of “Jewishness” as an enduring “natural” characteristic that “afflicted” all those who were (and would always remain) Jews. In identifying the consequence of this scientific discourse of “racial” “Jewishness”, Bauman quotes the words of Hannah Arendt:

Jews had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion; from Jewishness there was no escape [1989; 58].⁶²

Through the scientific belief that it had discovered the laws of nature, one’s “Jewishness” was written in stone and was deemed to be “stronger than human will and human creative potential” [1989; 58]. The result of this “finding” was that the “trait” of “Jewishness” came to be understood as natural and so irredemable. As such, nothing could alter the Jews’ propensity to subvert the boundaries and order so integral to the modernist project. The Jews were now proven beyond all reasonable doubt to be the eternal enemy of the universalising and “enlightened” state. It was, therefore, modern science that legitimated the ostensible “natural” differences of the Jews in the era when legal equality had prohibited that distinction both formally and legally. Thus, as did the enlightened state, modern enlightened science also conflated enlightenment with domination.

The question remains, however, as to why it was the Jews that took on this role as the representatives of the threat of disorder. In answering this question, Bauman has recourse to the perception to the pre-modern of the Jews. Consequently, one of the paradoxes of Bauman’s account of antisemitism as expressed in *Modernity and the holocaust* is that despite his insistence on the rigidity of the pre-modern/modern

⁶² For Arendt’s meaning of this statement; see above. chapter 5

dichotomy, the Jews transcend this particular boundary. It is, in other words, only the Jews who stand “outside” of history.

Bauman argues that the Jews differed in one vital respect from the other pre-modern, semi-autonomous castes. Their difference related to their *religious* or *theological* relationship to Christianity. Bauman’s point is *not* that this religious form of Judeophobia is synonymous with modern antisemitism, but rather an *ambivalence* in the relationship continued in the modern era, albeit with a modern content. Thus, Bauman’s suggestion of the uniqueness and originality of modern antisemitism is brought into question, and, indeed, in some respects he comes near to expressing ideas which are to be found in the “eternal antisemitism” methodology.

Bauman states, for example, that the ambivalence arise in the pre-modern era. He states that,

Christianity needed the Jews and it needed the separation and estrangement of the Jews and could not reproduce itself, and certainly could not reproduce its ecumenical domination, without guarding and reinforcing the foundations of Jewish estrangement - the view of itself as the heir and overcoming of Israel. It was born of the rejection *by the Jews*. It drew its vitality from the rejection *of the Jews*. Christianity could theorise its own existence only as an ongoing opposition to the Jews. Continuing Jewish stubbornness bore evidence that the Christian mission remained as yet unfinished. Jewish admission of error, surrender to Christian truth, and perhaps a future massive conversion, served as the model of Christianity's ultimate triumph. Again, in a truly "alter-ego" fashion, Christianity assigned to the Jews an eschatological mission. It marginalized Jewish visibility and importance. *It endowed the Jews with a powerful and sinister fascination* they would hardly possess. [1989; 38, emphasis in the original]

Since the “self-reproduction of the Church and its ecumenical domination” needed this ambivalent view of the Jews, they came to occupy a place in the pre-modern Christian imagination that went far beyond the realities and practicalities of day-to-day intercourse and antagonisms. Indeed, ambivalent theological relationship permits the “relative autonomy of the “Jewish Question” from the “popular social, economic and cultural experience” [1989; 38]. Pre-modern Judeophobia (although in *Modernity and the holocaust*, Bauman anachronistically refers to it as “antisemitism”) therefore acquired a form that transcended the material social relations that existed between Jews and

Christians and gave rise to the image or "concept" of "the Jew" as personifying the carrier of a "message" that "alternative to this order here and now is not another order, but chaos and devastation" [1989; 39]. Thus,

The age of modernity inherited "the Jew" already firmly separated from the Jewish men and women who inhabited its towns and villages. Having successfully played the role of the alter-ego of the Church, it was prepared to be cast in a similar role in relation to the new, secular, agencies of social integration. [1989; 39].

It was this image of the "conceptual Jew" (made distinct from the "flesh and blood" Jew) as the *antithesis of order* that Bauman argues was utilised in the turbulent passage from the pre-modern to the modern. As with the pre-modern "Jew", the outstanding feature of the "modern Jew" is the incongruity of the content that filled the old form.

Bauman argues:

[The nature] of Jewish incongruities shows there was hardly a single door slammed on the road to modernity in which the Jews did not put their fingers. From the process which brought their emancipation from the ghetto, they could not emerge but heavily bruised. They bestrode all the barricades and invited bullets from every side. The Conceptual Jew has been, indeed, construed as the archetypal "viscosity" of the modern dream of order and clarity; as the enemy of all order, old, new and, particularly, the desired one [1989; 40].

The incongruities that attach to the modern "conceptual Jew" are the familiar catalogue of the discontents of various elements of society who perceive the Jews as the root of all their problems. To the modern anti-modern, the Jew became the embodiment of the coldness and spiritlessness of the dominance of money-exchange. To the modernists and the socialists⁶³, the Jews likewise became the embodiment of the rule of capital, so that the overthrow of capital required the destruction of the Jew. To the peasant and the working-class, the Jews were seen as representing the ruling-elite. To the aspiring "indigenous" laissez-faire minded middle-class, the Jews, fighting for civil and political rights, were perceived as an ally of an interfering state. To the old-landed ruling-elite, the Jews were seen as potential usurpers of political power. To the aspiring nationalists seeking a "home", the Jews were seen as frustratingly international, and as defenders of universal as opposed to particular, national rights [1989; 46-51]. Thus, in all ways,

⁶³. On this point Bauman relies on an antisemitic reading of Marx's *On the Jewish Question*. For a detailed account of such an interpretation see: Carlbach, J. (1978) *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. For an alternative reading see: Chapter 1 above.

[t]he Jews were "strangers", - always on the outside even when inside, examining the familiar as if it was a foreign object, asking questions no one else asked, questioning the unquestionable and challenging the unchangeable [1989; 55].

It is to this ambivalence of the "conceptual Jew" that the scientific laws of nature testified, fixed and *naturalised*. Once the Otherness of the Jews was so inscribed, Bauman argues that the only way left to neutralise the threat of Jewishness was by segregation and, ultimately, destruction and genocide.

In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman re-traces, from the perspective of "culture"⁶⁴, the Jews' entry into modernity and the consequences of the journey. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, his account in the later work appears to confront many of the criticisms that can be made against *Modernity and the holocaust*. Consequently, one can read *Modernity and Ambivalence* as both a *supplement* and a *corrective* to that earlier work.

In contrast to the rather general and abstract nature of Bauman's explanation of antisemitism in *Modernity and the holocaust*, *Modernity and Ambivalence* remains more historically grounded. He concentrates on Germany, but refers to this part of his study as a "case study", implying that it is an example or is representative of the phenomenon of antisemitism. Therefore, the specificity of German antisemitism is underplayed. This point becomes clear in Bauman's repeated thesis, noted above, that the Nazi "state" is to all intents and purposes the same as any other modern Western state.

Modernity and the holocaust presents antisemitism without, not only antisemites, but also without Jews. Bauman explains antisemitism as the product of the combination of "universal" abstracts - Reason, the State, Science. Indeed, he argues that public outbursts of antisemitism, such as *Kristallnacht*, were in fact counter-productive in their desire to instil antisemitism in the general population. Similarly, his discussion of the Jews is replaced by a discussion of the "conceptual Jew" which, as just discussed, becomes *distinct* from "flesh and blood" Jews. In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, however, Bauman

⁶⁴ By "culture" Bauman appears to be referring to "national" aesthetic values and national forms of "manners" and "etiquette".

considers the place of agency and responsibility in the phenomenon of antisemitism, He does not, however, discuss the agency of the antisemites, but does present in considerable detail the role of *Jewish* agency in the development of the antisemitic image of “the Jew”.

The third adjustment concerns the methodology of the two studies. As I noted above, *Modernity and the holocaust* presents antisemitism in a non-dialectical manner in its connection with modernity. One of the consequences of this approach is an entirely negative reading of modernity so that any potentiality for freedom or opposition to antisemitism is ruled out of court in advance. Conversely, in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman argues that modernity itself produces a dialectic. It produces a dialectic of order and ambivalence which is reproduced in his view of antisemitism as the dialectic of modernity and the Jews.

Importantly, the dialectic is *not* that between *modernity and antisemitism*. For Bauman, these terms collapse into each other. Rather, it is his thesis that the dialectic within modernity produces ambivalence, that is, the Jews, who from that position come to represent the potential freedom in which ambivalence and homelessness, modern *vices*, becomes postmodern *virtues*. In this way, therefore, not only is antisemitism presented as *the* question at the very heart of modernity, the Jews come to represent the vanguard of a new freedom. Hence, we can understand Bauman’s description of the Jews as the Other of modernity.

The implication of this position is that the Jews were from the outset *always already* Other and unable to assimilate. This consequence evades the question of how *in the course of modernity* the Jews were gradually excluded, but also re-formulates the antisemitic belief as to the Jews’ distinctiveness and “otherness”.

Yet, whilst the debt to Adorno and Horkheimer is made explicit in *Modernity and Ambivalence* many aspects of Bauman’s thesis as the cultural causes of antisemitism appears as a treatise premised upon Hannah Arendt’s observation that assimilation for the Jews implied assimilation into an antisemitic society. Moreover, this connection

with Arendt can also be seen in Bauman's reference to the social (or, for him, cultural) categories of *parvenu* and *pariah*. Finally, we can also see the debt to Sartre's notions of the "authentic" and "inauthentic" Jew.

The central concept in *Modernity and Ambivalence* is that of the *stranger*; a role that, as we have seen, had been occupied by the Jews. Bauman argues that the modern quest for order involves a clear distinction between those inside and those outside the newly marked (national) territory: "friends" and "enemies" respectively. The concept of the stranger, therefore, not only throws this boundary-demarcation into question but also challenges the distinction in the first place. The stranger represents an outsider on the inside and the insider who is outside. As Bauman states,

[The strangers] are all *neither/nor*; which is to say that they militate against the *either/or*. Their under-determination is their potency; because they are nothing, they may be all. They put paid to the ordering power of the opposition, and so the ordering power of the narrators of the opposition. Oppositions enable knowledge and action; [the strangers] paralyse them. [The strangers] brutally expose the artifice, the fragility, the sham of the most vital of separations. They bring the outside into the inside, and poison the comfort of order with suspicion of chaos[1991; 56, emphasis in the original].

As such, the stranger (i.e. the Jew) becomes the personification and embodiment of ambivalence; a characteristic which, as we shall see, leads directly to the antisemitic mythology of the "real" Jew who exists "underneath" the "assimilated" Jew.

The urge for order and clear-cut boundaries is the *raison d'état*, the state is bound to invest a heavily to obliterate the threat of disorder, arising from the (destabilising) stranger. Yet, Bauman argues that the more that the *praxis* of order is set into motion, the more ambivalence is created. This "negative dialectic" arises from the artificial nature of order which *imposes* itself upon an unordered and heterogeneous world. In other words, the more grids that are placed onto that world, the more visible those aspects which do not fit become. In terms reminiscent of Adorno and Horkheimer, Bauman refers to these "remnants" as modernity's "industrial waste".

One of the techniques through which the state seeks to confront and neutralise the ever-present threat of the stranger is through the offer of assimilation. Yet, for Bauman this

apparently liberal exercise is nothing other than an exercise of power and domination. In Bauman's account, assimilation demands the denial and casting of one's own culture and one's absorption (i.e. disappearance) into the culture of those making the offer. In this way, assimilation acts as a technique in the modern state's drive for order and homogeneity, and as a corresponding attack on difference. Consequently, this "cultural crusade" - the demand that the stranger assimilate into the dominant culture through acceptance of its values - is, along with political and legal equality, another weapon in its war against heterogeneity and diversity.

Thus, Bauman speaks of assimilation as a *trap* rather than as an offer. The power to define what constitutes the values to be assimilated, to determine the stranger's success in adopting them, and, consequently, his success in ridding himself of his "own" culture, lays with the dominant power itself. Moreover, the dominant power is always at liberty to change the "rules of the game" whenever it so wishes. Thus, the liberal idea that assimilation involves a symmetrical relationship between the two parties is replaced in Bauman's account of a strictly asymmetrical relationship.

Bauman observes that the attempt by the stranger to take up the offer implies a re-enforcing of the host's (already considerable) power and dominance. If, on the one hand, the stranger refuses the offer, then he remains in the ambivalent (and dangerous) position of the stranger. He remains outside the moral universe constituted by the "national community".

Bauman further perceives a contradiction between the fact that assimilation is offered to the *individual*, but that the culture that they must leave behind is seen as a *group* or *collective* phenomenon. This contradiction results in a "Catch-22" for those seeking to assimilate. On the one hand, the majority of the Jews (the unassimilated) will always be a reminder of the limits of the assimilation process, as well as the measure against which the assimilated's success will be measured. As such, the more the assimilated seek to distance themselves from their co-religionists, the more the accusations of duplicity become compelling. On the other hand, should the assimilated remain in overt

connection with these others, then the more their own assimilation will be viewed as unsuccessful.

Yet, the most dangerous aspect of the trap of assimilation, and one that ultimately leads to what Bauman sees as its inherent and logical failure, is that the more the stranger (in this case, the Jew) attempts to assimilate, the more his difference to his host becomes apparent. The host culture, despite its creation as artifice, perceives itself and legitimises itself in the language of *naturalness*, allowing for the continued survival of the foundations of homogeneity and uniformity which constitute the very essence of the modern nation-state.. The consequence of such an ideological legitimisation means that cultural membership is seen by the nationals, now recast as “natives”, as a matter of “natural ascription” . As such, it places the possibility of *conscious* attempts at successive assimilation *beyond* the actions and intents of those seeking admission.

The practical outcome of the “trap” of assimilation was that the Jews who sought assimilation were caught in a “no-man’s land” where they became clearly identifiable as a distinct (and, by definition, ambivalent and so dangerous) group. By taking up what they perceived as the “offer” of assimilation, they cut themselves off from their own heritage and culture and sought entry into a culture that could not only refuse them. As Bauman states,

Though it effectively alienated its agents from their community of origin, assimilation did not lead, therefore, to a full and unconditional acceptance by the dominant nation. Much to their despair, the assimilated found that they had in effect *assimilated themselves solely to the assimilated*. Other assimilants were the only people around who shared their problems, anxieties and preoccupations. Having left behind their former social and spiritual affinities, the assimilants landed in another community, the “community of assimilants” - no less estranged and marginalized than the one from which they escaped, but in addition also incurably ambivalent. [1991; 143, emphasis in the original]

The very act of assimilating, therefore, points to the Otherness the stranger is seeking to overcome. From the perspective of the “native”, assimilation always gives rise to a suspicion of duplicity; that despite appearances to the contrary, “underneath” the assimilated remains what he always was (and is and will be). Assimilation is only a mask in the eyes of the hosts, therefore, and under it lurks the “real” Jew. Thus, in

tracing the cultural aspects of assimilation, Bauman again concludes that modernity creates the idea of "Jewishness" as a *natural* and so immutable characteristic, unamenable to any form of integration within (any) modern nation-state (now themselves legitimised in the eyes of its members as a matter of nature) The links between such naturalisation and Otherness of the Jews points obviously to the ultimate technique open to the modern state to counter its antithesis of order and boundary-definition - genocide.

As I noted above, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman seeks to explore the role and extent to which human agency may or may not have played a part in the phenomenon of antisemitism. I also argued this discussion was absent from *Modernity and the holocaust*. However, because of the nature of his thesis, he can only concentrate upon the question of *Jewish* responsibility. He discusses those who either fell for the trap of assimilation, or those who saw it for what it was. It is at this point that he draws upon Hannah Arendt's terminology of *parvenu* and *pariah*.

In describing the modern state as the "*Panoptical State*" [1991; 91] Bauman is referring to the work of Foucault⁶⁵ and provides a clue to the reasons for his focus upon the actions of those Jews directly involved in the assimilatory effort. Bauman implies that the power and domination that he sees as inherent within the *praxis* of assimilation located the contradictions discussed above *within* the assimilating Jews themselves. Since the "source" or "origin" of the assimilatory pressure (and so antisemitism) was within the all-powerful, all-seeing, and ever-vigilant "gardening" state, Bauman is unable to see the *antisemite*, other than in the nature of that state itself. It is, I believe, for this reason that he cannot but be limited to questions of agency in terms of *response* to that initial assimilatory and antisemitic pressure.⁶⁶ It is, therefore, in the context of response that Bauman discusses the "strategies" of the *parvenu* and the *pariah*. Furthermore, this issue of Jewish response and (limited) agency permits Bauman to escape from the negative reading of modernity presented in *Modernity and the*

⁶⁵ See especially: M. Foucault *Discipline and Punish* (1987) London: Penguin

⁶⁶ It is also to be noted that in this discussion, Bauman echoes many of Sartre's ideas as presented in *Anti-Semite and Jew*. [1995]

holocaust, whilst still leaving room for his idea that modernity is *inherently* antisemitic to remain.

In his discussion of the Jewish parvenu, whom Bauman identifies as those Jews who failed or refused to recognise the “true nature” of assimilation, Bauman moves uneasily between accusations of naiveté and complicity.⁶⁷ Bauman conducts this examination within the specific context of the German experience, one that he characterises as “prototypical”.

On the one hand, Bauman implies the naiveté of the parvenu in his discussion of their misguided understanding of the nature of the Germany into which they were seeking to assimilate. Drawing on his observation that these Jews only associated with others like themselves, he argues that they were unaware of the true nature of the parochiality of German culture and its antisemitic tendencies. Instead, the Germany that they envisioned was that of the German Enlightenment as represented by the “holy trinity” of Goethe, Schiller and Lessing, a German culture that could and would become the embodiment of true universality that would overcome the dichotomy of German and Jew. Yet, the error of such a belief when seen from the perspective of what Bauman terms the “real Germany” was that these assimilating Jews came to represent the antithesis of German national(ist) culture; they represented cosmopolitanism, enlightenment and a group “feeding off the organism” [1991; 123]. Bauman notes that as a consequence of this naiveté, they never fully realised that, “emancipation meant an escape from the ghetto *and* German history” [Mosse, quoted in Bauman, 1991; 123]. Consequently, the fact that “assimilation meant a head-on collision with the very society that they tried to assimilate into” never entered their minds.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Bauman argues the assimilated Jews provoked within the “native” population a feeling which I characterise as *ressentiment*:

There was nothing *intrinsically* wrong with the idea of fusing the two cultures; it was rather the would-be German partners, who abandoned their own luminous heritage and could not bear the sight of the strangers picking it up and dangling

⁶⁷ It appears to me that although Arendt was also rather hard on the parvenu, she did not express the degree of criticism in Bauman’s attempt.

⁶⁸ It is to be noted that in his part of his argument, Bauman comes closest to replicating Arendt’s observation noted above as to assimilation meaning assimilation into antisemitic society.

it before their eyes, that visited a defeat upon a venture moribund in itself [1991; 138. emphasis in the original].

On the other hand, Bauman also accuses assimilating Jews of a betrayal exercised against their “own” culture, co-religionists, and, ultimately, themselves. In keeping with the Foucauldian element of his thesis, Bauman argues that the “objective” predicament in which the assimilating Jews found themselves - the embodiment of ambivalence - could not but be internalised. Consequently, the fight against ambivalence came to be located *in* the Jews themselves. This internalisation compounded and manifested one of the contradictions which Bauman sees as inherent within assimilation: the conflict between the *individual* nature of the “offer” of assimilation, and the collective nature of the “traits” that one needed to shed.

The outcome of this dilemma, now made personal, was the parvenus highlighting those aspects of Jewish culture that they believed matched the modern, rational age, and discarding its more “mystical” or allegedly “pre-modern” characteristics. Similarly, it meant repressing any element that might be identified as “characteristically Jewish”, such as speaking Yiddish, and, ultimately, perceiving their own culture and heritage through the perspective of disgust. Bauman rather harshly then concludes that this self-denial was attempted solely for the promise (never to be fulfilled) of entry into the “good (i.e. antisemitic) society”. Finally, Bauman implies that this internalisation of the dominant values could not but further the modern state’s goal of extirpating the difference and diversity that it saw as a threat to its aim of perfect (universal) order.

The panoptic nature of the assimilatory process is most evident in Bauman’s account of the relationship between the Western (i.e. German) Jews and the Eastern Jews (or *Ostjuden*). Bauman argues that the immigration of the *Ostjuden* into Germany created severe problems for the assimilating German Jews. In contrast to Hannah Arendt’s thesis, Bauman argues that rather than permitting the Western Jews to stand out, the German Jews were instead identified with them. One of the consequences was that the *Ostjuden* revived the image the Western Jews had tried so hard to escape.

More importantly, however, because of the speed with which the new *Ostjuden* changed their habits of dress and other “Eastern” habits, questions were raised regarding the “success” of the assimilation of the German Jews and brought to the fore the antisemitic notion of the alleged duplicity of *all* Jews. It brought into the popular imagination the idea that the Jews were the masters of mimicry, and so, appearances to the contrary could never be trusted. Racism, Bauman argues, was merely the most extreme of the opinions that maintained that some aspects of human behaviour are not amenable to assimilation, but represent the “natural” limitations to any attempt at integration through *Bildung*. Again, therefore, Bauman argues that the processes of modernity, in this case, that of assimilation, results in the *naturalisation* of an alleged particularity in those it once claimed in the name of “universality”. However, as Bauman has sought to illustrate, the promise of assimilation was *fraudulent from the start*.

In this context, Bauman argues that the parvenus amongst the Western Jews had internalised the domination inherent within the assimilatory process to such a degree that they adopted an antisemitic stance to their Eastern co-religionists. Bauman contends that this betrayal manifested itself in stereotyping the Eastern Jews with all those traits from which they themselves wished to escape. Indeed, he argues that this group echoed the majority culture’s metaphors in terms that “*anticipated Nazi rhetoric*”⁶⁹ [1991; 134, emphasis added]. Thus, not only did the assimilatory process entail a constant “self-vigilance” *within* the Western Jews, but it also required the internalisation of the dominant (antisemitic) values of the host community. In this way, Bauman argues that the *Ostjuden* became the Other of the Others, and that naiveté turned into complicity. Indeed, it holds the German Jews themselves *responsible* for the consequences of such collaboration.

The harshness of Bauman’s judgement against the Western parvenus rests partly in his argument concerning the pariah. As does Arendt, Bauman draws on the thought of

⁶⁹ It is to be noted here that, once again Bauman implies the continuity between the modern nation-state and the Nazi regime.

Bernard Lazare⁷⁰ in characterising the pariah as the one who saw through the allure of the trap of assimilation. He argues that the strategies open to the pariah were threefold.

First, they could accept the offer of assimilation at face-value and, through political activism, to look to the state to deliver on its promise. This route would prove to be unsuccessful, as Jewish intellectuals within leftist groups became marginalised and, ultimately, delegitimised through identification with the negative stereotype of *Ostjuden* and the claim of the Jews' duplicity.

The second path was to accept the modernist project by creating a Jewish nation-state. This route was followed by Theodor Herzl. Yet, Bauman argues that far from re-forging the links with the (Jewish) past, Zionism was a response to the failures of the thoroughly modern process of assimilation. As he states, the aim of Zionism was "to salvage the Jews from the collapse of European liberalism and to salvage liberalism from the consequences of its collapse in Europe [1991; 148]."

The final strategy was to accept the situation of isolation and "homelessness", and here Bauman cites the example of Jews such as Freud, Kafka and Simmel. However, as Bauman explicitly notes, these Jews came from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and not from Germany. In recognising their situation for what it truly was Bauman argues that they were in an ideal position to be critical of the claims of universality made by the various nation-states of their region. Recognising such claims as particularistic and relative, it was they who were able to grasp the actually-existing universal condition of modernity: that despite all attempts at order and boundary-making, the real human condition was one of existential isolation and the diversity of humankind, both at an individual and a group level. And, Bauman argues, it is this observation that makes these Jewish pariahs the first postmodern harbingers of the demise of the modern *weltanschauung*. It can thus be argued that Bauman implies that the trap of assimilation offered two resolutions - Auschwitz or Kafka, or, to paraphrase Marx, barbarism or freedom.

⁷⁰ Jewish French writer of the late 19th century.

In conclusion, Bauman's accounts in both *Modernity and the holocaust* and *Modernity and Ambivalence* expresses the idea that the connection between modernity and antisemitism cannot be understood in terms of a relationship whereby the limitations of the former give rise to the latter. Instead, he argues that from its very inception, antisemitism is inscribed in modernity in its very meaning, goals and ambitions. It is modernity's quest for order and boundaries that gives rise to fear of the Other. It is of course true that Bauman speaks of contradictions within modernity, such as those between universality and particularity. However, as he makes clear in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, this universality is itself a claim to power masking more parochial or relativist claims, a claim only recognised by Jews themselves. Consequently, Bauman maintains that despite its rhetoric, all aspects of modernity, including, on the one hand, the (overt) concepts of citizenship, equality and rights, along with notions of cultural values, and on the other hand, the (covert) discourses of science and "nature", are part of its strategy and techniques of power and domination aimed at creating a rational, homogenous and docile population. It is also for this reason that Bauman's explanation of antisemitism does not recognise *antisemites* and instead remains in the realm of discursive power.

Moreover, because of Bauman's insistence on a unidimensional understanding of modernity, he does not make any distinction between liberal democratic states and the Nazi regime. Nor does he distinguish between a regime with legal rights and those without, a point he reiterates in both works especially in his argument that rights are synonymous with coercion. Consequently, he cannot address the question of the *relationship* between equality and inequality or the limits and failings of equality which give rise to inequality and antisemitism. It is for this reason that I have emphasised that Bauman's work is similar to Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (a point expressly made by Bauman), but is one in which the notion of *inversion*, from enlightenment to domination is lacking. Therefore, paradoxically, whilst Bauman recognises the thoroughly modern nature of antisemitism, he collapses all its multifarious and *ambivalent* aspects into a homogenous unity that only permits the exercise of power and domination, the network of which encapsulates antisemitism itself.

In both studies, Bauman argues that it is the Jews who become marked as modernity's Other. In *Modernity and the holocaust* he explains this by relying upon the Jews' pre-modern relationship to Christianity and one that continues in form, if not in substance. On this account, therefore, the place and responsibility of "flesh and blood" Jews in the history of antisemitism is evaded. Conversely, in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, he suggests that modernity itself creates the Jews as its ambivalence and, therefore, as a by-product in its quest for order. We also see how the quest for order produces in the Jews "strategies" that reproduce that process. Whilst the result is the antisemitic imagery of the Jew (that is, the re-appearance of the "conceptual Jew"), the concept appears to match the "flesh and blood" Jews. Thus, in Bauman's account, the Jew, becomes either over-determined or under-determined; either they are *not* the antisemite's Jew or they are the Jew *upon which* antisemitism is concentrated. Whichever outcome is accepted, it leaves open the question of the relationship between concept and actuality.

Finally, Bauman has argued that the "Jewish Question" is the locus of far more fundamental and deeper problems with modernity. However, these problematics and consequences *manifest* themselves solely around the question of the Jews and antisemitism. In this way, therefore, the Jewish Question becomes the question of modernity, and is endowed with a significance comparable to that placed upon it by the antisemitic imagination itself. This virtual "eschatological" reading of antisemitism and the Jews is replicated in Bauman's idea in *Modernity and Ambivalence* that whilst modernity (and antisemitism) creates the Jews, the Jews become modernity's "gravediggers" and the hope and potential for the future. In many ways, this reading of the Jews is but a philosemitic replication of the antisemitic myth of the role of the Jews as the harbingers of doom and ultimate destruction.

Chapter 8

Jean Francois Lyotard: Un-thinking the Unthinkable

*The word of God must be infinite, or, to put it in a different way, the absolute word is as such meaningless, but it is pregnant with meaning. Under human eyes it enters into significant finite embodiments which mark the innumerable layers of meaning....The key itself may be lost, but an immense desire to look for it remains alive.*⁷¹

If Zygmunt Bauman's account of antisemitism collapses any relationship between rights and antisemitism by arguing that the latter is a constitutive part of the former, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1925-1997) also refutes any notion of relationship. However, rather than collapsing the two poles, he stretches them apart to such a degree that the language of relationship is replaced by the language of the Other. In this way, Lyotard locates the holocaust, antisemitism and the Jews in a realm that is the Other of society one that is outside or beyond social relations premised upon autonomous rights-bearing individuals..

Lyotard's contribution to critical theories of antisemitism, and his thesis of the Other in particular, are contained in a series of books and articles written from the early 1980s to the early 1990s. Although the historical context of any text is important to illuminate its meaning, in many ways, for Lyotard's work it is decisive. It is thus worth while spending a little time discussing this context.

The immediate spur for Lyotard's contemplation of antisemitism was a series of scandalous issues in France that immediately grabbed popular and academic attention. The first of these episodes was the publication of Faurisson's "denial" of the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz.⁷² in 1981. It was as an intervention in this controversy that Lyotard wrote and published *The Differend* (1983). This dispute was followed a couple of years later by the so-called "Heidegger Affair" with the publication of

⁷¹ Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* New York: Schocken, 1969. Quoted from Z. Bauman. *Modernity and Ambivalence* p.173

⁷² In "A Paper Eichmann", Pierre Vidal-Naquet 1981

Victor Farias' indictment of Heidegger's political commitment to National Socialism. It was as a contribution to this debate that Lyotard published *Heidegger and "the Jews"* in 1988. Finally, two articles published in 1990, *Europe, the Jews, and the Book* and *The Grip (Mainmise)* (both 1990) comprise Lyotard's reflections on the repugnant desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Carpentras. Yet, while these specific episodes may have served as the impetus for a series of publications focused upon antisemitism, the holocaust and the Jews, in many ways these publications also became a critical *tour de force* of the entire tradition of "Western" thought. In what follows, I will concentrate my attention on what Lyotard has to say about antisemitism and will refer to the wider elements of his work only when led by this primary issue.

The cumulative effect of these controversies upon the realm of public affairs in France was great. They broke the silence that surrounded the holocaust that had reigned in France for almost forty years. Along with the trial of Klaus Barbie, these "affairs" challenged the orthodox self-representation of France as the nation of resistance and brought to the light awkward questions of collaboration and responsibility. Lyotard's writing in response to these "affairs" bears witness to the national trauma experienced in France in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Lyotard's treatment of the holocaust, antisemitism and the Jews is constantly mediated by its historical context. He refuses all attempts to "seek the truth"; indeed, he argues that such a goal is all but impossible. Rather, he is concerned to understand what it is about these phenomena that permitted them to be forgotten so quickly and apparently so easily. He implies that it is only in answering *that* question, that we can even begin to think about the actual events under investigation. It is partly for this reason that for Lyotard, the issues surrounding the holocaust, antisemitism and the Jews require a thoroughly critical reading of the "western" tradition of modern thought and practice. Hence, Lyotard's inclusion in this study.

Context may also shed light upon the distinct character of Lyotard's writing. His investigations not only lead him to a "writing of "the ethical"", but t his writing is

itself also a praxis of ethics. Lyotard's writings demand that readers *think about what they are thinking about*. Lyotard's thesis in *The Differend* is that no event contains meaning in itself. Rather, meanings are only ascribed once that event has been "phrased", that is, put into language, and only when that phrase enters into a "genre of discourse" or "language game". In this way, meanings are ascribed (and continue to be ascribed) only when the event/phrase has entered into a chain of discourse. However, of all events the holocaust, antisemitism defy any such "phrasing"; they escape even the possibility for the ascription of meaning - they cannot be spoken about. Confronted with the question of *why* these "events" cannot be phrased the reader in turn begins to think about the "events" themselves. And it is this thinking about what is being thought about that breaks or disrupts the genre of discourse within which the reader is implicated. It is in the silence that follows from this lack of words that, without one word of description or representation, the reader is confronted with the intimation (and not the knowledge) of the unspeakable terror and horror that was the holocaust. By analogy, what Lyotard has to say about Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* is equally applicable to Lyotard's writings themselves,

Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* is an exception, perhaps the only one. Not only because it scarcely offers a testimony where the unrepresentable of the holocaust is not indicated, be it but for a moment, by the alteration in the tone of a voice, a knotted throat, sobbing, tears, a witness fleeing off-camera, a disturbance in the tone of the narrative, an uncontrolled gesture. So that one knows that the impassable witnesses, whoever they might be, are certainly not lying, "play-acting", hiding something. [1988; 26]

It is this idea of the unrepresentability and unspeakableness of the holocaust and antisemitism that informs Lyotard's account of these events. His writing resonates with the shock of having to be reminded of something forgotten but which should not have been forgotten.

In the works cited above, Lyotard aims to explain why it is and what it is about the holocaust, antisemitism and the Jews that prohibits them from being grasped by the mind in the same manner as that occurs with other events. Why it is, in other words, that they cannot be "phrased"?

To a certain extent an answer to this question had been provided some twenty years earlier. In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno had also argued that the holocaust, which he referred to by the use of the emblematic "Auschwitz", was an event that could never be negated and sublimated within the framework of Hegelian speculative dialectics. According to this line of argument "Auschwitz" represents the limits of "identity" and "reconciliation"; it remains unique, therefore, in its "non-identity" and in its inability to be reconciled within the movement of speculative dialectic as a whole.

However, for Adorno, this irreconcilability does not represent the demise of dialectics *per se*, but, rather, gives rise to what he termed "negative dialectics", in which,

[T]he absolute, as it hovers before metaphysics, would be the non-identical that refuses to emerge until the compulsions of identity has dissolved. Without a thesis of identity, dialectics is not the whole; but neither will it be a cardinal sin to depart from it in a dialectical step...It lies in the definition of negative dialectics that it will not come to rest in itself, as if it were total.⁷³

Thus, "Auschwitz" stands "alone", unamenable to integration within *speculative* dialectics, but, nonetheless is "included" within the system of *negative* dialectics as that which can never be negated. Simon Jarvis summarises this point with his characteristic clarity

Hence Adorno's insistence that *dialectical thinking relies on an undialectical element precisely in order to remain dialectical*. Adorno, then, asks how the dialectical experience of thought is possible. It is made possible by that which it cannot exhaustively think, the non-identical.⁷⁴

Lyotard's critique of *Negative Dialectics* in general, and its implications for the event of "Auschwitz" in particular, is not carried out so as to "save" dialectics. On the contrary, it is to show that the "phrase-event" that is "Auschwitz" is incapable of being integrated or "chained" within any philosophical discourse or meta-narrative of a "philosophy of history" that is dialectical in nature, be it speculative or negative.⁷⁵ Lyotard argues that *any* dialectical treatment of "Auschwitz" can only give rise to a result or *resultat* - as a "moment" in the dialectical unfolding of history. To permit

⁷³ *Negative Dialectics* p.406

⁷⁴ Simon Jarvis, *opp. cit.* p.173

⁷⁵ Lyotard also questions "debates" about "Auschwitz" to be included in the "dialektike" of Aristotle.

such a result would undermine Lyotard's thesis that "Auschwitz" cannot only not be known "in itself", but also that it cannot be (re)presented in the discourses of thought..

Lyotard's general thesis is provided in a nutshell by Lyotard himself in a small passage from his article *Europe, the Jews, and the Book*

My claim is that the Jews represent *something that Europe does not want to or cannot know anything about*. Even when they are dead, it abolishes their memory and refuses them burial in its land. All of this takes place in the unconscious and has no right to speak. When the deed is done in full daylight, Europe is seized for an instant by the horror and the terror of *confronting its own desire*. [1990b; 159 emphasis in the original]

At the outset we can present Lyotard's response in a schematic way. Lyotard's contribution to questions of antisemitism and the Jews turns upon a re-focusing of the way these issues are usually approached. Rather than understanding them *politically* he transforms them into questions of *ethics*. The ethical escapes phrasing, even the possibility of phrasing, according to the tradition of Western political *praxis*. Indeed, for Lyotard, politics can be defined precisely as the attempt to silence and forget the ethical. This point can be expressed as the conflict between autonomy and heteronomy with "Europe" representing the former, and the Jews the latter. It follows, therefore, that since Europe believes it has successfully overcome any form of dependency, of heteronomy, no place or "genre of discourse" is left accessible to the ethical. It is this situation that makes the ethical, and its representatives, the Jews, the Other of Europe.

Lyotard argues that despite all proclamations to the contrary, Europe's attempt to deny the ethical is always doomed to failure. The ethical remains deep in its unconscious. As such, the disconcerting feeling that something is not quite right is often present as an unlocatable anxiety which, every now and then, gives rise to an obsessive attempt to rid itself of those who appear to personify the limits of its own putative success. The holocaust is one such episode, yet, since it was a further attempt to extinguish the ethical, it too took place beyond the sphere of the political. Lyotard explains this point as follows:

The solution was to be final: the final answer to the "Jewish" question. It was necessary to carry it right up to its conclusion, to "terminate" the interminable. And thus to "terminate" the term itself. It had to be a

perfect crime, one would plead not guilty, certain of the lack of proofs. This is a "politics" of absolute forgetting, forgotten. Absurd, since its zeal, its very desperation distinguishes it as extrapolitical. Obviously, a "politics" of extermination exceeds politics. It is not negotiated on a scene. This obstinacy to exterminate to the very end, because it cannot be understood politically, already indicates that we are dealing with something else, with the Other. [1988; 25]

Having given a brief overview of Lyotard's answer to his own question as to why the holocaust, antisemitism and the Jews remain beyond, or "exceed" politics, and come to be the Other, it is now necessary to examine the argument in more detail. The essential point for Lyotard is that the political and the ethical, autonomy and heteronomy, Europe and the Jews cannot be understood in terms of a *relationship*, since the concept of a relation implies that the "phrase" of the one can be linked to the other. It is exactly this linking that Lyotard claims is not possible. It is in this way, therefore, that Lyotard's thought on these issues attempts to break free of any dialectical (i.e. relational) understanding between modernity and antisemitism.

Lyotard argues that the political aim of emancipation has always involved the attempt at autonomy, the attempt to be free of any dependence upon an Other; the attempt to free oneself from the ethical.

The Christian Churches had introduced the motif of fraternity. The French Revolution extended it, by turning it on its head. We are brothers, not as sons of God but as free and equal citizens. It is not an Other who gives us the law. It is our civic community that does, that obliges, prohibits, permits. That is called emancipation from the Other, and autonomy. Our law opens citizenship to every individual, conditional on respect for republican principles. [1993; 161-162]

In this way, Lyotard explains how this discourse of political *praxis* premised upon the related concepts of rights, equality and the rule of law comes to be defined solely in terms of its (final) overcoming of heteronomy, of being in debt to an Other. In this discourse only humanity occupies the place of the legislator.

Similarly, in what Lyotard refers to as the "narratives" of modernity, "man" emancipates, seeks his autonomy from any other, through recognising and naming *himself* as the author of "his" own creation. Moreover, because western political consciousness is premised upon this recognition, any attempt at representing the other

results in that other becoming assimilated to the one seeking to represent it. Thus; it becomes no different from the consciousness that inaugurates the attempt. As it is a consciousness that recognises itself as autonomous and self-standing, it will represent the other in the same way. It will name the other in the same way that it names itself, and attribute to it the same qualities. Consequently, the other will cease to have any power over the inaugurator and the relationship of asymmetry and heteronomy will be destroyed. As with all relations between autonomous individuals, the possibility of the debt owed to the other can be, and will be, cancelled. Humanity will be emancipated from the Other and the ethical - heteronomy will be evaded or forgotten.

Yet, this attempt at emancipation and autonomy cannot but fail. It fails because what is forgotten - the ethical - does not, for the mere fact of being forgotten, cease to exist. Rather, it is repressed and, as such, remains beyond the notice of consciousness. Yet, even though buried within the realms of the unconscious, it nonetheless makes itself felt within the realm of consciousness. Consciousness occasionally and for no apparent reason feels itself assailed from the outside, even though the real location of the disturbance is within its own depths. Lyotard explains this point in the following way:

This sudden feeling is as good as a testimony, through its unsettling strangeness, which "from the exterior" lies in reserve in the interior, hidden away and from where it can on occasion depart to return from the outside to assail the mind as if it were issued not from it but from the incidental situation. [1988; 12-13]

It is through this process that the autonomy which believes itself to be the victor will always remain alert to the stirrings of its own unconscious connection with heteronomy, the ethical. Because it cannot be ordered through consciousness, the unconscious affect will appear suddenly, as if it came from nowhere, as a bolt out of the blue. Believing it has emancipated itself the ethical will suddenly, unexpectedly, be seized by an "anxiety" which it cannot place. Yet, this "Forgotten", itself forgotten and buried within the unconscious, is continually present as a lack, or lapsus, as an absence, within consciousness. As a result, consciousness will continually respond to an unconscious desire to be rid of that which it senses, but does not know and which disrupts its search for "true" autonomy. It is in this way that Lyotard explains how it is that the ethical - heteronomy- remains, but remains in *excess* of the political - autonomy - and acts as a

constant disturbance. Thus, the ethical remains simultaneously as that which is both “excluded” and “included”.

The question that remains, of course, is why this conflict, which Lyotard locates within the heart of the political *praxis* of European modernity, should affect the Jews as *the* Jews and give rise to antisemitism and the holocaust? In answering this question, Lyotard eschews any recourse to the “scapegoat” theory. Rather, he identifies something he believes is distinctive about the Jews that brings upon them the obsessive wrath of the West. The Jews, Lyotard claims, are the representatives of the ethical that can never be extinguished and remain as the constant challenge and reminder of the limits of European political *praxis*. It is the Jews, in other words, who in the face of claims of autonomy stand out as the intimation of what the political forgets: one is always in debt to the Other, that heteronomy can never truly be done away with.

To explain why the Jews come to “represent *something that Europe does not want to or cannot know anything about*” [1993; 159] Lyotard draws references and allusions from the body of works of Kant, Freud and Levinas.

In particular Lyotard focuses upon the Jews’ constitution as Jews. He argues that the Jews were constituted as the Jews through

a promise and an alliance that are not the contract and the pact, a promise made to a people who did not want it and had no need of it, an alliance that has not been negotiated, that goes against the people’s interests, of which it knows itself unworthy. And so this people, an old communal apparatus already well-to-do, hypothetically, with intact defence mechanisms and dynamic, economic, linguistic regulations without which it would not be a people, this simple people taken hostage by a voice that does not tell it anything, save that it (this voice) is, and that all representation and naming of it are forbidden, and that it, this people, only needs to listen to its tone, to be obedient to a timbre. [1988; 21]

Central to Lyotard’s interpretation of this origin is that this Call was an event so traumatic that it could not be registered within consciousness but which nonetheless remained buried within the unconscious. Forbidden to be represented, the Other (the Voice) remains beyond and unknown to consciousness. Never able to be recognised,

known or named it lingers as a feeling that exceeds all knowledge and language. Lyotard argues that the purpose of the Jews' "Book" (in which this origin is recounted) is, therefore, *not* to represent the Other, through which the debt and obligation to the Other is cancelled, but rather is constantly to remind the Jews that they have "forgotten the Forgotten". As a consequence, the Jews are eternally reminded of this debt to the Other. Thus, the Jews are,

[f]orgetting souls, like all souls, but to whom the Forgotten never ceases to return to claim its due. The Forgotten is not to be remembered for what it has been and what it is, because it has not been anything and is nothing, but must be remembered as something that never ceases to be forgotten. And this something is not a concept or a representation, but a "fact", a *factum* (Kant *Critique of Practical Reason*, A56): namely that one is obligated before the Law, in debt. [1988; 3]

Lyotard suggests that the Jews are unable to work through the trauma of their origins because of the prohibition of representing the Other that called them into existence. Consequently, the Jews are unable free themselves from their obligation, their debt - their heteronomy - and embark on the project of emancipation and autonomy. They are, therefore, the very personification or embodiment of the ethical, and, as such, are the Other of modern political *praxis*.

Thus it is that the Jews cannot manage to find their place in the systems by which thought is represented in the politics and social practices of the European West. They cannot form a "nation" in the medieval sense, nor a people in the modern sense. The Law forbids them to acquire the communitarian status of an ethnic group. Their relation to the Event of the Covenant and the Promise is a relation of dependence, not a relation to a land and a history but a relation to the letters of a book and to a paradoxical temporality.[1993 143]

The Jews, therefore, exist "within" Europe in the same manner as does the ethical itself. They exist as the "absent-present" that exceeds the political but that remains deeply entrenched within the unconscious. Their "presence" is registered within Europe's consciousness as a challenge and limit to its self-proclaimed autonomy.

'[T]he jews" are within the "spirit" of the Occident that is so preoccupied with foundational thinking, what resists this spirit; within its will, the will to want, what gets in the way of this will; within its accomplishments, projects and progress, what never ceases to reopen the wound of the unaccomplished. "The jews" are the irremissible in the West's movement of remission and pardon. They are what cannot be domesticated in the obsession to dominate, in the compulsion to control domain, in the passion for empire, recurrent ever since

Hellenistic Greece and Christian Rome. "The jews", never at home wherever they are, cannot be integrated, converted, or expelled. [1988; 22]

It is in this way and for these reasons that the "conflict" between the political and the ethical, autonomy and heteronomy, turns into a conflict that cannot but involve the Jews and inevitably becomes antisemitism. Indeed, Lyotard argues that antisemitism is precisely this antagonist encounter.

Anti-Semitism is one of the means of the apparatus of its culture to bind and represent as much as possible - to protect against - the originary terror, actively to forget it. It is the defensive side of its attack mechanisms - Greek science, Roman law and politics, Christian spirituality, and the Enlightenment, the underside of knowledge, of having, of wanting, of hope. One converts the Jews in the Middle Ages, they resist by mental restriction. One expels them during the classical age, they return. One integrates them in the modern era, they persist in their difference. One exterminates them in the twentieth century. [1988; 23]

At this point, Lyotard's thesis comes to resemble "eternal antisemitism". Because Lyotard implies that *all* (European) post-Judaic religious and political movements have sought emancipation and autonomy (in the sense of closing the debt to the (originating) Other) and it follows that those who are aware that the debt has not been cancelled will remain as a thorn in their side. In this account, antisemitism is detached from any specific relationship to modernity⁷⁶ even while Lyotard remains aware that the holocaust arose within the context of a specific historical period characterised by a specific form of political *praxis*. This context he terms as "republicanism"; that of the modern emancipated political nation-state premised upon the rule of law, equality and rights.

Lyotard's claim that antisemitism - the desire to be rid of the ethical - occurs in the unconscious of Europe, that is, in a realm that *exceeds* politics, means that antisemitism need not be part of any political project. Indeed, this is precisely the situation within the modern political nation-state, where tolerance and assimilation appear to deny the space for Jews as Jews or the possibility of antisemitism. As Lyotard states,

Our law opens citizenship to every individual, conditional on respect for republican principles. The Jews are allowed in like anyone else. This is called assimilation. [1993; 161]

⁷⁶ Modernity, of course is usually taken to mean the period covering the last two hundred years, However, this periodisation is equally a matter of some debate.

However, Lyotard echoes Hannah Arendt's observation, but for entirely different reasons, that for the Jews, assimilation means assimilating antisemitism [1988; 22]. For Lyotard this is the case because, as we have discussed, political emancipation is precisely the denial of the ethical, the denial of the very premise that constitutes the Jews as the Jews. Perhaps more importantly, assimilation as understood in its political and legal sense takes place only at the level of appearances, at the level of consciousness. At the level of the unconscious, antisemitism still abounds.

What then can a "French or German citizen of Israelite profession" be - above all if he is an officer like Dreyfus or a head of government like Blum? In the European unconscious, it is recognised that his debt to the Other will prevail over his duties to the others, to the national community. And that he is bound to be a potential traitor. Unless he forgets himself as Jew. This is the great temptation for the "assimilated" themselves. The "final solution" will come as a monstrous reminder to them that they are always, even *despite themselves*, witnesses to something about which Europe wants to know nothing.[1993; 161]

Political assimilation, then, appears in some senses to be a purely cosmetic measure. Underneath it, in the realm of the unconscious, the conflict with the ethical will continue unabated and the superficiality of republican political universalism will collapse. And, as I have indicated, it is in this realm that Lyotard locates the mass murders of the Nazi regime, a realm of which Europe is unaware; a realm that exceeds thought.

Despite his insistence on the absence of relationships between "modernity" and antisemitism Lyotard, at this point in his argument, appears to have re-formulated the conclusion reached by Adorno in *Negative Dialectics*; that antisemitism and the holocaust represent the limit and boundary of thought. However, Lyotard is keen to avoid such a conclusion..

His argument against Adorno's idea of the complete negativity of "Auschwitz" is two-fold. His first point is that despite Adorno's claim that "Auschwitz" represents the limits of thought, s one can know *something* about "it", even if what is known is its own irreconcilable negativity. Even this negativity would make of "Auschwitz" a *resultat* - a moment in the unfolding of dialectical thought - and so be able to be "phrased", to be brought into the realm of thought, within a genre of discourse. Lyotard cites as an

example of this "inclusion" Adorno's expression "*After Auschwitz*". For Lyotard, the use of such temporality implies that "Auschwitz" can be located, placed or "phrased" through and within the categories of the mind, of thought - that it becomes amenable to consciousness as experience. Yet, as I have stressed, this is precisely the type of reasoning that Lyotard eschews and claims cannot be applicable to antisemitism and the holocaust.

Secondly, Lyotard argues that *if* "Auschwitz" is the negation of speculative dialectics that Adorno claims it to be, then the "result" (a term Lyotard has questioned) would be unmitigated nihilism. In a detailed and complex argument⁷⁷ Lyotard questions Adorno's claim and argues that that "in making the name "Auschwitz" a model for and within negative dialectics, Adorno suggests that what meets its end there is merely affirmative dialectics". This counter-claim rests, Lyotard notes, on the contradictory manner in which Hegel has included such attempts within his own works on speculative dialectics through his own distinction between positive or affirmative dialectics and negative dialectics.

This opposition is a trace, the scar of a wound in speculative discourse, a wound for which that discourse is also the mending. This wound is not an accidental one, it is absolutely philosophical. [1983; 90]

Lyotard's reading of this point implies the correlation between the negative aspects of dialectics and "the ancient kind" of scepticism; and it is in Hegel's utilisation of scepticism that Lyotard detects a contradictory attitude. He notes that, on the one hand, Hegel understood it as "the free aspect of every philosophy" and itself part of affirmative speculative dialectics. On the other hand, Hegel also understands scepticism as an nihilistic abstraction through which all "determinations" are "disintegrated". It is this sense that

[s]cepticism always sees in the result only *pure nothingness*, and abstracts from the fact that this nothing is determinate, is the nothing of *that out of which it comes as a result*.⁷⁸

By presenting negative dialectics as scepticism which sees in the result -"Auschwitz" - a nothingness that is devoid of "determination", the consequence is that only

⁷⁷ See: *The Differend* and the sectioned titled *Resultat*

⁷⁸ Hegel; *Phenomenology of the Mind*. p.137, quoted in Lyotard, p.91

nothingness results. Whereas speculative dialectic "make this distressing negativity work for the production of an affirmation",

"Auschwitz" [as] a model of negative dialectics...will have awakened the despair of nihilism and it will be necessary "after Auschwitz" for thought to consume its determinations like a cow its fodder or a tiger its prey, that is, *with no result*. In the sty or the lair that the West will have become, only that which follows upon this consumption will be found, waste, matter, shit....We wanted the progress of the mind, we got its shit.[1983; 91]

Conversely, Lyotard argues that what emerges from the inability of thought to comprehend the holocaust and antisemitism is a silence, not the silence reflective of a void, of a nothingness, but rather a silence that "speaks". For Lyotard, this silence is not the referent of a "nothing" in the sense of not being there, but rather that "something" *is*, which is inexpressible, un(re)presentable, but present as a *feeling*. It is a feeling can only be intimated or pointed toward and cannot be the "thing itself" [1983; 57].

In presenting his thesis in this way, Lyotard is able to maintain his claim that the antisemitism and holocaust within modernity can be explained without recourse to any notion of dialectical relationship. For Lyotard, antisemitism and the holocaust are neither the antithesis of modernity, of a system of social relations premised upon law, rights and equality, nor its logical conclusion. Rather, they are its Other.

Thus, Europe could forget these events so quickly and so easily, because it never *knew* about them in the first place. Europeans did not *know* what was happening, because what *was* happening *exceeded* the realm of the political. Concerned as these events are with the ethical, they are the Other of the political and so cannot be located or "phrased" within the discourses that relate to that realm; "language games" that have no place for what is outside them. Taking place in the realm of the unconscious, they remain unknown and unknowable to consciousness. They cannot but escape the realm of thought and knowledge, but reach us only in the silence of a feeling. It is to this feeling that Lyotard's writing testifies.

Several questions arise throughout Lyotard's analysis Lyotard is of course quite correct to identify the feeling of sheer incredulity when "reminded" about the

holocaust. He is, in my opinion, equally correct to reflect upon that feeling. However, it seems to me to be problematic when the theorising of reflections or feelings about antisemitism and the holocaust come to stand in for a theory of the events themselves. In many terrible situations we begin at a loss for words, but later seek to understand what has happened. Indeed, it is often only in understanding that mourning does not become melancholia. It seems to me that Lyotard's unwillingness to understand gives rise to several potential problems with his account of antisemitism and the holocaust.

In many ways, Lyotard appears to make of the holocaust what the initial Call was to the Jews. Lyotard locates antisemitism and the holocaust outside the realm of consciousness, of thought, and of knowledge; that is, the same realm through which the initial constitution of the Jews occurred. Both the Jews and antisemitism are forgotten and not forgotten. Moreover, Lyotard's writing itself is aimed to make us remember that we have forgotten this forgotten, in a manner similar to that of the Jewish "book". The paradox of Lyotard's account is that in a manner similar to Adorno, but with different consequences, the holocaust, which is claimed to be unknowable, to be beyond (political) meaning, is endowed with an excess of (ethical) meaning. It becomes the most significant ethical event in over five thousand years. The "Judaizing" of the holocaust in this way is problematic. As Bauman points out, the holocaust and antisemitism is part of European history. To infer that it is "Jewish history" already assumes a division that has itself to be brought under critical scrutiny.

Equally problematic is Lyotard's claim that the failures of Jewish emancipation are to be explained by the nature of the Jews themselves, that they are the personification of the ethical itself - a point reflected in Lyotard's notion that the Jews are the Other of modernity. Despite the philosemitism underpinning it, that heteronomy is "more" ethical than autonomy, it can appear that the antisemitic claim that the Jews are unfit for emancipation and autonomy because of some inherent aspect is, in a perverse way, legitimated by Lyotard's account. Consequently, the Jews of whom Lyotard speaks appear to be "the Jews" murdered by the Nazis. It appears, therefore, that the Yellow Star forced upon so many millions of individuals in some way spoke to a "truth" about the one wearing it.

Lyotard's attempt to understand antisemitism and the holocaust without reference to any notion of relationship (dialectical or otherwise) is also questionable. There is little doubt that he more than implies that emancipation and autonomy, especially in its modern form of rights and equality, can be said to *give rise to* the exclusion of "heteronomy", which is then resented by the emancipated themselves. Read in this way, Lyotard's account re-formulates Nietzsche's understanding of antisemites as a dialectic of rights and *ressentiment*. Yet, for Lyotard, such a conflict takes place in excess of, or beyond, the realm of consciousness, of the political. Through this shift of location, any equivocality attaching to rights and equality is lost and is replaced by a dismissal. Yet, as the *political history* of the holocaust and other events has shown (precisely the type of knowledge declared inappropriate by Lyotard) it was precisely the *loss of rights* that was the first step to murder.⁷⁹

It also follows from this point that from Lyotard's perspective, the Jews *really are* of central significance to the question of "modernity". It is as if for Lyotard, the Jews are the markers or embodiment of the limits of modernity itself. In this way, the question of modernity and its relationship to antisemitism and the holocaust becomes the question of the Jews. It is a question, moreover, that we can never answer since as Lyotard argues, it is placed beyond the field of political and social *praxis*. Thus, by taking antisemitism and the holocaust, *and only antisemitism and the holocaust*, outside of history, human knowledge is deemed to be of no avail. In this way, antisemitism and the holocaust and the Jews come to represent the nemesis of the entirety of Western political and social *praxis* and the struggle for emancipation that has punctuated it.

However, I would argue that, if anything, it is precisely antisemitism and the holocaust that cry out for understanding. Moreover, they require an understanding that recognises the social and political (secular?) forces at play and, correspondingly does not represent the futility of any political *praxis* of emancipation. It appears to me that after the holocaust that which is most in question or most at threat, is the emancipation thus far

⁷⁹ See: for example, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. It is to be noted that in the recent barbarism in Kosova, those expelling the "Albanians" ensured that their passports be destroyed

achieved. It is for this reason that I have argued in this study that any explanation of the relationship between modernity and antisemitism should avoid an either/all approach - either the "modern" claim of rights and no antisemitism, or no rights and antisemitism; or the "postmodern" claim of no rights and no antisemitism or rights and antisemitism - and instead should concentrate upon the social and political equivocalities that give rise to both.

Conclusion

The Ambivalence of Modernity - Antisemitism as the Search for Certainty

When introducing this study, I noted that critical theories of antisemitism have in common a characterisation of antisemitism as a modern phenomenon. Each of the theorists I have discussed seeks to explain the emergence of antisemitism through a critique of modern political emancipation and the legal rights through which that emancipation was concretised. Whilst the earlier theorists, such as Marx and Nietzsche explained antisemitism as emerging in a dialectical relationship with emancipation, later writers, such as Bauman and Lyotard saw emancipation itself, its nature and substance, as responsible. It is to this developmental trajectory that I shall now return,

The earlier theorists, argue that antisemitism arises out of the spaces left by what they identify as the shortcomings of emancipation and rights. This “space” is said to arise from the nature of emancipation which gives rise to a society comprised of autonomous and equal rights-bearers whose social recognition rests upon their role as owners of private property. As a consequence, each individual is perceived as existing in isolation from others, whilst being involved in a struggle of all against all. Corresponding to this idea of abstract and equal individuals torn from themselves, others and nature, there is the sense of a loss of any form of communal existence or sense of hierarchy, which is replaced by a sense of uncertainty and insecurity, as if there is nothing solid on which to rest human existence. It is in the attempt to constitute what is absent or lost that antisemitism is said to arise - a world of naturally-constituted communities ordered according to immutable laws of nature in which everyone has a place and there is a place for everyone (with the Jews at the bottom).

In the accounts of Marx, Nietzsche and Sartre, therefore, the phenomenon of antisemitism can be said to arise through the dialectic of rights and *ressentiment*, both of which arise as a consequence of what these theorists take to be the limits of

modern political emancipation. In many ways, therefore, antisemitism arises as a way of compensating for the difficulties and anxieties that modern social existence generates. Yet, the point to note is that in these accounts, is the fact that antisemitism is understood as coming into existence through a *relationship* with emancipation. As such, a relationship of tension exists between them and although emancipation is held as the primary cause for the development of antisemitism, the two terms of the dialectic are not conflated.

The dialectic of rights and *ressentiment* is further evidenced by the fact that these early theorists adopt an ambivalent attitude to political emancipation. On the one hand, they identify the causes of antisemitism with the shortcomings of emancipation. Yet, it is equally the case that they stress the *potentiality* of antisemitism. In other words, whilst antisemitism *may* be *one* of the outcomes of the limits of emancipation, it is not necessarily the only possible outcome. Correspondingly, these thinkers also emphasise the positive or beneficial aspects of modern emancipation. Most noticeable is the idea that it brings with it a social and political form of universal freedom and equality; a manifestation out of which its actual concretisation, its substantiality, could arise. To paraphrase Marx, of whether equality or inequality, freedom or barbarity will reign, remains entirely open and undetermined.

This ambivalence of emancipation is also reflected in the figure of the antisemite. In these early accounts, the question as to whether equality or inequality will arise is always mediated through the prism of human agency and responsibility. As is the nature of political emancipation itself, whether an individual will or will not become an antisemite is equally open to question. However, whilst these theorists offer reasons as to why antisemitism is a possible option for an individual, they also say that without that individual action or agency, antisemitism could not materialise as a concrete *praxis*, at least to the extent that it closes all other social options, potentialities and possibilities.

The question of individual responsibility is also important in these works conceptualising of the Jews. Both Marx and Sartre stress that there is nothing inherent

in the Jews that justifies the image the antisemite places upon them. Indeed, their main point is to move any account of antisemitism away from a discussion of an alleged Jewish nature or essence, and to shift it onto a critique of modern society. They seek to dissolve the issue of antisemitism with the aim of developing emancipation's potential for concrete and realisable freedom and equality. From this perspective, therefore, there is a basic assumption that the Jews are already part and parcel of the modern social world and their challenge is with those who seek to exclude them as the "Other". In this way, these theorists throw down the gauntlet to the antisemites' claim that the "Jewish question" is *the* question of the modern period.

It is for this reason that aspects of their accounts on antisemitism concentrate upon the ways that the antisemitic image of the Jews comes into being. In keeping with their basic idea that antisemitism arises as an attempt to compensate for the social conditions in which modern individuals find themselves, they argue that the antisemitic image of the Jews arises from the projection of these conditions onto the Jews as if they were inherent Jewish attributes. It is for this reason that the Jews appear to the antisemites as the embodiment of modernity itself. Thus, the Jews are presented variously as personifying the values of modernity such as reason and intellect, as the coldness and harshness of modern legal relations, or of transformers of the natural world (human and organic) into the nexus of money.

Individual responsibility is less important when it comes to understand the role of the Jews. In presenting the image of the Jews, these accounts of antisemitism overlook the agency of the Jews themselves in the perpetuation of the categories of Jew and Gentile. Paradoxically, the development of antisemitism appears to take place without any Jewish agency so that the Jews as an entity appear to remain outside history, an accusation that these early accounts trace to the thought of antisemites..

A slightly different problem arises in the thought of Nietzsche, and on that becomes more significant in later accounts. In Nietzsche's discussion of antisemitism, he gives reasons for modern animosity against the Jews. He states that they come to represent the severe and austere morality of the rights-bearing individual engaged in the

constant activity of exchange. The problem is that it is not clear whether Nietzsche himself sees these as specifically Jewish traits which he believes can be found in the Old Testament. Thus, in Nietzsche's work, despite his evident distaste for antisemites, it can appear that the reason for the Jews' persecution lies within the "nature" of the Jews themselves. This is an issue to which I shall return.

In the accounts of antisemitism written in the immediate aftermath of the holocaust⁸⁰, the factors present in the earlier accounts undergo a change of emphasis. Most noticeable and significant amongst these modifications, is the manner in which the relationship of modern emancipation to the emergence of antisemitism is reformulated. The ambivalence and open-endedness of political emancipation is restricted and, as a consequence, its degeneration into antisemitism is explained in a more deterministic and structural manner.

This more stringent critique is exemplified by Arendt and Adorno and Horkheimer. They understand political emancipation in its relationship to antisemitism arises by reference to factors that suggest that from its inception, emancipation is *inverted* from freedom into barbarity and equality into inequality. However, by explaining the relationship of political emancipation to antisemitism as an "inversion", these theorists maintain a distance between emancipation and antisemitism and, thereby, seek to account for that transition or transformation. Consequently, their accounts of emancipation still rely upon a mediating factor. For Adorno and Horkheimer it was emancipation's imbrication with social forms of domination tied to the specific demands and course of capitalist development that resulted in the emergence of antisemitism. For Arendt, it was the emancipation's entanglement within the contradictions of nation and state.

This idea of a "space" between emancipation and antisemitism is reflected in their view that whilst the seeds of antisemitism are identified as existing within the

⁸⁰ I have included the work of Jean-Paul Sartre in the earlier accounts because, although written in 1944, and as explained in Chapter 4 theoretically it remains more similar to those of Marx and Nietzsche, than to Arendt and Adorno

structure of the bourgeois period, the period immediately following political emancipation, antisemitism only emerges in its final form as an element of a new social configuration: totalitarianism in the thought of Arendt, and Fascism, or late capitalism, for Adorno and Horkheimer. However, in seeking to establish the connection between these more general conditions and antisemitism, the latter appears as the lightning-rod for more fundamental and complex problems. As a consequence, the reasons offered to explain antisemitism replicate these wider issues. In this way, the idea that the Jewish Question is of central significance first comes to the fore.

That the flaws that they identify in political emancipation should give rise to antisemitism is explained by the fact that the Jews' position within the modern body politic was conditional and tenuous. Here, the earlier idea that it was antisemites who sought to exclude a group of people already integrated, is replaced with the idea that the Jews have always, to a certain extent, been excluded. Neither Arendt nor Adorno and Horkheimer, however, attempt to explain this exclusion by reference to innate characteristics of the Jews, but both must account for the way in which an empirical group of Jews was transformed into the antisemitically driven concept of "the Jews".

Both accounts argue that the concept of "the Jews" arose because of the fact that from the beginning, Jews occupied an identifiable position in society because of the special services or functions they performed. Whilst the mere occupying of these positions gave rise to a general feeling of *ressentiment* against them by the remainder of the population, it was only when such services and functions were made superfluous by other social and political developments that the Jews themselves became perceived as "superfluous". As a consequence, both accounts argue that the entire population became antisemitic in the wake of the transformation to either totalitarianism or Fascism.

This closing of the distance between emancipation and antisemitism is reflected in the lessening of significance of the figure of the antisemite. As I have just noted, both Arendt's and Adorno and Horkheimer's accounts of antisemitism imply that along with the transformation from bourgeois to later forms of existence, entire populations

became antisemitic. However, this transformation is explained as a result of deeper and wider social changes, so that the role of human agency and responsibility in adopting an antisemitic perspective, and acting on such a worldview, declines, which corresponds with a decline in the ambivalence and tension identified in the earlier accounts which left open the question as to whether freedom or barbarity would result. As a consequence of this development within critical theories of antisemitism, the Jewish question comes to adopt a more central position in the critique of modernity itself; a position that in some ways mirrors antisemitic perspectives on the issue.

In their accounts of the manner in which antisemitism arose both Arendt and Adorno and Horkheimer stress that with the development of totalitarianism or Fascism antisemitism ceased to have reference to the particular circumstances of Jewish-Gentile relations. Yet, it is in their discussions of the precursor to this development that we can see the most significant differences between them.

Hannah Arendt was insistent that what I have termed her "Genealogy" concentrate on the role the Jews themselves played in the development of antisemitism. She stresses both the political and social actions of the Jews that placed them in a tenuous and conditional relationship outside the modern body politic. She is equally concerned to trace the role that Jews played in the emergence of an idea of an innate or "natural" "Jewishness"; an idea that she sees as a necessary, but not sufficient, ingredient for the perverse determination of the Nazis to exterminate each and every Jew.

Conversely, in Adorno and Horkheimer's discussion of the way in which the concept of "the Jews" emerged, (flesh and blood) Jews disappear from the picture. In their place remains only their portrait as painted by antisemitism. The implication is that the hostile imagery of the Jews as embodying the failures of modernity remains unchallenged. Thus, both antisemitism and "the Jews" are endowed with a significance that transforms a phenomenon that arises as *one* aspect of the limits of political emancipation into *the* central question of the age.

In contradistinction to the earlier theorists who sought to dissolve or de-centre the Jewish question both this account and Arendt's, reformulate antisemitism and the Jews in terms of an increasing prominence. In this way, we begin to see the loss of critical distance between theories that seek to explain and challenge antisemitism and the assumptions of the phenomenon itself.. It is a loss, moreover, that becomes more apparent in the final body of work to be discussed.

The last two works that I examined, those of Bauman and Lyotard respectively, can be grouped together under the heading of postmodern accounts of antisemitism. In these accounts, any space or distance between political emancipation and antisemitism is occluded. Their critique of political emancipation in its connection to antisemitism is so harsh that antisemitism comes to be read as inhering within its very substance and nature. As such, political emancipation becomes synonymous with the exclusion of the Jews. As a result, rights, as the medium through which emancipation was concretised, come to be represented as coercive instruments of dismissal and denial. Corresponding to this view of antisemitism, the holocaust is also read as an event inscribed within the substance of political emancipation.

Bauman and Lyotard's work have in common the absence of human responsibility for the modern phenomenon of antisemitism. This point can be illustrated by the absence of the figure of the antisemite and their associated explanation of antisemitism as something which occurs beyond or "behind the backs" of the conscious activity of modern individuals.

In denying and removing any tension or ambivalence within the *praxis* of political emancipation and its conflation with antisemitism, they collapse the concept of "the Jews" and the presentation of empirical Jews so that the Jews' exclusion from "modernity" comes to be attributed to the nature of Jews themselves. Thus, in Bauman's account, the Jews are perceived as the personification of ambivalence and difference, the very elements which give rise to antisemitism initially. Similarly, Lyotard's description of the Jews as the personification of "the ethical" reflects in themselves the reasons for their exclusion. In these ways, therefore, the Jews become

the carriers of the causes for their own destruction. Thus, in these accounts, the question as to how Jews came to be conceptualised as “the Jews” is redundant, since it is argued that they were never part of modern society initially. It is as if the “Yellow Star” pinned on their bodies appears to reflect the truth of their existence.

It is, therefore, as a direct result of their explanations of antisemitism that Bauman and Lyotard perceive both antisemitism and the Jews as the unqualified site of all the failures and anxieties of modernity. In this way, therefore, the phenomenon of antisemitism takes on almost eschatological qualities, as evidenced by Bauman’s claim that the Jews themselves are the precursors of a superseding era of postmodernity. It is at this point that a loss of critical distance or symmetry between critical and anti-antisemitic theories and the phenomenon that is the object of investigation appears most fully; it appears in the idea that antisemitism and the Jews *really are* the index and markers for the failure of the “modern project”.

The paradox of this position is that it reproduces many of the assumptions of antisemitism that were identified and challenged in the earlier accounts discussed above. In both, for example, an individual’s “identity” arises through membership of a given group. As a consequence, the most “legitimate” social composition is implied to be that which allows particularity to flourish unhindered and unmolested by any claim to universalism. Indeed, such universal goals, along with individual equality it contains is said to be doomed to failure and so can only be understood as the imposition of a false and manipulated order.

What is perhaps most interesting, however, is the way in which these last accounts solidify, or fix, the relations and concepts that are used by critical theory to theorise the causes for the emergence and development of antisemitism. This methodology can be evidenced through the conflation of political emancipation and antisemitism, so that the one is read as the other. The ambivalence that earlier theorists had identified through their critique of political emancipation is countered by the idea that that political emancipation *can only* express itself through antisemitism. It is no longer a question of potentiality, but of *certainty*.

This notion of solidity is illustrated through the denial that the meaning of the Jews is in fact contested and contestable. Instead, "the Jews" come to be understood as fixed with a specifically "Jewish" attribute. As a result, the certainty so ardently sought for by antisemites to compensate for the anxieties brought about by an age in which "everything solid melts into air" [Marx 1848] is replicated. In these accounts of antisemitism, therefore, it is as though everything has its place, and there is a place for everything; modern emancipation dared to tamper with this spontaneous order and it was the Jews who paid the price.

The characteristics of the postmodern theories of antisemitism were present in embryonic form in the earlier accounts of Arendt and Adorno and Horkheimer, but almost (although not entirely absent) from those of Marx, Nietzsche and Sartre. A possible reason for this transformation was the occurrence of the holocaust between the time of the first and second theoretical accounts. The scale, barbarity and horror of this event seems to have left its scar on the accounts of antisemitism that followed it and became the prism through which it was seen. As such, the gradual and increasing insistence on the centrality of antisemitism and the Jews as *the* defining aspect of modernity comes to mirror the traumatic and traumatising nature of this catastrophe.

Without in any way seeking to diminish the hitherto unprecedented horror of the systematic and calculated murder of millions of individuals, it seems to me that the significance of the holocaust to later accounts of antisemitism is a product, not of the events themselves, but of its traumatic nature. It seems as if the magnitude of the holocaust gave rise to a theoretical pessimism and nihilism that appeared as the only way to acknowledge that such things could happen in the world. Even such a rigorous and sensitive thinker as Hannah Arendt appears at times to despair of a political answer to such a calamity.⁸¹ However, it appears to me that the most productive way of confronting the trauma is through an attempt to understand it and to show it for what it was - as something *meaningless*. By placing upon it a significance and

⁸¹ See her comments in *Origins of Totalitarianism* in which she has recourse to the teachings of Augustine as a possible way to live in a world in which "everything is possible".

meaning that, for many theorists after 1945, over-endows it, to the degree that for Bauman it marks the end of one era and the beginning of another, and for Lyotard calls into question millennia of thought and takes on a meaning comparable to that of the call of God to the Jewish people, seems to me to give Nazism and antisemitism a (posthumous?) victory.

To overcome this trauma, it seems to me that critical theories of antisemitism need to re-evaluate the holocaust through a cautious and reflective return to earlier accounts of antisemitism. In explaining antisemitism through a critique of modern emancipation, critical theory needs to re-engage with the idea of the ambivalence and open-endedness of emancipation along with its inherent potential for either freedom or barbarity. In other words, critical theories of antisemitism need to re-connect with their earlier commitment to social and political emancipation. In this way, the holocaust comes not to be explained as an inevitability, but as a possible outcome that may arise when the uncertainty inherent within a *praxis* with the aim of universal human freedom and equality is destroyed in the name of a *ressentiment* that relies on a certainty founded on false and arbitrary assertions.

In addition to this reconnection, critical theories of antisemitism must also focus upon opening up and interrogating the concepts upon which antisemitism relies. In the light of my criticisms of the initial accounts it is necessary that later theorists understand the manner in which those concepts arose, as well as the relationships between them and those people to whom they are made to apply. Moreover, they must do so through concentrating upon the thoughts and actions of all who are involved. In this way, for example, the concept of “the Jews” as a distinct entity can be seen as one attempt amongst many to impose upon an individual an “essential” or, at least, “determining” attribute that denies and restricts the reality of modern social existence. In this way, both the concept of “the Jews” and the antisemitism with which it is associated can be understood as one manifestation amongst many that seek to replace fragile equality with a certainty that is premised upon a hierarchical ladder of collective forms.

Correspondingly, theoretical accounts of antisemitism also must recognise that modern ambivalence and potentiality are not solely “external” phenomena but are locatable within social individuals themselves. Thus, the question of whether tendencies leading to freedom or to barbarity dominate *at any given time* is ultimately one of personal and social responsibility. Finally, these questions must be asked of all in society, regardless of which side they may or may not have been or be allocated by those who attempt to build walls of sand, but who try to convince others of their impenetrability and solidity.

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