Hannah Arendt, Modernity and the Historical Sociology of Anti-Semitism

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There are good reasons why Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) became a classic of political theory. Arendt was among the first to compare two of the most puzzling political regimes of the 20th century, Stalinism and Nazism. She witnessed the rise of Nazism and fled from its grasp to the United States in 1941. The *Origins* was published a decade later. In this paper, my intervention will question some of Arendt's arguments with respect to her study of anti-Semitism. There are many hypotheses in this section of her work which cannot be taken for granted as eternal truths of political philosophy, but can be debated as sociohistorical hypotheses. The purpose of this engagement is threefold. The first is to explore the validity of some of Arendt's arguments regarding European anti-Semitism and her analysis of power in the light of contemporary historical sociology. The second is to outline the reifying tendency of some of her arguments. The third is to offer an alternative interpretation of the transformation of anti-Judaism, which emphasizes the role of the Church as an agent of this transformation.

This paper is divided into four sections. In the three first sections, I proceed to a reconstruction and a critical engagement with Arendt's sociohistorical hypotheses regarding the history of anti-Semitism. The first section questions Arendt's inductive theory of power based on Tocqueville's interpretation of the French Revolution. The second section questions Arendt's theory of the nation-state and nationalism. The third section presents some alternative views with respect to the relation between social contentions and anti-Semitism during the 19th century. In the final section, I offer an alternative view of the ontological shift in the history of anti-Judaism.

Arendt's Theoretical Reconstrution of the Emergence of Modern Anti-Semitism

Fifty years after the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, there is no consensus regarding analytical distinctions between the concepts of xenophobia, racism, anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism (Fredrickson 1997, 2002; Friedländer 1998; Langmuir 1996; Winock 2004). Arendt took position in this debate by contesting the historiography that sees in racial anti-Semitism continuities with medieval anti-Judaism, for instance Norman Cohn (1967) and Joshua Trachtenberg (1983). In her view, there is a paradigm shift in the way hatred of the Jews is understood and expressed. Arendt argues that the rise of a modern and distinct form of anti-Semitism was made possible by several transformations occurring between 1870 and 1900: the decline of traditional

nationalism, the decline of the European system of nation-states and the rupture in the balance of power.

From Tocqueville to a Theory of Power

A first historical "rule" identified by Arendt is derived from an analogy between the situation of the Jews in German history and the situation of the French nobility during the French Revolution. "Anti-Semitism", argues Arendt, "reached its climax when Jews had similarly lost their public function and their influence, and were left with nothing but their wealth (Arendt 1958: 4)". The pillar of this reconstruction is Tocqueville's interpretation of the French Revolution, which Arendt summarizes in the following passage,

> According to Tocqueville, the French people hated aristocrats about to lose their power more than it had ever hated them before, precisely because their rapid loss of real power was not accompanied by any considerable decline in their fortunes. As long as the aristocracy held vast powers of jurisdiction, they were not only tolerated but respected. When noblemen lost their privileges, among others the privilege to exploit and oppress, the people felt them as parasites, without any real function in the rule of the country. In other words, 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 (Arendt 1958: 4).

In this passage, the central claim about the ways in which the peasantry experienced its relationship with the nobility is empirically problematic. The thesis that "the aristocracy [...] was not only tolerated but respected" prior to the period where its social power declined is nuanced, relaxed and often contradicted by the historiography of peasant resistance and uprisings during the feudal, seigniorial and absolutist periods (Anderson 1979; Beik 1985; Brenner 1995a; Brenner 1995b; Comninel 2000; Hilton 1982; Te Brake 1998; Tilly 1995). Arendt's argument induces a historical rule from the culminating point of an intra-ruling class competition between nobles and bourgeois, and inter-class competition between the former groups and the peasantry. Not only does the argument underestimates the competition between nobles and bourgeois for state offices (as an alternative view see Comninel 1990), but it also underwrites the history of social contentions prior to the nobility's decline of power. Evidence can be given that cases of peasant resistance and rebellion related to the growth of fiscal taxation were recurrent during the Second Millennium. On several occasions rebellions led to demands in favour of the abolition of serfdom and the communalisation of landed property. Confronted to heavy taxation, the peasants in Alsace, Switzerland and

in the German states started a series of rebellions in 1524-1525. A group of peasants, miners and textile workers, support by Thomas Müntzer, fought with several requests: the reduction of taxation, the abolition of serfdom, the restoration of former judicial practices endangered by Roman Law, and the election of pastors by the community. The peasant's revolts at the beginning of the 16th century were a reaction to the newly consolidated territorial states. The peasants were nostalgic of their dignity in a past, which predated the arrival of the territorial princes, who introduced new forms of taxation (Blickle 1981; Holborn 1982: 62). Reacting to the requests of the insurgents, Martin Luther elaborated a distinction between political liberty and Christian liberty. He justified serfdom by advocating its compatibility with Christian faith and liberty. Luther condemned all forms of peasant's revolts. He approved the nobility's slaughters of the peasants in Frankenhausen, "[A] prince," he says, "can now deserve better mercy by shedding blood, than others can by prayers" (Luther cited in Reinhardt 1997: 228). He advocated torture and execution against the social insurgents of the Anabaptist movement. In other cases, peasants' revolts led to considerable gains for peasant communities, though the vast majority was repressed in blood baths (Blickle 1981; Brenner 1995b). The view that peasants "tolerated and respected" the nobility until the episodes of terror during the French Revolution is at best a romanticized and lenient generalization from above.

Nevertheless, Arendt insists that "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". This assertion reifies in a problematic way the social perception of the relation between wealth and power as a constant variable throughout the ages. It is empirically derived from Tocqueville's claim that the aristocrats were "tolerated and respected" prior to the decline of their power. Researches in history from bellow outline that the scenario was far more complex. Historical analysis of peasant resistance to the landlords' exactions tends to show that the social experiences of resistance to oppression and exploitation took various forms in different social formations. It followed different patterns with respect to the degree of solidarity and coordination within both the nobility and peasant communities, the militarization of the ruling class, demographic trends, and the religious and spiritual distribution of forces in each given context (Brenner 1991, 1995b; Comninel 2000; Duby 1973, 1977, 1996; Hobsbawm 1998: 146-199; Teschke 2003; Thompson 1993). It is adventurous to try to encapsulate these experiences through a general covering law without empirical reconstruction.

With respect to the social perception of wealth and power, these experiences can also hardly be captured by a formal pattern. Social experience varied with respect to who was the owner of the wealth: a member of the higher

aristocracy? a local baron or a usurer? a Jew or a Christian? How was the wealth obtained? from taxation, coercion or money lending? Was the wealth concentrated in the hands of the church? or in the hands of the landlords?

One should also be careful not to project capitalist social relations in precapitalist contexts. The non-productive use of wealth was a common form of reproduction of the nobility's social power in feudal, seigniorial and absolutist contexts. In European history prior to 16th century England, the accumulation of wealth was not reinvested in the rationalisation of production. It was reinvested in military spending, luxury goods and gigantic ceremonies, not in a systematic fashion-way and increasing the efficiency of production the systematic rationalization of the production process (Brenner 1991; Hirshman 1997; Taylor 1989: 212-216; Wood 2002). Social perceptions of the "social function" of wealth therefore can hardly be captured by unequivocal transhistorical hypotheses. They need to be contextualized, not reified.

Building on what precedes, Arendt argues that,

> What makes men obey or tolerate real power and, on the other hand, hate people who have wealth without power, is the rational instinct that power has a certain function and is of some general use. Even exploitation and oppression still make society work and establish some kind of order. Only wealth without power or aloofness without a policy are felt to be parasitical, useless, revolting, because such conditions cut all the threads which tie men together (Arendt 1958: 5).

Here, Arendt proceeds to a significant reification. She blurs the distinction between the way social power is organized in precapitalist and capitalist societies. She also suggests a functionalist rationalization and defence of order based on the usefulness of exploitation and oppression. Her argument postulates a "rational instinct" to understand the "general use" of power and order. Nothing is said of the ways in which power is imposed through coercion and repression, or the way it is constituted through concrete (and contradictory) socio-historical processes.

What Arendt misses here is the specifically capitalist moment of the separation between the economic power of exploitation and the political power of domination. The separation of the economic and the political power is the distinctive characteristic of capitalist class relations (Wood 1995). It has a major consequence for the ways in which wealth is perceived and reproduced in pre-capitalist vs capitalist societies. The important point here is that in pre-capitalist social forms, wealth is always accumulated through extra-economic means: serfdom, political monopoly right, militarized access to monopoly and trading routes, pillage, direct extortion, and so on. Only in capitalism is the reproduction of private economic power, or the accumulation of private wealth,

made possible by a juridical framework, which allows for power to be reproduced in the private sphere. Another symptom of Arendt's failure to capture the specificity of capitalist social relations appears in the claim that, "[B]y the end of the eighteenth century it had become clear that none of the estates or classes in the various countries were willing or able to become the new ruling class, that is to identify itself with the government as the nobility had done for centuries. The failure of the absolute monarchy to find a substitute within society led to full development of the nation-state and its claim to be above all class" (Arendt 1958: 17). The important point here is precisely that a ruling social class did not need to identify with the government precisely because of the separation of economic and political power in capitalism.

Nation, Nationalism and Anti-Semitism

With respect to her analysis of the nation-state, Arendt adhered to the core theses of the idealist literature of international relations during the interwar period. She interpreted the years 1870-1914, or in Hobsbawm's words the *Age of Empire*, as a period of decline of the nation-state.

> ...modern antisemitism grew in proportion as traditional nationalism declined, and reached its climax at the exact moment when the European systems of nation-states and its precarious balance of power crashed". [...] And, "[M]odern antisemitism must be seen in the more general framework of the development of the nation-state, and at the same time its source must be found in certain aspects of Jewish history and specifically Jewish functions during the last centuries (Arendt 1958: 9).

This interpretation is controversial. At the theoretical level, it underestimates the ways in which a new form of imperialism operating through the international market was made possible by juridical conditions that, in turn, were made possible by the nation-state (Wood 2003). And at the empirical level, the evidence supporting the view that "traditional" nationalism was in decline between 1870 and 1914 is unclear, while proof to the contrary is abundant (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1999; 1997: 142-164). Arendt also claims that nationalism is resolutely distinct from anti-Semitism, "...not only the Nazis, but fifty years of antisemitic history, stand as evidence against the identification of antisemitism with nationalism" (Arendt 1958: 4). This interpretation, not uncommon in German conservative circles after 1945, is questioned by theories of nationalism. It is also questioned by cultural historians of fascism, such as George Mosse, who outlines in the German case the embedded character of anti-Semitism in *völkisch* nationalism (Fischer 1986; Friedländer 1998; Mosse 1987). There were virulent nationalist movements in France, Germany, Austria, Poland and Rumania toward the end of the 19th

century, and few made a mystery of their anti-Semitic postures. With respect to the French case, the historian Michel Winock concludes, "À vrai dire, l'anti-Sémitisme baigne l'ensemble du mouvement nationaliste: de Déroulède à Maurras, de Rochefort à Barrès" (Winock 2004: 19). In some places, such as Germany, there might have been a decline of the vote in favour of anti-Semitic parties during the decades just prior to 1914 (Levy 1975). However, anti-Semitism never came close to disappearing. It became much more pernicious in some fields, such as the arts (especially music), the university, the army and in biology; it remained a common political strategy used by various political parties, not only the openly anti-Semitic.

As Arendt outlines, the court Jews (*Hofjuden*) became an integral component of European states during the 17th and 18th century. Arendt argues that while there was interdependence between the *Hofjuden* and national bourgeoisies until the end of the 19th century, their "good" relations collapsed with the era of imperialism.

> Since this intimate relationship between national government and Jews had rested on the indifference of the bourgeoisie to politics in general and state finance in particular, this period came to an end with the rise of imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century when capitalist business in the form of expansion could no longer be carried out without active political help and intervention by the state. Imperialism, on the other hand, undermined the very foundations of the nation-state and introduced into the European comity of nations the competitive spirit of business concerns (Arendt 1958: 15).

To start with, the view that the bourgeoisie was indifferent to politics in general is problematic. Many German bourgeois, such as Fichte, were against the extension of the franchise, and fought politically to limit the extension of political rights to Jews (Elias 2001: 221; Volkov 1978). The argument according to which imperialism "undermined the very foundations of the nation-states" is also problematic. After the Congress of Berlin, the simultaneous extension of conscription, nationalism, militarism and imperialist currents appears to have led to their mutual reinforcement rather than the opposite. The European nation-state system entered a zero-sum game of imperialist competition, which reinforced nationalist and militarist currents (Anderson 1991; Keegan 1990; Kolko 1994; Mann 1986; Winock 2004). Both currents were actively promoted in French and German nationalist circles until the breakout of the war of 1914. Nonetheless, Arendt argues that "in an imperialist age, Jewish wealth had become insignificant; to a Europe with no sense of balance of power between its nations and of inter-European solidarity,

the non-national, inter-European Jewish element became an object of universal hatred because of its useless wealth, and of contempt because of its lack of power (Arendt 1958: 15)".

According to her theory of power, Arendt argues that the Jews had become the object of universal hatred because of their "useless wealth". Alternative interpretations of this process exist, alternatives which do not expect one to accept generalizations based on an analogy with Tocqueville's analysis of the French Revolution. There is historical evidence that part of the reason why national bourgeoisies tended to hate Jewish wealth during the imperialist era is not because it was useless, but because it was its competitor. For centuries, Jews were excluded from the guild system which regulated trade and prevented competition until the beginning of the 19th century in Germany (Clapham 1955; Evans 2001). Napoleon, however, not only proceeded to reform the German state's administration, he also abolished the guild system, deregulated economic customary regulations and exposed German traders to a new form of competition with Jewish merchants and bankers. In France and Germany, Jews were the scapegoats for economic scandals in the 1870s and 1880s. In France, a coalition of conservative forces placed its hopes in the consolidation of a Catholic bank, *l'Union générale*, to counter Jewish influence in finance (Verdès-Leroux 1969). The purpose of the coalition, which collapsed in the 1880s, was to compete with, and get rid of, Jewish capital. The French middle class had invested its assets in the bank and adopted anti-Semitic trends after the bank's collapse. Édouard Drumont's *La France Juive* (1886), for instance, became a national bestseller. A decade earlier, the German middle class had fallen victim to speculation which also translated in anti-Semitic and anti-Liberal backlash from Berlin to Vienna. In terms of their socio-economic location, the minority of former *Hofjuden*, which was then concentrated in banking and finance, was in harsh competition with other sectors of the ruling class operating in the same domain. Competition, scandals of corruption and the middle class's financial bankruptcy points much more to the origins of anti-Semitism than the alleged un-usefulness of Jewish wealth.

The argument about the parasitical character of Jewish economic activities came rather from civil servants and academics *à la* Sombart who adopted a racial conception of capitalism. For a century, civil servants and academics had relied on the state to reproduce their power. To them, it was materialism and socialism rather than capitalism that threatened German *Kultur* and by extension their own power. Elements of the middle class who perceived socialism as a threat to the German *Volk* were more receptive to a conception of capitalism which saw in its excesses the consequences of the Jewish spirit, rather than a new social form.

Social Contentions and Anti-Semitism during the 19th Century

Modernization theories and failed development theories have been

criticized for making a-historical assumptions, that a rising bourgeoisie emerged in opposition to absolutism in the post-feudal period. In this respect, they have interpreted the situation of Jews as that of a passive capitalist class (Eley 1984, 1990, 1995). Hannah Arendt, for instance, sees in Romanian and Lithuanian Jews a class of bourgeois who failed to play a role in production and prevented capitalist development. Along similar lines, she argues that "[The Jews] did not form a class of their own and they did not belong to any of the classes in their countries. As a group, they were neither workers, middle-class people, landholders, nor peasants. Their wealth seemed to make them part of the middle class, but they did not share in its capitalist development..." (Arendt 1958: 13). There are limitations to this analysis. First, Jews were part of different social classes, and they were concentrated in some sectors of economic activity, just like any other social group (Katz 1971: 43-90). The argument that Jews were found in none of the sectors listed above is empirically problematic (Birnbaum 1995: 94-127). Since much legislation denied the Jews access to agrarian property, there were few Jewish landholders. But on the economic level, many made their way into the middle class during the nineteenth century, even though they were often deprived of political rights. Second, Arendt saw capitalist development as a necessary consequence, a functional requirement, of the breakdown of feudalism and the development of the absolutist state, and this too is problematic (see Dufour 2004).

Many theorists and commentators (Charles Fourier, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Édouard Drumont, Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, Alphonse Toussenel, Werner Sombart) developed converging views according to which Jews were involved in parasitical sectors of the economy, or were the manipulators of unproductive capital. In contemporary comparative politics, many approaches have renounced theorizing the emergence of capitalism and therefore can hardly reconstruct the important relations between the breakdown of feudalism, the absolutist state and the emergence of capitalism. However, the theory of social property relations developed by historian Robert Brenner offers a key understanding of these processes, and criticizes the view that there is a necessary link between the transformation of feudalism and the emergence of capitalism. Pre-capitalist social property relations led to the development of different political organizations and different patterns of reproduction of power (Teschke 2002, 2003; Wood 1991).

As Arendt outlines, late medieval and absolutist transformations in social property regimes contributed to a significant improvement in the situation of court Jews (*Hofjuden*) in France and the German states, though they represented no more than two percent of the Jewish community in the German states (Mosse in Birnbaum and Katznelson 1995: 62). Any theory of anti-Semitism based solely on this segment of the population is shaky. Nonetheless, the financial activities and European connections of this minority of wealthy Jews played a central role in the reproduction of power of the

German aristocracy after the defeat of 1648. In addition to their expertise in finance, they had an important network of relations in Europe, which most princes did not have. It allowed the *Hofjuden* to remain relatively close to power even when anti-Judaism was widespread. Yet, the history of the *Hofjuden* tells little about the history of the three quarters of the Jewish population which were "petty ambulatory traders or hawkers" (Mosse in Birnbaum and Katznelson 1995: 61). Before 1800, this portion of the Jewish population was subjected to different patterns of economic subordination. They had to pay a tax for their legal protection (*Schutzjuden*), a tax on their movement from one principality to another (the *Leibzoll*, a tax which treated the Jews as if they were cattle) and other taxes on the community's privileges. The Jewish population of the German states was significant in comparison to that of other European states (especially in comparison with France and England), but still it remained a small proportion of the total population. The largest concentrations were found in the free commercial cities of Frankfurt and Hamburg. Berlin "...by 1880 had 45 000 Jewish residents, at a time when in all England there were only 46 000 and in all of France only 51 000" (Craig 1978: 153). Prior to 1933, Germany appeared to be a safer place for Jews than Russia, Poland, Romania or France (Marrus 1994: 27-28; Burstein and King 2004: 35-53). The eastern European immigrants in the German states had good reasons to perceive Germany as a place more favourable to their integration than other European states (Friedländer 1998: 80-87). Despite a growing climate of anti-Semitism in the German states (a deterioration of the Jews' legal rights after 1812), violent pogroms remained characteristic of other places, especially in the east: Ukraine, Poland, Romania and Russia.

With the German *Enlightenment*, Jewish thinkers, such as Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), made crucial contributions to "German" philosophy. They were central in the promotion of free speech, and they faced resistance from Protestant theologians and the papacy (Tonelli, 1973: 746; see also Kertzer 2003). An important current of Judaic thought, the *Haskala*, developed out of this influence. In the perspective of Jewish *Enlightenment*, emancipation was synonymous with assimilation into the surrounding society and rupture with the life of the ghetto (Katz 1971: 245-274). The emergence of "universal" political ideologies created new political patterns of inclusion and exclusion. The context of development of these conceptions was provided by a period of *détente* in Christian-Jewish relations which followed the decision of the enlightened Frederick II (1740-1786) to grant "equality of status to all religious creeds" (Craig 1983: 27). According to historian Gordon Craig, this stand in favour of religious tolerance reflected the interactions between rich Jewish families and the enlightened members of the Prussian aristocracy during the middle of the 18th century (Craig 1983: 129). In this optimistic mood, Josef Wolf and Gotthold Salomon, members of the *Society for Culture and Science of the Jews*, "anticipated that it would not take long until "one will no longer

ask in Europe (for the most part), who is Jewish and who is Christian, because Jews also live according to European laws and contribute to the good of the State" (Wolf and Solomon cited in Roemer 2000: 349). Not every Jew shared this optimism. Much prior to the steady rise of anti-Semitism in the 1870s, the Napoleonic invasions sparked cases of Francophobe, anti-Semitic and anti-cosmopolitan rhetoric in some of the German states (Craig 1983: 3). During the 1820s, one case culminated in Jewish slaughters during the Hep! Hep! riots in Southern Germany when people protested against the extension of civil rights to Jews. Thus, when French historian Arthur Beugnot wrote in 1824 "[L]e monde ne verra pas deux fois un spectacle semblable à celui de la proscription du peuple juif; les nations et les rois ne réuniront plus leurs passions et leurs préjugés pour effrayer la raison par un tel effort de barbarie"(Beugnot 1824: 6), he neglected the capacity of traditional anti-Judaic institutions, such as the Church, to defend the remnants of their influence by playing the anti-Semitic card. Paradoxically, one of the Jews' traditional enemies, the Vatican, shared the views of Wolf and Solomon. The Vatican's related publications (*civiltà cattolica, L'osservatore romano*) started to target the agnostic Jew, for he was the symbol of cosmopolitanism, modernity and materialism, all of which the Church rejected. From the encyclical of Pope Gregory XVI (1832) to the 20th century, the Vatican condemned the extension of rights to Jews on several occasions. In 1825, under Pope Leo XII, and during 1838, under Pope Gregory XVI, the Vatican restored the forced concentration of Jews in ghettos in Rome and northern Italy. It played a central role in the development of a new form of suspicion directed toward emancipated and agnostic Jews (Kertzer 2003: 161-163). Through its systematic efforts to discriminate against atheist Jews, the Church played a role in the development of a variant of anti-Semitism grounded in views suggesting that Jews were "forming a state within the state".

The position of the German *Enlightenment* toward the Jews and Judaism was more ambiguous. In Christian Wilhelm Dohm's view, Jews were "superstitious and immoral" because they did not have a chance to fully participate in the surrounding society. He promoted the extension of rights to Jews because he thought it was a necessary condition for their social integration and their moral improvement. Assimilation was conceived as a chance for Jews to shed their errant views (Mosse 1987: 39-41; Mosse in Birbaum and Katznelson 1995: 64). The same could not be said of Dohm's religious antagonists, who opposed the extension of rights to Jews. Critics of the *Auflklärung*, usually religious men, argued that Jews had hereditary traits, which condemned them to perpetual exclusion. This argument is similar to the argument developed to exclude the *conversos* from offices in Spanish Aragon during the 15th century. As a general trend, Jewish emancipation tended to generate two patterns of exclusion: suspicion of their resistance to assimilation and suspicion of their too successful emancipation. To attribute one pattern to modern science and the second to religion is problematic, for both forms of

exclusion found important advocates in Catholic journals and Christian organizations.

In France, Jews were granted civil rights after the Revolution (in Bordeaux, 1790; Alsace-Loraine, 1791). Some revolutionaries, such as Clermont-Tonnerre, argued in favour of assimilation and promoted the extension of individual rights to Jews, though he remained opposed to the concession of collective right, or to the notion of Jewish *nation*. Some members of the clergy, such as *l'Abbé* Grégoire, favoured emancipation thinking it would dispose Jews to convert to Catholicism. Others, such as *l'Abbé* Maury and *l'évèque* La Fare from Nancy, stood against the extension of citizenship rights to Jews, whom they claimed would resist assimilation in any way (Bourdrel 2004: 158-170). In the southern region of France (Bordeaux and Bayonne), the descendants of the Spanish diasporas of 1492 were integrated into an economic bourgeoisie active in various economic sectors, including long distance trade and colonial expeditions. But in other region, such as Alsace, their living conditions were closer to that of Jews of Eastern Europe. Since they were denied access to landed property, many had to rely on usury in the countryside. In the beginning of his reign, Napoleon extended civil rights to Jews. He adopted ambiguous policies, including a "politic of extensive intermarriage". This strategy of coerced assimilation was formulated in the pre-revolutionary context. In 1784, the legal tutor of the Alsatian Jews, *l'intendant* La Galaizière, conceived a plan forbidding inter-Jewish marriages in places where they formed more than 10% of the population. The plan was to limit the annual birth rate of Jews to 72 per year for a population of 18 000. It also left to the king's discretion to approve the validity of inter-Jewish marriages (Bourdrel 2004: 144-145). Ultimately, Napoleon reintroduced discriminatory laws against the community (Bourdrel 2004: 180-181), and Catholicism remained the official religion until 1848.

Recasting the Ontological Shift in the History of Anti-Semitism

In 1967, in the preface to the French edition of the first volume of *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Arendt suggested another necessary condition (condition sine qua non) for the emergence of modern anti-Semitism. She argued that a decisive condition for modern anti-Semitism was made possible by a new trend endogenous to Judaic thought occurring during the 15th and 16th century. During this period, Arendt argues, the Jews started to think of themselves as 'racially' different from the rest of society. Arendt is not interested in the social processes which led to the Jews being increasingly isolated from the rest of society during this period: the long term impacts of the institutionalizing of the ghetto, the growing autonomy of Yiddish as an autonomous language, the different waves of migration and the repeated expulsions, the Lutheran frantic form of anti-Judaism, or the impacts of the mandatory distinctive clothing. These are all measures which certainly contributed to create a perception of sameness and isolation. Historian Hervé

Martin concludes from a study of Christian iconography that "[D]es particularités ethniques ont été prêtées aux Juifs à partir du moment où ils sont mis à l'écart de la société chrétienne. Durant le haut Moyen Age, ils ne se distinguent en rien des chrétiens dans l'iconographie. Quelques siècles plus tard, toute forme d'opposition à l'Église est judaïsée, alors que les apôtres, adeptes de la Nouvelle Loi, sont occidentalisés" (Martin 1998: 425-426). In fact, Jews were represented with horns and tails, and were believed to have a distinct smell and menstruations from Christian communities prior to the 16th century.

Historian Gavin Langmuir outlines that the influence of religious trends, actors and movements in modern societies should not be underestimated, as it is sometimes the case in structuralist strategies which contrast traditional and modern forms of anti-Judaism (Langmuir 1990: 201-231). According to these explanatory strategies, there are two distinct paradigms of anti-Judaism, the second following the first in a teleological fashion. According to this argument, each of the two "paradigms" creates the basis for a fundamentally different type of relation with the Jews. In pre-modern times, Christian anti-Judaism presented a theological rationalization of the exclusion of Jews. According to a structural-functionalist argument, with the advent of modernity, the collapse of theological conceptions of the world created a vacuum. In order to fill this vacuum, the difference between the national community and the Jews had to be "reinvented" in accordance with modern concepts. And the second paradigm alone was capable of generating conditions in which the idea of extermination would be seen as viable ground on which to base social policies of exclusion of the Jews. This model appears to offer an important insight with regard to the origins of modern racism and modern anti-Semitism. Yet, depending on its formulation, it can suffer from the usual weakness of structural-functional explanations. It has an *ad hoc* theory of structural changes. It fails to take into account the pre-scientific development of racist *attitudes,* and it minimizes the continuities between Christian anti-Judaism and racial anti-Semitism. Among the key missing links in the German case, is the importance of *völkisch* nationalism. As Fredrickson puts it, "[D]eterministic cultural particularism can do the work of biological racism quite effectively..."(Fredrickson 2002: 8).

Yet, even during centuries prior to the development of *völkisch* nationalism, historical research on Aragon Spain confirms that doctrines of *limpieza de sangre* (1446) were used by Christian organizations to restrain the *conversos* and *maranos* (the Jews and the Muslims convert to Christianity) from access to institutions on the ground of alleged permanent pathologies. The *Jésuites* later emulated this mechanism of exclusion. Between 1592 and 1946, no one with a Jewish member in his lineage in the five preceding generations was accepted into this Catholic religious order (Kertzer 2003: 241). Historian David Kertzer outlines that even the Nazis referred to this

organization to legitimize their own policies. In 1515, heresy was also thought of in some places as a hereditary vice. In Cordoua, in 1530, children of heretics were excluded from access to offices in the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Lewis 1999: 84). Of course, the patterns were not supported by a modern scientific discourse, but in terms of organizational behaviour, these institutions acted like racist organizations.

With respect to the social base of Nazism, the Christian creed did not prevent adhesion to Nazism, nor did not prevent Hitler from arguing, "[T]oday I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord" (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, cited in Friedländer 1998: 98). Protestant circles in the northeast and the Catholic Party of the centre collaborated with the NSDAP on key occasions. Several representatives of Protestant and Catholic circles reassessed their centuries-old anti-Judaic stereotypes. On the contrary, many of the most agnostic and materialistic actors of German society were part of the political opposition to National Socialism, and among the first to be targeted by the Nazi state. During the Weimar Republic, many scholars from the German orthodoxy maintained their virulent antidemocratic habits of the late 19th century. In the poet Stephen George's circle, a radical antidemocratic and aristocratic tradition kept warmly alive the dream of a restoration of the monarchy. In the views of these conservative clerks, a restoration of the old order was necessary to counter the drive toward social equality, "[R]evenez vers nous, Pères Jésuites, intelligents et habiles. Votre poison est préférable à la trahison de ceux qui vantent l'égalité" (Stephen George cited in Klibansky 1998: 61). Of course, not all religious forces were necessarily predisposed toward the NSDAP. Many Catholics militated in the *Zentrum* for policies of containment of the SPD, while Protestant zealots were numerous among the ranks of another anti-Semitic party, the DNVP. However, religious circles were a fertile ground for demands of spiritual and cultural renewal to save civilization from the pitfalls of materialism, and to this extent they prepared the ground for the Nazi rhetoric of the *volk(s)gemeinshaft* (Friedlander 1998; Mann 2004; Mosse 1966, 1987).

The argument that Nazism was a secular ideology should not be pushed too far. It minimizes the role played by Christian elites, slogans and traditional anti-Judaism in the Nazi strategies of mobilization. It does not capture the complexity of National Socialism's ideological roots in pseudo-religious *völkisch* nationalism, and it minimizes the role of the NSDAP's indispensable alliances with the Catholic and Protestant Churches. In this vein, it is important to recast the answers of religious institutions to National Socialism. Saul Friedländer stresses that,

> Although outright supporters of National Socialism as a whole were a small minority both in the churches and in the universities, those in favour of the national revival heralded by the new regime were definitely a majority. That majority shared a conservative-nationalist credo that easily converged with the main ideals proclaimed by the regime at its beginning (Friedländer 1998: 59).

Some important members of the Churches were in favour of the National Socialists' program of spiritual renewal. Important theological debates between members of the clergy argued over the priority of baptism over race. Members of the dissident Confessing Church argued that Jews who had received a Christian baptism should be exempted from the National Socialists' category of "Jews". Other Christian groups, such as the members of the *Weiss Rose*, were radically opposed to Nazism.

Another argument presented by advocates of the secular character of Nazi anti-Semitism claims that National Socialists formulated a secular/scientific definition of the Jewish race, rather than a religious one. This argument should also be nuanced. Hitler did argue that the "Jewry is unqualifiedly a racial association and not a religious association". In his views, the Jews were a racial cancer threatening the German *Volk*. This conception seems to have been widespread in Nazi circles. However, despite the National Socialist rhetoric, the Nazis were never able to give a racial definition of Jews. The criterion they adopted to define who was a Jew was conceived in terms of lineage and religious practice, rather than in racial terms. In the *First Decree for the Implementation of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service*, dated April 11 1933, the Nazis specified this definition: "[A] person is to be regarded as non-Aryan if he is descended from non-Aryan, especially Jewish, parents or grandparents. It is enough for one grandparent to be non-Aryan. This is to be assumed especially if one parent or grandparent was of Jewish faith". In general, however, Jews were depicted as a race by Nazi officials and scientists. Yet, this shows that the line between the two conceptions remained porous.

With regard to their attitudes toward National Socialism, both the Catholic and the Protestant Churches adopted policies guided by short-term institutional interests. From the beginning of the regime, no one opposed any fundamental resistance to the boycott of Jewish business, or to the daily violence committed against the Jews (Friedländer 1998: chapter 2; Kertzer 2003). While the "most prominent German Protestant clergyman" admitted that he was a lifetime anti-Semite (Friedländer 1998: 42), Munich's cardinal argued that the Jews were able to defend themselves alone against the new regime (Friedländer 1998: 43). In April 1933, Hitler proclaimed that his views were in continuity with a "fifteen-hundred-years-long tradition" of Christian anti-Semitism (Hitler cited in Friedländer 1998: 47). In September, the election of a Nazi as Reich Bishop bolstered the moral of the German Christian

Movement. During the same month, the Vatican ratified a Concordat with the National Socialist regime. These cases are a few amongst others which contrast thé ideal-type of a secular *Weltanschuung* in sharp rupture with traditional anti-Judaism. An analysis that abandons the identification of structural organic unity (pre-modern times/modern times) in favour of an analysis of the specific social contradictions of different state formations underlines that Christian anti-Judaism remained an important ideological component to gain the vote of the "lower-middle-class voters" for the far right, from Paris to Vienna (Friedländer 1998: 83).

In France, pro-restoration and anti-Semite Catholics tried to cement an alliance with labour based on a mixture of anti-capitalist and anti-materialist slogans. It culminated in *Boulangisme*. In Germany, anti-Semitism was an important component of *völkisch* nationalism near the end of the 19th century. Of course, this does not imply that this form of nationalism had to culminate in Nazism as Daniel Goldhagen sometimes seems to be arguing. It did not have to be entirely invented or imposed by a caste of scientists to survive until 1933, however. Some physicians and anthropologists contributed to give it a pseudo-scientific legitimacy, but their influence played a role in a much larger picture.

Against the view that Nazism was a distinctively agnostic ideology, Friedländer traces the origins of its "redemptive anti-Semitism" in the convergence of different currents with deep roots in 19th century religiosity (Friedländer 1998: 87-112). He notes that from the beginning, the NSDAP's program took a stand in favour of a "positive Christianity", hereby contrasting with the view that Nazism was a secular ideology.

The view that Nazism was a secular movement, and therefore modern, underestimates the filiations between *völkisch* nationalism and Nazism, as it does the political alliances between the Nazis and the churches. It also minimizes the role of religious social forces in the diffusion of popular anti-Semitism in the beginning of the 20th century. German religious elites were part of the power structure which collapsed with the advent of the Weimar Republic. They shared with other conservative forces the perception that an authoritarian take-over of power was necessary to counter the moral and cultural collapse, when not the civilizational breakdown associated with the heartland of Weimar's modernity and urban culture.

What about the modernity of anti-Semitism? According to Fredrickson, there remains a significant analytical distinction between the type of organization of exclusion developed in Spain to exclude the *conversos* and the type of mechanism of exclusion associated with German *völkisch* nationalism:

> One factor that makes the Iberian case different [than that of German national identity] is the role that played

> religion. National identity and a universalistic religious commitment were made synonymous, and national unfitness was defined as an inherited inability to believe in the One True Faith as defined by the Inquisition. What we have here therefore is a quasi-racialized religious nationalism and not a fully racialized secular nationalism of the kind that arose in Germany. (It would take the Enlightenment and reactions against it to make this possible.) (Fredrickson 2002: 41)

Fredrickson suggests an important nuance between the two mechanisms of exclusion. From an analytical point of view, however, the attribution of permanent characteristics of inferiority can be found to be at work in both mechanisms. For reasons developed above, I would be inclined to diminish the importance of "secular" in the expression "fully racialized secular nationalism" when referring to Nazi anti-Semitism. Rather, I would contrast the former "quasi-racialized religious nationalism" with a fully racialized "redemptive" nationalism, borrowing Friedländer's expression. The latter expression remains compatible with Fredrickson's conditions for the possibility of modern racist doctrines, "...the rejection of hierarchy as the governing principle of social and political organization, and its replacement by the aspiration for equality in this world as well as in the eyes of God, had to occur before racism could come to full flower"(Fredrickson 2002: 47). A view from below of the same social trends reveals that aside from the Enlightenment, modern racist doctrines found a fertile ground in places where the extension of the franchise was hardly debated, and where a strong coalition of forces were opposed to it. It did not matter very much if the nationalist imagination was more inclined toward an ethnic, or *völkisch*, representation of the nation (such as in Germany), or whether it was more inclined toward a civic representation of the nation (such as in the US). In the light of the American experience, the hypothesis that civic variants of nationalism are ramparts against the marginalization and exclusion of social groups does not resist empirical analysis. Those ideal-types refer to categories of division of the world that probably weighed less than the negotiations of relations of power surrounding the extension of the franchise and social and political rights. It is often argued that ethno-cultural nationalism is a good ground for the emergence of racism, but it should be outlined that "[T]he one exclusionary principle that could be readily accepted by civic nationalists was biological unfitness for full citizenship" (Fredrickson 2002: 68).

The cases studies of Bartlett, Nirenberg and Fredrickson are fundamentals. They sharply question the view that it is only with modern science that permanent ontological vices or permanent pathologies were attributed to social or cultural groups who were then refused access to certain

rights (Bartlett 1993; Nirenberg 2001; Fredrickson 2002). Racist attitudes, as defined by Fredrickson, were anterior to eugenics and the institutionalizing of racial hygieñe. One interpretation already seen with Bauman attributes the pernicious role played by racial hygiene and eugenics to the Enlightenment's program of domestication of nature. Fredrickson's comparative history of scientific racism invites one to interpret the success of scientific racism not so much as an outcome of the Enlightenment in general, but of the context of the social contentions surrounding the extension of social and political rights, especially in the South of the US between 1890 and 1950, in South Africa during Apartheid and in Nazi Germany. It is the specific character of the social contentions which made racial theories a technology of power in some national contexts, rather than others.

In sum, Arendt's analysis of anti-Semitism tends to have two limitations. It takes too much for granted that a universal model of the relation between wealth and power can be induced from Tocqueville's analysis of the French Revolution, and applied to the situation of the Jews as a whole. Second, it tends to take too much for granted that both the importance of nationalism and the nation-state declined in the 1870s, though she does not underline the consequences of the emergence of capitalism which made possible in the same movement an open era of imperialist competition at the inter-state level and a consolidation of the ideologies of the integral nation. With respect to the ontological shift in the development of anti-Judaism, Arendt finds one of its conditions of possibility in a development intrinsic to Judaic thought while minimizing the way in which Christian legislation and social representations of the pre-modern era could have contributed to this transformation. On the contrary, I argue that a decisive shift with a strictly theological pattern of anti-Judaism occurred before the beginning of the modern era. Toward the end of the middle ages, Jews were constructed as having biological differences, horns, tails, a bad smell and the biological capacity to give birth to monsters. A very important moment in the development of religious racism occurred with the institutional decision to deny access to the children of *conversos* and heretics in Medieval Spain, a decision later emulated by other Christian organisations such as *Les Jésuites*. In the eyes of Christian institutions, the conversion to Christianity had ceased to be a guarantee of shedding away the "essence of the Jewish character", this "essence" had been racialized. It became a fundamental mechanism of exclusion of Jewish competition, and a rampart against the extension of political rights to Jews during the 19th century.

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